

Reading Schedule

Of

Hebrews

**Life-Study Messages
(Two messages/Week)**

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II	6 Weeks	5	9, 10	5/7 – 5/11	1-10
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The Church in Pleasanton

2018

John 17: 22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are cone;

1 Cor. 2:7 But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the wisdom which has been hidden, which God predestined before the ages for our glory,

MESSAGE NINE

THE CAPTAIN OF SALVATION (1)

In this message we come to the Captain of our salvation. It is difficult to understand this matter doctrinally. It seems that, logically speaking, for salvation we need Jesus to be our Savior and Redeemer, not our Captain, Pioneer, or Forerunner. Nevertheless, in God's wonderful salvation, in His "so great a salvation," we do need such a Captain. A captain is a leader who leads a group of people into a certain place. What is this Captain leading us into? He is leading us into glory.

The glory of God is a most difficult thing for anyone to define or explain. In His prayer to the Father in John 17, the Lord Jesus said, "And the glory which You have given to Me I have given to them" (John 17:22, Recovery Version). What is this glory? The glory into which our Captain is leading us is the glory which He has already given us. Although glory has been given to us already, yet we still need to enter into it. How difficult it is to speak about this glory! Some say this glory is a luxurious state into which we shall enter in the future and which will thrill and excite us very much. When I heard this kind of talk in the past, I was unhappy with it. Deep within, I felt that it was too light, that there was no weight or meaning in it. If you turn the question to me, I would have to say that it is exceedingly difficult to define what is the divine glory which God has ordained for us.

The New Testament tells us that we have been called into glory and that this glory was designed according to God's wisdom in eternity past. First Corinthians 2:7 says that in eternity past God ordained that we should be brought into this glory. Both 1 Thessalonians 2:12 and 1 Peter 5:10 tell us that we have been called into this glory. And, according to Colossians 3:4, when Christ appears, we shall appear with Him in His glory. What is this glory? Probably most Christians think that glory is merely a kind of shining or brightness. I would not say that glory is not such a shining or brightness, because I have not entered into it and dare not say that this understanding of glory is wrong. However, I would say that such an understanding is too objective and that it is absolutely according to objective considerations. To say that the glory into which we shall enter is merely a kind of radiant shining or brightness may be correct, but it is altogether an objective concept.

We may illustrate this matter of glory by the example of a carnation flower. The seed of a carnation plant is very small. If you sow this seed into the earth, it will grow until it eventually reaches the blossom stage. When the carnation blossoms, that is its glorification. A long process must transpire from the seed stage to the blossoming stage. As the carnation passes through this process, it must do a great deal of fighting. If you were a carnation seed, you would be able to tell us how much fighting you must pass through. The carnation must firstly fight against itself, because the life element within the seed must fight against the shell and break through it in order to come out. Then the carnation must fight against the soil in which it grows. Because the soil helps the carnation to grow, we may call it the growing soil. However, even this growing soil is a frustration to the carnation. Although the plant needs the soil and the soil helps it to grow, it is, nevertheless, a frustration to the growth of the carnation. The carnation must fight against the very soil that helps it to grow. Finally, after much fighting, the carnation reaches the stage of blossoming. That is the glory of the carnation flower. Its blossom is its glory.

Every one of us, without exception, is like a carnation seed. Through regeneration, the life of glory has come into us. We now have a seed of glory within us. The life that we have within us as a seed is the life of glory. This is Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Glory is not merely a radiant shining in the air.

Week 5 – Day 1 (5/7) (Cont'd)

That is too objective. If glory were merely an outward shining, it would simply be another vanity. But that is not the glory that the Bible talks about. The glory revealed in the Bible is the very blossoming of God's divine element. One day, God's divine element is going to blossom. Does it bother you when I say that the glory into which we shall enter is not merely something objective, but that it is the blossoming of the divine element from within us? If it does, it means that, at least to some degree, you are still clinging to the old doctrines. You need to cross the river.

Consider the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus on the mountaintop (Matt. 17:1-2). When the Lord Jesus ascended to the top of that mountain and was transfigured, did the shekinah glory suddenly come upon Him from the outside, from the third heavens? Did He enter into an outward shining or brightness? No, the glory shone from within Him. That is why it is called the transfiguration. Likewise, the glory into which we shall be brought is the very glory that is within us right now. It is not merely objective; it is altogether subjective. What a difference between this and the traditional teaching about glory! At the time we were regenerated, the seed of glory was sown into us. This is mysterious.

In regeneration a life element came into our being. This life element is not a small thing: it is God's divine element. All that God is is in this substance, this life element, that has come into our being. Oh, how we all must realize what happened to us when we were regenerated! God's divine element came into us.

When the children of Israel entered into the land of Canaan, they began to blossom. That was their glory. That blossoming stage was also a fighting stage, for they began to fight almost immediately after entering into the good land. The first battle they fought was at Jericho. After Jericho, they fought continually until David defeated all the enemies and the temple was built. Then the glory of God filled the temple (1 Kings 8:10). Apparently, the glory that filled the temple came down from above; actually, the glory was with the children of Israel. Since the day they crossed the Red Sea, the glory was with them. The glory was in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire (Exo. 14:19, 24). When they built the temple, the temple was filled with glory. Again I say that the glory did not come from above. It was present already, waiting for the people's growth and development. When the children of Israel were fully developed, the glory filled the temple.

Likewise, we all had our beginning at the time of our regeneration. That was our Passover. Since the time of our Passover, the time when the seed of glory was sown into us, that seed has been growing. This growing is a fighting process. Even now we are still under the process of entering into glory.

Now we are prepared to understand the Captain of salvation. The salvation of which Christ is the Captain is the very salvation which brings us into glory. The "so great a salvation" brings us into glory, and Christ, our Savior, is the Captain of this salvation. What does this mean? It simply means that our Savior took the lead to fight through into glory. The Lord Jesus did not suddenly enter into glory. During all of His days on earth, a fighting process was going on. The seed of glory was in Him and was fighting its way out. If you read the Gospels, you will see that the life of Jesus was a life of fighting. The story of His life was a fighting story. He was always fighting the battle for the growth of the seed of glory. He fought that the glory might come out and that He might be brought into glory.

Do not think that the Lord entered into glory when He ascended to the heavens. No, before His ascension, while He was still on earth, He entered into glory on the day of His resurrection. Luke 24:26 indicates that Christ entered into glory not by ascending but by resurrecting. His resurrection was His entrance into glory. His whole life, from the time He was born until the day He was resurrected from the dead, was a fighting process. The Lord did not only fight for victory but for glory. He fought for His glorification. His fighting paved the way into glory. In this matter of fighting for glory, He was the Pioneer. He pioneered the way into glory. Therefore, He spontaneously has become qualified to be the leader of those entering into glory. So He is the Captain of our salvation. Today we are following this Pioneer who has paved the way and entered into glory. That glory is now the good land. We must cross the river and enter into this land. In a sense, Christ has crossed the river and is now on the other side, in the land of glory. Although He is in the glory, we are not yet in it. We are on the way, following Him as our Captain.

Heb. 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

10: 32, 35 But call to mind the former days, in which, having been enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings; 35 Do not cast away therefore your boldness, which has great reward.

I. GOD LEADING MANY SONS INTO GLORY

Our God has established a great corporation, a great business. The purpose of this corporation is to accomplish one thing: to lead many sons into glory (2:10). God's corporation is a corporation of glory. It does not make money; it makes glory.

A. All Things for God

In order to lead many sons into glory, God had to have a suitable environment. So, He created the heavens, the earth, and all things. All things are for God to accomplish His glory business.

B. All Things through God

All things which God created for the accomplishing of His glory business are existing through God. It is God who maintains all things in the universe that they may serve the purpose of accomplishing His glory business.

C. Many Sons among All Things

All things are for and through God. Among the all things are the many sons of God who are the center of God's creation. All things are for the many sons of God because God's corporation is to bring His many sons into glory. This requires much fighting. This is why the Firstborn Son of God is the Captain of His many sons' salvation.

D. Into Glory

God's goal is to bring His many sons into glory. His Firstborn Son, the Lord Jesus, as the Pioneer, has fought into this glory. Now He is the Captain of God's many sons' salvation leading them into His glory by fighting. We, the many sons of God, are now on the way, fighting into the glory which God ordained for us.

II. MAKING JESUS PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS

In order to accomplish His purpose of bringing many sons into glory, God had to have an example, a model. Such a one could be the qualified Captain taking the lead to bring the many sons into glory. Jesus is this Captain. Before Jesus became the Captain, however, He had to be perfected through sufferings (2:10). When I read the Bible as a young man, I was bothered by the verse in Hebrews 2 which says that Jesus needed to be perfected. On the one hand, I knew that Jesus was perfect. On the other hand, 2:10 says that He had to be perfected. So it seemed to me that Jesus was not perfect. But He truly was perfect. Although He was perfect before His incarnation, He did not have the experience of human suffering. He had to be perfected through suffering before He could become the Captain of salvation. The word perfect in 2:10 means to carry to the end or consummation by completing or perfecting. To be perfect here actually means to be qualified. Before His incarnation, Jesus was not qualified to be the Captain of salvation. In order to be qualified for this office, He had to experience human suffering. Thus, to make Jesus perfect does not imply any imperfection of virtue or attribute in Jesus, but only the completing of His experience of human sufferings which makes Him fit to become the Captain, the Leader, of His followers' salvation. Since Jesus had passed through all the human suffering, He has been perfected, qualified, to fill this office. He is qualified to bring the many sons of God into the region of glory which He has already entered as the Pioneer.

Week 5 – Day 2 (5/8) (Cont'd)

Why did the writer of Hebrews mention suffering? Because at the time this Epistle was written the Hebrew Christians were suffering (10:32-35). They were being persecuted. In a sense, their suffering was not good, for they were very troubled by it. In another sense, however, that suffering was the process which was helping them to enter into glory. The writer was telling them that the Lord Jesus, as the Captain of salvation, had gone ahead of them that He might help them cross the waters of suffering and enter into glory. This was the writer's concept. This concept is deep. The writer seemed to be telling the Hebrew believers, "Hebrew brothers and sisters, you must realize that our Jesus is the real Joshua. He took the lead to cross the Jordan River. Don't miss Him. Look unto Him and follow His steps. He has passed through all the sufferings and has entered into glory. He is our Pioneer, our Forerunner. He has gone before us to cut the way into glory. The way has been paved and all you need to do is follow Him. Do not be troubled by your sufferings. You should be comforted. All the sufferings are helping you along the highway of Zion." Jesus truly was their Captain of salvation. Now we understand the meaning of this term.

III. THE PIONEER, THE LEADER, AND THE CAPTAIN

Since Jesus has been perfected through His experience of human sufferings in the flesh, He is qualified to fulfill the office of the Captain of our salvation. He has become the Pioneer, the Leader, and the Captain. He has cut the way into glory, He has taken the lead to enter into glory, and He is now the Captain bringing His followers into glory.

IV. SALVATION

Our salvation is "so great a salvation." This salvation is very deep. It is not only a matter of saving us from our fallen state, but of bringing us into glory. We are not going to be kidnapped into glory; we shall be saved into glory through the way of suffering.

Let me say a word of comfort to you all. The more we follow Christ in His way, the more we must be prepared to experience sufferings. Sufferings are good. They are a great help. We need to kiss the sufferings and appreciate them. We need to thank the Lord for our sufferings because all the sufferings are our helpers. Sooner or later you will say, "Sufferings, you have been my dear helpers. I owe very much to you. When I was passing through you, I didn't like you because then I didn't know how great a help you really were to me. Thank you for what you have done." The more we Christians pray and love the Lord, the more problems we may have. According to our experiences, we can realize that many problems are precisely measured out. They are neither too long nor too short. And they all seem to come at just the right time. As we look back upon our experiences, we see how good it was that certain things happened when they did. Do not be bothered by your problems. Whatever happens to you, just say, "Praise the Lord. This is the process of getting into glory." Look at our Captain. He is pioneering; He is fighting. Let us follow Him. He is not leading us into some objective glory, but into that very glory which has been sown into our inner being. The glory that has been sown into us as a seed will be developed into the glory which we are going to enter. May the Spirit speak to us more about this matter of entering into glory.

If you compare what we have said about glory in this message with the definition of it found in Romans 8:17-18, 21, you will see that they are the same. To be glorified is not to be kidnapped into a region of shining brightness. The glory into which we shall enter is the glory of the divine element that has been sown into us. We are not entering into this glory on our own but with the Captain who has pioneered the way, who has entered into glory, and is now leading us into glory. Once again, we see that we are the real river crossers. We are crossing the river to enter into glory.

Rev. 21:11 Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

John 1: 14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

MESSAGE TEN
THE CAPTAIN OF SALVATION (2)

We need to devote another message to the Captain of salvation. This is a great matter. The Captain of salvation is the One who leads us into glory. There is no problem with understanding the Captain; the difficulty is in understanding the meaning of glory. Although we spoke about glory in the previous message, because many of us are not clear about the true meaning of glory in the Bible, I am burdened to say something basic regarding glory in this message.

GLORY—GOD EXPRESSED

In the Bible, glory is God expressed. Whenever God is expressed, that is glory. But whenever God is hidden, concealed, there is no glory. When God is seen, there is glory. You can never see God without seeing His glory. While the unseen God is God, the seen God is glory. Glory was seen as the children of Israel journeyed from Egypt to the good land (Exo. 13:21). During the day God was seen as the cloud and during the night He was seen as the pillar of fire—that was glory. In the Gospel of John we read that the Word was God, that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and that we all beheld His glory (John 1:1, 14). John 1:18 says, “No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (Recovery Version). There is glory in the declaration of God. When we see God, we see glory.

THE CORPORATE EXPRESSION OF GOD

Based upon this understanding of glory, we may ask, What is God’s eternal purpose? God’s eternal purpose is to express Himself in a corporate way. If you read Revelation carefully, you will see that the entire city of New Jerusalem bears the glory of God (Rev. 21:10-11). This means that the whole city will be the corporate expression of God. In the New Jerusalem, God is in the Lamb, and the Lamb is the lamp with God shining in and through Him as the light (Rev. 21:23, Gk.). Eventually, this light will shine through the wall of the city, a wall that is made of jasper, is crystal clear, and expresses God’s image. If you were to ask me what glory is, I would say that that is glory. To be brought into glory simply means to be brought into that glorious expression of God.

Since many of the new ones might not be familiar with this matter, let us examine the verses in Revelation more carefully. Revelation 21:11, a description of the New Jerusalem, says, “Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” Verse 18 of the same chapter says, “And the building of the wall of it was of jasper.” The whole wall of the city is made of jasper, expressing the very image of God. If you read Revelation 4:3, you will see that God, the One sitting on the throne, has the appearance of jasper: “And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper.” God’s appearance is like jasper, and the city wall is made of jasper expressing the same appearance as God. This is the glory that the city bears. Such a glory is not an objective shining or brightness. The glory here is the divine reality expressed. The divine reality expressed through the corporate Body is glory. This is the glory that we are going to enter into. The glory into which we shall enter is not an objective shining or brightness; it is God Himself shining from, through, and out of us.

Where is the glory in the New Jerusalem? It is in the center, in the heart, of the city. God, the source of glory, is on the throne in the center of the New Jerusalem. God on the throne is the substance, essence, and element of glory. In Revelation 21 that glory is called the light (Rev. 21:23). That light is not a natural light, such as the sun, moon, and stars, nor a man-made light, such as a lamp. No, it is the divine light, God Himself. This is the source of glory. God as the light shines in and through the Lamb as the lamp,

Week 5 – Day 3 (5/9) (Cont'd)

eventually shining through the entire city, causing the city to bear the appearance of God Himself. When we look at the New Jerusalem, we see the expression of God's appearance, the light in the lamp shining through the jasper. This is glory. Glory is God expressed through His redeemed people. Oh, how we all need to see what this glory really is!

In these messages we have spoken much about crossing the river. We need to cross the river to the glory side, to the region of glory. But this does not mean that we shall enter glory in a physical sense and walk on golden streets. No, the things pertaining to God and to His eternal purpose are so mysterious, spiritual, and divine that no human words can illustrate them adequately and no human mind can comprehend them sufficiently. Because of this, the Bible uses symbols to represent the divine reality. When the Bible says that Christ is the Lamb, it does not mean, of course, that He is literally a lamb with four feet and a tail. When the Bible says that Christ is the Lamb of God (John 1:29), it is referring to the divine redemption.

As a whole, the Bible reveals that the Divine Being, the Almighty and mysterious God, wants to have a full expression through a corporate people. For this purpose, He created the universe, including the heavens and the earth. For this purpose, He specifically and especially created man as a corporate entity to contain Him, to be filled with Him, to live by Him, and to have his being by Him in order to express Him. Eventually, this corporate man will be the New Jerusalem as God's corporate expression. God will be there as the center, essence, substance, content, life, and everything to this corporate man. God will be shining there. He will shine from within this corporate man and through this corporate man. God's glory will be there, and all the members of this corporate man will be brought into that glory.

Now we are able to grasp the meaning of the glory into which we are being brought. This glory is not a mere objective shining; it is God Himself expressed. When God Himself comes into us, He is life; when He works in us, He is light; and when He is expressed in us, He is glory. This is God's eternal goal into which He is leading us. God is now bringing us into the region of glory which is God Himself expressed.

THE NEED TO CROSS THE RIVER

Although God created man with such an intention and purpose, man has been ruined and corrupted. In a sense, ruined mankind has become Chaldea, Babylon, the land of idolatry. The Bible often uses lands and cities as figures to symbolize man. So Chaldea and Babylon signify the ruined and corrupted man filled with idolatry. Since man has fallen, there is the need to cross the river out of the corrupted land into the elevated, new land, that is, into an elevated, new mankind. So God came in and called Abraham out of that ruined mankind, that is, out of Chaldea, making him the head and father of the called race. Abraham crossed the river and became the first Hebrew, the first river crosser. Abraham's crossing the river and entering into the new land signified his entering into an uplifted, new mankind which is to be used by God to be His expression.

THE GOAL IN CROSSING THE RIVER

God's expression was symbolized by His temple, His habitation on earth. God's intention in calling Abraham was to obtain such a habitation. Abraham's being called was eventually for the producing, the building up, of God's habitation. This is not a small thing. We must look at the Bible and the people in it as a whole, and not just consider a few individuals, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. What was God's intention in calling Abraham? His intention was that all of Abraham's descendants might be built up as a habitation of God on earth. Eventually, the result of Abraham's being called was the temple. The crossing of the river was for the building of the temple. What is the significance of the building of the temple? It is the corporate expression of God. The temple, the habitation of God, is the corporate expression of God on earth. The temple was filled with the glory of God (1 Kings 8:10-11). When the temple was erected during the reign of Solomon, the shekinah glory filled it. At that time, all the children of Israel were brought into glory. The physical temple symbolized the people of Israel. God's habitation on earth was not a house made of stone. That was only a symbol. The real habitation of God on earth at that time was the people of Israel. When God's glory filled the temple, it signified that God's glory had filled the children of Israel. The children of Israel were brought into glory. This is the real goal of crossing the river, the real goal of being a Hebrew.

Luke 24:26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into His glory?

1 Pet. 1:11 Searching into what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them was making clear, testifying beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories after these.

THE MEANING OF CROSSING THE RIVER

If you know the kernel of the Bible, you will realize that everywhere there is a river for God's people to cross. As I have already mentioned, there was a standing river, the laver, in front of the tabernacle (Exo. 40:30-32). Whenever a priest wanted to come into the presence of God, he had to pass that little river. To say that it was sufficient for the priests to wash themselves once and for all would be ridiculous. How many times did the priests have to be washed? It depended on how many times they went into the presence of God. Likewise, we need to be washed more than once. How many times do we need to be washed? Whenever we are dirty. To wash is just to cross the river. This washing will not be finished until we are on the sea of glass (Rev. 15:2-3). When we get into the New Jerusalem, there will be no more dust, only gold, pearl, and precious stones. There we shall never be dirty again. There will be no laver, no sea of glass, in front of the New Jerusalem. But there will be the lake of fire, and everything that has been washed away will go there. Now we understand what it means to cross the river; it is to wash ourselves from anything old, anything ruined, and anything that does not match God's glory.

Abraham was called to cross the river. After that one, initial crossing of the river, how many crossings followed? Firstly, there was the crossing of the Red Sea and secondly the crossing of the Jordan River. At the time of the crossing of the Red Sea, the Egyptian forces were buried (Exo. 14:28). What was buried under the Jordan River? The self. When the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River, twelve stones, representing the old Israel, were buried there, and another group of twelve stones, representing the new Israel, were brought out of the river and set up in the good land (Josh. 4:8-9). We need to cross out of Egypt. We need to cross out of the Egyptian forces and Egyptian power. We need to cross out of the Egyptian department stores and modern fashions. Eventually, we need to cross out of ourselves. We need to cross the Red Sea and we need to cross the Jordan River. Then we shall have the temple built.

Do not think that after crossing the Red Sea and the Jordan River there are no more rivers to cross. Every time you desire to enter into the temple you need to cross the river—the laver. You still need to cross the sea of glass. Day by day and time after time, you need to cross the river to get into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of the shekinah glory, where God dwells. This is what it means to be brought into glory. The crossing of all the rivers brings us into glory, the glory that is God Himself expressed.

THE LORD JESUS AS THE TYPICAL EXAMPLE

For this, we not only have the clear type of Abraham and his descendants consummating in the building of the temple, but we have a typical example—the Lord Jesus. The Lord as the Pioneer and Forerunner is the example, the model, of a person who has crossed the river and entered into God's glory. He has crossed the river Jordan and has fully entered into the divine glory. He suffered and entered into glory (Luke 24:26; 1 Pet. 1:11).

What is this glory into which Christ has entered? It is the full expression of God. When the Lord was in the flesh, God was concealed within Him. Within Him was the seed of the divine glory. In Jesus, the Nazarene with blood and flesh, was the seed of God's divine glory. But this glory was concealed within Him just like the glory of a carnation is concealed within the carnation seed. When the carnation seed falls into the earth, dies, and grows again until it reaches the stage of blossoming, the carnation seed will be brought into glory. Jesus was such a seed. He fell into the earth, died, and grew up (John 12:23-24). By His growing up, His whole being, including His humanity and His human nature, was brought into the glorious expression of God. That was His glory. The Lord suffered death, crossing the river of death, and entered into the glory, into the full expression of the Divine Being. What was typified by Abraham and by his

Week 5 – Day 4 (5/10) (Cont'd)

descendants at the time of the building of the temple, was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. After living on earth for thirty-three and a half years, the Lord fulfilled the type. Jesus crossed the river. He firstly crossed the river at the time of His baptism. For three and a half years after His baptism, He was continually crossing rivers. Eventually, on the cross, He crossed the death river. By crossing that ultimate river He entered into glory. The glory into which He entered is the reality of the expression of God's divine being. After His resurrection, He was God's glorious expression. That was the glory into which He entered. He is the example, the model, because He was the first One who pioneered into glory, the One who paved the way.

WITHIN THE VEIL

This Pioneer, this Forerunner, entered within the veil (Hebrews 6:19-20). What is the veil? The veil is that which separates us from God's expression. Every river is a veil separating us from God's expression. By passing through the Jordan, the river of death, Jesus entered within the veil. There within the veil is nothing but the expression of God. He is there now in glory. There is a man in the glory. This means that there is a man in God's expression. Even more, there is a man who is God's expression, a man who is God's glory.

CHRIST AS THE GLORY IN US

This wonderful man Jesus, who is the model, example, Forerunner, Pioneer, and Captain, one day entered into us. We might have been unconscious of it, but He entered into us. Although we may know that Jesus has entered into us, we probably do not know what kind of Jesus He is, for most believers understand Him according to a low level of gospel preaching. Who is this Jesus who has come into us? He is not only the Savior, He is the One who took the lead to run the race into glory, the One who has entered into the full expression of God, the One who, even today, is this full expression of God. This Jesus, who is God's expression, the effulgence of God's glory (Heb. 1:3), is the Jesus who has come into us. Therefore, Colossians 1:27 says, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." In the past, probably the most we could say was that Christ was the eternal life in us. If we did not have Colossians 1:27, we would never imagine that the Jesus who is in us is the hope of glory. Our hope of glory is just Christ Himself.

This glory is still a hope to us because, as yet, it has not come out of us. Once you sow a carnation seed into the earth, you have the hope of its blossoming. Though you cannot see it blossoming yet, you believe that it is going to blossom. Christ within us is the hope of glory. Since the seed of glory has been sown into us, we all hope to see it blossoming.

On the one hand, this wonderful One is within the veil, dwelling there in the expression of God and as the expression of God. On the other hand, He has come into us. We should not try to understand this with our little mind, saying, "Christ was within the veil and now He has come into me. Since He is in me, He must no longer be there." That is our natural thought. We should not stay in our small mind—we must cross the river. We may use the example of electricity to illustrate how Christ can be there within the veil and here within us at the same time. The electricity is in the power plant as well as in our room. When the electricity comes into the room, it does not leave the power plant. Likewise, on the one hand, Christ is there within the veil and, on the other hand, He is within us. He does not have to leave the glory in order to come into us. While He is within the veil and within us, He is ministering from there to here. He entered within the veil as the Pioneer, the Forerunner, entering into the glory which is the full, glorious expression of the Divine Being. Now He is in glory as the Captain of our salvation. One day this Captain of salvation came into us. But in His coming into us He never left the glory. Rather, He brought the glory into us. This is wonderful. When the Captain of salvation came into us, the glory came with Him. In other words, the Captain of salvation came into us to be the glory. At the very least, He came in to be the seed of glory. Now we all have this seed of glory, that is, the Captain of salvation Himself, within us. Why is He called the Captain? Because He took the lead to pioneer the way into glory. Since He was the first to enter into glory, He, as our Forerunner, is fully qualified to be our Captain.

2 Cor. 4:16-17 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory,

Now we are prepared to understand the matter of Jesus' being perfected through sufferings (2:10). How is it that His sufferings qualified Him to be the Captain? Because without passing through sufferings He could not be in the glory, and, if He were not in the glory, He would not be perfected or qualified. But by passing through the sufferings He entered into glory. He is now fully qualified, fully perfected, to fulfill His office of Captain. Therefore, He can come into us as the Captain as well as the glory.

At this very moment, He is ministering from there to here. As He ministers to us in this way, He is not only the Captain but also the High Priest. He is the High Priest ministering Himself to us as bread and wine. The Lord continually ministers Himself to us as grace. First Peter 5:10 speaks of the God of all grace. When Paul was suffering because of a thorn in the flesh, he asked the Lord three times to remove it (2 Cor. 12:7-8). But the Lord answered Paul, saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The Lord seemed to be telling Paul, "I shall not be so foolish as to take away the thorn. Rather, I shall afford you My sufficient grace. I shall minister Myself to you as the supply, as the grace, as the bread and wine, that will sustain and support you as you pass through all the sufferings. These sufferings will produce glory in you."

THE ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY

Paul knew that sufferings help to bring us into glory and so he could say, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outer man is consumed, yet the inner man is being renewed day by day. For the present lightness of the affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:16-17, Gk.). In 2 Corinthians 4:17 Paul made a comparison, comparing the "present lightness of the affliction" with the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He was saying that the eternal weight of glory far surpasses the present lightness of the affliction. Here we see three comparisons: affliction with glory, lightness with weight, and present with eternal. Whatever sufferings we pass through are the lightness. This present lightness of affliction cannot compare with the eternal weight of glory. Do not be troubled by your sufferings. Rather, you must tell Satan, "Satan, regardless of the sufferings that I am passing through, I am happy. This is not a weight; it is lightness." Brothers and sisters, do you feel that you are under a heavy weight? Many sisters have come to me saying, "Brother, you don't know how hard and heavy my situation is. You don't know what a weight is on me." Sisters, it is wrong to say this. Your suffering is not a weight; it is a lightness. The real weight is the glory. All our sufferings are just the lightness, the present lightness of the affliction that works for us the eternal weight of glory.

Once again we need to ask, "What is glory?" Glory is the expression of God. There is no need to wait for eternity to have the expression of God. Even today, after the saints have experienced a certain lightness of affliction, we may see the glory in them. I can testify that I have seen many dear saints who are like this. They have passed through sufferings and eventually the expression of God has come out of them. The more they suffer, the more they are brought into the expression of God. Not only in the future, but even now, the sufferings bring us into the expression of God. This is the weight of glory.

Week 5 – Day 5 (5/11) (Cont'd)

CHRIST'S COMING FROM WITHOUT AND FROM WITHIN

Romans 8:30 says that those “whom He justified, these He also glorified.” This does not mean to put us into glory. To put us into glory is one thing and to glorify us is another. Then 2 Thessalonians 1:10 says, “When He shall come to be glorified in His saints.” One day, at the right time, Christ will come to be glorified in us. This means that He will come out of us. If you know the Bible, you will realize that, on the one hand, Christ is coming from without, and that, on the other hand, He is coming from within us. He has been sown into us as the seed of glory. This seed will grow until it reaches the stage of blossoming. Then the glory will come out. I do believe in the literal second coming of the Lord. But in the Bible the concept of His coming is not that shallow. Why has the Lord not yet come? It is very easy for Him to come down from above. He can do it at any time. But it is not easy for Him to come out of us. Although He can come down from above at any time, where is the people out of whom He can come? It is very easy for Him to shine upon us, but it is difficult for Him to be glorified in us. It is easy for Him to put us into glory, but it is not so easy to glorify us. For example, if a person has a pale complexion, it is easy to color it by adding some outward coloring. But for his paleness to be inwardly transformed to pinkness needs time for growth. The Bible does say that God is leading many sons into glory, but it also says that He will glorify us. To glorify us means to have the glory that has been sown into us saturate our whole being. When our whole being has been permeated and saturated with the element of glory, that glory will come out of us. This is what it means to glorify us. When we experience this glorification, we shall be in the expression of God. At that time we shall be fully on the other shore, fully in the expression of God. This is our glory.

Now we understand what it means to enter into glory, what it means for God to lead us into glory. Praise the Lord that we are crossing the river! We are still crossing the river—crossing the river from old Christianity into the new church life, crossing the river from the old self into the new spirit, crossing the river from all things other than God Himself into the expression of God. Every day we are the real river crossers. Day by day we are crossing the river. Our Captain has passed over all the rivers. He has cut the way and now He is the Pioneer, the Forerunner, and the Captain leading us into glory. For this, He has come into us as the Captain and as the seed of glory. Even now He is ministering to us from God's glory, ministering Himself into us as the bread and wine to sustain and support us. This is the Captain of salvation. While we are heading toward glory, the glory is within us. Praise Him!

Study Questions

1. What is the significance of Christ being the Heir of all things?
2. What does it mean that we are joint heirs with Christ? of all things?

- Heb. 12:14 Pursue peace with all men and sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord;
2:11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers,
1 Tim. 4:4-5 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if received with thanksgiving;
5 For it is sanctified through the word of God and intercession.
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MESSAGE ELEVEN

THE SANCTIFIER AND THE SANCTIFIED

In this message we come to the matter of sanctification. No book talks as much about sanctification as does the book of Hebrews. It is absolutely essential that we have holiness, for without it we cannot live in the presence of God. In 12:14 we are told that without holiness no man can see the Lord. However, sanctification is very difficult to define. In order to understand what sanctification is, we need to see a little of the background of the various schools of Christian teaching on the subject of sanctification or holiness. Sanctification is fully revealed in the Scriptures, in both the Old and New Testament. Although it is revealed in the Scriptures, it was nearly lost. At the time of the Reformation, God began a recovery of all His truths. The first truth that God recovered was justification by faith. If you read the church history of the last five hundred years, you will find that after God recovered justification, the next thing to be recovered was sanctification. But sanctification was not recovered in as clear a way as justification was. Even justification, although it was recovered clearly, was not recovered fully. It was recovered objectively but not subjectively. We saw this in the Life-study of Romans. Nevertheless, after the recovery of justification by faith, the recovery of sanctification followed, but it followed in a way that was not fully accurate.

We cannot say who was the first person used by God to recover sanctification. But we do know that, according to the history of the recovery, in the eighteenth century God used a group of university students at Oxford—John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield. These young men began to have a meeting. John Wesley was raised up by God through the help of the Moravian brothers under the leadership of Zinzendorf. The Moravian brothers helped John Wesley to be clear about salvation. Wesley had been invited to speak in the United States. Even then, he was not clear about his salvation. It was on the boat on the way to the United States that he received help regarding this from the Moravian brothers. After spending some time in the United States, Wesley returned to Europe and visited Bohemia, the place where Zinzendorf and others had begun to practice the church life. John Wesley received the greatest help from them while he was there. In one of his writings he says that if he had not had the burden for England, he would have remained in Bohemia for the rest of his life. As far as he was concerned, that was the place where God dwelled. Wesley, however, was burdened to return to England. We know from history that the revival under John Wesley saved England from revolution. I mention this to point out to you the extent of the influence of John Wesley's preaching.

The group of students at Oxford that included John Wesley and George Whitefield adopted certain regulations, called methods, that they used to control, correct, and behave themselves. They were very strict to control themselves by these methods. John Wesley and the others kept these methods in order to have a proper living. They came to consider that kind of living holy. This is the holiness practiced by the Methodists as sinless perfection, a perfection without sin. The Church of the Nazarene, the Church of God, and the Assembly of God today practice a kind of holiness that is of the same school as the holiness of the Methodists.

Then in the early part of the nineteenth century, the Brethren under the leadership of John Nelson Darby were raised up. The Brethren showed from the Bible that holiness is not sinless perfection. Using Matthew 23:17, they showed how the temple sanctified the gold. It was the temple that made the gold holy. These Brethren teachers pointed out that the gold in the market place, although there was nothing sinful about it, was not holy until it had been offered to God and put into His holy temple. Only then was the gold sanctified. Their argument was very strong, and no one could defeat them. Furthermore, using Matthew

Week 6 – Day 1 (5/14) (Cont'd)

23:20, the Brethren teachers showed that, according to the words of the Lord Jesus, the altar sanctifies the sacrifice. They argued that an ox or a lamb, when in the fold, might have been sinless and perfectly all right. Nevertheless, it was common. It was not holy until it was offered to God on the altar, at which time it was sanctified. Doctrinally speaking, the Brethren defeated the teaching that holiness is a matter of sinless perfection, proving that it had no ground in the Scriptures and that it is a human concept of holiness. The Brethren, famous for their doctrinal debates, also appealed to 1 Timothy 4:4-5, which says that food is sanctified by the saints' prayer. When that food is in the market place, it is common. There may be nothing wrong with it and it may have no sin, but it is common. However, when that same food is placed on the saints' dining table and is prayed over by the saints, it is sanctified by the saints' prayer. Using all of these verses, the Brethren teachers showed that sanctification means a change of position. They said that sanctification is altogether a positional matter. Gold, for example, is common when it is still in the store, but when it is put into the temple it is holy. Its position has been changed. Likewise, when a lamb is still in the fold, it is common, but when it is placed on the altar it is holy. The food in the market place is also common, but it is sanctified by the prayers of the saints. So, in the light of all these verses, the Brethren taught that holiness means a change of position. Originally, our position was worldly and not at all for God. When we are separated unto God, our position is changed and, as a result, we become holy.

This teaching of the Brethren is altogether correct. When we studied the various schools of sanctification many years ago, we agreed with the teaching of the Brethren. We saw that sinless perfection was not genuine holiness. However, although holiness is a positional matter, as we studied the New Testament we discovered that holiness, sanctification, is not merely a positional matter but also a dispositional matter. Sanctification is not only a matter of changing our position but also of changing our disposition. Yes, according to the verses that speak of the gold sanctified by the temple, the sacrifice sanctified by the altar, and the food sanctified by the saints' prayer, there is undoubtedly a positional aspect to sanctification. But we also need to consider Romans 6 where, according to the Greek, the word sanctification is used twice (vv. 19, 22). In these two verses the King James Version uses the word holiness instead of sanctification. There is a difference between these words, for holiness does not include experience, but sanctification does indicate or imply some amount of experience. If you read Romans 6, you will see that it is not concerned with the matter of position but of disposition. It not only touches our position; it goes deeper to touch our disposition.

In Hebrews 2 as in Romans 6 holiness refers mainly to God's divine nature. Sanctification is to work God's holiness into us by having God's divine nature imparted into our being. This is not the positional sanctification; it is the dispositional sanctification. In this sanctification, Christ, as the life-giving Spirit, is saturating all the inward parts of our being with God's divine nature. This is to work God's holiness into our whole being. We may call this dispositional sanctification.

Now we come to Hebrews 2:11 which says, "For both He Who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one." Does the phrase all of one refer to position or to disposition? Undoubtedly, "He Who sanctifies" is Christ, and "those who are being sanctified" are we. So Christ and we are all of one. The Greek word translated of actually means "out of." This means that Christ and we, the Sanctifier and the sanctified, are all out of one source, one Father. The source surely does not refer to position but to nature, to disposition. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all out of one source, one Father. The Father is the source of the Sanctifier and He is the source of all the sanctified. This is not a matter of position but of disposition.

The remainder of verse 11 reads, "for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers." What is the cause referred to by the words for which cause? For the cause that He and we are all out of the same Father, the same source. Because of this, He is not ashamed to call us brothers.

Heb.1:6 And when He brings again the Firstborn into the inhabited earth, He says, "And let all the angel of God worship Him."

Psa. 2:7 I will recount the decree of Jehovah; He said to Me: You are My Son; Today I have begotten You.

Many people in this country are fond of dogs. Are you willing to call a dog your brother? Would you say to a dog, "Dear brother, I love you"? Certainly not. None of us would call a dog our brother. We would be ashamed of doing this. We do not have four legs and a tail. We are men. We will not call someone our brother unless we are both out of the same source. Only then are we not ashamed to call someone our brother. Likewise, Christ is not ashamed to call us brothers because both He and we are out of the Father. Both He and we are out of the same source. As a result, He and we have the same life, nature, and disposition. By this one verse, we can see that sanctification here is neither sinless perfection nor merely a positional change. It is deeper and higher than that. It is a dispositional change.

As we have seen, among Christians there are three schools concerning holiness or sanctification. The first school teaches that holiness is a matter of sinless perfection. This is absolutely not scriptural. There is no ground in the Scriptures for this teaching. The second claims that holiness is positional. There is a strong basis for this in the Scriptures, but it does not include everything regarding holiness, sanctification, that is mentioned in the Scriptures. The holiness, the sanctification, mentioned in the Bible includes dispositional transformation along with positional change. Hebrews 2 is on the dispositional side, not on the positional side. Sanctification in 2:11 does not concern position but disposition, the nature and the source.

He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all out of one. Because of this, He is not ashamed to call us brothers. Rather, it is glorious for Him to call us brothers because He and we are of the same source. He has come from the Father, and we also have come out of the Father. We may say to the Lord, "O Lord Jesus, You have the Father's life, and we have it too. You have the Father's divine nature, and we have it too. We are Your brothers. Lord, we are of the same source as You are."

This is the basic concept of dispositional sanctification, the sanctification found in Romans 6 and Hebrews 2.

I. THE SANCTIFIER

A. The Son of God Incarnated

Who is the Sanctifier? The Sanctifier is the Son of God. In His original state and before His incarnation, the Son of God could not sanctify us. The Sanctifier today is not only the Son of God, but the Son of God incarnated. If He had never been incarnated, He would be unable to sanctify us. I say this strongly. Although He might have been able to sanctify you according to your concept of sanctification, He would have been unable to sanctify you according to God's economy.

B. The Son of Man Crucified, Resurrected, Glorified, and Exalted

As the incarnated One, Christ is the Son of Man. This Son of Man could not sanctify us until He had been crucified, resurrected, glorified, and exalted. These are His qualifications for Him to be our Sanctifier. The incarnated Son of God needed to pass through death and resurrection that His humanity might be born of God and that He might be glorified and exalted into the position of His being Sanctifier.

C. The Firstborn Son of God Produced

In order to be the Sanctifier, Christ had to be produced as the Firstborn Son of God (1:6). Before Jesus Christ was resurrected, God did not have a Firstborn Son. He just had the only begotten Son. What is the difference between the Firstborn Son and the only begotten Son? As the only begotten Son, Christ did not have human nature. He only had the divine nature. When He was incarnated, He put on human nature. The thirty-three and a half years of His life on earth were a transitory state. On the one hand, He was still the

Week 6 – Day 2 (5/15) (Cont'd)

only begotten Son of God; on the other hand, He had put on human nature. The divine nature within Him was the Son of God but the human nature was not. Therefore, during those thirty-three and a half years, Jesus was quite peculiar. He had the divine nature—that was the Son of God—but He also had on the human nature, and that was not the Son of God. That human nature had not been born of God. According to His divinity, His divine nature, He was the Son of God. But, before His resurrection, He had something that was not born of God—the human nature. He needed to pass through death and resurrection in order for that human part to be born of God. Psalm 2:7 is a strong basis for this: “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” What was prophesied in Psalm 2:7 was fulfilled on the day of resurrection. This is proved by Acts 13:33 which, referring to the resurrection of Christ, quotes this verse from Psalm 2. In His human nature Christ was begotten as the Son of God on the day of resurrection. After this, He became the Firstborn Son of God. Now, as the Firstborn Son, He has both the divine nature and the human nature. As the only begotten Son of God, He did not have the human nature. While He was on earth after His incarnation, He had the human nature, but in those thirty-three and a half years His human nature had not been born of God. It was through His resurrection that the human part of His being was born of God. By this begetting, He became the Firstborn Son of God. While the only begotten Son of God had just the divine nature and not the human nature, Jesus today as the Firstborn Son of God has both natures. This is not a small thing; it is a great matter.

Let me ask you, are you sons of God? If you say yes, then what kind of sons of God are you? Are you like the Firstborn or like the only begotten? We are like the Firstborn Son of God because we are sons of God with a divine nature as well as a human nature. We are the sons of God according to the Firstborn Son, not according to the only begotten Son.

Now we can understand why the only begotten Son of God could not sanctify us and why the Firstborn Son of God can sanctify us. The Firstborn can sanctify us because He, like us, has two natures and because we have the same natures as He does. Our Sanctifier is not the only begotten Son of God; He is the Firstborn Son of God, the One who has the human nature as well as the divine nature. Because He and we are of the same two natures, He can sanctify us. Only when the Firstborn Son was produced could the Sanctifier come into His office to do His sanctifying work. This means that He had to pass through the process of incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, glorification, and exaltation. After passing through this process, He became the Firstborn Son of God. In other words, the Firstborn Son of God was produced. This is our Sanctifier. He is qualified to be our Sanctifier, and we are qualified to be the sanctified.

He who sanctifies is Christ as the Firstborn Son of God, and those who are being sanctified are the believers of Christ as the many sons of God. Both the Firstborn Son and the many sons of God are born of the same Father God in resurrection (Acts 13:33; 1 Pet. 1:3). Both the Firstborn Son and the many sons are the same in the divine life and nature. Hence, He is not ashamed to call them brothers.

II. THE SANCTIFIED

A. The Sinners with God Propitiated

Undoubtedly, we are those who are being sanctified. The sanctified are sinners for whom Christ propitiated God (2:17). As sinners, we had problems with God. How could the Sanctifier sanctify people who had problems with God? It would have been impossible. Therefore, the Lord Jesus made propitiation for us (2:17). What does this mean? It simply means that Christ has appeased God for our situation. Although we were a people who had problems with God, now, through His propitiation, we have no problems with Him. We can declare boldly that we have the assurance that we have no problems with God. Perhaps you feel that you still have a problem with God. Do not believe your feelings. Your feelings mean nothing. The Holy Word means everything, and the Holy Word tells us that Christ has appeased God for us.

Rom. 6: 19, 22 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification. 22 But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life.

B. The Death-victims Released

Not only were we sinners needing propitiation, but we also were death-victims. Our destiny and destination were death. Hallelujah, we have been released from the slavery of death (2:15)! The concepts that God has been propitiated and that we have been released from death are very deep. Both are clearly mentioned in Hebrews 2. God has been propitiated, and we have been released. We are a people without problems with God and a people who are no longer enslaved by the fear of death. We are free, we are liberated, we are released, and we are emancipated. We are a freed people. Who can enslave us again? People often speak of the United States as the land of freedom. Certainly we, the believers, are in the real land of freedom.

C. The Many Sons of God Brought Forth

In order to be the sanctified ones, we need another thing—to be produced as the sons of God. The many sons of God had to be brought forth. On the negative side, we have the propitiation for our sins and we have been released from the slavery of death; on the positive side, we have been produced, brought forth, as the many sons of God. The meaning of God's sanctifying work is that the Firstborn Son of God is working on the many sons of God. This means that the Sanctifier is the Firstborn Son of God and that the sanctified are the many sons of God. The Firstborn is now working on His many brothers. He is qualified to be the Sanctifier because He is the Firstborn Son of God, and we are qualified to be the sanctified because we are the many sons of God. He was qualified through His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, glorification, and exaltation. After passing through this process, He became the Firstborn Son of God. Our qualifications to be the sanctified are that we have the propitiation for our sins, that we have been released from the slavery of death, and that we have been brought forth to be the many sons of God. Now both He and we are qualified. He is the qualified Sanctifier and we are the qualified sanctified. Do you realize that you are qualified to be the sanctified? The people on the street are not qualified, but we are fully qualified through the propitiation and resurrection of Christ.

III. SANCTIFICATION

A. To Separate the Many Sons unto God

Sanctification means separated unto God (Rom. 6:19, 22). Although we were born of God at the time of our regeneration, we still have not been thoroughly separated unto God. In sanctification this work is carried on.

B. To Transform Them in Their Being

Secondly, in the process of sanctification we are transformed in our very being (2 Cor. 3:18). This matter of transformation is not positional; it is altogether dispositional. In transformation we are being changed metabolically by means of the element of life. This is not an outward change or adjustment; it is an inward metabolic change, an organic change by means of the life element.

C. To Conform Them to the Image of the Firstborn Son

As a result of transformation, we shall eventually be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29). Transformation is to change our Adamic nature into the nature of Christ. Conformation is to conform us, the many sons of God, to the image of the Firstborn Son of God. This is also a part of the process of sanctification.

Week 6 – Day 3 (5/16) (Cont'd)

D. To Glorify Them with God's Glory

The work of conformation, which is based upon the work of transformation, will issue in our glorification (Rom. 8:30; Col. 3:4). In the process of sanctification we are going to be glorified with God's glory. This has been fully covered in the messages on the Captain of salvation.

Now we have seen what sanctification is. It is to separate the reborn sons of God unto God, to transform them metabolically and organically with the element of the divine life, to conform them to His image, and to glorify them with His glory. This is the full dispositional sanctification.

IV. THE SANCTIFIER AND THE SANCTIFIED BEING ALL OUT OF ONE

We have seen that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all out of one. This means that they are all out of one Father. Both the Sanctifier and the sanctified are sons born of the same Father. Since He and we are born of the same Father, we are His brothers. We and He have all come out of the same source and we share with Him the same life and nature. In this life and nature we are now under His sanctifying work to transform us from being natural and to conform us to His image that we may be glorified with the glory of God. This is sanctification.

MESSAGE TWELVE

THE MANY SONS, THE MANY BROTHERS, THE CHURCH

In the book of Hebrews all of the basic factors of the New Testament are implied in a deeper and yet very simple way. Apparently it is difficult for anyone to realize that the church is mentioned in the book of Hebrews. Although you might have read Hebrews a number of times, perhaps you have never been impressed with the mention of the church in this book. We are all familiar with the mention of the churches in Acts and in the other Epistles, but we may not have the impression that the church is found in Hebrews. Thirty-eight years ago I conducted a detailed study of this book with two different groups of people. At that time, I thought that I knew this book thoroughly, but I did not see the church in this book.

The church is only mentioned twice in this book, in 2:12 and 12:23. In 2:12 it says, "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise unto You." I do not think that in the past many of us paid attention to the church in this verse. This verse is composed essentially with the matter of the church. In this verse both the brothers and the church are mentioned in a very deep way. The Son says to the Father that He will declare the Father's name to His brothers and sing hymns of praise to the Father in the church. Do you know the meaning of this? In this verse we must notice three elements: the brothers, the church, and what the Lord is doing today in the church. This verse is a very great revelation of what the church is and of what the Lord is doing in the church. In no other book can we find out something concerning the nature of the church that is revealed so thoroughly, basically, fundamentally, and crucially as it is found here. Do not consider 2:12 as a small verse. It is a great verse. It contains a marvelous revelation. In this message, I hope that we all shall not only have a revelation, but that we all shall see a vision of what the church is and of what the Lord is doing today in the church.

Heb. 2:12 Saying, "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You."

12:23 And to the church of the firstborn, who have been enrolled in the heavens; and to God, the Judge of all; and to the spirits of righteous men who have been made perfect;

What is the church? The church is a corporate composition of the brothers of the Firstborn Son of God. Do you still remember the difference between the only begotten Son of God and the Firstborn Son of God? The only begotten Son of God had divinity without humanity. Although He had the divine nature, He did not have the human nature. But the Firstborn Son of God has both the divine nature and the human nature. The brothers are not the brothers of the only begotten, but the brothers of the Firstborn Son of God. We are the same as the Firstborn. He is divine and human, and we are human and divine. The Firstborn Son has humanity as well as divinity and all of His brothers are the same as He is. Whether we are brothers or sisters, we are all His brothers, for Christ does not have any sisters. Tell me, are you human or divine? Is the Firstborn Son divine or human? He is both divine and human, and we are both human and divine. He is first divine and then human, and His brothers are first human and then divine. Eventually, He and we, we and He, are the same. We are wonderful people. We are not only human—we are also divine. Do you realize whose son you are? You are God's son. God is our divine Father, and we all are His divine sons because we all have been born of His divine life with His divine nature. We are the many sons of the Father and the many brothers of the Firstborn Son of the Father. This is not a dream. This is reality.

The church is both human and divine. This is the nature of the church. The church is a composition of the many sons of God. The church is a corporation of the many brothers of the Firstborn Son of God. This is the church. I never saw the church this clearly years ago. More than forty years ago I saw that the church was a group of real believers in Christ meeting together. This definition of the church is not wrong. Approximately one hundred fifty years ago it was revealed to some of the brothers that the church is not a building of brick and stone. They declared strongly to all of Christendom that the church is not a physical building. It is not a cathedral, chapel, or sanctuary. They declared that the church is a gathering of God's called ones. When true believers in Christ come together, they are the church. We have received much help from this revelation and more than fifty years ago we also began to say that the church is a gathering of God's called saints. We were thankful for the help that we received from those brothers in the last century. Later on, we began to see that the church is not only a gathering of real believers; it is a body, the Body of Christ. If you gather many chairs together, the chairs cannot become a body. If you gather sheep together, they likewise cannot be a body. As everybody knows, a body is an organism with life. It has life tissues, life cells, life nature, life shape, life ability, and life function. The church is deeper, higher, and more profound than just a gathering.

The Lord has shown us the real significance of the church. Praise Him that He has granted us to see that the church has two natures—the human nature and the divine nature. The church has two lives. These lives are not only combined but are also mingled together. The church is an organism with two natures and with two lives combined and mingled together. This is marvelous! Do you realize that the church has two lives? Do you realize that the church has two natures? Do you realize that the Firstborn Son of God has two lives and two natures, that He is not only the Son of God, but also the Son of Man? The Firstborn has all of the divine attributes as well as all of the human virtues. What we have is not just a little humility or submission. This rich store is much more profound than this. It is unlimited and immeasurable, filled with the divine attributes and the human virtues. The church is such an organism. It is the Body of Christ.

Quite often bad news comes to me about a church in a certain place. Someone may say, "The church there is not good. It has problems." I do not like to hear things like this, because my concept of the church is based upon my faith. I believe that every church is wonderful. There is not a church that is not good. Although you may think that a certain church is not good, after a period of time that church becomes very different. Why? Because the church is organic. It grows. Your body may be quite tired, but after a while it

Week 6 – Day 4 (5/17) (Cont'd)

is invigorated. It changes by life because it is an organism. The churches in the Lord's recovery are organic. Never believe that the church in a certain locality is not good. The church is wonderful because it is an organism that grows. Never forget that the church is a living corporation of all the brothers of the Firstborn Son of God. The church is neither physical nor organizational; it is altogether of life—the divine life and the uplifted, resurrected human life. Nothing is richer than life. The best life in the universe is the divine life, and the second best life is the human life. The human life that we have today for the church is not the natural human life but the uplifted, resurrected human life. We have such a life! This human life plus the divine life is the life of the church. It is in such a profound way that the church is revealed in this book. The church is a living composition of all the sons of God, a living corporation of all the brothers of the Firstborn Son of God.

I. THE MANY SONS

A. Predestinated unto Sonship

The many sons of God of whom the church is composed have all been predestinated unto sonship (Eph. 1:5). We have not become sons of God because of an accident; we were predestinated to be the sons of God before the foundation of the world. In eternity past God decided that we would be His sons. Firstly, God foreknew us (Rom. 8:29). After this, He selected us. Regardless of how you feel about yourself, God selected you before the foundation of the world. After foreknowing and selecting us, God predestinated us. The word predestinate includes the thought of being marked out. In eternity past, before creation, God put a mark upon us. He marked us out beforehand. For what did God predestinate us? For sonship. We have been predestinated unto sonship.

It is difficult to find this concept among many Christians today. The concept commonly found among Christians is that we have been predestinated unto salvation. There is hardly any consideration about sonship. We do not have the concept of sonship because we have been influenced by traditional Christian teachings. Once again, we must be recovered back to the pure Word. The pure Word tells us that we have been predestinated unto sonship. As long as you are a son of God, you have nothing to worry about.

We did not become sons of God by accident. Suppose you repented and believed in the Lord Jesus as the result of an automobile accident. According to your feeling, that was all an accident, but according to God, it was because you had already been marked out. Why did you have that accident? Simply because you were a little stubborn. God, in His sovereignty, permitted that accident in order to bring you into sonship. But sonship is not an accident. It was planned ahead of time. If anyone reading this message has been saved as the result of an automobile accident, it must have been because God used that to cause you to turn to Him. We, God's chosen ones, are surrounded by angels who know how to arrange our surroundings that we might be brought into sonship. Many of us were forced to believe. Once we found ourselves in a certain situation, and there was no escape. Eventually we had to kneel down and call, "O Lord Jesus." When we did this, all the angels rejoiced because we obtained sonship. The destiny of angels is to be ministering servants. Our destiny is sonship.

B. Born of God

As the chosen ones of God, we have been born of God to be His many sons. At the time when we received the Lord Jesus by believing in Him we were born of God and received the right to be the children of God (John 1:12-13). From that time on, the Spirit of God always bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). Even at times when we are weak or are backsliding, we still have the deep conviction that we are the children of God because once we have been born of God we shall be His children forever. We have received the eternal sonship through our regeneration.

Rom. 8:15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery bringing you into fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father!

Heb. 2:11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers,

Psa. 22:22 I will declare Your name to my brothers; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

C. Born of the Spirit

When we were born of God, we were born of the Spirit in our spirit (John 3:6). In our flesh we were born of our parents. But it is in our spirit that we have been born of the Spirit of God to be His children. God has sent the Spirit of His Son into us that we might be the many sons of God like His Firstborn (Gal. 4:6). To be the many sons of God is a matter in our spirit and with the Spirit of the Son of God.

D. Having Received the Spirit of Sonship

Since we have been born of the Spirit in our spirit, we have the spirit of sonship (Rom. 8:15). It is difficult to determine whether this spirit refers to the divine Spirit or to the human spirit. It includes both, for the spirit that we have received is a mingled spirit, a spirit that is both divine and human. Romans 8:15 says that we, the sons of God, cry, “Abba, Father,” but a sister verse, Galatians 4:6, says that the Spirit cries, “Abba, Father.” This means that when we cry, Abba, Father, the Spirit also cries and that when the Spirit cries, it is we who cry. We and the Spirit are one.

E. Waiting for the Full Sonship— the Redemption of Our Body

As yet, we do not have the full sonship, which is the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23). We are waiting for full sonship, the redemption or the transfiguration of our physical body. In other words, although we have been born of God in our spirit, we have not yet been born of Him in our body. The day is coming when our body will be transfigured. Then we shall have the full sonship. We are waiting for this.

II. THE MANY BROTHERS

A. Brought Forth in Resurrection

As the many sons of God, we are the many brothers of Christ who is the Firstborn Son of God. He was born to be the Firstborn Son of God through His resurrection (Acts 13:33), and we have been produced to be His many brothers in His resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3). It was after His resurrection that He called His disciples His brothers (John 20:17). Our new birth was not a physical birth but a birth in resurrection.

B. Having the Firstborn Son of God as the Elder Brother

We, the many sons of God, have the Firstborn Son as our elder Brother (Heb. 2:11; Rom. 8:29). As our elder Brother, He is our model and our example. Because He is our elder Brother, He takes the lead in everything, and we have to follow in His footsteps.

C. Having the Same Life and Nature as the Firstborn Son of God

As the many sons of God, we have the same life and nature as the Firstborn Son of God (2:11). Since we share the same life and nature as He, we are His many brothers. Because we have the life and nature of God, we are God’s many sons. Because we share the same life and nature as the Firstborn does, we are His brothers. To God, we are His many sons; to the Firstborn Son of God, we are His many brothers.

III. THE CHURCH

A. Composed of the Many Brothers in Resurrection

As we have seen, the church is composed of the many brothers of the Firstborn Son of God in resurrection (2:12). Because of this, the church is a corporate partnership with Christ. When we come to 3:14, we shall have much to say about this partnership. For the present, it is sufficient that we keep in mind that the church is a corporate partnership.

B. The Firstborn Son of God Declaring the Father’s Name to His Brothers

In the church, the Firstborn Son of God declares the Father’s name to His brothers. Because the Father is the source of life and nature, to declare the name of the Father is to show the many brothers the source of life and nature. Although the Jewish people in ancient times knew God, they did not know the Father. They knew God as the Creator but not as the Father who begets. They knew God’s creating power, but they did not know the Father’s begetting ability. They knew God’s power, but they did not realize the Father’s life. Before the resurrection, not even the disciples of Jesus knew the Father’s life and begetting ability. Before the day of resurrection, they only knew as much as the Jewish people did. However, on the day of resurrection the Lord came to them to declare the Father to make them know the Father as the source of life.

The Bible only mentions this very briefly, but this brief mention is like a little show window through which we can see a great deal. According to John 20, Jesus visited His disciples in the evening on the day of His resurrection. But John does not say that He declared the Father to the disciples. This is mentioned prophetically in Psalm 22:22. According to that prophecy, after His resurrection Christ came mainly to His disciples to make the Father known to them. The Father’s life and nature have become theirs. The Father’s being has been transferred into their being. This is what it means to declare the Father’s name to the disciples. If we had been there when the Lord did this, we would have realized that that declaration was not just a matter of mentioning the name. No, it was an impartation of all that the Father is—the Father’s life, nature, and being—into the disciples. It was from this that Peter came to realize that he was a partaker of the divine nature. He mentions this in his second Epistle (1:4). We, the sons of God, have all become partakers of the divine nature. To us, God is no longer merely the creating God but also the begetting Father. He has begotten us. He has imparted His life, His nature, and even His being into our being. This is what it means to declare the Father’s name.

C. The Firstborn Son of God Singing Hymns of Praise unto the Father in the Midst of the Church

After declaring the Father’s name, the Son sings hymns of praise to Him in the midst of the church. I do not believe that this prophecy means that the Firstborn Son of God sang hymns of praise to the Father in the church only once. Rather, I believe that it means throughout all the centuries the Firstborn Son has been continually singing hymns of praise unto the Father in the church. How does He do this? He does it in all of His brothers. I have the full assurance that right now He is inside of us. Since He is in us, He sings praises unto the Father in our singing. His singing is in our singing. When we sing, He sings because He is within our singing. When we sing hymns to the Father from our spirit, He sings with us in our spirit. This is wonderful. The church on earth today is one corporate Body with the Firstborn Son of God. In the meetings of the church, the Firstborn Son of God sings praise to the Father. Whenever we come to the meetings, we must open our mouths to praise the Father. If we do this immediately, we cooperate with the

indwelling Firstborn Son of God. Do you want to gain more of the Firstborn Son? If you do, you need to praise the Father. The more we praise the Father, the more we gain the Firstborn Son. The more we sing, the more He sings in our singing. The best way to have Christ work together with us is by singing praises to the Father. According to our experiences, many of us can testify that this is so. In some of the church meetings we did much singing to the Father. That was the time when we enjoyed Christ so much. We even had the sensation that He was singing in our singing.

Christ has made the Father known to us as the source of life. Now in all the church meetings He is waiting for the opportunity to cooperate with us in singing praises to the Father. The best way for us to give Him this cooperation is to open our spirit and sing praise to the Father. The more we sing, the more we shall enjoy His singing. When we praise the Father, we enjoy Christ. We are one with Christ in praising the Father in the church meetings. The more we praise the Father in the church meetings, the more He praises the Father in our praising, and the more we enjoy Him and gain Him.

The church is composed of the many sons of God who are the many brothers of Christ in resurrection. It is a corporate partnership with Christ, the Firstborn Son of God, to participate in the Father's life, nature, and being. In the church, the Father is praised by His Firstborn Son within His many sons. This is the church. Now we have seen something regarding the many sons, the many brothers, and the church.

Study Questions

1. What is the "so great a salvation" spoken of in Hebrews?
2. What is the warning regarding this salvation and why is it needed?

Week 7 – Day 1 (5/21)

Heb. 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope unwavering, for He who has promised is faithful;
2:17 Hence He should have been made like His brothers in all things that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

MESSAGE THIRTEEN

A MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST

The book of Hebrews is marvelous in both its content and its composition. No human mind could have written such an Epistle. It certainly was written under divine inspiration. In this message, on a merciful and faithful High Priest, we come to the conclusion of the first two chapters of Hebrews. After covering so many items in the first two chapters, the writer concludes this section by revealing that the Son of Man is a merciful and faithful High Priest ministering to us. In order for us to know His qualifications for being such a priest, we need to look back at chapters one and two to see all the items of what He is and of what He has done.

I. AS THE SON OF GOD WITH THE DIVINE NATURE

Why does the writer of Hebrews use the words merciful and faithful to describe this High Priest? Why does he not use just one word or more than two? The answer is that in the first two chapters of this book the writer has mainly covered two points—that Christ is the Son of God, God Himself, and the Son of Man, man Himself. Merciful corresponds with His being a man, and faithful corresponds with His being God. In order to be faithful we not only need virtue but also ability. Suppose I have spoken a word to you as a promise. Although my virtue may be good, I may not have the ability to keep my word. I have the heart to be faithful in keeping my word, but I lack the ability. I do not have the means to fulfill my word. Eventually I am forced into not being faithful. But this High Priest is not merely an honest man; He is the faithful God. God is faithful (10:23). He is able to fulfill whatever He says. God never lies (6:18). Whatever He has spoken He is able to fulfill. He has every means to fulfill what He has spoken. Only God can be fully faithful. None of us can be completely faithful. A good number of times I had a sincere heart to keep my word but found myself unable to do it. I could not do it because I am not the Almighty God. What can frustrate God from fulfilling His word? Nothing. Jesus can be a faithful High Priest because He is the very Almighty God. Since He, as the Son of God, is God Himself, He is able to be faithful. Although, as the many sons of God and as the many brothers of the Firstborn, we are divine as well as human, we are not almighty. We are human in our human nature and divine in His divine nature, but we are not almighty in His deity. Since He is the Almighty God, He can be faithful to us.

II. AS THE SON OF MAN WITH THE HUMAN NATURE

Being merciful corresponds to the point of Christ's being a man. He became a man and lived on earth as a man passing through all the human sufferings. As a result, He is fully qualified to be merciful to us. He knows how to be merciful to man. He is a man with the experiences of human life, with the experiences of human suffering.

How is Christ able to be a merciful and faithful High Priest? Because He is the Son of Man with the human nature and the Son of God with the divine nature. He is fully qualified. Aaron was a good high priest, but he only had humanity. He did not have divinity. Although Aaron could have been merciful, I doubt that he was truly faithful. But our High Priest, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, is both merciful and faithful because He is both God and man.

III. BEING INCARNATED TO BE LIKE US

Another qualification of Christ’s being the High Priest is that He was incarnated to be like us (2:14, 17). We may even say that He is more than like us, for He suffered in His human life some things we have not suffered. In order to be qualified to be a merciful High Priest, He became like us, sympathizing with all of our weaknesses.

IV. BEING TRIED

The Lord Jesus is qualified to be the High Priest because He was tried (2:18). If you read the Gospels again, you will see that no other person has been subject to so many troubles, attacks, misunderstandings, and rumors as the Lord Jesus. So many religionists are good rumor makers. There are as many rumors in the sphere of religion as in any other place. These rumor makers are accustomed to twisting your words. They isolate a few words that you say and add something else to it. Sometimes the Lord Jesus spoke a word and the religionists picked on it and twisted it, trying to make a case out of it against the Lord.

The situation is exactly the same today. When Brother Nee and I were working together in China, I saw how many lies and rumors were spread about him. Often Brother Nee would not say anything. A number of times he came to me, saying, “Witness, Christians can lie.” At that time, he was the target, and we were under his covering. The attacks did not reach us because he was the umbrella and we were under him. In 1949, after we went to Taiwan, I spontaneously became the target for the attacks. Now I know from my own experience that Christians can lie. If you were to go to the Lord Jesus and ask Him whether or not religious people can lie, He would say, “They certainly can. I have suffered a great deal of it.” Because the Lord Jesus was different from the dark religion of His day, He was hated by the religionists. All the religious people hated Him. The same thing happened to Watchman Nee in China. From 1932 until the day he was imprisoned in 1952, no denomination in China invited him to speak. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus is merciful and certainly knows how to sympathize with us and how to suffer the lies. No human being has ever been tempted, tested, attacked, opposed, and misunderstood by the religionists as He was. He is qualified to be merciful to us and to sympathize with us.

V. HAVING SUFFERED DEATH

Christ is also qualified to be our High Priest because He suffered death (2:9). The death that the Lord Jesus passed through was truly a baptism. Once the Lord Jesus asked His disciples, “Can ye...be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” (Mark 10:38). That baptism was His death. His death was the real Jordan River. In suffering death, He crossed the river and entered into the region that is full of God’s expression, full of God’s glory.

VI. HAVING MADE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS

By suffering death on the cross, Christ made propitiation for our sins (2:17). This means that He appeased God for us. He has appeased God’s righteousness and all of God’s requirements on us. He has settled every problem between us and God.

VII. HAVING DESTROYED THE DEVIL

By His death on the cross Christ has not only tasted death for us and made propitiation for our sins, but also has destroyed the Devil who has the might of death (2:14). He has abolished death. He has solved the problem of our sins. He has also spoiled the Devil. So He is qualified to be a merciful High Priest.

VIII. HAVING RELEASED US FROM THE SLAVERY OF DEATH

Christ has also released us from the slavery of death (2:15). We have been released by Him from the slavery of sin, from the slavery of the fear of death, and even from the slavery of death itself. No longer are we enslaved by anything.

Week 7 – Day 2 (5/22)

Heb. 2:10-12 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12 Saying, "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You."

IX. IN RESURRECTION BRINGING FORTH MANY BROTHERS TO FORM THE CHURCH

A further qualification of Christ's being the High Priest is that in resurrection He has brought forth many brothers in order to form the church (2:10-12). He is the Firstborn Son of God in resurrection, and we are His many brothers in resurrection to form the church. He and we are the same in life and in nature. He and we are all in resurrection. He is the Head of the church, and we are the members of the church. This affords Him so much ground to be our High Priest.

X. IN EXALTATION BEING CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOR

Christ's being crowned with glory and honor in His exaltation is also a qualification of His priesthood. His exaltation, glory, and honor all afford Him the possibility of ministering to us as the High Priest. With such a position and possibility, He can be merciful and faithful as much as He likes.

XI. BEING THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION

Eventually Christ was perfected and qualified to be the Captain of our salvation (2:10). We have seen this in the two previous messages. As the Captain of salvation, He is now fully qualified to be our High Priest.

In the past, many of us have had the experience of being ministered unto by Christ as our High Priest without knowing much about it. Hebrews is a book on the priesthood. As we shall see in future messages, the priesthood which is mentioned in chapters four through six, is fully developed in chapters seven through ten. When we come to that portion of Hebrews, we shall see more. In this message we need to spend some time to lay a foundation for a proper understanding of the priesthood.

What is a priest? We have already said that the priest is one who serves God. Although it is correct to say this, it is not adequate. A priest is not only one who serves God but also one who ministers God into man. All Christians think that a priest is one who serves God, but not many Christians know that, ultimately, a priest is one who ministers God to man. In a sense, serving God is secondary, while ministering God to man is primary. The basic significance of the priesthood is not to serve God but to minister God to man. If, as priests, we only know how to render service to God without knowing how to minister God to man, we shall be quite poor.

The first mention of the word priest in the Bible is with Melchisedec (Gen. 14:18-20). Melchisedec was the first priest in the Bible. As we have pointed out on other occasions, the first mention of a thing in the Bible establishes the principle for that category of things. Therefore, the first mention of the priest, that of Melchisedec, establishes the principle of a priest. If you examine the case of Melchisedec as the priest of the most high God, you will see that he did not go from man to God but came from God to man. He did not go to God and serve God; he came from God and ministered something of God to Abraham, God's seeker. After the case of Melchisedec, there is much development of this matter of the priesthood in the Bible. But we must not forget that the foundational story of the priesthood is that of a priest coming from God ministering something of God to God's people.

The main point with respect to Christ as the High Priest is not that He serves God but that He ministers God to us. We must go deeper than the superficial concept that a priest is one who serves God. Everyone, including the unbelievers on the street, knows that a Catholic priest is one who serves God, burns incense,

and fulfills his “holy” duty. Even the heathen religions have priests. We need to cross the river out of this low concept into a higher one. God does not need your service, but He does want you to minister Himself to people. As the High Priest, Christ’s major job is to minister God to us. Mainly what Christ does within you is to minister God into you. This is our High Priest. He is continually doing one thing—ministering God into us. Some may say that Melchisedec did not minister God. But what about the bread and the wine—what do they signify? The bread and the wine signify God as our enjoyment, God being ministered to us to refresh, sustain, support, strengthen, and nourish us that we may grow with all the riches of God. This is the primary task of a priest. In principle, we who serve God today are His priests. As priests, our main responsibility is to minister Him to people.

We need to see this kind of priestly ministry in the practical church life. There are many service groups in the church life today. These service groups should not only be considered as a kind of Levitical service. All the service groups must also be the priesthood. A service group should not be just for its service. The brothers and sisters in every service group must constantly minister the riches of God in Christ to people. You need to minister God to the people in your service group. Eventually, your whole group will become a priesthood ministering God from one member to another. Take the example of the cleaning and arranging group. The main task of this service group is not simply to clean the hall, arrange the chairs, and keep everything in order. That is a help, but that is not the priesthood. The real priesthood comes into being when you minister God to people as you clean the hall and arrange the chairs.

As we minister God into people, they will eventually have His expression. Christ ministers God into His believers until there is in them the expression of God. As we have seen, the expression of God is glory. In the Bible, the glory of God is God’s expression. When God is expressed, we have glory. But how can God be expressed? By Christ as the High Priest ministering God into us continually. We have basically covered this point in the two messages on the Captain of salvation.

Now we can see Christ in three aspects. In the first aspect, He is the Captain of salvation; in the second aspect, He is the seed of glory; and in the third aspect, He is the ministering One, the High Priest. As the High Priest, Christ ministers God to us. This is His priestly work and this also is the job that the Captain of salvation is doing. Although He is the Captain of salvation, He fulfills His office by being the High Priest. In 2:10 we are told that Christ is the Captain of our salvation, and in 2:17 we see that this Christ who is the Captain of our salvation is also our High Priest. How can He function as the Captain of our salvation? Only by being the High Priest. According to our human concept, a captain is a leader, a leading fighter. This concept is not wrong, but if Christ were just a Captain in this sense, He could not fulfill His office.

Consider the relationship between Moses and Aaron in the Old Testament. Without Aaron, Moses could not fulfill his leadership. The apostle’s leadership needs the ministering of the priesthood. Joshua, like Moses, also needed the high priest. Do not think that Aaron is one person and that Moses is another. According to themselves as historical figures, they are two, but considered as types of Christ, they are one. On the one hand, Jesus is our Moses; on the other hand, He is our Aaron. When we come to chapter three we shall see more of Jesus as our Apostle and as our High Priest. The leadership and the priesthood must always go together. In Christ, these two ministries belong to one person. He could never function as our Captain if He were not our High Priest. I could not follow Christ if He were not the High Priest. On the one hand, He is the Captain leading on and fighting on; on the other hand, He is the High Priest ministering God Himself and the riches of the divine life into us.

I may use my physical body as an illustration. I praise God that He has given me a strong, healthy body. After ministering, however, I become quite exhausted. Then I go home and enjoy a good meal. This revives me. After such a meal, I am able to come and minister again for another hour and a half. Then I go home and enjoy another good meal. Recently, after speaking in an evening meeting, I went home still very much alive. I awoke the next morning before six o’clock full of energy. I did many things that morning. Where did the energy come from? It came from the nourishment. Likewise, I have a real High Priest ministering bread and wine to me. This enables me to do my job without being tired out. The more I enjoy the nourishment, the more energy I have.

Week 7 – Day 3 (5/23)

Heb. 2:17-18 Hence He should have been made like His brothers in all things that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For being tempted in that which He Himself has suffered, He is able to help those who are being tempted.

If you read Hebrews 1 and 2, you will see that this wonderful, mysterious, marvelous One is now our High Priest. Do not think that this High Priest only serves God. That is secondary. This High Priest is the One who continually ministers God to us. If, as a priest, you only go to God and serve Him, He will say, “I don’t need you. Why do you come here and waste your time. You must go with Me to the people. You need to minister Me to people. That’s what I want.”

As we have seen, Christ is more than fully qualified to be our High Priest. He, the Son of God, God Himself, became a man and suffered as a man. As the Son of Man, He passed through all things and accomplished all things. Now He is qualified to minister to us as our High Priest. Regardless of our situation, He has something to minister to us. Often, the enjoyment of His priestly ministry is like breathing. There is no need for us to understand the breathing process or to analyze the air. As long as we breathe, we get all that is in the air. Likewise, many things happen in our spirit that we do not understand. Like the air, Jesus is here. As long as we contact Him by breathing Him in, we have all that we need. Nevertheless, it is a help if we know the Lord well. This enjoyment of Christ is real; it is not superstitious.

As our High Priest ministers God into us, we shall gain more of God and come into His expression. Eventually, we shall come to serve God. Here is where we need to make a turn. When we come to serve God, we are infused the more with God. Once we have been infused with Him, God will say, “Go and minister Me to others.”

Now we can understand the way in which the Lord Jesus as the Captain of our salvation brings us into glory by being the High Priest ministering God to us all the time. As Christ ministers God into us, a chain reaction begins. We are transfused with God until we also become priests. As priests, we do not mainly serve God but minister God to others, bringing them into God’s expression. The ones who receive our ministry will in turn be infused with God. This will cause them to go to God for more infusing. Then God will tell them to minister Himself to others. This is the way that the Captain of our salvation is leading us into glory. I regret that I do not have the adequate words to express this. This is not merely a kind of Christian edification. It is the way that the Father is leading many sons into glory. I repeat, the Lord leads us into glory by being our Captain and our Captain fulfills His duty by being our High Priest.

XII. RENDERING HELP TO SUCCOR US

I learned Hebrews 2:17 as a youth. I was taught that Christ, as our High Priest, can sympathize with us, but I was taught this in the low way which says that whenever you find yourself in difficulty, Christ can sympathize with you. Although I experienced Christ’s sympathizing with me like this many times, I did not receive from it the ministry of the divine life. I only obtained comfort, nothing else. My present experience is much different. The experience that I now have of Christ’s sympathizing with me as my High Priest is much higher and richer than this. Every time I experience His sympathy I receive the divine supply. I have learned from my experiences that Christ as the High Priest mainly serves God by ministering God to us.

This kind of ministry is called succor, a helpful rescue. To understand the Greek word that is rendered “succor” in 2:18 in the King James Version we need to read 2:16 in both the King James Version and the Recovery Version. The King James Version says, “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” The Recovery Version says, “For assuredly He does not take hold of angels, but He takes hold of the seed of Abraham.” What a difference between these translations! The King James Version says the Lord Jesus did not take upon Him the nature of angels but the nature of the children of Abraham. But the proper meaning of the Greek is not to take on but to take hold of. What does it mean to take hold of? According to the Greek, it simply means to help and rescue us. But this does not

mean to rescue a person in the way that you rescue a drowning man. It does not just mean to grab hold of a person and pull him out of a dangerous situation. No, it means to get into a person, put him upon you, and carry him. That is the helpful rescue spoken of here. This is why the King James Version says, “He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” This is not absolutely wrong, for it is a partial meaning of the Greek word. The full meaning of this word is “to help, to rescue, by coming to a person, putting him on you, and carrying him.” For example, when you have a difficult time, the High Priest is not going to stretch forth His finger and rescue you from that difficult time. No, while you are suffering, He will come to you, put you on, and carry you through the difficult time. This is the work of our High Priest. After you have experienced this a number of times, you will never again be threatened by any difficulty. The next time a difficulty comes, you will say, “The more difficulties I have, the more I enjoy Christ, the more I enjoy God, the more I enjoy the divine element, and the more I am brought into glory.”

Now we know the real meaning of 2:17-18. Christ is so many things: the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Creator, the Upholder, the Heir, the One who suffered death, made propitiation for our sins, destroyed Satan, and released us from the slavery of death. As such a One He is thoroughly qualified to be the Captain of our salvation. As our Captain, He saves us from every kind of low situation and brings us into God’s glory. He does not save us in an objective way but by ministering God Himself into us and by rendering us a subjective succor by putting us on, bearing us, and carrying us. When we enjoy this succor, we participate in God’s element and are brought into the expression of the glorious God. This is the way in which the Lord is bringing us into glory.

MESSAGE FOURTEEN

HOLY BROTHERS AND PARTAKERS OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING

I. HOLY BROTHERS

In this message we come to Hebrews 3. This chapter opens in this way: “Wherefore, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling.” I like these two titles—holy brothers and partakers of a heavenly calling. No other book in the New Testament calls us holy brothers. The title holy brothers implies two main points—that we are holy and that we are brothers. We are not only brothers but holy brothers. Do you dare to say that you are a holy brother? The writer of this book could not call us holy brothers until he had covered so many of the qualifications concerning both Christ and us in the first two chapters. By the time he reaches the third chapter, he is able to call us holy brothers. Through His death and resurrection Christ has made us His brothers. Originally, we were sinners, death victims, prisoners, and captives. Praise Him that His death has made propitiation for our sins and has released us from the slavery of death. In His resurrection we were produced as His brothers. So now we can be called holy brothers. In chapter two we see that the brothers brought forth in the Lord’s resurrection are in the process of being sanctified. Therefore, we are holy brothers. We are not merely sinlessly perfect; we are divinely holy.

In 1:9 we see our relationship with God’s anointed One. That verse, which is addressed to Christ, says, “Your God has anointed You with the oil of exultant joy above Your partners.” The King James Version renders the Greek word for partners as “companions.” But a partner is better than a companion. We may be companions without being partners, but if we are partners, we certainly are companions. In God’s economy, Christ is the One whom God has appointed to accomplish His plan, and we are Christ’s partners in the divine interest. He was anointed by God, and we share His anointing for the fulfillment of God’s purpose. Christ is the Heir appointed by God, and in 1:9 we see that this appointed Heir has been anointed.

Week 7 – Day 4 (5/24)

Heb. 1: 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of exultant joy above Your partners";

3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus,

The anointing confirms the appointment. Firstly, God appointed the Son and then He anointed Him. As Christ's partners we all partake of His anointing. We are partners of God's anointed One and we share His anointing. This is a part of the gospel. It is included in the full gospel. Many people talk about the full gospel. The full gospel includes our partnership with Christ. This wonderful item is included in the full gospel. We all need to see that we are partners of Christ and that we share in His anointing. Because of this, by the time we reach 3:1, we have all that we need to be holy brothers. We have the standing, the qualifications, the reality, the life, the nature, the source, and all that we need. We are now the holy brothers.

If you knew that you were such a holy brother, what would you do? Would you still smoke cigarettes? Whenever I see a brother smoking cigarettes, my whole being goes down. I say to myself, "Oh brother, you have just sold your birthright for a cheaper price than Esau did." How can a holy brother still smoke cigarettes? Although we have no regulations or legality, we do have our majesty. We are not only holy; we are majestic. Consider our position; we are the brothers of the Firstborn Son of God and we are the partners of God's anointed One. This is not a small thing. If you were a brother of the president of the United States, you would be very proud and have a certain amount of majesty. But whose brother are you? You are a brother of the Firstborn Son of God and a partner of God's anointed One for the fulfilling of God's plan. Smoking is an insult to God's anointed One. Yes, the Bible never says that you should not smoke, and the New Testament is not a book of laws but a book of holy brothers. Nevertheless, I believe that if the Lord would open your eyes and impress you with this marvelous item in the full gospel, you would be another person. You would be more than open for our High Priest to minister Himself into you. This would change your taste. Never again would cigarettes be tasteful to you.

Such a vision would change our preaching of the gospel. Today the preaching of the gospel is too low. As we preach the gospel, we should not only tell people that they are sinners, that they are condemned, and that they are going to perish. We have to preach the gospel in a much higher way, telling people that God is calling them to believe in His Firstborn Son that they might become His brothers, even His partners in fulfilling God's eternal plan.

There is the need for such preaching today. I hope that some of the young brothers will be burdened to do this kind of preaching. I do not want to hear the preaching of the gospel with the same old tune that tells people that they are sinners and are going to hell. This is not wrong, but it is too low. We need to preach the gospel from Hebrews 3:1, telling the sinners how they can be converted and transformed into holy brothers. If the young people preach this gospel, many of their schoolmates will be attracted.

More than thirty-nine years ago, when I was still young, I stayed for a while in Peking, the old capital of China. In Peking there was an outstanding hospital that was sponsored and supplied by the Rockefeller Foundation called Peking Union Medical College. It was a great hospital with the highest standard. Many of the nurses who worked in that hospital were caught for the church, and some of the doctors were also caught by the higher preaching of the gospel. They were all on fire. We need this kind of preaching today.

I am burdened because I have seen something higher. I want to see people get something better. We should not preach the gospel in a low way. What is the center, the high point of the gospel? Is it to take a poor sinner, sprinkle some drops of blood on him, and send him to heaven? Do you think that God's gospel only does this much? No, it is much higher than this. God's gospel is to make people holy brothers. This is not my concept; it is the concept revealed in the book of Hebrews. In His resurrection, Christ has made all of us His brothers and He has come into us to declare the Father to us. Now, as the Sanctifier, He is qualified to perform the sanctifying work that makes us holy. We are His holy brothers and His partners,

sharing His anointing for the fulfilling of God's plan. Is this not in the Bible? Is it not the good news? The world needs to hear these glad tidings. Many thoughtful people in the leading universities throughout the country are wondering about the meaning of human life. So many are asking themselves, "What is the purpose of life? What will happen after my graduation?" No one in the universities can tell them. We must go and tell them the real meaning of life. Go and tell them that they can be the holy brothers of the Firstborn Son of God. If the Lord delays His coming back, I hope that after a few years this kind of preaching will be prevailing in all the universities in the United States.

The United States, Europe, and all the leading countries need to hear the higher preaching of such a full gospel, the gospel that produces holy brothers of the Firstborn Son of God. If the young people will take up this burden and go to the campuses preaching this gospel, a good number of thoughtful young people will be caught. They will be satisfied. I hope that many of you reading this message will make a deal with the Lord, telling Him that you are willing to be burdened for the preaching of the high gospel. If you are burdened to preach the high gospel, I believe that the Lord will honor your preaching. "Lord, we need more young preachers, more preachers of the fullest gospel!"

Before we go on, I would like to have some fellowship with the young people. I have been fully captured by the Lord and I know what I am doing here. I have seen the vision. In the whole universe there is nothing higher than this. I am doing the most glorious work among the humankind, and you all must do the same thing. This is why I do not care for the department stores—they are too low. I would never trade what I have in my hands for anything in the world. What I have is too high and too glorious. Today's world needs a crusade with the preaching of the highest and fullest gospel.

A. Heirs of Salvation

The holy brothers are the heirs of salvation (1:14) who inherit "so great a salvation" (2:3) that does not only make us holy brothers to participate in God's holiness, but also brings us into God's glory.

B. Partners of the Appointed Heir

The holy brothers are also the partners of God's appointed Heir (1:9, 2). God's Son is God's appointed Heir to inherit all things. This Heir has been anointed by God for the fulfilling of His eternal plan. The holy brothers have a partnership with such a One.

C. Followers of the Captain

The holy brothers are also the followers of the Captain of salvation (2:10). The Captain of salvation is the Firstborn Son of God who has pioneered the way into God's glory. The holy brothers are the followers of such a Captain to be brought into the divine glory.

D. Brothers of the Firstborn Son of God

Furthermore, the holy brothers are the brothers of the Firstborn Son of God. Christ is the Firstborn Son of God with both divinity and humanity as we have seen in one of the previous messages. The holy brothers, as human beings being regenerated with the divine life, are the brothers of Christ with humanity and divinity. They are the same as Christ in both life and nature.

E. The Church in Resurrection

Ultimately, the holy brothers are the church in resurrection (2:12). Individually they are the brothers of Christ; corporately they are the church, the Body of Christ. This is absolutely a matter in resurrection. Before the resurrection of Christ, the church did not exist. It was through Christ's resurrection that the church came into being, composed of Christ's brothers. This was why after His resurrection the brothers of Christ, the church, were produced. Today the church in the Lord's recovery must be the church in resurrection.

Week 7 – Day 5 (5/25)

Heb. 12: 10 For they disciplined for a few days as it seemed good to them; but He, for what is profitable that we might partake of His holiness.

14 Pursue peace with all men and sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord;

29 For our God is also a consuming afire.

F. Sanctified by and with the Son of God and the Son of Man

The holy brothers are being sanctified by and with the Son of God and the Son of Man (2:11). The Sanctifier is the Son of God and the Son of Man. As we have seen in message eleven, we have been made qualified to be partakers of the divine holiness. The divine holiness is simply the holy nature of God. Holiness is God's nature. As the Sanctifier, Christ is now sanctifying us dispositionally by imparting God's holy nature into our being. I have often used the illustration of teaification. A glass of plain water is teaified by putting tea into it until the water is completely teaified. The way to teaify the water is to add the element of tea to the water until the water is saturated and permeated. Then all of the water will be teaified and will have the appearance, color, taste, and flavor of tea. This is teaification. We are the glass of plain water, and Christ is the very essence of the divine holiness, the divine nature. Christ has put Himself into us, the glass of plain water, to permeate and saturate us until we are fully sanctified with His holy nature. This is sanctification.

G. Partakers of the Divine Holiness

The holy brothers are also partakers of the divine holiness (12:10). We are partakers of the divine holiness that is nothing less than the holy nature of God. When we are being sanctified, we are saturated into this holy nature of God. It is by this saturating way that we partake of the divine holiness.

H. Pursuing Holiness

As holy brothers, we have to pursue holiness (12:14). On the one hand, we have been sanctified by the blood of Christ (10:29); on the other hand we have been regenerated with the holy nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4). Now as such sanctified holy ones, we should pursue holiness in our daily walk. Without holiness we shall not see the Lord. Without it, our fellowship with the Lord will be broken. We need a holy life in order to keep a continuing fellowship with the Lord that we may see Him all the time.

I. On the Way to Glory

As holy brothers, while we are under the process of being made holy, we are on the way to glory (2:10). To be made holy, to be sanctified, is a preparation for us to be glorified. As we are on the way to glory, Christ is sanctifying us, ministering to our needs as the High Priest, and bringing us into glory as our Captain.

II. PARTAKERS OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING

Now we come to the partakers of the heavenly calling. The term heavenly calling is used by the writer of this Epistle to compare this calling with the earthly calling. All the people in Judaism participated in an earthly calling for earthly blessings. Nothing in Judaism is heavenly. But in God's economy, in His full salvation, we have been called by God from the heavens and called to everything that is heavenly. Therefore, this calling is a heavenly calling. Everything in it has a heavenly nature. We, the holy brothers, are partakers of such a heavenly calling. Do you like to stay with the earthly calling, or will you cross the river to be a true Hebrew partaking of the heavenly calling?

The concept of the book of Hebrews is focused on the heavenly nature of the positive things. First of all, it points out to us that Christ today is sitting in the heavens (1:3). He has entered into the heavens (9:24). He has passed through the heavens (4:14) and has become higher than the heavens (7:26). Then this book unfolds to us the heavenly calling (3:1), the heavenly gifts (6:4), the heavenly things (8:5), the heavenly country (11:16), and the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22). It also tells us that we are enrolled in the heavens (12:23) and that God warns us today from the heavens (12:25). All the things in the Old Testament which were held in Judaism were of an earthly nature. In this book the writer's intention is to show the Hebrew Christians the contrast between the heavenly nature of the New Testament and the earthly nature of the Old Testament that they may forsake the earthly things and attach themselves to the heavenly.

A. To the Heavenly Christ

The heavenly calling firstly calls us to the heavenly Christ (1:3, 13; 4:14; 6:20; 7:26; 9:24; 10:12). Where is Christ today? He is in the heavens. He was on earth and He will return to earth, but now He is in the heavens. He is the heavenly Christ ministering the heavenly life, supply, and riches to us all the time that we may live a heavenly life while we are still on earth.

B. With the Heavenly Enrollment

The holy brothers have partaken of the heavenly calling, but they are still on earth. Yet they have been enrolled in the heavens, (12:23) having their names written in the heavens. Today we are not in the heavens, but our names are written there. We are partakers of the heavenly calling, sharing in the heavenly enrollment. So we are a heavenly people (Phil. 3:20).

C. To Taste the Heavenly Gift

We, the partakers of the heavenly calling, have been called to taste the heavenly gift (6:4). The heavenly gift should be the heavenly things given to us by God at the time of our salvation, such as forgiveness, righteousness, divine life, peace, and joy. As partakers of the heavenly calling, we all have tasted these heavenly things.

D. To Have the Heavenly Worship

As partakers of the heavenly calling, we also need to have the heavenly worship (8:5; 9:23-24). Although we are on earth, our worship to God must be heavenly. The holy brothers have been called to have the heavenly worship on earth. We have to keep our worship from any earthly nature. Both our life and worship should be heavenly.

E. To Come to the Heavenly Jerusalem

People under the Old Testament came to the earthly Jerusalem. But we, the partakers of the heavenly calling, come to the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22). The earthly Jerusalem symbolizes the law with its bondage (Gal. 4:25), whereas the heavenly Jerusalem symbolizes grace with its freedom (Gal. 4:26). The Hebrew believers should not remain under the law as children of bondage coming to the earthly Jerusalem. They should give up the earthly Jerusalem and come to the heavenly one as the children of freedom under grace.

F. To Go to the Heavenly Country

We, the partakers of the heavenly calling, have been called to the heavenly country (11:16). We are traveling through the earth and shall reach the heavenly country.

Week 7 – Day 5 (5/25) (Cont'd)

G. Partakers of the Holy Spirit

As partakers of the heavenly calling, we are also partakers of the Holy Spirit (6:4). The Holy Spirit is what God promised to give man in His gospel (Gal. 3:14). In His gospel, God has called us from the heavens to the heavenly things that we may partake of His Holy Spirit. It is by God's Holy Spirit that we have tasted the heavenly gift. It is by God's Holy Spirit that we can live a heavenly life on earth. It is by the Holy Spirit that we can partake of the divine holiness. The Holy Spirit is just God Himself. As partakers of the Holy Spirit, we partake of God as our enjoyment. It is also by God's Holy Spirit that we can have the heavenly worship.

H. Partakers of the Divine Discipline

We, the partakers of the heavenly calling, also partake of the divine discipline (12:8). I have been told that in Great Britain the crown prince, the successor to the throne, receives a great deal of discipline. A prince needs to be disciplined before he can assume the throne and have the kingship. This is the kind of discipline that we are now partaking of. As successors to the throne, we all are under the divine discipline. As holy brothers we need to partake of the divine holiness brought to us by the Holy Spirit within us. As partakers of the heavenly calling, we need to partake of the divine discipline accomplished by the Holy Spirit through our environment. We holy brothers are partakers not only of the heavenly calling but also of the Holy Spirit, of the divine holiness, and of the divine discipline for us to be perfected, equipped, and qualified that we may be the proper partners of God's anointed One.

Study Questions

1. How is Jesus as a man superior to angels?
2. Describe God's purpose in the creation of man and how Christ fulfilled the prophecies concerning this purpose.

- Heb. 1: 2 Has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom also He made the universe;
- 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus,
- 3 For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by as much as He who built the house has more honor than the house.
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MESSAGE FIFTEEN

CHRIST AS THE APOSTLE SUPERIOR TO MOSES

In this message we come to the third comparison found in the book of Hebrews—that Christ as the Apostle is superior to Moses. At the very beginning of this Epistle, we saw the comparison between our God and the God of the Jewish people. Then, in chapters one and two, we saw two aspects of the comparison between Christ and the angels. As both the Son of God and the Son of Man Christ is superior to the angels. The third boast of the Jewish religion is Moses, who was their most outstanding leader. As we shall see in another message, the fourth comparison, that between Christ and Aaron, shows us that Christ as the High Priest is superior to Aaron.

As the Apostle and High Priest, Christ is superior to both Moses and Aaron. We see these two titles of Christ in 3:1 where we are told to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus.” Jesus is our Apostle and our High Priest. As the Apostle, He was typified by Moses; as the High Priest, He was typified by Aaron. The Apostle is the One who was sent to us from God and with God (John 6:46; 8:16, 29). The High Priest was the One who went to God from and with us (Eph. 2:6). As the Apostle, Christ came to us with God to share God with us that we might partake of His divine life, nature, and fullness. As the High Priest, Christ went to God with us to present us to God that we and all our case might be fully cared for by Him. As the Apostle He was typified by Moses who came from God to serve the house of God (3:2-6), and as the High Priest He was typified by Aaron, who went to God with the house of Israel and their cases (4:14—7:28).

Although you might have known that Jesus is our High Priest, I doubt whether many of you reading this message have ever heard that Jesus is also the Apostle. Jesus was the first Apostle in the New Testament. This is why I say once again that the book of Hebrews is quite peculiar. Firstly, it tells us that the Lord Jesus has been appointed by God to be the Heir of all things (1:2). Then it tells us that He is even the Captain of salvation (2:10). Christ as the Heir of all things and as the Captain of salvation is not so clearly revealed as in this book. Even Christ as the High Priest cannot be found elsewhere in the New Testament. Now we see that Christ is the Apostle. The word apostle in Greek means a sent one, one who is sent by higher authority. Jesus is the One who was sent by God. God sent Him to us.

I. MOSES

Moses was a type of Jesus as the Apostle, the sent one. When the children of Israel were suffering persecution under the tyranny of Pharaoh, God appeared to Moses and charged him to go to the children of Israel and to Pharaoh. Thus, Moses became an Old Testament apostle. Moses was God’s sent one, the apostle who was to take Israel out of Egypt and lead them through the wilderness for the purpose that they might be constituted as God’s house and to be formed into a habitation of God on earth. This habitation of God was symbolized by the tabernacle made by the children of Israel in the wilderness. That tabernacle was only a symbol; it was not the real habitation of God. At that time, God’s real habitation on earth was the children of Israel themselves. The children of Israel were formed and constituted into a house of God by Moses, God’s apostle. This portrait is very clear. When we read the Bible we need to have such a heavenly vision, a revelation in the spirit. Without this, we can never apprehend the true significance of all the stories in the Old Testament.

Week 8 – Day 1 (5/28) (Cont’d)

A. A Part of God’s House

There is, however, a difference in degree between Moses and Christ. Regardless of how much Moses prefigured Christ, he was still only a part of the house, whereas Christ is the Builder of God’s house (3:3).

B. Faithful in God’s House

Moses, as God’s sent one to take care of God’s house, was faithful to God in all His house. This typifies that Christ, as the Apostle from God, for God’s house, is faithful to God who constituted Him (v. 2).

C. For a Testimony of the Coming Things

Chapter three, verse 5, says that Moses was “a servant for a testimony of the things to be spoken later.” Moses was a testimony. Here a testimony means that Moses was a photograph. Your photograph is your testimony. Suppose we have never seen a certain person but we have a photograph of him. His photograph is his testimony. Likewise, Moses was a testimony, a prefigure, a photograph, a type of the real, typical, and genuine Apostle sent from God.

II. CHRIST

A. The Builder of God’s House, God Himself

Christ is not only a part of the house but also the Builder of the house (vv. 3-4). Moses only had one nature—humanity. This human nature is good for God’s building. But Moses did not have the divine nature which is good for being the builder. The Lord Jesus has two natures, the humanity which is good for the material for the building of God’s habitation and the divinity which is the element of the builder. In His humanity, Jesus is the stone for God’s habitation. He is the foundation stone (Isa. 28:16), the cornerstone (Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11), the topstone (Zech. 4:7), and the living stone (1 Pet. 2:4) to produce us as living stones (1 Pet. 2:5). In His humanity He is the good material for God’s building and in His divinity He is the Builder. Moses was an apostle sent from God to constitute God’s house on earth, and Christ was also the Apostle doing the same thing. But Christ is not only a part of the building; He is also the Builder. This is the difference between Christ and Moses.

B. Over Us, the House of God

In Hebrews 2 Christ is the Firstborn Son and we are the many sons who form the church. In that chapter Christ is the Captain, the Firstborn Son, and the High Priest in order for the many brothers to be the church. Chapter three is somewhat different. In this chapter Christ is the Apostle, and the church is the house of God. In Hebrews 2 Christ is the Firstborn, the Captain, and the High Priest, and the brothers are the church. In Hebrews 3 Christ is the Apostle and the brothers are the house of God. The church has a double function. To Christ, the church is the Body; to God, the church is the house. Christ is the Head, and the church is the Body of the Head. This is the first function of the church. God is the Father, and the church is His house. This is the second function of the church. Just as Christ is the Head and the church is His Body, so God is the Father and the church is His house. The church as the Body of Christ is an organism. In like manner, the church as a house is not a physical house; it is a living house.

As all Greek students know, the Greek word rendered house here may be translated as “household” or, using the modern term, “folks,” “the members of a family.” God’s house is not a physical house but a living house. God’s house is His family, and His family is His house. His house is also His household, for His folks are His dwelling place. Suppose a certain family has a house. The family is one thing and the house is another. The family is living and the house is physical. But God’s family and God’s house are both living.

Gen. 28:12, 16-17 And he dreamed: There was a ladder set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 16 And Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I did not know it. 17 And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

In what way is God's house living? It is living in the Father's name and in the Father's life. When we say that it is living in the Father's name, this means that it is living in the Father's reality. This house is a living composition of the many children of God in the Father's life and reality. This is wonderful. Where the house of God is, there is the family of God, and where the family of God is, there is God the Father with His life and reality. This is similar to the church as the Body of Christ. Christ is not separate from all the members of the Body, for, as the Head of the Body, Christ indwells all the members. Christ should not be counted as a separate member of the Body because He is in all of the members of the Body. Likewise, God's house is God's family. The Father is not a separate member of the household but is in all of the children. This is Bethel, the house of God, the very house that Jacob saw in his dream (Gen. 28). This is the reason that where the church is, there is Bethel, the house of God with the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, as the heavenly ladder. Such a church is the gate of heaven by which people can communicate from the earth to heaven. There is even now a communication between earth and heaven. When we are in the proper church life, we are in the gate of heaven. If you have the spiritual eyes, you can see the angels ascending and descending upon the heavenly ladder.

Who is the one who formed, built, and constituted this house and who takes care of this house? Jesus Christ, the Apostle sent from God, has and still is constituting and building up His house. He is not only building the house but also carrying it on. This house is a movable, portable house; it is a living and walking house. Do you believe that today's organized Christianity is such a house? Can organized Christianity walk? We are living, walking, and moving. We are walking corporately with the Apostle. God's house is a corporate Body. If we are going to enjoy the Apostle and if we are going to enjoy the Father with His reality, we must be in the house. In religion, I am sorry to say, people are not told that they have an Apostle. But we must know that we have an Apostle. Our Captain of salvation and our High Priest is the Apostle, the One sent by God to take care of God's house. If you are not in the house, you will not enjoy Him in His aspect of being the Apostle. You may enjoy Him in other aspects, for He is great, kind, and more than merciful, and He will do many things for you. But as far as the church as the house of the Father is concerned, you will not be able to enjoy Him as the Apostle.

This is the reason that I do not believe in being an individual Christian. Once you are an individual, you are through. When you are an individual, you are a separated stone. As a separated stone, you have nothing to do with the house. We need to be in the church. Many of us can testify what enjoyment, blessing, and grace we have partaken of since we came into the church. We are going to see wonderful things happen in and to the house.

Many of the young people are stirred up to preach the high gospel. After being stirred up, they may be unable to wait for even half a minute. They want to know the next step. Young people, the next step is to get into the house and stay with the house. The step after that is to go on with the house. We cannot preach the high gospel unless we have the house. In order to have the highest preaching of the gospel we must have the church as the house of the living God. Then we shall be able to declare to all the thoughtful people, "Come and see. Here is the meaning of life. Come and see the life that so many philosophers have been seeking for in the past but failed to find. Come and see the church life." We need to have the church life. We cannot preach the high gospel if we do not have a model. People want to be practical. They don't want to hear about something that will happen by and by; they want to have it now. Then people will ask, "Where is this thing that you are talking about?" and we shall be able to say, "Come and see." Without having the church life on the highest plane there is no possibility of preaching the high gospel. In a sense, the high church life is the preaching. We simply need to bring people in and let them see and taste. Then

Week 8 – Day 2 (5/29) (Cont'd)

they will say, “Now I know.” It is easy to preach the gospel when we have a model. Every salesman knows that it is difficult to sell a product unless you have a sample. The best way to sell something to people is to show it to them.

In the last message I told you about the many nurses from the great hospital in Peking who were captured for the church life. They were highly educated and qualified nurses. Many times they attended the church meeting in their white uniforms, coming to the meeting as soon as they got off duty. This influenced others, who asked them, “What is this thing that has captured you? You don’t care for eating or anything else—you just go to those meetings. What is this?” As a result of this, many others were caught.

We need to have the highest church life, something that is so attractive to people. We need to let people know what is the real humanity and what is the genuine human society. The church life must be the best society, the highest communal living. Be assured that one day this will happen. I do believe in the Lord’s life. Someday, not long from now, the whole world will see and religion will be surprised. By then they will see the difference. They may criticize and oppose us today, but time will vindicate.

We have been given many bad names. Some even call us a cult. Recently I received a letter from a brother who was on a ship in the navy. He met some other Christians on board ship and saw how poisoned they were against us. But let us wait and see what time will say. Do not be influenced by the rumors. No one on earth today is as fundamental as we are. No one honors God’s divine oracles as we do. No one believes in the Triune God as practically as we do. We do not believe merely in a doctrinal way—that is a Vanity Fair. We are practical. If we believe in justification by faith, it must be practical and experiential. We believe in every aspect of the Bible in the way of experience. We do not want to have any vain doctrines. What does vain doctrine do for you? Nothing. We were born into a doctrinal Vanity Fair, but there is nothing in it, only terms. I was born into such a Vanity Fair and it took me more than twenty years to unload all of those vanities. Whatever we believe in today must be practical. We do believe in the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and we believe according to the black and white letters of the pure Word, not according to tradition.

The Lord is here and He is covering us. Anyone who opposes this testimony does not have a case. Sooner or later his follies will be exposed. Time will tell. Time will prove. This testimony is not something new; it has been tested for over fifty years. Wherever this testimony has gone, nothing has been able to stand against it. If you were to ask the missionaries who have gone to Taiwan, they will tell you that no work in Taiwan can stand against the work of this testimony. All the missionaries admitted that this is the leading work on the island of Taiwan. In 1968, over one hundred thirty American brothers and sisters visited Taiwan. While they were there, they met a missionary who spoke against us. Although he did not like this testimony, he had to admit that it was the most prevailing work. Why is this work prevailing? Because it is the Lord’s testimony. It is not up to us; it is up to Him. But we must be one with Him. Do not hold on to anything.

Heb. 3:14 For we have become partners of Christ, if indeed we hold fast the beginning of the assurance firm to the end,

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

Let me give you a testimony of what happened to one of the opposers. In 1958, I was invited to visit a spiritual place in England. I went there neither to receive help nor to give help to others but to see the situation there. The leader honored me by putting me in a special house and assigning a person to take care of me. For a month's time the leader turned all of the meetings over to me, not only the meetings of the conference but even the regular meetings. During my stay there I discovered that that place was not for the church; it was absolutely for its ministry. During the twenty or thirty years prior to 1958, the ministry in that place was prevailing. Many admitted that it was a spiritual ministry. After I stayed there for a month, the leader brought me to his retreat in Scotland. I stayed with him there for a week with the purpose of sitting down with him face to face to have a talk about the Lord's economy, about what the Lord is doing today. His opinion was that the Lord would use his ministry to establish ministry centers throughout the earth. I told him that the Lord's economy is to establish local churches in city after city. Although we were good friends, we could not get along. He found that I was more than stubborn in this matter, and I learned that he could not be changed one bit. We did not fight with each other, but within we realized that there was a great discrepancy between our understandings of the Lord's economy. We returned from his retreat house in Scotland to England. Before I left, he asked me to speak again in one of the regular meetings. I did not know what to speak until I got on the platform. Then the message came. In that message I told the people that the ministry is not for the ministry, but that every ministry must be for the local churches. I was very strong, saying, "Look at the ministry of the apostle John. Although it was the most spiritual ministry, it was not the lampstand. Look at all the local churches in Revelation—most of them were a mess. But the local churches are the lampstands." In that message I emphasized strongly that the local churches should not be for the ministry but that the ministry must be for the local churches.

The dear brother who was the leader in that place had touched God's government. To be governmentally wrong with God is a serious thing. If this testimony is the Lord's recovery, then it is something that is divinely governmental. If any man can touch this testimony without anything happening to him, it proves that this testimony is nothing. But this is the Lord's recovery, and we all must be careful. How serious it is to touch the Lord's recovery!

The dear one who invited me to England had firstly been invited by us to come to Taiwan. He came in 1955 and again in 1957. During his first visit he did not touch the church matter, but in his second visit he purposely touched it. This set off a strong debate between him and us. The debate was between this brother and the leading ones on the island of Taiwan. During the first two of these meetings I was doing the interpretation and did not speak in the debate. However, in the third meeting I joined in. Although we were friends with this dear brother, even intimate friends, we held different concepts regarding the Lord's economy. This brother left Taiwan in April of 1957. When I visited him in England sixteen months later, in August, 1958, he told me that when the plane took off from Taipei for Hong Kong, the flow within him was cut off and that it had not been recovered. On the very day he told me this, he said that he had cried to the Lord early in the morning, asking Him why the flow had been cut off.

C. Faithful to God Who Constituted Him

Christ, typified by Moses, was faithful to God in taking care of God's house (v. 2). Chapter two verse 17 tells us that He is faithful as the High Priest. Here it says that He is faithful as the Apostle sent from God to us.

Week 8 – Day 3 (5/30) (Cont'd)

D. Counted Worthy of More Glory and Honor Than Moses

Moses was only a part of the house, whereas Christ is both the house and the Builder of the house. So Christ is counted worthy of more glory and honor than Moses was (3:3). We need to see that Christ as the Builder of the house has more glory and honor than Moses. Hence, Christ is much superior to Moses.

MESSAGE SIXTEEN

PARTNERS OF CHRIST

In this message we come to the partners of Christ, to the corporate partnership. In Hebrews 1 and 2 we have seen that we have been constituted to be the brothers of the Firstborn Son of God, and, as the many brothers, we have been formed into the church. Taken as a whole, these two chapters reveal that God is the source and that out of Him have come the many brothers of the Firstborn Son of God who have been formed into the church. The church is simply the expression of God Himself in Christ. In the church we have God. In the church we also have the Son of God, God's appointed Heir. In the church we also have the Captain of salvation, the Firstborn Son of God, and the Son of Man. In the church we have the many brothers of the Firstborn Son of God and the partners, the joint-heirs of the appointed Heir. All of these heirs are the partners of the unique Heir. The issue of all of this is a glorious expression of God. One day, in the New Jerusalem, this will fully come into being. There, in the New Jerusalem, we shall see the glorious expression of God in full. In the New Jerusalem there will be the throne of God with the Almighty God sitting upon it (Rev. 22:1). There in the New Jerusalem will be the Father, the Son as the Lamb, and the Spirit flowing as a river of water. The many brothers of the Firstborn and the many sons of God will also be there. In the New Jerusalem we shall see the Lord of all, the Captain, and the High Priest. That city will be the full expression of the glorious God. This is the glory, the rest, the good land, and the region into which we shall enter after we have crossed many rivers.

While I am speaking, I have a glorious vision in front of me. Oh, I have seen the church! In the church we not only have justification by faith, personal salvation, and forgiveness of sins—we have everything. The church life is a small focus through which we can see the whole picture of the New Jerusalem. Everything that will be in the New Jerusalem in a full way we have in the church today in a miniature way. I have the sensation that in these days we have entered into glory, into rest. This is a foretaste of the full taste that is coming. We are in the glory, in the good land. Christ is not only our God but also today's Moses. He is a better, higher, and more excellent Moses. He is also our Aaron and our real Joshua, and we are His Calebs, His partners, comrades, and companions.

In Greek the word partners is the same word as partakers. The same Greek word has these two meanings. A partaker is absolutely different from a partner. I may be a partaker of my breakfast, meaning that I am one who enjoys breakfast, but I am a partner of a corporation, meaning that I am a joint-owner of that corporation. Because these two English words are the same word in Greek, the translators have had difficulty in rendering the correct meaning of the Greek word. The King James Version made a big mistake in Hebrews 3:14, translating it as "partakers of Christ." But according to the context, here the Greek word should not be translated "partakers" but "partners." The portion from 3:7 through 3:14 deals with entering into the good land. The type of this entering into the good land was entering into the land under the leadership of Joshua. Joshua entered into the good land, and Caleb was his partner in this matter. We should not consider Caleb as a partaker of Joshua, for Caleb did not enjoy Joshua; he was a comrade, companion, and partner of Joshua in entering into and possessing the good land. Christ today is our real Joshua, and we must be His Calebs. In this respect, we are not His partakers; we are His partners. When we enjoy Christ, we are His partakers; when we follow Him, we are His partners. My burden in this message is to tell you that we are not only partakers enjoying Christ but also partners following Him. As His partners, we are working together and cooperating with Him.

Psa. 133:1-3 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell in unity! 2 It is like the fine oil upon the head That ran down upon the beard, Upon Aaron's beard, That ran down upon the hem of his garments; 3 Like the dew of Hermon That came down upon the mountains of Zion. For there Jehovah commanded the blessing: Life forever.

I. CHRIST, GOD'S APPOINTED

A. To Accomplish God's Plan

God has a great operation in the universe. The goal of this operation is to accomplish a glorious expression. This glorious expression is the goal into which we all are going to enter. Our view must be broadened to see that God's operation in the whole universe is to accomplish a glorious expression of Himself. The Son of God was appointed to accomplish God's plan. He has been appointed to run this corporation. He was appointed to this office in eternity past.

B. Anointed by God

Christ was appointed in eternity past and anointed in time (1:9). That anointing was the initial heavenly, divine inauguration. God has initially inaugurated His appointed Heir into His office by anointing Him. God the Spirit poured Himself out as the anointing oil upon this appointed Heir, anointing Him to be the operator of God's divine operation.

As the partners of Christ, we are partners in His anointing. He was appointed in eternity past and anointed in time. His anointing includes us. I would refer you to Psalm 133 where we see that the ointment poured out upon the head of Aaron, the high priest, flows down upon the whole body to the skirts of his robe. This signifies that all the members of the body of the high priest share his anointing. We, the partakers, share the anointing of the unique Heir. As I have already mentioned, the anointing was the initial inauguration. Therefore, we all share in His inauguration. In this heavenly, divine, and eternal inauguration, we are His partners. He has obtained the anointing, and we share it with Him because we are His partners. This means that we all have been anointed. We all have been put into office. We are not only the partakers of Christ who enjoy Him but also the partners of Christ who share in His operation. I have the full assurance that in giving this message I am sharing in His operation. He is going to accomplish a full expression of God in glory, and we are now cooperating with Him in this operation. I have heard many testimonies concerning being a partaker of Christ and enjoying Him, but I have not heard one concerning being a partner of Christ. From now on, in the churches we need to hear more testimonies concerning being partners of Christ and sharing in His operation. Recently, many of us have been touched to go to the campuses and preach the high gospel. That kind of preaching should be the sharing in the operation of the anointed Heir. We are Christ's joint-heirs and partners, cooperating with Him and sharing in His operation. His office must also be our office.

Hebrews 1:9 says, "You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of exultant joy above Your partners." Notice that this verse says, "God...Your God." Whose God is this? We have seen that the Son is God. How many gods are there? There is only one. Some of those reading this message may unconsciously still hold the concept that there are three gods, but they dare not say that there are three gods. According to the truth of the Bible, there is only one God (1 Cor. 8:4). We cannot say that there is more than one God. Nevertheless, deep within, many Christians unconsciously hold onto the concept of three gods, the so-called tritheism. I ask you to forget about your traditional teachings. We do not have more than one God. God is one, yet He is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Matt. 28:19). But this does not mean that there are three different gods.

Isaiah 9:6 and 2 Corinthians 3:17 prove that the Father, Son, and Spirit are one. Isaiah 9:6 says, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...and his name shall be called...The Mighty God, the everlasting Father." If you believe that the child born in the manger was the Mighty God, then you must also believe

Week 8 – Day 4 (5/31) (Cont'd)

that the Son given to us is the everlasting Father. There are two lines in Isaiah 9:6: the child born to us is the Mighty God, and the Son given to us is the everlasting Father. All fundamental Christians, including us, believe that that child was the Mighty God. But, sorry to say, many Christians only believe the first line in 9:6 but do not believe the second.

Some Christians dare not to touch the matter that the Son is called the everlasting Father. Some have twisted it to fit in with their traditional concept. We are not smart enough to understand the Trinity fully. God did not make us that smart. This matter of the Trinity is beyond our understanding. We cannot even understand ourselves as tripartite men. For instance, where is your heart? Where is your conscience? People think that they are clear about the Trinity, but they are not even clear about themselves. Where is your soul? What is the difference between your spirit, soul, heart, mind, will, emotion, and conscience? If you do not even understand yourself, how can you think that you are able to understand God?

We need to forget about tradition and return to the Bible. I beg you to take the whole Bible. This matter of Christology has been the subject of debate since the last part of the first century. No one can solve this problem. No one can understand it thoroughly. We should just humbly accept everything that is in the Bible whether or not it fits in with our concept. Isaiah 9:6 says that a child is called the Mighty God and the Son is called the everlasting Father, and 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, “Now the Lord is that Spirit.”

When I was young, I was under the Brethren teachers who taught the truth according to their knowledge of the Bible. They taught us not to pray to the Son but to the Father in the name of the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. We were told not to pray to the Spirit. They said that under certain circumstances we might pray to the Lord Jesus but that it should not be often. We must pray to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Later the Lord led me to stay with Brother Nee. One day he invited a Chinese preacher from the China Inland Mission to speak in our meetings. In his message the preacher said, “Don’t consider that the Lord Jesus is another One from the Holy Spirit.” When that speaker went on to say that the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit, Brother Nee said, “Amen.” After the meeting, I went to Brother Nee, and he said, “This is just what we need. This is what we should take.” That was revolutionary to me. At that time I certainly crossed the river of the Brethren teaching into the good land of the truth. Not long afterward, Brother Nee spoke to a small group of us on John 14, pointing out that today the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit. He said, “The ‘He’ in verse 17 is the ‘I’ in the next verse.” My eyes were opened and the light shone. Then verse 17 says that the Spirit will be in us and verse 20 says that the Lord will be in us. Are there two or one in us? Surely one. Who is this One—the Lord Jesus or the Spirit? Both, for They are one. Then verses 9 through 11 tell us that the Lord Jesus is not only the Spirit but also the Father. We should not be so foolish as to be today’s Philip. When Philip asked the Lord to show them the Father, the Lord said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father,” for He and the Father are one (John 10:30).

Prior to his imprisonment, Brother Nee published a large hymnal containing a thousand and fifty-six songs. Some of the best hymns in our hymnal were taken from that source. One of the hymns in our hymnal, number 490, was written by Brother Nee and translated by us for inclusion in our hymnal. The fifth stanza says,

Thou, Lord, the Father once wast called,
But now the Holy Spirit art;
The Spirit is Thine other form,
Thyself to dwell within our heart.

The original Chinese, which is much clearer than the English, says “Once You were the Father; now You are the Spirit.” Now you know from where I derived the truth that Christ is the Spirit. This truth has been practiced, testified, and fully proved by my own experience. I say once again that we don’t care for doctrine; we care for experience.

The word, “O God...Your God,” in 1:8-9 refers to the Son. Since the Son is God Himself, He is God; therefore, it says, “O God.” Since the Son is also man, God is His God; therefore, it says, “Your God.”

Heb. 6:20 Where the Forerunner, Jesus, has entered for us, having become forever a High Priest according to the border of Melchisedec.

2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything.

II. THE CAPTAIN OF SALVATION

A. He, as the Forerunner, the Pioneer, Having Entered into Rest and Glory

The anointed Heir of God, as the Captain of salvation, has entered into rest and glory through death and resurrection (6:20). He did this as the Pioneer and Forerunner. He took the lead to pass through the pathway of the cross and entered into rest and glory. He is now sitting at the right hand of God (1:3, 13) crowned with glory and honor (2:9) to be the qualified Captain of our salvation that He may bring us through the pathway of the cross into the good land of rest and glory.

B. We, as His Partners, Sharing with Him in What He Has Attained and Obtained

In His foresight, God decided that this unique Heir needed a group of joint-heirs. God decided that it was not good enough for Christ to enter into the good land alone. God wanted this unique Heir to enter into the good land of the glorious expression of the Divine Being with a group of joint-heirs. The more joint-heirs there are, the more glory there is. Consider Joshua's entering into the good land with the children of Israel. Certainly God was able to bring Joshua alone into the good land. Suppose Joshua, a single person, marched into the good land, saying, "I have come here by the Almighty God to take over the land." Although that would have been possible, it would not have been glorious. When Joshua took the lead to enter into the good land, at least two million people marched after him. That frightened all the Canaanites to death. It was not a single heir who entered into the good land but an army of joint-heirs. We all know what happened at Jericho. God could have performed the same miracle with just Joshua, but if He had done this, there would have been no glory. An army marched around Jericho, and all the demons were terrified. That was the glorious taking of the good land. The entrance into the good land was a glorious entrance. We are going to march into the good land. We have a Captain, the real Joshua. We all must be His partners in taking the good land.

Before we can be His partners, we must firstly be His partakers enjoying Him. When we enjoy Him and partake of Him, His title is not Christ but the Holy Spirit. We are partakers of the Holy Spirit (6:4). But when He is the Captain, He is Jesus Christ, not the Holy Spirit. When He is our enjoyment, He is the Holy Spirit. When He is our Captain, the One leading us, He is Christ.

Do not be bothered by all these different titles. As I have showed you already, in the first two chapters of Hebrews we see that the very God is the Son of God. This Son of God is also the Captain and the High Priest. This is similar to Zechariah 2 where we see that the Lord of hosts sent the Lord of hosts. The Lord of hosts is both the Sender and the Sent One. Likewise, in the first chapter of Hebrews we are told that God has spoken, that God has spoken in the Son, and that, eventually, the Son is addressed, "O God." Following this, we are told that He is the Captain of our salvation and our High Priest. How wonderful and marvelous this is! As our Captain, He is the Christ. As our enjoyment, He is the Holy Spirit. When He takes the lead to march on, He is our Captain. When He comes into us to be our enjoyment and nourishment, He is the Holy Spirit.

Week 8 – Day 5 (6/1) (Cont'd)

We are Christ's partakers and partners. When we enjoy Him, we are His partakers. When we follow Him, we are His partners. Are you a partaker of Christ? This means that even in troublesome times we enjoy Him, partaking of His riches and nourishment. After we have enjoyed Him in such a way, He becomes the Captain who takes the lead, and we follow Him as His partners. When He marches, we march with Him. He is the Captain and we are the army. By this, we shall enter into His rest (4:8-9) and be brought into His glory (2:10).

III. TODAY'S JOSHUA AND CALEB

Christ, the Captain of salvation, is the real Joshua leading God's people to take and possess the land. We, His partners, are the real Calebs sharing with Him in the taking and possessing of the land. We need to spend much time to consider this matter of taking the good land, for it is not as clear as it should be. The lowest view of the good land is that when a saint dies he crosses the river Jordan and enters the good land. Many songs speak about crossing the cold waves of Jordan. Even John Bunyan interpreted the good land this way in Pilgrim's Progress. The inner life people, the so-called spiritual people, say that Canaan is not the third heaven, because Canaan is filled with demons, giants, enemies, and Canaanites. Since there are no enemies in the third heaven, the inner life people rejected the low concept of the good land being heaven. But the inner life people did not tell us clearly what Canaan is. Some of them say that Canaan signifies the air, the heavenlies, where the principalities, powers, and evil spirits are. From my youth I was not satisfied with the concept that Canaan was heaven, but as a young seeker of the Lord I did accept the concept that Canaan was the heavenlies full of Canaanites, principalities, and powers. However, after a certain period of time, I began to doubt this. If Canaan is the heavenlies where the wicked spirits are, then where is the rest? My point in mentioning this is that Christ's operation is to gain and possess the good land of Canaan. Without the good land of Canaan, God's purpose cannot be fulfilled. Christ's enterprise is to take the good land of Canaan, possess it, and build God's house in it. The good land is the fulfillment of God's purpose in Christ, which is to have a full expression of Himself. For this, Christ is the Operator, and we are His partners. We are His partners in this enterprise. We have been inaugurated with Christ for this purpose. We have been inaugurated with Christ to share His office that, with Him, we might take the land, possess it, and build the house of God. Eventually, this will be the land of glory. Praise the Lord that we are His partners. Being a partaker is for the purpose of being a partner. We are not only partakers of Christ but also His partners!

Study Questions

1. According to Hebrews 2, what four things were accomplished by Christ's crucifixion?
2. What is the significance of the Father's name referred to in Hebrews 2:12?

Matt. 13: 3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went out to sow.

23 But the one sown on the good earth, this is he who hears the word and understands, who by all means bears fruit and produces, one a hundredfold, and one sixtyfold, and one thirtyfold.

MESSAGE SEVENTEEN

THE GOOD LAND FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE

I feel strongly that we need to have a message on the good land for the fulfillment of God's purpose. This matter of the good land has been a great puzzle to most Bible readers and Bible teachers. Many Christian books speak about the good land. If you read these books, you will realize that all the readers and teachers of the Bible have the feeling that the good land is not merely a tract of land in Palestine. In the Bible, the good land is a symbol, a figure, of something further. Even the lowest interpretation of the good land as a symbol—that it is the region Christians enter after crossing the Jordan River of death—follows the principle that the good land is not merely a tract of land in Palestine but rather signifies something spiritual, holy, and heavenly. It is very difficult for anyone to understand thoroughly the spiritual significance of the good land. I have been studying this matter for years. Ever since my youth, I have been interested in the true significance of this good land. I am sorry to say that as a young Christian I did not receive much help in this regard. But now in this message I shall try my best to present to you what the Lord has shown us concerning the real significance of this good land.

THE PROPER PEOPLE OF GOD

In the Bible, the land or earth always signifies the proper people of God. The sea, on the contrary, signifies the world that has been corrupted, polluted, and ruined by Satan. In other words, the land always signifies the people of God, and the sea signifies the worldly people, the people who have been polluted, corrupted, ruined, and usurped by Satan.

A FIGURE OF CHRIST

Secondly, in the Bible the land is a figure, a symbol, of Christ. Christ is the good land. When we studied Genesis 1:9 in our Life-study of Genesis, we pointed out that the land which came out of the death water on the third day was a type of the resurrected Christ who came out of death on the third day. As we saw in that study, all of the life, including the vegetable, animal, and human life, came out of the land. Even man was made from the dust of that resurrected land. Medically speaking, our physical body contains the same elements as the earth. In both the earth and our bodies we have such elements as copper, iron, and sulfur. So mankind came from the land, and the land is a figure of Christ. This signifies that Christ is the source of all kinds of life. Christ as the good land, the land that came out of death water, the land that was elevated above and surrounded by the death water, was depicted by the land of Canaan. As we shall see, the land of Canaan is an elevated land surrounded by water. This land is a picture of Christ.

A TYPE OF THE CHOSEN ONES OF GOD

In the Bible, the soil of the earth typifies us, the chosen ones of God. God has chosen us to be the soil into which He sows Himself in order that He Himself may grow in us (Matt. 13:3, 23). We are God's soil. Eventually, we become His field and His farm to grow Christ (1 Cor. 3:9). This matter is quite weighty and meaningful.

Week 9 – Day 1 (6/4) (Cont'd)

THE LAND, CHRIST, AND HUMANITY

God took some dust from the land that was resurrected out of the death water and used it to make man (Gen. 2:7). Thus man was made out of the land and was destined to express God. Man's body was made with the dust of the resurrected land, but man himself was made in the image of God for the purpose of expressing God (Gen. 2:7; 1:26-28). Not only was the dusty man made in God's image to express God, but he was also committed with God's authority to exercise God's dominion and to form God's kingdom on earth. So God's expression and kingdom are fully related to the earth. Man came from the resurrected land, the resurrected earth, and lived on this earth to express God and to represent Him, to form an expression of God and a kingdom of God. This expression with the kingdom is God's goal, and we must enter into it.

This short word combines the land, Christ, and humanity. The land, Christ, and humanity combined together are the expression of God and the kingdom of God where God's glory and authority are. This is the sphere into which we all must enter. It is the realm that we all must reach. Here is our rest and satisfaction. Here God is fully expressed and has a dwelling place, His habitation.

Revelation 21:1 says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Here we see that the old heaven and the old earth will pass away and that there will be a new heaven and a new earth. In this new heaven and new earth will be the New Jerusalem, and within the New Jerusalem God in Christ flows as the living water which symbolizes the flowing Spirit. If you look at Revelation 21, you will see a picture of the land, Christ, and all of God's chosen, regenerated, sanctified, and glorified people. This combination of the land, Christ, and us will be God's expression with God's kingdom. This is our good land, the land that we all must strive to enter into. It is here that we have rest and satisfaction.

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

From the whole revelation of God's divine Word, we can see that in eternity past God planned to express Himself. This is God's eternal purpose: to express Himself in a practical and real way through a corporate entity composed of many human beings. This is God's eternal purpose. In order to accomplish this purpose, God created the heavens and the earth.

Satan, God's enemy, intervened and damaged God's creation, especially the earth. So the earth was judged with water by God (Gen. 1:2). The whole earth was under the judging water, which was a kind of death covering the land. Then God came in and raised up the land that had been covered by the death water, raising it out of the death water on the third day. A good number of Bible teachers agree that this is a picture of the resurrected Christ. The land that was raised out of the water on the third day was a type of the resurrected Christ from whom all life has come into being. Out of this land God made man in His own image to express and represent Him. In Adam at that time we could see the land because Adam was made with the dust of the ground. We could also see Christ because Adam was made in the image of Christ. Genesis 1:26 says that man was made in the image of God, and Colossians 1:15 says that Christ is the image of the invisible God. Therefore, man was made in the image of Christ and bore the image of Christ. If you could have seen Adam, you would have seen the image of Christ. So with Adam, a man, there were the dust of the land and the image of Christ. Hence, in Adam we see three things: the land, Christ, and man. These three things are combined to be God's expression and God's kingdom. That was a miniature of what God intended to obtain.

Gen. 6:12-13 And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and now I am about to destroy them with the earth.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND THE EARTH

Satan, knowing God's central thought, came in to damage man. When the Lord Jesus became flesh (John 1:14), He came to become dust. When He came to join with man, it meant that He came to join with the earth. After Adam had been damaged, man eventually became flesh (Gen. 6:3), and God came in to judge that flesh. When God judged the flesh, He also judged the earth, for the flesh, that is, mankind, cannot be separated from the earth (Gen. 6:12-13). In God's sight and according to God's concept, man is always related to the earth. When man is judged, the earth is judged, and when the earth is judged, man is judged. God always treats these two things together. By the flood, God judged the flesh and the earth.

After the flood, the ark landed on Mt. Ararat on exactly the same day of the month as the Lord Jesus was resurrected from the dead—the seventeenth day. The Lord was crucified on the fourteenth day of the month, the day of the Passover, and three days later He was resurrected. The ark was resurrected from the death water on the seventeenth day of the month. According to the record of Genesis, this was on the seventh month of the year, which was changed at the time of the Passover to be the first month of the year, according to the Jewish sacred calendar. In other words, the Lord Jesus was resurrected on the same day and in the same month as the ark was resurrected from the death water.

When Noah and the seven others came out of the ark, they lived on the new earth. The resurrected people lived on the new earth, and, once again, that new earth typified the resurrected Christ. That Noah and the other seven resurrected people lived on the new earth signified that they lived in Christ. Now we all are living in Christ today.

This pleasant situation did not last very long, for Satan came in to corrupt and pollute mankind again. As Genesis 10 reveals, Satan utilized Nimrod's father, Cush, to build Babel. Satan's corrupting and polluting of Cush and Nimrod meant that Satan had once again corrupted mankind. In the eyes of God, that polluted mankind became one with the land of Chaldea. In the eyes of God, mankind is always related to the land. If you read the history of Israel according to the record of the Bible, you will see that God always put Israel and the land together as one. Some verses refer to both the land and the people because God always reckons the two as one (Isa. 1:7-9, 27). If the people in the U.S.A. are corrupt, it means that the U.S.A. is corrupt. When the people on the land are polluted, it means that, in the eyes of God, the land also is polluted. We cannot separate the people from the land.

AN ELEVATED LAND

At the time of Babel, man became one with the land of Chaldea. God came in and called Abraham out of that corrupted Chaldea, meaning that He called him out of the corrupted mankind. God brought Abraham out of that land into an elevated land, the good land of Canaan. The land of Canaan is an elevated land. According to geography, the land of Canaan is surrounded by water, by the Mediterranean Sea, the Dead Sea, and the Jordan River. This signifies that it is a land that comes out of the death water and is elevated above it. This is the land that signifies Christ with God's proper people. In God's eyes, He always considers the good land, Christ, and His proper people as one.

Week 9 – Day 2 (6/5) (Cont'd)

THE ULTIMATE CONSUMMATION OF ENTERING INTO THE GOOD LAND

Abraham entered into the good land of Canaan. When his descendants fell away from that good land, God brought them out of their fallen place and restored them to the good land. What was the ultimate consummation of the entering into the good land by the children of Israel? It was the temple. On the one hand, the temple was God's expression, and, on the other hand, it was God's kingdom, government, and administration. There, with the temple, we can see God's expression and God's kingdom. There, with the temple, God and all His people were able to rest and be satisfied. The good land is a combination of the proper earth and the proper people with God's dwelling place built up to express God and to exercise His authority in the universe. This is the good land.

In the Old Testament we see a miniature of the good land: an elevated land surrounded by death water and filled with God's dwelling place. There in that land were God's expression and administration. This is the miniature in the Old Testament. The fulfillment of this figure is found in the New Testament. Ultimately, in the New Testament, God will have a new earth. He will not just have a tract of land but a whole new earth, an earth resurrected and elevated above all death. In this new earth there will be no more sea, no more death, and no more night (Rev. 21:1, 4, 25). All sea, death, and night will be gone forever, and there will be a clean, clear, dry land with a pure river flowing through it. The New Jerusalem will be there. That will be God's eternal habitation, expression, and administration. There God will be fully expressed and His authority will be completely exercised. That will be the fulfillment of the good land. Where is our good land? It is there on the new earth.

Rev. 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and of those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

A FORETASTE OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Praise the Lord that the church life today is a foretaste of the new land with the New Jerusalem. The church life today is on the new land. Anaheim may be old, but we are on new, elevated land. This is a foretaste of the coming New Jerusalem. Are we not in the New Jerusalem today? We are. We are not in the full taste New Jerusalem, but we are in the foretaste New Jerusalem, the church life. This is our good land today. What the Jewish people had was only a type, a prefigure, of the good land. In the New Jerusalem there will be the fulfillment and the full taste of the good land. What we have in the church life today is real, but it is not yet full. We are in the reality, not in the type, but this reality is just the foretaste. In nature, the foretaste is exactly the same as the full taste. So, in foretaste, we are in the New Jerusalem and we are on the new earth.

Many of us were in the region of old religion. Some were in Catholicism and others were in Judaism. When you were in that old region, in your Chaldea, did you have the sensation that you were in the New Jerusalem? Did you have the feeling that you were tasting the New Jerusalem? The taste in the New Jerusalem is mainly the living water and the tree of life. In the New Jerusalem our taste will mainly be that of the living water for us to drink and that of the tree of life for us to feed upon. What drinking we have enjoyed since coming into the church life! The water we drink in the church life is much better than any earthly beverage. No drink on earth can compare with what we are drinking in the church life. Moreover, day by day we are enjoying the Lord Jesus as our tree of life. Who can be as pleasant and joyful as we are? We are truly in the foretaste of the New Jerusalem. Did you enjoy this taste when you were in Judaism? Did you have the taste of the New Jerusalem when you were in Catholicism burning candles and making confession to the priests? Did you have it when you were sitting in the pews in the so-called Protestant denominations? Did you have it when you were in the free groups where you found it so easy to be dissenting? Where can you have the taste of the New Jerusalem? Only in the proper church life. To us, the church life is the good land. In this good land we have God's dwelling place, rest, expression, authority, kingdom, and dominion. The church life is where we all can rest. Day by day I am resting, not working. While I am working, I am enjoying the rest. This is why it is difficult for me to be worn out, to be tired out, because I am resting, not working. Every cell in my body and every drop of my blood is resting. Oh, what an enjoyment this is!

The church life is our real rest and enjoyment. We are surely in the good land, in the land flowing with milk and honey. The milk and honey are the produce of two kinds of lives—the animal life and the plant life. This signifies the rich life of Christ. Christ's life is the animal life for redemption and the plant life for regeneration. We are now enjoying the milk and honey life flowing in the good land.

MESSAGE EIGHTEEN

THE REMAINING SABBATH REST (1)

In this message we come to the Sabbath rest (4:9). What is the Sabbath rest? As I have already pointed out, throughout the centuries it has been difficult for Christians to understand the matter of the good land of Canaan. Likewise, Christians have been unable to understand properly the Sabbath rest revealed in Hebrews 4. Some say that the Sabbath rest in this chapter is the millennium. They say that the millennial kingdom, a period of a thousand years (Rev. 20:4), will be the seventh period of a thousand years, the first six thousand years being the period from the time of Adam's creation until the time of the Lord's coming

Week 9 – Day 3 (6/6) (Cont'd)

back. This concept is based upon the fact that in the eyes of the Lord a thousand years are the same as a day (2 Pet. 3:8). According to those who hold this concept, six days mean six thousand years, and the seventh day will be the seventh thousand, the Sabbath rest during the millennium. This interpretation has never satisfied me. To say that the Sabbath rest in 4:9 is simply the millennial kingdom is not altogether accurate; it is only partially correct.

I. THE FIRST MENTION OF THE SABBATH REST

In order to have the proper understanding of the Sabbath rest, we need to consider the first mention of it in the Bible. The first time that the Bible mentions the Sabbath is after the creation of man (Gen. 2:2-3). Many Christians, looking at this matter superficially, only see that the Sabbath was the seventh day, the day on which God rested after completing His work of creation. Although it is correct to say this, we need to look into the contents. Why did God not rest on the fifth day? You may say that He did not rest on the fifth day because He had not finished His work. That is correct. What, then, did God lack? It is very meaningful to see what He lacked.

According to the record of Genesis 1, God created all things by means of His word, calling things not being as being through His word. But the creation of man was not done in this way. God did not create man simply by saying, “Man,” and bringing mankind into being. No, God made man with the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). Nothing else was made with any kind of material substance. When God wanted light, He said, “Light,” and light came into being. The creation of man, however, was absolutely different. When God created man, He did not call things not being as being. Firstly, there was a conference among the Godhead (Gen. 1:26) and then He used a certain material, the dust of the ground, to create man. If man had not been created on the sixth day, God would have been unable to rest on the seventh day even though everything else had been created. It was not the completion of the work that caused God to rest—it was the creation of man. After God created man, He was satisfied and was able to rest.

How can we prove this? In all the days of creation, except for the second day, God looked at His work and said, “Good.” But at the end of the sixth day, after man had been created, God saw everything that He had made and said, “Very good” (Gen. 1:31). When He said, “Very good,” it meant that He was satisfied. At the end of the sixth day, seeing man in His image to express Him and committed with His authority to represent Him, God was satisfied and said, “Very good.”

Our study of the Bible has been greatly influenced by our religious background. Even before we ever read the Bible, we already had certain concepts about it. These concepts are damaging. Before we could look at the colors in the Bible, we had already put on colored eye glasses. As a result, we could not see the real colors in the Scriptures. We must take off our glasses and look at the Bible in a pure way. This is why I say again and again that we must return to the pure Word and reread and restudy it. We need to forget what we have heard about Genesis 1 in the past. If you reread Genesis 1 and 2, you will see that God rested on the seventh day not mainly because His work was finished but because He had attained what He desired. What God desired was not a finished work. Rather, He wanted mankind to be on the earth expressing and representing Him. This is His heart’s desire. As long as God can have this, He is satisfied. God’s heart is satisfied by having man on the earth expressing and representing Him. When God had this, He rested on the seventh day.

John 5: 9 And immediately the man became well, and he took up his mat and walked. Now it was the Sabbath on that day;

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father is working until now, and I also am working.

Heb. 4:8-9 For if Joshua had brought them into rest, He would not have spoken concerning another day after these things. 9 So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

II. THE LOSS OF THE SABBATH REST

When man was damaged by the fall, this rest was lost. At this point, we need to consider John chapter five, the case of the enlivening of the impotent man. John 5:9 says, “And immediately the man became well, and picked up his bed and walked. Now it was the Sabbath on that day” (Recovery Version). In enlivening the impotent man, the Lord did something which, according to the Jewish regulations, was not permitted on the Sabbath day. As a result, the Jews persecuted the Lord Jesus. Verse 16 says, “And for this the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill Him, because He did these things on the Sabbath” (Recovery Version). On the Sabbath day, they sought to kill Jesus. Do you believe that anyone who is seeking to kill a person could be at rest? Do you think that all those persecuting Jews had rest in their hearts? I do not believe it. In verse 17 we see the Lord’s answer to the Jews: “My Father is working until now, and I am working” (Recovery Version). The Lord seemed to be saying, “You are keeping the Sabbath, but My Father is working. The Sabbath that He had on the seventh day has been lost because man has been damaged. As long as man has not been recovered, My Father is still working. Look at this poor man. He has been lost, spoiled, ruined, and corrupted by the enemy of God. How can My Father rest? You may rest according to your tradition, but you don’t have the real rest. While you say you keep the Sabbath, you don’t know what the Sabbath really means. You do not have rest, do you? Neither does My Father have rest. So, My Father is still working, and I am working too. This is why I am here. I have come here to do My work. Don’t you know that the Sabbath has been lost, that the Sabbath on which God was satisfied has been lost, destroyed by the enemy of God? Don’t you know that God lost what He had gained? My Father is working until now. Since Genesis 3, My Father has never stopped working because the man who satisfied Him has been damaged.” How we need to be impressed with the real significance of the Sabbath! The significance of the Sabbath is that God is satisfied with man when man expresses and represents Him. When there is a situation in which man expresses God and represents Him, that day is the Sabbath to God.

III. THE GOOD LAND AS THE SABBATH REST

Now we need to return to the matter of the good land. Why was the good land a rest? Did the children of Israel rest in the good land? From the very day they entered into it they were fighting constantly. Then why did God call that land the rest, as He did in Deuteronomy 12:9? Superficially speaking, people say that the good land of Canaan was called the rest because the people made their homes in it and settled there. This thought is rather natural and superficial. The land was a rest because the temple could be built there. There, with the temple, God could have His expression and representation. When God is expressed and represented, there is satisfaction for both God and man, and that is the real rest.

IV. CHRIST AS THE SABBATH REST IN THREE STAGES

The Sabbath rest in 4:9, as typified by the good land of Canaan (Deut. 12:9; Heb. 4:8), is Christ as our rest. Christ is rest to us in three stages. In the church age, He, as the heavenly Christ, the One who has expressed, represented, and satisfied God and who rests from His work and sits on the right hand of God in the heavens, is the rest to us in our spirit (Matt. 11:28-29). In the millennial kingdom, after Satan has been removed from the earth (Rev. 20:1-3), God will be expressed, represented, and satisfied by Christ and the overcoming saints. Then Christ with the kingdom will be the rest in a fuller way to the overcoming saints who will be co-kings with Him (Rev. 20:4, 6) and share and enjoy His rest. In the new heaven and new

Week 9 – Day 4 (6/7) (Cont'd)

earth, after all the enemies, including death, the last enemy, are subdued to Him (1 Cor. 15:24-27), God will be fully expressed, represented, and satisfied by all His redeemed ones in Christ. At that time Christ, as the all-conquering One, with that glorious situation, will be the rest in the fullest way to all God's redeemed for eternity. Thus, the Sabbath rest mentioned in 4:9 and typified by the rest of the good land of Canaan should only cover the first two stages of Christ as rest to us and should not include the third stage. The rest in the first two stages is a prize to His diligent seekers who are not only redeemed but have also enjoyed Him in a full way so that they have become the overcomers; whereas the rest in the third stage is not a prize but the full portion to all the redeemed ones. Therefore, Christ as rest to us in the first two stages, especially in the second stage, is the Sabbath rest mentioned here, the rest that remains for us to seek after and enter into diligently. It is in the second stage of Christ as rest to us that Christ will take possession of the whole earth as His inheritance (Psa. 2:8; Heb. 2:5-6) for His kingdom in the millennium (Rev. 11:15). All His overcoming followers, who seek and enjoy Him as their rest in the first stage, will participate in His reign at that time (Rev. 20:4, 6; 2 Tim. 2:12). It is then that they will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5; Psa. 37:11). Some will have authority over ten cities, some over five (Luke 19:17, 19). It is then that they will also partake of the joy of their Lord (Matt. 25:21, 23). That will be the kingdom rest, which is typified by the rest of entering into the good land of Canaan. The rest of the good land was the goal to all the children of Israel who were redeemed and delivered from Egypt; likewise, the rest of the coming kingdom is the goal to the New Testament believers who have been redeemed and saved from the world. We are all on the way now towards this goal.

V. A MUTUAL REST FOR GOD AND MAN

When God rested on the seventh day, Adam also rested. Likewise, when God has no rest, man has no rest either. In John chapter four, the Lord Jesus was laboring because He was hungry. Moreover, both He and the Samaritan woman were thirsty. Was there any rest there? No, there was no rest because man had not yet been gained by God for His expression and representation. Not until man has been gained by God to express and represent Him can God and man have rest. If in the church life today all the brothers and the sisters go their own way and no one goes God's way, there will be no rest, even if we come together in a very active way. In such a case, there is not the wonderful church life. The church life is a life in which man is gained by God on earth for His expression and representation. When this situation appears, we all shall be in the rest, because God will be satisfied to see Himself expressed and represented through a group of human beings. Whenever this happens on earth so many angels in heaven will be rejoicing for God's satisfaction. How do we know when God is satisfied and at rest? We know it because our spirit is satisfied. Now we know the real meaning of the Sabbath rest: it is the satisfaction of God with man in having gained man to express and represent Him on earth. Whenever such a situation appears, that is the Sabbath, and both God and man are satisfied and rested. This is the Sabbath rest.

VI. A PROPHECY OF THE REMAINING SABBATH REST

In type, this Sabbath rest was the good land. In actuality, however, this rest was not realized by the children of Israel when they entered into the good land. Therefore, the psalmist prophesied of a remaining Sabbath rest for God's people (Psa. 95:7-11). The book of Hebrews quotes Psalm 95 concerning the rest. What is this Sabbath rest? In principle, it is the situation in which man is gained by God to express and represent Him. This situation did not come into being until the church came into existence.

Heb. 3:7, 13, 15 Therefore, even as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, 13 But exhort one another each day, as long as it is called "today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 15 While it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the provocation."

VII. THE CHURCH LIFE AS GOD'S SABBATH

In a positive and good sense, the proper church life is God's Sabbath. Now we can understand why the book of Hebrews warns the believers not to miss the Sabbath, telling them to be diligent to enter into it. What is this Sabbath? It is the proper church life. The writer seems to be saying, "O Hebrew believers, don't go back to keep the old Sabbath, That is past. In the Psalms God prophesied of another day, the remaining Sabbath rest." If you read chapters three and four of Hebrews carefully, you will find this promise of the remaining Sabbath rest. These two chapters speak of "another day." This "another day" is "Today" (3:7, 13, 15; 4:7). This "another day," "Today," is the promised Sabbath rest that remains for us. The writer seemed to be saying, "Hebrew believers, don't be foolish. The Sabbath rest that God kept in Genesis 2 has been destroyed and will never occur again. In the Psalms, God has assigned another day, 'Today.' This is the remaining Sabbath rest for you. You must enter into it."

What is this Sabbath rest? Firstly, it is the church life. We must enter into the church life so that God may be expressed and represented on earth today, be satisfied, and find rest. When this happens, God and we shall have our Sabbath rest. If we do not get into the proper church life, we shall miss the rest. However, as we shall see, this is not altogether the meaning of the Sabbath rest in Hebrews.

In Matthew 11:28-29 the Lord said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Many Christians understand this verse in a very superficial way, thinking that it means they will find comfort whenever they are heavy laden and come to the Lord Jesus. Although this may work for you the first time, it may not work after that. If you just take the Lord as your rest according to your natural, selfish concept, the Lord will eventually turn His face away from you. Many Christians experienced this kind of comfort at the beginning of their Christian life only to find that it did not work well later on. Why? Because Christ is not our life and rest for our individual enjoyment but for the building up of God's house. If you want to enjoy Christ as your rest, you must come to Him. But where is He? Where do we go to meet Him? We must come to the church. The rest, which is Christ Himself, is in the church. Why is this rest in the church? Because in the church God is expressed and represented, and where God is expressed and represented, there is the Sabbath. If you do not believe this, try to take your own way and pray to Christ for comfort. If you stay away from the church, you will probably find yourself unable to pray.

Today there is only one good land—the church life. Today's church is the good land because in the church God has His habitation for His expression and representation. God's throne, kingdom, and government are in the church. Thus, it is in the church that God is satisfied. If He is not satisfied there, then where is He satisfied? There is only one situation that can satisfy God: a situation in which a group of people has been gained by Him to be His expression and representation. The angels do not have this privilege because they have not been ordained to express and represent God. But we have been destined and ordained to express and represent Him. Therefore, God's satisfaction and rest are in the church.

Week 9 – Day 5 (6/8) (Cont'd)

Although many Christians are truly saved, they are not in the church life. Likewise, many of the children of Israel were saved at the time of the Passover. They struck the blood, ate the lamb, came out of Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and were saved. But how many of them came into the rest? Very few. In like manner, although there are so many real Christians, those who have been truly saved, very few are in the church life. Do you believe that all Christians are in the good land? No, many are wandering, and others still remain in Egypt, doing such worldly things as going to the movies. Since they have believed in the Lord Jesus, we cannot say that they have not been saved. However, they are in Egypt or in the wilderness, not in the good land. We need to be diligent to press on to enter into the rest. Where is our rest today? It is in the church life.

VIII. THE CHURCH LIFE AS THE HIGH GOSPEL

God is not the only one who desires to rest in the church life. So many unbelieving human beings are wandering, dissatisfied with their way of life. This is why we need to have the proper and high church life, the church life that will be the high gospel for the thirsty ones. This is not a matter of having a Sunday morning eleven o'clock service; it must be the proper church life in which God and man are satisfied. When the hungry and thirsty ones come to such a church life, they will see that this is what they have been looking for, that this is what they desire, and immediately they will enter into the Sabbath rest. All the believers as well must endeavor to enter into this rest. But today the book of Hebrews is closed to most Christians, and no one will touch it. We all must realize that the book of Hebrews is a part of the full gospel. Let me say what is on my heart: I want to encourage all the young brothers and sisters to go to the campuses to preach the gospel according to the book of Hebrews. They need to go and preach this high gospel for the proper human life.

When I was preaching the gospel years ago, my favorite messages were on the meaning of life, vanity, and drinking at the fountain of life. On New Year's Day in 1932, I preached on the subject of vanity. After preaching for only twenty minutes, so many people stood up even before I had finished my call because I had touched their inward feeling, the feeling of vanity in their life, the vanity in their being. Although I did not preach very much on sin, eventually everyone repented of his sin. Oh, we must go to the thirsty people, to the hungry people, and preach the high gospel of the church life that can satisfy the hunger and thirst in their lives. The church life must be today's Sabbath rest, the good land flowing with milk and honey.

Study Questions

1. What is the relationship between glory and fighting, and thus why do we need a captain of salvation ?
2. What does it mean for Jesus to be made perfect through sufferings, and how does this apply to us?

Rev. 4:2-3 Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting; 3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance, and there was a rainbow around the throne like an emerald in appearance.

MESSAGE NINETEEN

THE REMAINING SABBATH REST (2)

In the last message we saw the real meaning of the Sabbath rest, seeing that it is not merely a rest after the completion of work but that it means satisfaction. If your desire has not been satisfied, you cannot have rest. The best rest, the real rest, is the satisfaction of our heart's desire. When we consider this matter of the Sabbath rest, we must learn what is God's heart's desire. From the beginning of the Bible to the end, we can see that God's desire according to His eternal plan is to have Himself expressed and represented by man. It was for this reason that He created man in His own image and gave him dominion over all things (Gen. 1:26). When man is on the earth expressing God and representing Him, God's desire is satisfied. When we are satisfied in our God's desire, we are resting even as we are laboring and working. When the Bible first mentions man, it speaks of God's image and dominion, indicating that man was destined to express God with His image and to represent God with His dominion. In other words, man has been destined by God to express Him and represent Him in His image and with His authority to set up a kingdom, a divine realm, for God's rule on earth. This is clearly pictured in Genesis 1.

When we come to the end of the Bible, after centuries of God's work of creation, redemption, transformation, and glorification, we see a city with God's appearance. God sitting upon the throne has the appearance of jasper (Rev. 4:2-3), and the entire city of New Jerusalem also has the appearance of jasper (Rev. 21:11, 18a), signifying that God will be fully expressed in and through that city. When you look at that city, you will see God. There, in the New Jerusalem, God will be fully expressed. Moreover, in the center of the city is the throne of God (Rev. 22:1, 3), showing that God's dominion also is there. In the New Jerusalem God's image will be expressed and His authority will be exercised. Therefore, in eternity future on the new earth, the New Jerusalem will be God's complete expression and dominion. That will be the true Sabbath rest to God. At that time, God will be fully at rest because His heart's desire will have been completely satisfied. He will have obtained what He desired to have. This is the real meaning of the Sabbath rest.

IX. THE SABBATH REST IN VARIOUS AGES

A. Israel as God's Sabbath Rest

Based upon this understanding of the Sabbath rest, we can see in the Bible different ages or periods in the Sabbath rest. Firstly, the children of Israel in the Old Testament age were God's Sabbath. The children of Israel expressed God and represented Him on earth. Although there are many negative stories concerning the children of Israel in the Bible, they did, nonetheless, express and represent God. We should not only look at the black side of the history of the children of Israel but also at the white side. When I was a young Christian, almost everything that I heard about the children of Israel was negative. In message after message we were warned not to be like Israel. As a result of this, I received the deep impression that the book of Numbers was the worst book in the Bible. Many years later I learned that the book of Numbers was glorious. Although there is the black side in this book, there is also the white side. For example, what happened when Baalam was hired to curse Israel? God sovereignly took care of this matter, and out of Baalam's mouth came blessings instead of cursings. Baalam said, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel" (Num. 23:21), and, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! (Num. 24:5).

Week 10 – Day 1 (6/11) (Cont'd)

The Old Testament reveals that Israel, God's chosen people, became God's rest, His Sabbath. Israel secured the good land, and that good land became "the land of Emmanuel" (Isa. 8:8). The word Emmanuel means "God with us." The land of Canaan was called the land of God with man, the land where God was able to be with man. Since God secured that land through the children of Israel, the children of Israel became His Sabbath.

Eventually the children of Israel built the temple for God, and the shekinah glory of the Lord filled it (1 Kings 8:11). On that day, God not only came down from heaven, but His shekinah glory filled the temple. That was more precious than God's creation of the earth. If God could only create the earth but not gain it and build His temple, His habitation, on it, then what was the use of the earth? After the temple was built, God could say, "Now I have a habitation on earth." The land secured by the children of Israel not only became the land of Emmanuel, the land of God with man, but also the site where God's habitation was built. God's expression was there in the temple, which was a symbol of Israel as God's habitation on earth. When the temple had been built and was filled with God's glory, God rested. Do you not believe that the children of Israel were also at rest? Yes, they all rested with God; that was a Sabbath to them. As all of them rested with God, they surely kept the Sabbath. That was the first stage of the Sabbath rest.

B. Jesus as God's Sabbath Rest

In His economy, God always acts in a gradual way. Firstly, God had Adam and then, gradually, He had Abel, Enosh, Enoch, Noah, Abraham with his descendants, and then the children of Israel. But that was not the end. After this gradual development, Jesus, the second man, came. When the Lord Jesus was baptized, God was happy and satisfied, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). When God said that He was pleased with His Son, it meant that He was satisfied. At that time, the Lord Jesus was the Sabbath rest to God. Not only did God rest in Him, but so many of those who followed Him also rested in the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was the Sabbath rest to God and His followers. Both God and His followers rested in Him.

C. The Church, the Enlargement of Christ, as God's Sabbath Rest

The Church is the enlargement and the expansion of Christ. If Christ was God's Sabbath, then how much more extensive should the church be as His Sabbath? If Israel was God's Sabbath, then the church must be even more of a Sabbath to Him. If the Lord Jesus in the flesh was God's Sabbath, then the church, the Body of Christ, must be an even greater Sabbath to God. Although I have heard that when we come to the Lord Jesus we have rest, I have never heard that we also may have rest when we come to the church. Today I want to announce to you the glad tidings that the church is your rest.

No place is as restful as your own home. Is not the church your home? If the church is your home, then the church must certainly be your rest. Is not the church God's house? Since the church is God's house (1 Tim. 3:15), then the church must be God's rest today.

In this age, the age of the church, Christ is our rest. But do you not realize that the church is the enlargement of Christ? If Christ is our rest, then what about the church as the enlargement of Christ? If the individual Christ is our rest, then what about the corporate Christ? How can we forget the enlarged Christ or neglect the corporate Christ? Not only is the individual Christ our rest but also the corporate Christ. Not only the Head but also the Body is our Sabbath rest. Recently the Lord burdened me, saying, "You must go and tell My people that the church is their rest today!" Never have I seen so clearly as in these days that the church is today's Sabbath rest.

- Eph. 2:15 Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace,
4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.
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1. Because the Church Is the New Man

Let us now consider the reasons why the church today is the Sabbath rest. Firstly, according to Genesis 1 and 2, in order for God to have His Sabbath rest, He must have His expression and representation. In other words, God's Sabbath needs a man in His own image with His dominion. Immediately after the creation of the first man, the old man, God had a Sabbath because God had secured a man to express and represent Him. Should God not also have a rest after the creation of the new man? The church is the new man (Eph. 2:15; 4:24). If God enjoyed a Sabbath rest after the creation of the old man, He must have a greater rest after the creation of the new man. We are not in the age of the creation of the old man but in the new age, after the creation of the new man. God has a new Sabbath because He has secured a new man to express and represent Him. According to the principle established by the first mention of the Sabbath rest after the creation of man, there must be a new and better Sabbath after the creation of the new man. We are in this new Sabbath today.

2. Because God Rests in the Church

Secondly, in Deuteronomy 12:9 we are told clearly that the land of Canaan was a rest to Israel because it was a rest to God. The land was God's rest because there He could have His habitation and there He could put His name (Deut. 12:5, 11). The name is just the person himself. When God said that He would put His name there, it meant that He would put Himself there. When God said that His name would be there, it seemed that He was saying, "My name is just Myself. For My name to dwell there means that I shall dwell there. I shall set Myself there and make My habitation there. That place will be My dwelling place, and My dwelling place is My rest." Is not the church God's habitation today? Is it not God's house? Ephesians 2:22 says that God's habitation is in our spirit. Ephesians 2:15 mentions the new man and Ephesians 2:22 speaks of God's habitation. For both the new man and the habitation there should be the Sabbath rest. Is not the church the new man? As long as the church is the new man, we have the Sabbath. Is not the church God's habitation? As long as the church is the habitation of God, we also have God's rest.

3. Because the Church Is the Kingdom of God Today

In order to have God's habitation for His expression, there is the need of the exercise of God's authority. In Genesis 1:26 dominion follows image and goes along with it. This means that God's kingdom goes along with His expression. Without the kingdom as a safeguard and protection, it would be difficult for the expression of God to exist. Where the expression of God is, there is always the kingdom of God. Is the church not the kingdom of God today? Yes, the church is surely the kingdom of God today.

John 3:5 says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Recovery Version). In this verse we see that regeneration brings us into the kingdom of God. Yet some say that the kingdom of God is not present today. Some hold the concept that after Matthew 13 the kingdom of God was suspended. According to this concept, after the Lord Jesus presented the kingdom to the Jewish people and they rejected it, the kingdom was suspended. But if this is true, where shall we put John 3:5, which says that regeneration brings us into the kingdom? Have you not been reborn? Since we have been reborn, we must be now in the kingdom of God. John 3 tells us that we have been reborn into the kingdom of God. When an animal is born, it immediately enters into the animal kingdom. When a man is born, he is certainly born into the human kingdom. We have been born of God; therefore, we have been born into God's kingdom. Do you not have the divine life? Since we have the divine life, how can we say that we are not in the kingdom of God?

We should not be influenced by the concept that the kingdom of God is not here and that we must wait

Week 10 – Day 2 (6/12) (Cont'd)

for it. Although I do not say that the kingdom of God has come in every sense or in a full way, I do say that the kingdom has come already. While Matthew 6:10 says that we should pray, “Thy kingdom come,” Matthew 16:18-19 indicates that the kingdom comes when the church is built. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, “I will build my church,” and in the next verse He said, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” This indicates that the words church and kingdom are used inter-changeably, proving that the church is the kingdom and that the kingdom is also the church. When Peter used the keys to open the kingdom, that was the time when the church was built. Although the whole book of Matthew is on the kingdom, it speaks of the church in both chapters sixteen and eighteen. In Matthew 18:15-17 we are told that if a brother with whom we have a problem will not listen to us, we should “tell it unto the church” and that he should “hear the church.” If that brother neglects to hear the church, the church will look upon him as a publican or as a heathen man. Immediately after saying this, the Lord speaks of the church having the authority to bind and loose. We see by this that the church life is the reality of the kingdom.

Other New Testament books also reveal that the church life today is the kingdom. In Romans, a book that is on the church life, not on the kingdom, we see that the kingdom of God is the church life. Romans 14:17 says, “The kingdom of God is...righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” The church life today is the kingdom of God.

The book of Ephesians also shows us that the church is the kingdom of God today. Ephesians 2:15 speaks of the new man, Ephesians 2:22 speaks of the habitation of God in our spirit, and Ephesians 3:21 speaks of the church. The church as the kingdom of God is found in Ephesians 5:5. Thus, the new man is the habitation, the habitation is the church, and the church is the kingdom. Hence, the church today is the kingdom of God. Hebrews 12:28 says that we are receiving this unshakable kingdom. We are not just waiting for it; we have already begun to receive it.

We see the same thing in the book of Revelation. Although many Christians hold the concept that the kingdom has not yet come but that it will come in the future, in Revelation 1:9 the Apostle John says, “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” This verse indicates that John was in the kingdom already. What was the kingdom for him at that time? According to the following verses (10-13), it was the church. Therefore, the church today is the kingdom where God’s authority is exercised and represented. Where God has His dominion, there is rest. So the church, being the kingdom of God today, is God’s Sabbath rest. Since the church has God’s image and is God’s kingdom, it is a Sabbath rest for God.

X. THE HOUSE OF GOD AS THE REMAINING SABBATH REST IN HEBREWS

At this point we need to read Hebrews 3:6-7: “But Christ, as a Son over His house, Whose house we are, if we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end. Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit says, Today if you hear His voice.” Verse 6 says that we are the house of God and that the Son of God is now over the house taking care of it. If we would enjoy Christ, we need to be in the house and be a part of the house. Verse 7 begins with the word “wherefore,” indicating that it is the continuation of the foregoing verse. The use of the word wherefore to connect verses 6 and 7 means that we must take care of the house of God or else we shall miss the Sabbath and not enter into rest. Hebrews 4:7, being a continuation of 3:7, says, “He again designates a certain day, Today, saying in David after so long a time, as He has said before, Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” Verses 8 and 9 continue, saying, “For if Joshua had brought them into rest, He would not have spoken concerning another day after these things. There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” If we put all of these verses together, we shall see that today the Sabbath rest is the house of God. If we do not remain in the house of God, we shall miss the Sabbath rest. The writer seemed to be saying to the Hebrew believers, “Your fathers in the wilderness did not listen to the word of God. So, after that, in the Psalms, the Spirit set up another day for you to enter into rest. What is the rest that you need to enter today? It is the house of God under Christ, the Son of God.” The “wherefore” in 3:7 is very important. If we did not have this word here, we would be unable to see that the Sabbath rest today is the house of God under the care of the Son of God.

Heb. 3:7-8 Therefore, even as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of trial in the wilderness,

Matt. 12:7-8 But if you knew what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

Although thousands of Christians have been saved, so many of them remain in the wilderness; they have never entered into the good land. What is today's good land? It is a situation in which there is God's habitation with God's kingdom. This is the church life. The church is God's house, God's habitation, and God's kingdom. Thus, the church is today's good land. If we miss this, we miss today's Sabbath rest.

For years I wondered about the Sabbath rest in Hebrews 4, being dissatisfied with all the interpretations of it that I heard. But now, seeing that the church is today's Sabbath rest, I am fully satisfied and at rest about this matter. The house of God under the care of the Son of God is our rest, home, homeland, land of Emmanuel, and good land flowing with milk and honey.

In Matthew 11:28-30 the Lord Jesus said that if we were heavy laden and would come to Him, He would be our rest, and in Matthew 12:8 He said that He was the Lord of the Sabbath. Where is this Christ who is our rest and who is the Lord of the Sabbath? He is in the church. If we would take Christ as our rest, we must be in the church. The book of Revelation mentions clearly that this Christ, the all-inclusive One, is now walking in the midst of the lampstands, that is, among the churches. Not only is He walking among the churches, but, as Revelation 2 and 3 reveal, He is the Spirit speaking to the churches. If you want to touch Him, enjoy Him, and partake of Him as your rest, you need to be in the church. The church is our Sabbath today. If you apply this concept to all of the verses in Isaiah concerning the Sabbath, you will see how meaningful it is. How do we keep the Sabbath today? By having the church life. Oh, how we need to have the church life! We are the real Sabbath keepers; we keep the Sabbath day by day. What a Sabbath we are enjoying today! What a rest this is!

In the book of Hebrews the church is mentioned briefly but strongly. Hebrews 2:12 says, "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise unto You." The church is the place where the Firstborn Son of God can declare the Father to His brothers and sing praises to the Father. This is not a small thing. Many of us can testify that for years where we were before we came into the church life we did not have the realization that the Son of God was declaring the Father to us or singing praises to the Father in our midst. Although you might have attended many so-called Christian services, have you ever had the sense that where you were the Son of God was praising the Father in your midst? But how about today in the church meetings? Meeting after meeting, we do have the sense that the Lord is revealing the life, the reality, of the Father. Every time we meet together we have the sense that the Lord is happy with us, that the Son of God is praising the Father. This is the Sabbath rest.

In Hebrews 2 we have the church wherein the Son of God praises the Father, and in chapter three we have the house of God of which the Son of God takes excellent care. This church, this house, is the Sabbath rest. After mentioning these two matters in chapters two and three, the writer of Hebrews speaks of the remaining Sabbath rest in chapter four, telling us that we need to be "diligent to enter into that rest" (v. 11). What is the Sabbath, the good land, mentioned here? It is the church life, the house of God, the church in which the Son of God praises the Father, and the house of God taken care of by the Son of God. The "wherefore" at the beginning of 3:7, connecting, as we have seen, the house of God in chapter three with the Sabbath rest in chapter four, is a strong proof that the church life is today's Sabbath rest. We all must endeavor to enter into it, and once we have entered into it, we should never leave it.

XI. A WARNING ABOUT DISSENTING AND GIVING UP THE SABBATH REST

Barnabas is an illustration of a person who gave up the Sabbath rest. Barnabas brought the Apostle Paul into his ministry and for quite a while was an apostle working along with Paul (Acts 9:26-27; 11:25-26; 13:2; 14:14). Eventually, however, Barnabas dissented with Paul and separated from him, taking Mark

Week 10 – Day 3 (6/13) (Cont'd)

with him and going on his own way while Paul went with Silas to establish the churches (Acts 15:36-41). From this point onward, there is no further record concerning Barnabas in the book of Acts, for he was through with the Sabbath rest of the church life. Barnabas came into the Sabbath rest and stayed for a time, but then he left it because he was dissenting. After that, he was out of the Sabbath rest and was no longer in the divine economy.

In Romans 16:17-20 we have a warning about the matter of dissenting. Verse 17 says, “Now I beg you, brothers, keep a watchful eye on those who make divisions and causes of falling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them” (Recovery Version). The causes of falling here refer to a falling away from the church life. Such divisions and causes of falling will keep us away from the Sabbath rest. This kind of thing is not only happening today but also happened during Paul’s days. If you would check with those who are opposing the church life or dissenting with it today, you will find that none of them has rest. They have no joy or peace, only jealousy, because they are not in the Sabbath, not in the good land. Whoever becomes dissenting against the church life and opposes it will miss the Sabbath rest. In Romans 16:18 Paul continues, “For such men do not serve as slaves our Lord Christ, but their own appetites; and by smooth and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple” (Recovery Version). These dissenting ones have a taste, desire, and appetite for their own little kingdom and empire. Do not listen to their arguments or excuses. Their basic factor is their appetite. They are hungry for something, for there is a gap deep within them. They are seeking for something to satisfy their desire. That is the meaning of the word appetite in this verse. These dissenting ones employed smooth and flattering speech, deceiving the hearts of the simple. Then verse 20 certainly refers to the Sabbath rest: “Now the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” (Recovery Version). When the God of peace is present and Satan is crushed, that surely is the Sabbath rest. The grace of the Lord also points to the rest. We should not be distracted by the dissenting ones but stay with the church to enjoy the Sabbath rest. The church is God’s desire today. Therefore, it is God’s Sabbath rest.

MESSAGE TWENTY

THE REMAINING SABBATH REST (3)

We thank the Lord for what He has been showing us about the Sabbath rest. God could never find His full rest in heaven, because heaven is not the place where His eternal purpose is fulfilled. God’s full rest is on earth with man. Regardless of how wonderful or excellent the angels may be, God’s rest is not with the angels in heaven but with man on the earth. This is why the Lord Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Eventually, the Bible reveals that God’s full rest, His full Sabbath, will be on the earth with a living composition of all the redeemed people.

XII. THE PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SABBATH REST

Beginning at Genesis 2, this matter of the Sabbath rest develops progressively. In Genesis 2 we see that God’s first Sabbath was immediately after He had gained a man on earth in His image to express Him and with His authority to represent Him. Immediately after securing a man on earth in His image and with His dominion, God rested. That was the first Sabbath. God’s second Sabbath was with the children of Israel. After the children of Israel had gained the good land of Canaan and had built there a temple which was filled with God’s shekinah glory, God had His second Sabbath on earth. The temple in the good land filled with God’s glory signified that God had secured on earth a people to be His dwelling place, a place where He could dwell, express Himself and exercise His dominion. This was God’s second Sabbath with man on earth. Thus, in the Old Testament we have two outstanding stories concerning God’s Sabbath: the first in Genesis 2 and the second in 1 Kings 8.

Acts 2: 1-4 And as the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all together in the same place. 2 And suddenly there was a sound out of heaven, as of a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which were distributed; and it sat on each one of them; 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, even as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth.

As we saw in the last message, when the Lord Jesus came, He also was God's Sabbath. Following the Lord Jesus, we have the church as the Sabbath rest to God. Christ is the Head and the church is the Body. When we come to the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, we see that the glory of God filled the temple once again, and God again secured a habitation with man on earth for His rest. We may say that this is the third Sabbath. God had gained a man on the earth. Although God did have something with Noah, Abraham, and with the Lord Jesus Himself, in this message we need to focus on the three main Sabbaths: the first Sabbath after the creation of man in God's image and with God's dominion; the second when the temple was built on earth and filled with God's glory; and the third when the church, as the new man, was built with people in God's image.

The first two Sabbaths, the Sabbath after the creation of man and the Sabbath after the building of the temple, both were pictures; neither of them was the real thing. The first real Sabbath that God secured with man on earth was the building up of the church. The church is not a Sabbath rest in figure but in reality. The Sabbaths with Adam and with the building up of the temple were types, but the building up of the church is not a type—it is the fulfillment.

God's way is a progressive way. We can see this in His creation in Genesis 1. Why did not God create everything in a single day? He could have completed everything in just a few minutes. On the first day God simply called for the light, and on the second day He created the expanse. If we had been there, we probably would not have been very patient, saying to God, "God, the light is here, but we need air." Sometimes we are faster than God. God's way is often contrary to ours; He always does things in a progressive way. One day, God became a man, sowed Himself into mankind, and after the death and resurrection of that man, the church was produced. But God did not accomplish everything once for all. Although God has sown Himself into us as the seed, the harvest has not yet come. Whatever we have received, secured, and gained today is the seed, not the harvest. God is patient. Although the seed was sown nearly two thousand years ago, God did not accomplish all the work once for all at that time. When God sowed Himself into mankind, a wonderful age, the New Testament age, began. Before the Lord Jesus came God had never sown Himself into mankind. Adam and the children of Israel were types. God never sowed Himself into the soil of Adam or into the soil of the children of Israel because they were types. Only in the church is the real soil into which God has sown Himself.

Consider the natural law of the growth of a seed. If you sow a seed into the ground, you do not expect to have a harvest the next morning. Not even a mushroom grows that fast. The best harvest will always take the longest time. According to natural law, life takes time to grow, and the highest life requires the longest time to grow. A dog may grow to maturity in less than a year, but a human being needs at least eighteen years to grow into maturity. Parents do not expect their children to grow as quickly as a dog grows. Nevertheless, all the pastors, preachers, and ministers are dreaming, thinking that we Christians can grow up overnight. We need time to grow, time to ripen and mature.

XIII. THE GROWING SABBATH AND THE SABBATH OF MATURITY

God has sown Himself into a part of mankind which became the church and which includes everyone who has received the Lord Jesus. But after receiving the Lord Jesus there is a problem: How are we going to allow the Lord to grow in us? In the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, we see four kinds of soil. Although each type of soil received the same seed, the issue, the result, was different in each case. Have you been regenerated? Have you received the Lord Jesus? What will be the issue? This is the very thing

Week 10 – Day 4 (6/14) (Cont'd)

that many Christians miss today. Yes, the church life is a Sabbath rest to God, but it is not a Sabbath with maturity. It is good, but it is not altogether good; it is not yet good enough. The church life is wonderful as far as the seed goes, but we have not yet reached the harvest. There is a Sabbath for God in the church life today, but this Sabbath is not yet complete, perfect, or mature. Hence, there will be another stage of the Sabbath—the age of harvest at the time when the Lord Jesus comes back. When the Lord Jesus comes the second time, that will be the age of the harvest. It is wonderful to see the field growing, but this could never be as wonderful as the harvest. Undoubtedly, there is a real Sabbath for God in the church life because God has sown Himself as the seed into the field and the field is now growing. Nevertheless, we must remember that we are still not in the harvest. Will you be ripe when the harvest time comes? If you inquire of farmers, they will tell you that some of the crop is not ripe at the harvest time. Today's Sabbath in the church life is a real Sabbath, but it is not a Sabbath with perfection or maturity. That Sabbath will be in the next age. In 1 Corinthians 3 we see the field growing, and in Revelation 14 we see the harvest being reaped.

We all can be in the growing Sabbath, but whether or not we are in the harvest Sabbath depends completely on our maturity. Look at the situation: millions of Christians have been saved, but only a small minority have come into the church life to enjoy the riches of Christ. This Sabbath is for all Christians, but not all of them have come into it. This is the very reason why the book of Hebrews was written. It was written with the purpose of encouraging the saved ones not to forsake the church life but to endeavor, strive, and be diligent to enter into it because it is today's Sabbath rest. The Sabbath rest today cannot be found in any religion, organization, or free group. Today's growing Sabbath is the real church life with the riches of Christ, and all true Christians should be encouraged to be diligent to enter into this Sabbath. If they are not diligent, they will miss the mark, as did the majority of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt. At least two million of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt at the time of the exodus died in the wilderness, and only a very small number came into the rest. That was a type. Today, in the church age, we have the fulfillment of that type. Although millions of Christians have been saved, where are they? They are either still in Egypt or wandering in the wilderness. When the book of Hebrews was written, the Hebrew believers were in danger of becoming another people wandering in the wilderness and eventually falling away in death. Therefore, Hebrews was written to encourage them to be diligent to enter into the present Sabbath rest. How much Christians need this kind of encouragement today!

XIV. A REWARD FOR PROPER GROWTH

We are in the church life as the growing Sabbath today, but the problem is how we are growing. Are we growing properly and adequately? Are we growing in such a way as to cooperate continually with the Lord's grace? How we grow in this growing Sabbath determines whether or not we shall share in the next Sabbath. Practically speaking, the Sabbath in the next age will be a prize for our proper growth during this present Sabbath. The next Sabbath, the Sabbath of maturity, will be actually and practically a reward for those who have grown properly in this present growing Sabbath. In other words, if you do not grow well in this growing Sabbath, you will miss the next Sabbath, the Sabbath of maturity. The thought here is very logical; it is God's wisdom. God is wise to use the coming Sabbath as a reward to encourage us to enjoy the present Sabbath. If we miss the present Sabbath, we shall certainly suffer the loss of the coming Sabbath.

1 Cor. 9: 24-25 Do you not know that those who run on a racecourse all run, but one receives the prize? Run in this way, that you may lay hold. 25 And everyone who contends exercises self-control in all things; they then, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible.

At this point we need to consider Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Verse 24 says, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." The word obtain here does not refer to obtaining salvation, for we have obtained salvation already. The word obtain refers to gaining the prize. "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" (v. 25). The crown in this verse is a reward, a prize, for completing the race. Verses 26 and 27 continue: "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." The matter of being a castaway mentioned in verse 27 does not refer to being a castaway from salvation but from the prize. First Corinthians 10:1 immediately continues the thought of chapter nine (There were no chapter or verse divisions in the original Greek text.) Verse 5 of this chapter says, "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." This verse begins with a very important word, "but." In a sense, all the children of Israel were in the race. When they came out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, they were running the race, but many of them fell away. In the picture depicted here by Paul, we see that he was running a race, fearing that he himself might be a castaway and miss the prize. What does this mean? Simply put, it means to miss the coming Sabbath in the millennium.

Our wise Father uses the coming Sabbath in the millennium as an encouragement for us to run the race properly today. How are you running the race? Do not run sloppily. If you do, you probably will not mature very well. Perhaps now you are in the church life enjoying today's Sabbath, the growing Sabbath, but will you be there in the next Sabbath, in the Sabbath of maturity? We all must be careful about this. As Paul was running the race during the early days of his ministry when 1 Corinthians was written, he was not sure that he would gain the prize.

We find a similar thought in Philippians 3:12-13, a book written during Paul's later ministry. Philippians 3:12 says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfected, but I pursue after, if that I may gain that for which also I am gained of Christ Jesus" (Gk). Paul was saying that Christ had gained him for something but that he had not yet gained that for which Christ had gained him. Christ has gained us for the purpose that we might gain Him, and now we are on the way toward gaining Him. Have we gained Christ in a full way? No, we have not yet gained Him in full. He has gained us that we might gain Him in full. Even at the time when Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he was still on the way, not having gained Christ in full. In verse 13 Paul continues, "Brethren, I count not myself to have gained: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Gk.). The word "high" in verse 14 means from above, that is, heavenly; thus, the high calling here is equal to the heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus. In these verses we see that Paul was still pressing on. Even when he wrote the book of Philippians he still did not have the assurance that he had gained the prize.

In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, however, Paul was sure that he had the prize: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Paul wrote these words just before he was martyred. Will we be able to say such a thing at the end of our life? Will we be able to say that we have fought a good fight, finished our race, kept the faith, and that a crown of righteousness is laid up for us? Here it is not a matter of a crown of grace but of a crown of righteousness. Paul knew that the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give him a crown of righteousness according to His righteousness in that day. What is the day referred to here? It is the Sabbath in the coming age, the Sabbath of maturity. Paul said that this crown would be given not only to him but to all those also who love the

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Lord's appearing.

How are we growing now? How are we running the race? The answer to these questions will determine our future. Will you be there in the Sabbath of maturity during the millennium? Many Christians hold the mistaken concept that as long as they are saved they will share in the kingdom in the thousand years. Although I was taught this for years, from a further study of the Bible I learned that this concept is not accurate. While salvation is by faith, the reign with Christ for a thousand years is not a matter of salvation but of the prize which encourages us to run the race properly. The Father's wisdom is shown here.

Is not the church life a Sabbath today? Yes, praise the Lord that the church life is the growing Sabbath which leads us into the Sabbath of maturity. But whether or not we shall partake of the coming Sabbath of maturity depends on how we are growing today. This is very logical. Our Father is very wise. Even an earthly father may tell his children, "Children, if you do well in school this semester, passing your final exams, there will be a big prize awaiting you. But if you do not pass your finals, you will suffer, and I will put you into a dark room for a day. While you are sitting in that dark room, your brothers and sisters who passed their finals will enjoy a special prize and a full day's rest." I know of some fathers who have this practice. A father may have five children: one receives the top prize, another receives a secondary prize, a third, barely passing the final, receives the smallest prize, and the two naughty ones who fail their final exams are put into a little dark room. Is not such a father a good, wise, just, and loving father? Certainly he is, for he encourages all of his children to do their best. Our heavenly Father's practice in the New Testament is the same. Our Father, a Father of love, is wise, knowing how to encourage His children to grow up. There are many verses in the New Testament related to this and we shall cover them in the following messages.

Paul was an apostle, but he was still running the race. Although he was so faithful and was doing a marvelous and excellent work for the Lord, he still feared that he might have been a castaway. Do you think that Paul was afraid that he would be lost? No, as we have seen, being a castaway does not mean to be lost but to miss the prize. Even at the time of his writing to the Philippians, Paul was not sure that he had gained the prize. It was only at the very end of his life when he was about to be martyred that he could declare, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Only then did he have the assurance to say this. We need to pay close attention to these verses. However, few Christians pay much attention to them, only caring for spiritual "candies." I ask you to read and pray these verses in 1 Corinthians, Philippians, and 2 Timothy again and again until you get into them and are fully enlightened. Although these verses may not appear to be so sweet, they certainly are nourishing. They are the real health food. On the one hand, we all need to be excited that in the church life today we are in the growing Sabbath enjoying the riches of Christ. But, on the other hand, we must be careful how we grow, run the race, and fight, for that will determine whether or not we shall share in the coming Sabbath, the Sabbath of maturity. May the Lord's grace be with us in this matter!

Study Questions

1. What is glory and how do the wall of the New Jerusalem related to God's glory?
2. How does Christ come from without us and from within us?