

**Reading Schedule**

**Of**

**Hebrews**

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

**Five Books Total**

**Book III**

Week	Life-Study Messages	Days Covered	Page #
11	21, 22	6/18 – 6/22	1 - 13
12	23, 24	6/25 – 6/29	14 - 23
13	25, 26	7/2 – 7/6	24 - 37
14	27, 28	7/9 – 7/13	38 - 48
15	29, 30	7/16 – 7/20	49 - 59
16	31, 32	7/23 – 7/27	60 - 72
17	33, 34	7/30 – 8/3	73 - 84
18	35, 36	8/6 – 8/10	85 - 95



Heb. 4:8-10 For if Joshua had brought them into rest, He would not have spoken concerning another day after these things. So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered into His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His own.

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MESSAGE TWENTY-ONE

**THE REMAINING SABBATH REST (4)**

In the last three messages we have seen the meaning of the Sabbath rest according to the full revelation of the Holy Word. In brief, the Sabbath rest is simply God's satisfaction in His heart's desire. Whenever and wherever God is expressed and represented by man on earth, He is satisfied and at rest. As we have pointed out, the first Sabbath was after the creation of man, and the second Sabbath was after the completion of the building of the temple. Both of these Sabbaths were figures of God's Sabbath, not the real Sabbath. After the Lord Jesus came to declare God, expressing and representing Him as an example and model, the church was produced by His death and resurrection and became the corporate expression and representation of God. When God has the church, He is truly expressed and represented. Undoubtedly, the church life is a real Sabbath to God. The church as the Sabbath rest is not a figure but a fulfillment of what was prefigured in the Old Testament. When God gained the church, He obtained a real Sabbath.

As we saw in the last message, the age of the church is just the sowing and growing stage. Regardless how long this stage may be according to our feeling, it is still one stage, the stage of sowing and growing. In this stage, God's major task is to sow Himself into mankind and to make this part of mankind the church, the Body of Christ, the house of God. This part of mankind which has been injected with God Himself as life must grow in Christ and reach maturity. We must be very clear about this point. Why is God able to be satisfied in this age? Because in this age He is expressed and represented through the church.

In the New Testament we are clearly told that the church as the expression and representation of God is the kingdom of God on earth today (Rom. 14:17). Whoever receives Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born into the kingdom of God (John 3:5). Praise the Lord that the church is the kingdom of God today! Hebrews 12:28 says that we are receiving an unshakable kingdom. This verse does not say that we have received the kingdom or that we shall receive it; it says that we are in the process of receiving the kingdom. We cannot say that we have not received an amount of the kingdom, but our receiving of the kingdom has not yet been fully accomplished. The kingdom has already started and it is continuing.

In the church age we are in the growing Sabbath, in the Sabbath where Christ as life is growing. God's heart is at least somewhat satisfied with this growing Sabbath, but it is not satisfied in full because it is just the growing stage, not the final stage, the stage of harvest. The book of Hebrews was written to encourage the wandering, hesitating, and staggering Hebrews to come into the proper church life, today's Sabbath rest. But following this Sabbath, there is something still better—the harvest Sabbath. Both of these are real Sabbaths to God. Today God does have a true Sabbath in the church life. We never realized that there could be such a wonderful thing as the church life. But by His mercy, the Lord has opened our eyes, showing us the church life, which is something holy, heavenly, and spiritual that we can touch in our spirit and enjoy with the Lord as our Sabbath rest. Hallelujah, there is such a church life on earth today!

If we know the Bible and God's economy, we shall realize that everyone who has been regenerated and has received salvation needs to come into the church life. This is God's economy. If you do not come into the church life, you will miss the mark. God's economy is not only that you be saved and regenerated; His economy is that you come into the proper church life, which is today's Sabbath. God's economy is to have a corporate expression and representation of Himself. God is very patient; He is fulfilling His economy progressively. Firstly, He has sown Himself into His chosen people and now He is giving them time to grow.

**XV. THE ULTIMATE SABBATH**

We are now in the church life, the growing Sabbath that is leading us into the harvest Sabbath of the millennial kingdom. But not even the harvest Sabbath will be the ultimate Sabbath. The ultimate Sabbath rest will be the New Jerusalem. At the time of the New Jerusalem, there will be no more sea, satanic work, or corrupted and polluted world. All of that will be in the lake of fire. There will be a new earth, and upon

## **Week 11 – Day 1 (6/18) (Cont'd)**

that new earth there will be a city built up with transformed people as the living materials. That living composition, the New Jerusalem, will be God's complete expression in eternity future. There, in the New Jerusalem, we shall see God's expression and dominion. In the New Jerusalem will be God's throne and authority for His kingdom. The New Jerusalem will be the ultimate and eternal Sabbath because there God will be fully expressed and represented. That will be the ultimate consummation of God's work of grace, and we all shall be there.

Whether we are diligent or sloppy, our wise Father has a way to perfect us and make us mature. If we do not cooperate with Him, He is patient and will wait for tomorrow, next month, next year, or even for the next age. Before the age of the New Jerusalem, there are two ages, this age and the coming age. During both of these ages our patient Father will deal with His naughty children. If we are naughty and do not participate in the growing Sabbath today, we may miss the harvest Sabbath in the coming age. To miss the coming harvest Sabbath does not mean that we shall be lost. Since we are children of the Father, we can never be lost. But if we do not behave ourselves in His grace today, making it difficult for our Father to deal with us, we may miss the coming harvest Sabbath. However, our Father is much wiser than we are and has a way to bring us to maturity. Eventually we all shall be in the New Jerusalem, the ultimate Sabbath.

There will be a total of three real Sabbaths: the church, the millennial kingdom, and the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and the new earth. Although all these are Sabbaths to God, the second will be better than the first, and third will be fuller than the second. I have the complete assurance that we all shall share in the third and fullest Sabbath, for that Sabbath is wholly a matter of grace, not of reward. It is not a prize but our Father's eternal portion for all of His children. As long as you are a child of the Father, He has a way to make you mature so that eventually you will participate in that third Sabbath.

### **XVI. OUR NEED TO MATURE**

When you hear that we all shall be in the New Jerusalem, you may say, "Hallelujah, now I am at peace. I'll be there in the New Jerusalem." But before we come to the New Jerusalem, we first must pass through the church and then through the millennium. Our wise Father uses the church age and the coming age of the millennial kingdom to cause us to mature. Although He has been sown into us, what about the maturity? His intention is to have all of us matured, and He will accomplish this. Nothing can stop Him. Our sloppiness and failures do not mean anything. Nothing, including Satan, can stop our Father from accomplishing His desire. When He chose us, He was not foolish in doing so, but was very careful. God will never repent of His choice; it is irrevocable and it will stand for eternity. He has saved us, and we shall be there in the New Jerusalem. All of this is a work of grace. God has brought us into His salvation, put Himself into us, and is now charging us to grow. But the way we grow is up to us. If we are obedient, we shall save Him a little time. If we are disobedient, we shall cause Him some difficulty. But He still has a way to cause us to grow. However, if we do not cooperate with Him, we shall suffer the loss of the enjoyment of the church life in this age and the prize in the coming age. Our wise Father deals with us so that we may mature. Do not think that you can escape His dealing. God even has a way to deal with all the Christians who have been saved but are now wandering. We cannot see this today, but one day we shall see it.

How merciful it is that our Father has brought us from wandering in the streets into His church life. Now we are no longer wandering; we are enjoying the church life which helps us to mature. I have the full assurance that the church people will mature earlier and become the firstfruits. How good it is to enjoy the present church and the coming kingdom! The present church is the Sabbath of enjoyment, and the coming kingdom is the Sabbath of prize. If we enjoy the church well today, we shall receive the kingdom as a prize in the coming age. If we do not enjoy the church well today, we shall suffer the loss of the kingdom as a prize in the coming age. It is very foolish not to enjoy Christ well in the church today. We do not have to pay anything for this enjoyment; it is free. Our Father even encourages us to enjoy Christ well. The more we enjoy Christ, the more the Father is happy and satisfied. If we continue to enjoy Christ, one day the Father will say, "Child, since you have enjoyed My Son so much, I shall give you a prize in the harvest Sabbath. You will be one of My Son's co-kings." At that time, we shall be Christ's real partners sharing in His kingship in the harvest Sabbath.

John 10:28-29 And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand.

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Some say that as long as we have been regenerated and are children of God, we shall be in the millennial kingdom. But the Bible does not say this. Rather, it tells us that we must enjoy Christ, grow, mature, suffer, and overcome for Christ. Then in the coming age we shall receive the prize. This prize is not the eternal portion of the saints but a reward to the overcomers during the millennium. If you behave yourself in the Father's house, the church, the Father will say, "Since you have satisfied Me in My house, I will give you a prize in My kingdom." But if we do not satisfy Him today in His house, we shall miss the prize and suffer loss during the next age in His kingdom. The choice is up to us. How gracious, righteous, and wise our Father is! He has prepared a feast and He encourages us all to eat well. The better we eat, the happier He will be. It is foolish not to eat well in the feast. Oh, how we all need to enjoy the church life!

### **XVII. THE TWO MAJOR SCHOOLS OF DOCTRINE**

At this point we need to consider the two major schools of doctrine—the Calvinist school and the Arminian school. The Calvinist school says that everything is a matter of God's grace, selection, and predestination. According to this school, once God has selected and predestinated us and we have been saved, there are no problems; once we have been saved, our salvation is secure for eternity. The Calvinist claim that we shall never perish has a strong basis in the Lord's word in John 10:28-29. According to these verses, a saved person cannot perish. Calvinism undoubtedly has a ground in the Bible for saying that once we are saved we are saved for eternity. But when Calvinism says that since we are saved for eternity there can be no problems, it goes too far. Although it is good to know that we have been redeemed and reborn, we should not say that since we have been redeemed and reborn we can have no problems. It would be foolish for a child to say that since he has been born, there are no problems. Any child who says this is a most foolish child. Yes, we have been reborn, but there may be many problems.

The Arminians believe that a saved person can be lost again. Using portions of the word such as Hebrews chapter six, the Arminians insist that people who have tasted the heavenly gift and who have been partakers of the Holy Spirit may fall away, may have no opportunity to repent, and may be like the land that is burned, meaning that they are lost. The book of Hebrews contains five warnings such as this. The Arminians misuse these portions of the Word concerning God's punishment or chastisement of His children, considering it as perdition, as being lost once again. They use these portions to support their teaching that a saved person can perish again.

The Calvinists, unable to reconcile these portions of the Word with their teaching, say that the persons mentioned there as being tasters of the heavenly gift and partakers of the Holy Spirit are false Christians. But it is ridiculous to say this. They say this because it is their only way of escape. Neither they nor the Arminians have been able to reconcile the portions in the Bible regarding God's punishment of His children, because they have not seen the matter of prize and punishment in the kingdom. This matter of prize or punishment in the kingdom is the bridge between Calvinism and Arminianism.

### **XVIII. THE MATTER OF PRIZE OR PUNISHMENT**

Let us now look at this from a biblical point of view. Since we have been chosen forever, once we have been saved, regenerated, and have received eternal life, we can never perish. The eternal life will keep us. Two mighty hands, the hands of the Lord and of the Father, will uphold us, and we shall never perish (John 10:28-29). But this does not mean that we should be loose about committing sins, for we shall be chastised, punished either today or in the coming age, for whatever sins we commit. God is righteous. If His children commit sin and do not care for His will, they must suffer chastisement, punishment. If you do not care for His will in this age, you will miss the kingship as the reward in the coming kingdom. We must give heed to this warning.

What an enjoyment will be there in the coming kingdom! The harvest Sabbath! It will be better than the

## **Week 11 – Day 2 (6/19) (Cont'd)**

present growing Sabbath. The growing Sabbath of the church life today is the means by which we may be ushered into the harvest Sabbath in the coming kingdom. If we neglect today's Sabbath in the church life, we shall miss the next Sabbath in the coming kingdom. If we are careless and commit sins, we shall suffer God's punishment. But this does not mean that we shall be lost again.

Hebrews 6 proves this. Verses 7 and 8 say, "For the earth which drinks the rain which often comes upon it and brings forth vegetation suitable to those for whose sake also it is tilled, partakes of blessing from God; but bringing forth thorns and thistles, it is disapproved and near a curse, whose end is to be burned." The earth may produce vegetation or thorns. The thorns may be burned, but the land will still remain, having suffered a loss. Likewise, the believers can never be lost, but all that they bring forth which is not according to God's economy will be burned. Whatever we do that is against the will of God will be burned, but this does not mean that we shall be lost.

At this juncture let us consider 1 Corinthians 3:12-14. "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." The believers are God's farm (1 Cor. 3:9). Whatever we grow that is wood, hay, and stubble will be burned. But if our work abides as gold, silver, and precious stones, we shall receive a reward, a prize. However, if a man's work is burned, he shall suffer loss, but this does not mean that he will lose his salvation. The following verse says, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire" (Gk). This verse is very clear. A saved person may suffer loss, but he will not lose his salvation; he will be "saved as through fire." Do you want to be "saved through fire"? If you ask me what the fire is here, I would say that I do not know. More than thirty-five years ago, an older Christian friend was arguing with me saying, "How could a saved person still be saved through fire?" I answered, "I don't know, but the Bible tells us so." Then he said, "Here it does not really say 'by fire' but 'as by fire' or 'as through fire.'" At this point another elderly brother injected, "Even if it is 'as by fire,' it can still cause you to suffer." Whatever this fire is, I know that it is not good and that I do not want to experience it. Since we have this word in 1 Corinthians 3, we should not say that as long as we are saved everything is all right. Everything may not be all right. Our work may be burned and we may be "saved as through fire."

When some heard me preaching along this line, they condemned me, saying that I was teaching the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. The Catholic teaching of purgatory, which uses 1 Corinthians 3 as the basis, is much different from the pure Word of God. According to the Catholic concept of purgatory, if you commit sins and die, a relative may shorten the time you spend in purgatory by paying a certain amount of money to the Catholic Church. This teaching is devilish. What I am teaching is the pure truth from the pure Word.

First Corinthians 3 says that we need to build properly: according to God's divine nature—the gold; according to Christ's redemption—the silver; and according to the work of the Holy Spirit—the precious stones. We need to build according to the Father's nature, the Son's redemption, and the Holy Spirit's transforming work. But if we build according to the flesh, the self, and the worldly way, that will be wood, hay, and stubble. There is a great difference between building with gold, silver, and precious stones and building with wood, hay, and stubble. If you build with gold, silver, and precious stones, you will receive a reward. But if you build with wood, hay, and stubble, you will suffer a loss, yet still be saved. This is neither Calvinism nor Arminianism but the pure Word of the Bible.

In addition to God's gracious salvation, there is the matter of receiving a prize or suffering a loss. Only those who receive the prize will participate in the coming Sabbath, the harvest Sabbath. Those who gain the prize will enjoy the better Sabbath in the millennial kingdom, and those who suffer loss but who are saved as through fire will miss that Sabbath. How we need to press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and go on positively. In addition to salvation, there will be the prize of this high calling, which will be the harvest Sabbath in the coming kingdom. This is our mark, our goal. If we would reach this goal, we must pass through the church life. The church life is the way for us to reach the goal.

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

1 Cor. 10:17 Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread.

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MESSAGE TWENTY-TWO

**THE REMAINING SABBATH REST (5)**

The Bible is the revelation of God. If we are to understand any major aspect of this revelation, we must take care of the governing principles established and revealed in the Bible. The governing principle of the Bible as a whole is that God in eternity past made a purpose, a plan, which was to express Himself with His authority. This plan, God's eternal purpose, is thoroughly revealed in the first two chapters of Genesis and the last two chapters of Revelation. In Genesis 1 and 2 we see that man is the center of God's created universe. Although God created the heavens, the earth, and millions of other items, the central item is man. God made man in a very specific way, forming him out of the earth (Gen. 2:7) and in His own image (Gen. 1:26). Hence, man, a single entity, bears two things: the earth and the image of God. In substance man is earthly, but in expression he is divine. In this one entity, man, we see a wonderful principle—one creature bearing the earthly substance and the divine image. When man expressed God's image and exercised His authority in His dominion, God was at rest. As we have seen in previous messages, this is the significance of the Sabbath rest. That was the situation at the very beginning of the Bible.

When we go to the end of the Bible, we see the consummation: the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem. In the new heaven and new earth, the earth will be more useful than heaven because the New Jerusalem will be on the earth. If we read Revelation carefully, we shall see that the New Jerusalem is not a physical building, but a living composition composed of living persons, such as the twelve Apostles of the Lamb and the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12, 14). The city of New Jerusalem will bear the appearance of God and express Him in a full way. Moreover, God's throne will be in that city, and God's authority will be fully exercised there. This is the eternal kingdom of God. Therefore, in the New Jerusalem God will have complete rest and obtain His eternal Sabbath. This matter is the governing principle of the whole Bible.

**XIX. THE THREE PERIODS OF THE UNIVERSE**

If we are to know the Bible, we need to have an overall view of it. Do you realize that the universe is composed of three periods? The first period was the time before Adam, the period that is called the pre-Adamic age. As we saw in our Life-Study of Genesis, before Adam was created the universe was already in existence. No one can tell how long that first period of time was. The second period of the universe extends from Genesis 1:2 through the end of the coming millennium, from the time of the creation of Adam until the end of the millennium. This period of time is quite short, perhaps not more than seven thousand years. Although we may think that this is a long time, in God's eyes seven thousand years are the equivalent of seven days, for to Him a thousand years are as one day (2 Pet. 3:8). Following this second period, there will be the third period of the universe—the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem. That period will last for eternity. In order to know the Bible thoroughly, we must understand these three periods of the universe.

The first period of the universe was the period of the fall. God created, Satan damaged, and God came in to judge the universe. In Genesis 1:2 we have the start of God's re-creation. Strictly speaking, only verse 1 of Genesis refers to God's creation, for verse 2 is the beginning of God's re-creation. Within God's re-creation there was further creation. Man, for instance, was not a re-creation but a creation. From the time of God's re-creation until the full completion of His purpose will be a period of approximately seven thousand years. Since it is during this span of time that God accomplishes His eternal purpose, we may call this the period of accomplishment.

## **Week 11 – Day 3 (6/20) (Cont'd)**

The period of accomplishment began with the creation of man. Man was God's creation. God's re-creation only recovered the fallen universe back to a condition suitable for man's creation and existence. The second coming of the Lord Jesus will not end the period of accomplishment, because the old heaven and old earth will continue for another thousand years after the Lord's coming back. Those one thousand years will be a continuation of the period of accomplishment. The Lord's second coming is even a further step in the accomplishment of God's purpose. Therefore, God's accomplishment of His purpose began with the creation of man and will be completed not at the time of the Lord's second coming but at the end of the millennium.

After the period of accomplishment, the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem will come. That will be the period of the eternal Sabbath, the time of the complete Sabbath. The eternal period in the future will be an unending Sabbath. Our Father, our Savior, and all the redeemed ones will be there. This is our destiny, our future. Our future is the eternal Sabbath where our Father, our Savior, and all of us will be at rest for eternity.

### **XX. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE**

Let us now see how God accomplishes His purpose. Firstly, He created man. In his natural make-up, man is not the genuine fulfillment of God's purpose, but only a photograph, a prefigure. But even in this photograph we can see the features of God's satisfaction. The Old Testament mainly reveals two things: God's creation of man and His calling of man. God made Adam and called Abraham. Abraham, including Isaac, Jacob, and all Jacob's children, was the corporate called one. All the children of Israel were called in Abraham. Thus, Abraham was a corporate man, a prefigure once again of God's satisfaction. In this corporate man we can see much more than we can with Adam, for Adam was only a single man as a photograph of God's satisfaction, while Abraham, including his descendants, was a complete, corporate figure of God's satisfaction. The Old Testament reveals these two prefigures of God's satisfaction, one individual and the other corporate. However, in principle both are the same, revealing what God's satisfaction is. We need to have such an overview if we are to understand the Bible.

While the Old Testament shows us the prefigure, the New Testament reveals the reality. God Himself came to be a man, to be the seed which He Himself has sown into mankind as the earth, the soil. We should never separate mankind from the earth, because in substance these two are one. The Bible clearly says that man came out of the earth and belongs to the earth. God came to sow Himself as a seed into humanity, the real earth. This one grain of wheat fell into the earth of humanity, died, and in resurrection produced many grains which have been formed together into one loaf, the church (John 12:24; 1 Cor. 10:17). In this loaf, the church, we have God's expression and God's dominion. Here in the church is God's kingdom where God's authority is exercised and His image is expressed. Hence, the church is God's Sabbath, the first stage of God's accomplishment of His purpose in a genuine and real way.

But there is the need of another stage. The first stage was with the Lord's first coming, and the second stage will begin with His second coming. In order for Him to accomplish His purpose in a genuine way, He needs to come twice. In His first coming, He sowed Himself into mankind, and in His second coming He will reap what He sowed in His first coming. Something was accomplished with His first coming—the church was produced, and there was a Sabbath—but this is not the full completion of His purpose. His second coming will accomplish more, bringing in a fuller Sabbath. His first coming brought in the first real Sabbath, but this Sabbath is not the full Sabbath, because the accomplishment of God's purpose has not yet been completed. Thus, there is a need of His coming again to complete His accomplishment of God's eternal purpose. This means that God's eternal purpose could never be accomplished before the Lord's second coming. In other words, God's eternal purpose cannot be fully completed without the millennium.

## **Week 11 – Day 3 (6/20) (Cont'd)**

The millennium will be the last and most crucial part of the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose. I need to stress this point strongly because throughout the centuries most Christian teachers have held the concept that when the Lord Jesus comes back everything will be completed. According to that concept, the Lord's coming back apparently means the end of the old universe and the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth. When the Lord Jesus comes back, a wonderful time, the millennium, will begin. But regardless of how wonderful the millennium will be, during that time the old heaven and old earth will still remain in existence. At most, the millennium will be a time of restoration (Acts 3:21, Gk.). Heaven and earth will be restored during the millennium, but they will not yet be changed from the old to the new. The changing of the old heaven and earth into the new heaven and earth will require another thousand years. The approximately six thousand years from the creation of Adam until the second coming of Christ will issue in a restoration of the universe, but it will not result in a renewal of the universe. That requires another thousand years. After the last thousand years have passed, the entire universe will be changed from the old to the new. Then there will be a new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem.

## Week 11 – Day 4 (6/21)

Matt. 16:18-19 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in the heavens.

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Do you still hold on to the concept that everything will be all right at the time of Christ's second coming? Not everything will be all right at that time. Although Satan will be bound, he will not be fully dealt with during the millennium. At the end of the millennium, he will be loosed from his prison, will deceive the nations, and will lead them in battle against the Lord (Rev. 20:7-9). After the millennium, Satan will still work against God. Furthermore, the evil in human nature will not be completely dealt with during the millennium. Although all the nations will be subdued, at the end of that time Gog and Magog will rebel once again, proving that the element of rebellion in man will still be present. Thirdly, death, the last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), will not be cast into the lake of fire at the second coming of Christ, but at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:14). Thus, three evil things, Satan, the rebellious nature of man, and death, will still exist even at the end of the millennium. Since this is the case, how can we say that by the second coming of Christ everything will be all right? The Lord still requires some time to work in order to eliminate these three evil things from God's eternal universe.

Along with Satan, the rebellious human nature, and death, there are two more negative items that will not be dealt with until the end of the millennium. Firstly, the sea, a sign of negative things, will not be fully removed until the end of the millennium. In the new heaven and the new earth there will be no more sea (Rev. 21:1). Secondly, all the dead unsaved people will not be judged until the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:11-15). At the end of the millennium, the dead unsaved people will be resurrected and judged at the white throne for their eternal destiny, and everyone whose name is not found in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. That will be the last item of the termination of the old heaven and the old earth. Following that, the entire old universe will be over, and the new universe with the New Jerusalem will be ushered in. In the new heaven and new earth there will be no more Satan, rebellious human nature, death, or sea. Do not believe that everything will be settled at the time of the Lord's second coming. Only when we are in the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem will we be able to shout, "Hallelujah, everything is now all right!"

Today we are enjoying the Sabbath rest in the church life. Although this is good, we are waiting for the Lord's coming back, because that will usher in a better Sabbath. This Sabbath is called a "restoration" (Acts 3:21, Gk.). But even this is not the best, the ultimate Sabbath. Satan, the rebellious human nature, death, the sea, and the unsaved dead people will all need to be dealt with. The first Sabbath will bring in the second, and the second Sabbath will bring in the third. The church will bring in the kingdom, and the kingdom will usher in the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem.

### XXI. CHASTISEMENT IN THE COMING AGE

At this point we need to consider the Lord's chastisement. First Corinthians 11:32 says, "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Here we see that chastisement differs from being lost. Although you may never be lost, do not think that there will be no problems. The Lord may chastise you.

All fundamental Christians agree that if we do not behave ourselves after being saved, the Lord will chastise us. But many hold the inaccurate concept that the Lord's chastisement is only in this age, and that when the Lord comes back there will be no further chastisement. But this is not logical. Suppose a certain young brother has been seduced away from the church life, drifts back to the world, and lives in sin for the remainder of his life. Do you believe that when he meets the Lord everything will be all right? I cannot find a hint in the holy Word that this will be the case. There is not one verse which says that a Christian who lives in sin without repentance will have no problems at the time of the Lord's coming back. There are many verses, however, which tell us that the living saints and the resurrected dead saints will be judged

before the judgment seat of Christ for a reward, either bad or good. As the good reward will be a prize, so the bad reward will surely be a chastisement or punishment.

Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” This judgment will not be the judgment at the white throne for salvation or perdition, but the judgment at the second coming of Christ before the millennium for prize or chastisement. Paul’s use of the word “we” in this verse proves that he was including himself in this matter. The “things done in his body” refer to what we are doing today. First Corinthians 4:5 tells us to “judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.” Will you have praise of God at the Lord’s coming back or not? It depends upon what you do after you have been saved. At the time of His coming back, the Lord will set up His judgment seat, and all the raptured and resurrected saints will stand there to give an account to Him.

We find the same thing in Romans 14:10-12: “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then, each one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Recovery Version). We shall stand there and give an account of what we have done after we were saved. The Lord will ask us to tell Him what we have done that we may receive the reward we deserve, either good or bad. This is serious, and I feel sorry for the many Christians who have never heard about it. If we do not see this matter clearly, we shall be unable to understand the Sabbath rest and the five warnings in the book of Hebrews concerning the Lord’s dealing with the believers in the coming age.

## **XXII. REWARD IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

The Gospel of Matthew also speaks about reward. Do not accept the dispensational concept that Matthew is not for us today. If the Gospel of Matthew is not for us, then the Jesus born as the Savior in Matthew 1 and presented as the rest in Matthew 11 is not for us either. How ridiculous it is to say this! In Matthew 16:18-19 we see that when the church is built, the kingdom will be ushered in. Matthew 18:15-17 refers to the local church life, telling us that if a brother does not listen to the church, he should be considered as a publican and a heathen. This means that he will be out of the church life. To be out of the church life is to forfeit the right to what is mentioned in Matthew 11:28-29. In Matthew 11:28 the Lord said, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The “I” who gives us rest in Matthew 11 goes to the church in Matthew 16 and remains in the church in Matthew 18. If we would enjoy Him as our rest, we must follow Him to the church and stay with Him in the church. If we do not listen to the church, we shall be out of the church life and out of the rest. Matthew 12:8 says that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. In order to have rest we must be with Him. If we are outside of the church, we are without the Sabbath.

While Matthew 16:18-19 speaks of the church and the kingdom, Matthew 16:27 speaks of the reward. “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” This verse does not refer to unbelievers, for unbelievers are merely sinners and cannot be worthy of a good reward. This verse surely refers to the believers who will receive one of the two kinds of rewards: a prize as a good reward or punishment as a bad reward. Matthew 1 tells us that Jesus is the Savior and Emmanuel; Matthew 6 tells us to pray, “Thy kingdom come”; Matthew 11 tells us that we may come to the Lord for rest; Matthew 12 reveals that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath; Matthew 16 unveils that the church is built upon Christ and that the kingdom is ushered in through the built-up church; Matthew 18 tells us that we should be in the proper church life; and Matthew 16:27 warns us that the Lord will return to reward us.

Matthew 25 gives us a serious warning that when the Lord comes back He will punish some of His servants (vv. 24-30). Some say that the servants who are punished by the Lord are false Christians, but this is not logical. How could false Christians ever be the Lord’s servants? How could the Lord assign a work

## **Week 11 – Day 4 (6/21) (Cont'd)**

to a false servant? It is wrong to interpret the matter this way. Those who claim that these servants are false servants are forced to say this because they do not believe that the Lord will punish any of His servants after He comes back. They would argue, “How can any saved ones be punished by the Lord when He comes back? This means that the Lord’s redemption is not perfect.” Nevertheless, these same people teach that if Christians do not behave themselves in this life the Lord will punish them. We would turn their argument against them and ask, “Would not this chastisement also prove that the Lord’s redemption is not perfect?” The difference is a matter of time. Where is the verse telling us that the Lord will chastise His people only in this age and not in the coming age? There is no such verse. But there are many verses which tell us that when the Lord comes back He will chastise some of His servants (Luke 12:35-48, especially 46-47; 19:11-26). When the Lord comes back, He will punish His slothful servants.

Matt. 24:43-44 But know this, that if the householder had known in which watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 For this reason you also be ready, because at an hour when you do not expect it, the Son of Man is coming.

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To those who say that there will be no such punishment, I ask this question: If there will be no problem after the Lord comes back, why does He need to judge us at all? Why must we all stand before His judgment seat? Do you believe everyone who stands before the judgment seat will receive a prize, a good reward? What kind of reward would a slothful servant receive—a crown? Even if the Lord gave him a crown, he would be ashamed to accept it. If you lived in sin after being saved and the Lord offered you a crown at the judgment seat, would you receive it? How ridiculous it is to say that the Lord would give a crown to a Christian who spent his time gambling, taking drugs, and attending nightclubs. Perhaps the Lord will say to such a believer, “You are a slothful servant. You need chastisement.” Do not think that simply by being resurrected everything is solved. The strongest proof that not everything is solved by resurrection is the fact that after the resurrection all the unbelieving dead will still stand before the white throne to be judged concerning their eternal destiny.

According to the New Testament revelation, all real Christians who do not live according to the Lord’s will shall be disciplined, chastised, or punished. Whether this will happen to us in this age or in the next we do not know. Our wise Father is the only One who knows. Many fathers realize that it is not wise to deal with their children immediately following their wrongdoing. Only a wise father can decide the right time to discipline his children. Nevertheless, the principle is this: if a child is wrong, he needs to be disciplined. Hebrews 12 reveals that we are not only partakers of the Holy Spirit (6:4), but also of the divine discipline (12:8). Since we are the Father’s sons, He will surely discipline us. The time when He disciplines us is up to Him. But if we, the children of God, are wrong, He will surely discipline us. Do not be shortsighted and say, “Praise the Lord, during the last two years I have not suffered any discipline.” You may receive some discipline at the judgment seat of Christ when He comes back.

### **A. The Secret Rapture of the Mature Ones**

Another basic principle relating to God’s dealings with us is that we are God’s crop (1 Cor. 3:9). As God’s crop we need to reach ripeness, maturity (Rev. 14:15). If the wheat growing in the field does not ripen, it will never be taken to the barn; it will be left in the field. If we are wrong, we need to be chastised; if we are immature, we need to be left in the field to ripen. No one can argue with these two principles.

With these two principles in mind, let us come to Matthew 24 and 25. Matthew 24 reveals that, in a sense, the Lord will come in a secret way, for we are told that He will come as a thief (Matt. 24:42-43). No thief comes in a noticeable way. Matthew 24:44 says that we should be ready, “for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” When we think the thief will come, he does not come, but when we are at peace, thinking that no thief will come, he comes. The Lord gave the same warning to Sardis in Revelation 3:3, saying, “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

Matthew 24:40-41 says, “The one shall be taken and the other left.” This undoubtedly refers to the secret rapture, to the rapture of the ready ones, the matured ones. A thief only comes to steal treasures, things that are precious; he does not steal junk. We need to be a treasure in the eyes of the Lord. We need to be precious by being mature so that He will come and take us secretly. This will happen one day. Perhaps a young person will say, “I don’t know what happened to my friend who loved the Lord so much. She has disappeared. Where did she go?” Such a one has been raptured. Do not believe the teaching that there is only one rapture and that all the saints will be raptured at the same time before the tribulation. That concept is not accurate. Yes, the majority of the saints will be raptured according to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, but the mature ones will be taken secretly according to Matthew 24:40-44. There are two aspects of the Lord’s coming: the secret presence, which is first, and the public appearing, which follows later. First

## **Week 11 – Day 5 (6/22) (Cont'd)**

Thessalonians 4:15-17 speaks of those “which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord.” Here we see two categories of living saints: those who are living and have already been taken, and those who are alive and remain. Likewise, in Matthew 24 one living one is taken and the other is left.

### **B. The Parable of the Ten Virgins**

In Matthew 25:1-13 we have the parable of the ten virgins. The two saints mentioned in Matthew 24 are the living ones, for they are working in the field and grinding at the mill. The ten virgins in Matthew 25, however, are the sleeping ones. Sleep here does not refer to any kind of spiritual sleep but to physical death. Since the Lord has delayed His coming back, many saints have died. The number ten is the majority of twelve, which is the number of the church. The ten are found in Matthew 25 and the two in Matthew 24. When these two numbers are added together, we have the whole body of church people. At the time of the Lord’s coming back, the majority of the church people will have died; only a small number will still be living. Hence, the ten virgins represent the dead saints, and the two living ones represent the living saints.

All ten virgins in this parable were saved. Do not believe that the five foolish virgins were unsaved. To be foolish is very different from being false. For example, a foolish child is not a false child. Hence, all these virgins in Matthew 25, both the wise and the foolish, were saved. The lamps of both the wise and the foolish were shining, but the problem was that the foolish virgins did not have enough oil. When the bridegroom came and the virgins arose (this means that they were resurrected), the foolish virgins discovered that they did not have an extra portion of oil. The lamp of the Lord is our spirit (Prov. 20:27), and the extra portion of oil is the transforming Spirit in our soul, in our being. Our human being, our soul, is God’s vessel (Rom. 9:21, 23). To have oil in our lamp means that we have the Spirit in our spirit. The foolish virgins, however, never became transformed by having the Spirit saturate their soul. They did not have the Spirit in their soul, in their vessel. So they had to pay the price to gain the extra portion of the Spirit in their soul that they might be transformed. This is why the wise virgins told the foolish, “Go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves” (Matt. 25:9). If you do not pay the price to gain the transforming Spirit in your soul today, you will pay it when the Lord comes back.

We all need to pay the price to have our soul transformed by the Lord, the Spirit. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, “We all, with unveiled face beholding and reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit” (Gk.). This transforming Spirit is the extra portion of the oil that we need. The Spirit who comes into our spirit, lighting the lamp of our spirit, is free, and every regenerated person has it. But after we have been regenerated, we need to be transformed in our soul. This requires that we pay a price. Many who have believed in the Lord Jesus and who have been regenerated in the spirit are not willing to pay the price to be transformed by the Spirit in their soul. Although our spirit, the lamp of the Lord, is enlightened by the Spirit, our soul, which is our vessel, needs to be transformed by the Spirit. We need to pay the price to have the transforming Spirit in our soul. If we do not pay the price in this age, we shall have to pay it in the next.

**XXIII. THE COMING AGE STILL NEEDED  
FOR THE LORD TO DEAL WITH HIS BELIEVERS**

Many Christians hold the concept that everything concerning God's purpose will be completely accomplished when the Lord comes back, and that the millennium will not be an age for the Lord to deal with His believers. According to their concept, the Lord's dealing with His believers is only in this age, leaving nothing for Him to deal with in the coming age. In this sense, the millennium should be in the new heaven and new earth, without the need for the Lord to accomplish anything more for God's eternal purpose. But, as we have seen, the millennium will be the last part of the period of time in which God accomplishes His eternal purpose. The Scriptures unveil clearly that both this age and the coming age are the time for the Lord to work on and deal with His believers so that they may mature and be fully perfected for God's eternal purpose. If He cannot complete this work with us in this age, He will complete it in the coming age. It all depends upon our response to His work of grace. If we would cooperate with Him, He would surely prefer to perfect us and make us mature in this age; otherwise, He will be forced by our foolishness to postpone His dealing with us to the next age. In His wisdom, God has ordained the next age with the millennial kingdom to be an age of reward as an incentive for us to seek Him and respond to His work of grace in this age. If we are willing to take this incentive, we shall enjoy Him with the church life as today's Sabbath rest, and we shall be rewarded by Him with the millennial kingdom as the Sabbath rest in the coming age. But if we neglect this incentive, we shall miss the enjoyment of Him with the church life as today's Sabbath rest, and we shall be disciplined, chastised, and punished in the coming age, to say nothing of the loss of the enjoyment of Him with the millennial kingdom as the better Sabbath rest. Of course, this present age of the church is very crucial for the Lord to work on His believers for their maturity and perfection. However, the coming age of the kingdom is also needed for the Lord's dealing with those of His believers who are unwilling to cooperate with His grace in this age. This is why the book of Hebrews encourages us to endeavor to enter the Sabbath rest that remains for us.

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**Study Questions**

1. What is the difference between positional sanctification and dispositional sanctification and which of these does Hebrews 2:11 refer to?
2. Explain why the Lord needed to be the Firstborn Son of God in order to sanctify us?

## Week 12 – Day 1 (6/25)

Matt. 24:40-42 At that time two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left. 42 Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes.

25:1-4 At that time the kingdom of the heavens will be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2 And five of them were foolish and five were prudent. 3 For the foolish, when they took their lamps, did not take oil with them; 4 But the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

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### MESSAGE TWENTY-THREE

#### THE REMAINING SABBATH REST (6)

##### XXIV. THE JUDGMENT AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

First Peter 4:17 says, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” In this verse we can see that there are different governmental dealings of God. God deals with His house, that is, His children, in one way and at one time, and He deals with those who do not obey the gospel in another way and at another time. Although we have been saved and have become God’s household, God’s family, this does not mean that we shall never again be judged by God. On the contrary, this verse says that God’s judgment will begin at His house. If God were unjust in dealing with His own children, how could He judge the unbelievers and those who oppose Him? The principle here is that in order for God to be just in judging the unbelievers, He must firstly make a righteous judgment of His children.

##### XXV. GROWING IN LIFE

##### FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD’S PURPOSE

God’s intention is not to have a universe filled with neat, clean, righteous, sinless people. As we have seen, God’s purpose is to sow Himself into His chosen people, making them His children. Once we have become God’s children through regeneration, having God’s life as our seed and content, we need to grow with and into God and be fully transformed by being permeated with all His divine elements. God’s intention is not to gain a group of pure, righteous people; it is to gain a people who have been saturated with Him and built up in Him. Satan came in to frustrate God’s work mainly through sin, the world, and the self. Thus, if we are to grow in God’s life, we must hate sin, forsake the world, and deny the self. The object of dealing with sin is not merely to deal with the sin itself, but to eliminate the satanic frustration to the growth in life. Having our sins forgiven is a minor thing; being delivered from the sinful frustration so that we may grow in God’s life is the major thing. If you have committed a sin but repent and desire to go on with the Lord, God will surely forgive your sin because of Christ’s redemption. Do not worry about it. God’s intention is not simply to forgive your sins but to bring you onward that you may grow in His life. We all are human and easily fall into sin. But as long as we desire to grow in life, God will spontaneously take care of our sins and cleanse us with the blood of Jesus. However, if we are not willing to grow and yet ask God to forgive our sins, He will be faithful to do it, but we shall not be in the fulfillment of God’s purpose. Simply having our sins forgiven on the negative side does not fulfill God’s purpose. We also need to grow and enter into the Sabbath rest.

##### XXVI. THE LIFE AND WORK NEEDED

##### FOR ENTERING INTO THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

I like the picture we have in Matthew 24 and 25. As we pointed out in the last message, in Matthew 24:40-41 we see the two living ones, and in Matthew 25:1-4 we see the ten dead ones. Of the two living ones, one is taken and the other is left. Of the ten dead ones, five are accepted and five are temporarily rejected. The saved ones can never be rejected by God eternally, but they may be rejected dispensationally, like a child who does not do well in school and who, after graduation, is not allowed to share in the special

dinner planned by his parents as a prize for his brothers and sisters who did well. Such a child will never be rejected permanently by his parents, but he may be rejected temporarily. If we believe Matthew 1, then we must also believe Matthew 24 and 25. We should not select the verses that we like and ignore the verses that we do not like. Both Matthew 24 and 25 are crucial to our Christian life and work.

Matthew 25 contains two parables concerning us—the parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents. The parable of the ten virgins depicts the life we should have, and the parable of the talents portrays the work we should have. Our life must be that of a wise virgin, and our work must be that of a faithful servant. In the parable of the ten virgins, we see that we need to have a watchful life, a life that continually bears testimony and goes out of the world to meet the Lord. This parable also reveals that we not only need to have our spirit enlightened by God's Spirit, but our vessel, that is, our soul, must be transformed with an extra portion of the life-giving Spirit.

Furthermore, the parable of the talents reveals that our work must be the work of a faithful servant, using the Lord-given talents to do business for the Lord and to earn profit for His economy. According to what is revealed in Matthew, both such a watchful life and a faithful work are crucially needed for us to be rewarded with the coming Sabbath rest in the millennial kingdom. This is different from the enjoyment of rest in salvation which is received simply by faith in the Lord.

## **Week 12 – Day 2 (6/26)**

Matt. 25:14 For the kingdom of the heavens is just like a man about to go abroad, who called his own slaves and delivered to them his possessions. 15 To one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability. And he went abroad.

Acts 2: 40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this crooked generation.

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### **A. Talents Given according to Ability**

We have not only been regenerated that we may have the divine life to be God’s children, but we have also been talented to serve the Lord as His servants. In the parable of the talents, we see that the talents were given to the servants according to their ability. “Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability” (Matt. 25:15). We all have some ability, and the talents given to us are according to our ability. The Apostle Paul had great ability; many talents were given to him. Brother Watchman Nee also had much ability, and many talents were given to him. However, all our natural ability has to be dealt with by the death of Christ that it may be brought into resurrection to cooperate with the Lord-given talent. Our natural ability is always a frustration to our usefulness in the Lord’s hand. In the Lord’s work, only the resurrected ability, not the natural, can match the talent which the Lord gives.

### **B. A Warning about Being Slothful**

None of us should excuse ourselves by saying, “Praise the Lord, I don’t have much ability and not many talents have been given to me, so I don’t have much to do.” Whether we have been given five talents, two talents, or one talent, the principle is the same: we have to gain another five, two, or one for the Lord. If you have been given one talent, you should not use this as an excuse to be slothful. According to the parable, the danger is not with those of more talents but with those of one talent. The servant of one talent tried to excuse himself but received rebuke and punishment. Many fundamental Bible teachers, including C. I. Scofield, say that the one-talented servant was a false Christian. As we pointed out in the last message, these fundamental teachers, being Calvinists, were forced to say this because they could not reconcile such portions of the Word with the teaching that once we have been saved we are saved forever. Since they could not understand how a Christian could be cast into outer darkness, they had to say that the slothful, one-talented servant was a false believer. Calvinism does not see the matter of reward, which includes both prize and punishment. But the complete revelation of the Holy Word does not only show us the eternal salvation by faith but also unveils to us the dispensational reward (either prize or punishment) by works. The dispensational reward of a prize will be the coming Sabbath rest in the millennial kingdom. For us to enter into that Sabbath rest, we need, after being saved forever by faith, to live a watchful life as the wise virgins, and to do a faithful work as the faithful servants. Otherwise, we shall lose the coming Sabbath rest in the millennial kingdom and suffer some discipline.

### **C. Grace and Responsibility**

Calvinists stress the matter of absolute grace, and Arminians stress human responsibility. But according to the Bible, divine grace is for human responsibility. On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the people, “Be saved from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40, Gk.). Peter did not say, “Save yourselves.” as the King James Version renders it; he said, “Be saved.” To save yourself means that you do this yourself; to be saved means that someone else does it for you, yet you must allow him to do it. The Lord is saving us, but He needs our cooperation. For example, a mother may not say to her child, “Feed yourself”; she may say, “Be fed. Don’t be naughty and shut your mouth—open your mouth and be fed. Take the food and swallow it.” Although salvation is absolutely a matter of grace, we must be willing to be saved and willing to believe in the Lord. Even the Almighty God cannot do anything for us if we are not willing to believe in Him. Being willing to believe is our responsibility, the cooperation we render to God’s saving. Regardless of the grace extended to us, we all must be willing to believe in the Lord, look to Him, open ourselves to

receive His grace, and allow it to work on our behalf.

If we only have ability, we cannot work for the Lord. In addition to our ability, we have been talented by the Lord. Once we have been talented, we must use our talent. Only when we use our talent will the profit come. The profit comes from the grace of God, but the coming of this grace depends upon our use of our talent, upon our function and exercise. If we do not use the talent, the grace will not come, for its coming depends upon our exercise.

#### **D. Maturity and Kingship**

Our growth in life will determine the time of our maturity. If we grow in life and, like the wise virgins, have the extra portion of oil in our vessel and have been transformed, we shall mature earlier. While our growth in life determines whether or not we mature early, our work, our exercise, and our use of the talent determines whether or not we share in the Lord's kingship. The Lord said to the servant with the five talents, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21). This is to be a co-king with the Lord Jesus and to enjoy the real rest, the Sabbath during the millennial kingdom. According to Luke 19:17, the Lord said, "Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." In the millennial kingdom, some will rule over ten cities and others over five cities (Luke 19:19). You may not only be a mayor of one city but a governor of ten cities. Although we may not be clear about all the details, no one can argue with the principle here.

While in the parables we only have the principles, in Revelation 2:26-27 we have the details. Here we are told, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my work unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with the rod of iron" (Gk.). The nations on earth surely need to be ruled by us. When the Lord Jesus returns, He will assign us to rule over all the nations. In that day there will be no more nonsensical talk. Everyone will talk rightly because they will be under the proper ruling. Who will rule over them? We, the people who have been disciplined. Do you believe that all the rulers today are the proper persons? Some of them smoke, drink, and gamble. How could they be the proper rulers? The whole earth is waiting and groaning to be released from the improper rulers. The earth will be released from that kind of rule when the Lord Jesus comes back. Why has the Lord Jesus not yet returned? Because we have not yet been disciplined. If He were to come back today, whom would He assign to rule over the nations?

The word talent in Matthew 25 is the equivalent of the word gift in the Epistles. Paul told Timothy to "stir up the gift of God which is in thee" (2 Tim. 1:6). In life we need to grow, and in work we need to exercise our gift. The parable of the ten virgins reveals our need of transformation by the life-giving Spirit, and the parable of the talents reveals our need to have the proper exercise of the spiritual gifts. We all need to be transformed by the extra portion of oil in our vessel, and we all need to exercise our gift to gain some profit for the Lord. We need to grow on the one hand and make profit in God's economy on the other. Our growth will determine the time of our maturity, and the exercise of our gifts will determine the position we will share with Christ in the millennial kingdom. If we do not mature and exercise our gifts, we shall miss the early rapture and the enjoyment of reigning with Christ. Matthew 25 speaks of "the joy of thy lord" (vv. 21, 23). Undoubtedly, this joy is the rest in the Sabbath during the coming kingdom.

## **Week 12 – Day 3 (6/27)**

Matt. 25:29-30 For to every one who has, more shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him who does not have, even that which he has shall be taken away from him. 30 And cast out the useless slave into the outer darkness. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

16:27 For the Son of Man is to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will repay each man according to his doings.

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### **E. The Punishment of the Slothful Servant— the Discipline in the Coming Kingdom Age**

The slothful, one-talented servant will not only miss the enjoyment of being a co-king with Christ during the millennial kingdom, but he will also have some suffering. If there is to be no suffering, there would have been no mention of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 25:30), which are signs of the suffering of some punishment. This is not eternal perdition; it is our Father’s wise discipline.

Both the church age and the kingdom age are parts of the period of God’s accomplishment for the fulfillment of His purpose. The period of God’s accomplishment will not be over until the end of the millennium. Hence, God’s dealing with us. His discipline over us, may not necessarily be in the church age, but may also wisely be in the coming kingdom age. At the end of the millennium, God’s eternal purpose will have been accomplished, the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem will be ushered in, and then there will be no more dealings, no more discipline of God. I must repeat this because many Christians have the wrong concept that as long as the Lord comes back, and we are resurrected, everything will be all right and all Christians will share the reign in the millennial kingdom. Whether or not we will reign with Christ during the millennium depends on how we are doing now. Our Lord is sovereign, having a way to ripen us and make us mature. If we do not ripen in this age, He will see to it that we ripen in the next.

### **F. The Need to Pay the Price**

After the foolish virgins discovered that they were lacking in oil, they were told to pay the price and buy it for themselves (Matt. 25:8-9). Salvation is free, but transformation is not. We must pay for it. If we do not pay the price today, we shall have to pay it in the future. No one can pay it for us. According to the parable of the ten virgins, even after the Lord’s coming back, and even after our resurrection, the foolish ones will still have to pay the price to gain the extra portion of oil in their vessel. It is not, as the Calvinists say, that the five wise virgins were saved and that the five foolish ones were false Christians. That is an escape. We must take Matthew 25 in a very serious way. If we do not pay the price to gain the oil in the church age today, we shall have to pay it after the Lord comes back and we are resurrected in the future. This is the principle. This is not my concept or my teaching; it is the revelation of the pure word in the Holy Bible. Many Christians select verses according to their choice and taste, choosing verses that suit their natural concept, not daring to touch these verses in Matthew 25. How damaging that is! They are deceiving themselves and others. The wise virgins and the faithful servants shall enter into a Sabbath rest that is better than the Sabbath rest which we know today. Although we are enjoying a good Sabbath in the church age, it is not as good as the Sabbath to come in the kingdom age. Entering into the Lord’s joy is to enter into the Sabbath rest with the Lord in the millennial kingdom. When the Lord looks at all the overcomers, He will be satisfied and enter into His Sabbath rest. If we are among the overcomers, we shall enter into that rest with Him.

## **MESSAGE TWENTY-FOUR**

### **THE REMAINING SABBATH REST (7)**

The Bible, especially the New Testament, is a complete revelation. In the New Testament we see how the Savior came, was revealed to us, and accomplished redemption for us, and how we can believe in Him, receive salvation, and be regenerated. The New Testament also tells us that the saved ones form the church and that we can live the church life on earth today. In addition to all this, the New Testament gives us a

warning. After we have been saved and regenerated, we must hold on to God's grace, enjoying all that God has prepared for us in His grace. If we fail to do this, not holding on to God's grace and enjoying His riches, we shall suffer loss and punishment. The New Testament gives us such a clear and definite warning. It also encourages us to gain the prize. In order to gain this prize, we must pay the price. Hence, either punishment or a prize are ahead of us. Whether we receive the prize or suffer the punishment does not depend whatsoever on our salvation; it all depends upon how we live and work after being saved. If we live and work in the proper way ordained by God, we shall receive a prize. But if we neglect God's grace, we shall suffer loss, and a certain punishment will await us. As we pointed out in past messages, the Gospel of Matthew tells us that when the Lord Jesus comes back He will reward us according to our works (16:27). The parables in Matthew 25 also make this matter very clear.

### **XXVII. THE FIVE WARNINGS IN HEBREWS**

In the book of Hebrews there are five warnings, all of which are the same in nature. In the seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3 we also have some warnings. The seven warnings in Revelation 2 and 3 are the same in nature as the five warnings in Hebrews. Therefore, we may say that altogether there are twelve warnings, five in the book of Hebrews and seven in Revelation 2 and 3. Of course, with each of these warnings there is a certain amount of promise, for if we heed the warnings, we shall receive a prize. The first warning in Hebrews is in 2:1-4, telling us "to give heed more abundantly to the things which were heard, lest at any time we drift away" and not to "neglect so great a salvation." The second warning, found in 3:7 through 4:13, tells us not to come short of the promised Sabbath rest but to "be diligent to enter into that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience." In a sense, these messages on the remaining Sabbath rest have all been concerned with the second warning. The third warning, regarding being brought on to maturity (5:11-6:20), tells us not to be like the earth that brings forth "thorns and thistles" because "it is disapproved and near a curse, whose end is to be burned." In the fourth warning we are told to come forward to the Holy of Holies and not to shrink back to Judaism (10:19-39). And in the fifth warning we are encouraged to run the race and not to fall away from grace (12:1-29). The Arminians use these five warnings as a basis for saying that a saved person can be lost again. But if we look into these portions of the Word in a proper way, we shall see that they do not speak of being lost again but of the matter of reward, either the positive reward of gaining a prize or the negative reward of receiving punishment.

## Week 12 – Day 4 (6/28)

Heb. 10:30-31 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay"; and again, "The Lord will judge His people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.  
12:11 Now no discipline at the present time seems to be a matter of joy, but of grief; but afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it.

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### XXVIII. A WARNING ABOUT SINNING WILLFULLY

Let us now consider the fourth warning. Hebrews 10:26 says, "For when we sin willfully after receiving the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." What does it mean to "sin willfully"? To understand this we must go back to verse 25 as the word "for" at the beginning of verse 26 indicates. Verse 25 says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day drawing near." To sin willfully in verse 26 is to forsake the assembling together in verse 25. This warning had to be taken seriously by the Hebrew believers. When the book of Hebrews was written, many of the Hebrew Christians were on the edge between Judaism and the church, uncertain whether to forsake the church and return to Judaism, or to forsake Judaism and go on with the church. Where is the church? The church is in the assembling, the meetings of the believers in Christ. For the Hebrew believers not to attend the meetings with the believers in Christ meant that they had forsaken the church. If those staggering Hebrew Christians would forsake the meetings of the church, it meant that they were sinning willfully after they had received the knowledge of the truth. The writer seemed to be saying to them, "In this epistle I have presented to you the knowledge of the truth. You must attend all the meetings of the church. If you don't, it means that you sin willfully. If you sin willfully by forsaking the church meetings and returning to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin, you must realize that there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, for all the types of the offerings are now over." This is the correct meaning of "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." It does not mean that if we sin we cannot be forgiven or have our sins remitted. It means that the types are over, having been replaced by Christ, and that the Hebrew believers must stay with the church and not forsake the meetings. But if they would forsake the church and return to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin, they would be sinning willfully and offering the sacrifice in vain, for no such sacrifice for sin remained any longer in God's economy.

The writer warned the Hebrew believers that there no longer remained a sacrifice for sins, "but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery zeal about to consume the adversaries" (10:27). If the Hebrew believers would forsake the church, they would suffer the punishment which is intended for the adversaries.

Verses 28 and 29 continue, "And any one who has set at naught Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses: by how much do you think he shall be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" What does it mean to trample underfoot the Son of God? It means that if the Hebrew believers would return to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin, trusting in that sacrifice, they would in effect be trampling under foot the Son of God. They would be despising Him. The sacrifice for sin was a type of Christ. Since Christ had come to fulfill and replace the sacrifice for sin, the Hebrew believers had to stay with Him and not return to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin. If they were to do that, they would have been regarding the blood of the covenant a common thing, making it the same as the blood of sheep and oxen. The Hebrew Christians were warned not to return to Judaism to offer again the sacrifice for sin. For them to do this would have been to despise the Son of God in whom they believed and whose blood had sanctified them and to make His blood as common as that of the animal sacrifices. To do such a thing is also to insult the Spirit of grace. The Spirit of grace was working, moving, and anointing in them, and they had to listen to Him. Then the writer warned them by saying, "For we know Him Who said, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay. And again, the Lord will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (vv. 30-31). This is not the Lord's judgment on the unsaved ones; it is His judgment on "His people," His believers, the saved ones.

## XXIX. THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE

We come now to the fifth warning in chapter twelve of Hebrews. Verse 5 says, “And you have completely forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with sons, My son, do not make light of the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when reproved by Him.” The word discipline in this verse points to some kind of punishment. Verse 6 continues, “For whom the Lord loves He disciplines and scourges every son whom He receives.” To scourge here means to whip. Most of us received some kind of scourging from our parents when we were children. In like manner, our Father scourges His children. Verse 7 says, “It is for discipline that you are enduring; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom the father does not discipline?” A father will scourge his own children, not the children on the street. For God to scourge us does not mean that we lose our eternal security. The more a child is disciplined by his parents, the more secure he is. Verse 8 says that “if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are bastards and not sons.” I am afraid that if God the Father would not discipline me, it would mean that I am a bastard, not a son. Verse 9 says that “we have had the fathers of our flesh as discipliners and we respected them; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?” Being in subjection to the Father of spirits gives us more life. Verse 10 says, “For they indeed disciplined us for a few days as it seemed good to them, but He for our profit that we might partake of His holiness.” To partake of His holiness means to partake of His holy nature. This implies the growth in life. The discipline that we receive of our Father helps us to grow.

To be disciplined is not to be lost. A father may say to his son, “If you don't behave yourself, I shall punish you.” But this does not mean that the son will be lost. When a father punishes his son, he does not kill him. Do not think that being punished by our heavenly Father affects our eternal salvation. When He disciplines us, our eternal salvation is even more secure because He is dealing with us as His dear sons, not as bastards.

Do you believe that our Father only deals with us in this present age, not in the coming age? Since so many of us have been influenced by inaccurate teachings, I must point out once again that if we do not behave ourselves, our Father will punish us either in this age or in the age to come. Do not think that after the Lord comes back and you are resurrected, everything will automatically be all right and there will be no further discipline or chastisement. This is an inaccurate teaching. As we saw in the last message, both Matthew and Luke tell us definitely that when the Lord comes back, He will punish some of His slothful servants in the next age. This is clearly revealed in the pure Word. Which do you prefer—to be disciplined now or punished later? I do not like to have any punishment. By the Lord's mercy and grace I would rather behave myself. But if I must be punished, I would rather undergo it in this age, not in the next.

## Week 12 – Day 5 (6/29)

Heb. 4:9-11 So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered into His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His own. 11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience.

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### **XXX. A WARNING ABOUT GIVING UP THE BIRTHRIGHT**

Verses 15 and 16 say, “Looking carefully lest any one be falling away from the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and through this many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one meal gave up his birthright.” What does it mean to be “falling away from the grace of God”? It means that we have the grace already and that we must be diligent not to lose it, not to fall from the grace that we are already enjoying. If the Hebrew believers would go back to Judaism, they would fall away from the grace which all the believers in Christ were enjoying. They had to be careful lest any root of bitterness would trouble them, that is, some Judaizers would damage them with the bitterness of their Judaistic teachings. In the church life, things in the same principle occasionally happen.

Verse 16 says that for one meal Esau gave up his birthright. The birthright in Christ, which includes the kingship in the coming kingdom, means a great deal to the believers. But we may sell our birthright for just a small enjoyment of the material things just as Esau sold his for the enjoyment of a morsel of meat. If the Hebrew Christians would forsake the grace in Christ for a little morsel of Judaism, they would lose their birthright in Christ. To lose the birthright in Christ is not to lose eternal life; it is to lose the right of life, that is, to lose the enjoyment of the coming kingdom as a prize.

Verses 28 and 29 say, “Wherefore, receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us have grace, through which we may serve God well-pleasingly with godly fear and awe; for our God is also a consuming fire.” Since we are in the process of receiving such an unshakable kingdom, we must hold fast to grace and not fall from it. Verse 29 tells us that our God is a consuming fire. Although our God is love, here He is a consuming fire. This is a serious warning.

### **XXXI. RESTING IN THE PROPER CHURCH LIFE**

In these seven messages we have seen what it means to enter into the Sabbath rest. How we need to enter into the remaining Sabbath rest! Our Christ has accomplished so much. As the book of Hebrews tells us a number of times, Christ is sitting in the heavens. To sit means to rest. Today Christ is sitting in the heavens enjoying a Sabbath rest because He has accomplished everything to produce the church which is the satisfaction and rest to God. We must be warned not to forsake the church life. If we were to forsake the church life, we would be wandering in the wilderness. Nearly all of us can testify that before we came into the church life, we were wandering in the wilderness. We were traveling among many different Christian groups and had no rest until we came home to the church. Here, in the church, we are at rest. Since the Hebrew Christians were wandering, the writer encouraged them to enter into this present Sabbath rest in the proper church life. As we have already pointed out, that the church is today's Sabbath rest is proved by the fact that the church is the house of God in which the Son of God declares the Father to His brothers and in the midst of which He sings hymns to the Father. Be encouraged to be in the church life, today's Sabbath.

This Sabbath will usher us into the kingdom. The church life will feed us, edify us, build us up, and qualify us for the next Sabbath, which will be the kingdom age. The kingdom requires people who have matured. Although we have the seed of life within us and are growing, we need to mature. Where can we mature? In the church. The church is the proper field, the proper farm, where we can grow into maturity. In the church we enjoy the benefits of today's growing Sabbath. In the church we shall also be brought into the harvest Sabbath. Thus, the writer told the wandering Hebrew Christians to stop wandering, come into the church life, and enter into today's Sabbath which would bring them into the better Sabbath of the millennial kingdom. If they missed the church life, they would be like their fathers who wandered in the wilderness, fell there, and died. How we need to be diligent to enter into the Sabbath rest and be in the proper church life today! Hebrews 4:9 has never been as clear to me as it is in these days. By the Lord's mercy, may we all avoid the punishment and gain the prize in the coming age.

### **XXXII. THE CHURCH LIFE AS OUR REFUGE**

The church life is also a refuge. We need to escape Judaism, Protestantism, worldliness, and the wilderness, and flee into the refuge of the church life. Do not think that heaven is your refuge. Heaven is too far away to be a refuge for us who face a desperate situation on a stormy sea today. For us, the church life is a matter of life or death. If you wait until you go to heaven to find refuge, you may drown. Flee into the church life for refuge. Hebrews is a wonderful book containing many new concepts. Perhaps no one reading this message has ever heard that the church life is a refuge. But many of us have experienced the church life in this way. Suppose there were no church life in the United States. Where would we be? Most of us would have drowned in the stormy sea. Hallelujah for a refuge alongside of the stormy sea! The church life is our refuge today.

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### **Study Questions**

1. What is the church in relation to the Sons of God?
2. What does it mean for the Son to declare the name of the Father to His brothers?

## **Week 13 – Day 1 (7/2)**

Psa. 103:7 He made His ways known to Moses; His acts, to the children of Israel.

Heb. 4:12-13 Beware, brothers, lest perhaps there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God. 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.

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### **MESSAGE TWENTY-FIVE**

#### **AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF DESERTING THE LIVING GOD AND THE LIVING WORD OF GOD AND THE PARTS OF MAN**

#### **AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF DESERTING THE LIVING GOD**

In this message we need to cover three matters: an evil heart of unbelief deserting the living God; the living word of God; and the parts of man. Hebrews 3:12 says, "Beware, brothers, lest there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief in withdrawing from the living God." No heart is more evil than a heart of unbelief. Nothing offends God as much as our unbelief. David committed a dreadful sin, murdering a man and taking his wife. Governmentally speaking, however, this sin was not that serious, for it did not cause God to give up David. But the unbelief of the children of Israel in the wilderness caused God to give them up. Unbelief insults and offends God Himself. Every sin breaks God's righteous law, but some sins do not insult God Himself, as does the sin of unbelief.

#### **I. THE LIVING GOD**

Our God is the living God. Unbelief is so evil because it insults the living, faithful, and almighty God. If we do not believe in God, in His work and in His ways, we insult Him. This is why we must beware of unbelief. Verse 10 says, "Wherefore I was disgusted with this generation, and I said, They always go astray in heart; and they have not known My ways." God's ways are different from His acts. His acts are His activities; His ways are the principles by which He acts. The children of Israel only knew His acts, but Moses knew His ways (Psa. 103:7). In the wilderness the children of Israel saw a miracle nearly every morning—the manna. If such a miracle would occur today, it would be publicized in newspapers throughout the world. Although the children of Israel witnessed such a miracle, they, unlike Moses, saw only the acts of God; they did not know God's faithful, divine ways. We should not be like the children of Israel; we must learn the ways, the principles, of our God. When the children of Israel lacked food and water, they complained and murmured. When God acted on their behalf, they were happy temporarily, but not long afterward they offended God again. If we look at ourselves, we would not criticize them, because we would see that we are the same. We may shout, "Praise the Lord!" one night in a meeting and murmur against the Lord the next morning. How we need to know the ways of God! Our God is living and has His principles in doing things. He will never deny Himself. He is able, almighty, and faithful, always keeping His promises and fulfilling His word.

#### **II. THE EVIL HEART**

Although God is living and faithful, the evil heart is hardened against Him (3:8). In a sense, an evil heart is very reasonable; it reasons a great deal. However, in another sense, it is stubborn and without reason because it is hardened. Hence, it departs from the right track and goes astray, not knowing God's ways or principles. It tries God by putting Him to the test (3:9). Eventually, such a heart is self-deceiving and will be deceived (3:13). This is the condition of an evil heart. Such an evil heart always issues from the hardening. How dangerous it is for our heart to be hardened! We need to pray again and again for the Lord to soften our heart, saying, "Lord, have mercy on me. Soften my heart and never allow it to be hardened."

### **III. UNBELIEF**

An evil heart produces unbelief. Unbelief reasons according to the natural concept, not according to God's principle. Consider the reasoning of the children of Israel in Numbers 13:31-33. Their reasonings included some lies, for they said that "the land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." That was a lie. Joshua and Caleb said, "Rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not" (Num. 14:9). Joshua and Caleb spoke the truth. However, the children of Israel did not reason according to the truth but according to the lie, not counting on the ways of God. In the beginning, God had promised Moses that He would bring the Israelites into the good land. That one word should have been sufficient for them. Suppose a millionaire would give you a check for \$10,000 with his signature on it. If you did not believe it, it would be an insult to that millionaire. You should not say, "I don't believe I have \$10,000. I don't even have enough money to buy a pair of shoes." This kind of reasoning is an insult to the millionaire. God had spoken to Moses, saying, "Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt into the land of the Canaanites...unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exo. 3:16-17). This one word was more reliable than a check signed by a millionaire. The children of Israel should have believed this word and known God's ways, saying, "God, You should not let us die here in the wilderness. If You do this, how can Your word stand? We don't care how many giants are in the good land, or even if the good land is filled with evil angels. We will eat them up because You have promised to bring us into the land." This is proper reasoning, the reasoning that is according to God's ways, principles, faithfulness, and power. But the Israelites did not reason in this way. Instead, the Israelites said, "There are giants in the land, and we are like grasshoppers in their sight. They will eat us up." This is the logic of unbelief, the logic of reasoning according to the natural concept and not counting on the ways of God or trusting in the faithfulness of God. Joshua and Caleb stood against that kind of reasoning, declaring that the people were well able to take the land. Joshua and Caleb honored God, and God, in turn, honored them for honoring Him. Nothing honors God more than our belief, and nothing dishonors and insults Him more than our unbelief.

Unbelief issues in disobedience, obstinacy, and rebellion (3:18) and provokes God (3:8, 16). Because of their unbelief, the Israelites withdrew from the living God. The Greek word translated "withdrawing" in 3:12 may also be rendered as turning away, deserting, departing, standing aloof. Although God is living and faithful, unbelief causes us to turn away from Him. Once we turn away, what then can He do for us? Because of their unbelief, the Israelites missed the rest and fell in the wilderness (3:18-19). The Lord swore that they would not enter into His rest, and their "carcasses fell in the wilderness" (3:17). How serious is an evil heart of unbelief! God was forced into not doing anything for the Israelites because He could not do anything against Himself or against His principles. Never offend God to the extent that He is unable to do anything for you. That is terrible.

### **IV. WHILE TODAY**

After a certain length of time, the psalmist, being inspired by God, prophesied, saying, "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Psa. 95:7-8). The writer of the book of Hebrews was fully in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and understood what was written in Psalm 95. The little word "today" opens the wide window of the sky. Due to the provocation that took place in the wilderness, the window of blessing in heaven was closed. The children of Israel had provoked God to such an extent that He was unable to do anything for them. After waiting, in His mercy He came in to prophesy and advise through the psalmist, telling His people to hear His voice and not to harden their hearts, and prophesying of that day when the heavenly window would be reopened. That day arrived when the church came into being. The blessing of the Sabbath which was

## **Week 13 – Day 1 (7/2) (Cont'd)**

withheld due to the hardening of their hearts was opened again on the day the church came into being. Hebrews 4:7 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.” This was written to the Hebrew believers, the descendants of those who had provoked God in the wilderness by hardening their heart. The writer seemed to be saying to them, “Brothers, do not harden your hearts as your fathers did. We are living in another day, a day which in Psalm 95 is called ‘Today.’ Take today as the opportunity to soften your heart and listen to His voice. His voice is saying that Christ is better than the angels, Moses, and Aaron, and that Christ’s new covenant is much better than the old covenant given through Moses. Be diligent to enter into this promised day, the Sabbath in the church life.” If in the day of the church, we hear His voice and do not harden our heart, we shall never provoke and desert the living God. We shall trust in Him and enter into the rest.

### **THE LIVING WORD OF GOD**

After speaking so much about Psalm 95, the writer of Hebrews suddenly says in 4:12, “For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, both of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The word “for” at the beginning of this verse connects it with the preceding verse. Why does the writer here suddenly speak of the word of God? Because the promise in Psalm 95 is the word of God. Whenever we read the Bible, it must be living, energizing, and sharp enough to divide and discern all the things within us. If it is not, we have not touched the word of God but only the black and white letters. The printed matter in black and white letters is neither living nor energizing. Every word in the Bible must be the living and operative word of God. How do we know that we have touched the word of God and not just the printed matter? We know it when the word we have touched is living, energizing, and dividing our soul from our spirit. This is an important principle.

Psa. 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

130 The opening of Your words gives light, Imparting understanding to the simple.

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

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The writer seemed to be saying, “You Hebrew brothers cherish the Old Testament, especially the book of Psalms. One of the psalms says, ‘Today if ye will hear His voice.’ You have read this verse again and again without anything happening to you. Now I am using this psalm as a base for my talk with you. This word of God must be living and operative and must divide our soul from our spirit. Brothers, I know why you are staggering and hesitating. It is because your soul is mixed with your spirit. Sometimes, when you are calm, deep within, your spirit is telling you to go on and follow Christ as today’s Messiah. Although you may be clear about this in your spirit, you turn from your spirit to your soul. Your mind in your soul begins to wonder and this causes your soul to wander. Because your soul and spirit are mixed together, I have quoted the living word of God which is sharper than a two-edged sword. It will pierce your mixture, divide your spirit from your soul, and show you how foolish you are. You should no longer wander in your soul; you must turn from your soul to your spirit. Don’t consider, talk, hesitate, or stagger. The more you talk and hesitate, the more you are in your wondering mind.”

Many of us have had this experience. Before we came into the church life, we were wandering. Then we were attracted by the church and deep within our spirit something said, “This is it.” But then our mind began to wonder, asking, “Is this right? If it is, then why haven’t the spiritual giants practiced it?” Under the influence of our background, we began wandering in the wilderness. However, in the calm of the night, something deeper than our mind stirred within us, saying, “The church life is right.” During such a time, it was difficult to sleep or work well. We only found rest when one day the living word of God came in to divide our being, revealing what was our spirit and what was our soul.

The living word of God must pierce into our being and separate all the mixture of soul and spirit. The church life is absolutely in the spirit. It is very easy to be in religion. However, to enter into the church life we need to be pierced and divided by the living word of God. Only the word of God can divide our soul from our spirit. Our soul, like fly paper, is sticky. Thus, it is easy for our spirit to be stuck to our soul. Because of this, we need the piercing and dividing of God’s living word. We not only experience this upon first coming into the church life but often afterwards. Many times God came in and our spirit responded. However, our soul also reacted, mainly through our mind. The Lord may speak in our spirit and say, “Subject yourself to the church.” But the sticky soul, speaking through the mind, says, “Be careful. Don’t listen to the church so much. All the leading brothers have faults like anyone else. Look at Brother So-and-So. He’s good, but he’s not absolutely good.” When our mind acts like this, we soon begin wandering. Only when the merciful and faithful God comes in with the piercing of the living word of God do we find deliverance from our wandering mind. This is why we need the Bible. If the Bible is not living and energizing whenever we read it, something is wrong. Although many Christians take the Bible only as a printed book, day by day we must take it in a living way.

## I. THE OUTFLOW OF THE LIVING GOD

The living word of God is the outflow of the living God. It flows with the life of God (John 1:4), the light of God (Psa. 119:105, 130), and even with God Himself (John 1:1). Because the Scriptures are breathed by God (2 Tim. 3:16, Gk.), the word of God in the Scriptures is God’s outflow. It brings the life of God, the light of God, and even God Himself into our being.

## II. LIVING

Since the word of God is His outflow, being spirit and life (John 6:63), it is living. In our experience the whole Bible must not be dead letters but rather living as spirit and life.

## **Week 13 – Day 2 (7/3) (Cont’d)**

### **III. OPERATIVE**

The living word of God is operative. The anglicized form of the Greek word translated “operative” in verse 12 is energetic. Hence, operative here means energizing or energetic. The living word of God is energizing within us to work out something for God.

### **IV. SHARPER THAN THE TWO-EDGED SWORD**

The living word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword (Eph. 6:17), piercing into our being, dividing our soul from our spirit, discerning the thoughts and intents of our heart. Many times the word of God discerns our mixed-up thoughts. Do not think that all thoughts come from hell or that all intents come from the self. Some thoughts come from the heavens, and some intents are for God. But mostly we have a mixture in our thoughts and intents and need the living, operative, sharp word to pierce into us and discern our thoughts and intents, revealing which are of and for the self and which are of and for God. If we are left by ourselves, we cannot discern these matters. But once we experience the living word of God, it is easy to discern the thoughts that are not of God and the intents that are of Satan.

### **THE PARTS OF MAN**

This brings us to the parts of man. This is covered adequately in the book *The Economy of God* and the booklet *The Parts of Man*.

#### **I. BODY**

Our body is our outward organ by which we contact the outward, physical world. It is composed of all its members and is signified in 4:12 by the joints and marrow.

#### **II. SOUL**

The soul is our very self. This is proved by comparing Matthew 16:26 with Luke 9:25. Matthew 16:26 says, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Luke 9:25 says, “For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?” Here we see that our soul is simply our self, our being, our personality. In following the Lord, we must deny our soul, our self (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23).

Our soul is composed of the mind, the will, and the emotion. Proverbs 2:10 suggests that the soul needs knowledge. Since knowledge is a function of the mind, this proves that the mind is a part of the soul. Then Psalm 139:14 says that the soul knows. Knowing is a function of the mind, which again proves that the mind is a part of the soul. Psalm 13:2 says the soul considers, or counsels, which refers to the mind. Lamentations 3:20 indicates that remembrance is of the soul. From these verses we can see that there is a part in the soul which knows, considers, and remembers. This part is the mind.

The second part of the soul is the will. Job 7:15 says the soul chooses. Choosing is a decision made by an act of the will. This proves that the will must be a part of the soul. Job 6:7 says the soul refuses. To choose and refuse are both functions of the will. First Chronicles 22:19 says, “Set your soul to seek.” Just as we set our minds to think, so we set our souls to seek. This is, of course, the soul making a decision, which proves that the will must be a part of the soul. Psalm 27:12; 41:2, and Ezekiel 16:27 translate the Hebrew word soul into will. The prayer made by the psalmist is, “Do not deliver me to the will of the enemy.” In the original it means, “Do not deliver me to the soul of the enemy.” This proves clearly that the will must be a part of the soul.

The emotion is the third part of the soul. With the emotion there are many aspects: love, hate, joy, grief, etc. References to love are found in 1 Samuel 18:1, Song of Songs 1:7, and Psalm 42:1. These verses show that love is something in the soul, proving, therefore, that within the soul there is such an organ or function as the emotion. Concerning hatred, we may note 2 Samuel 5:8, Psalm 107:18 and Ezekiel 36:5. That joy, an element of the emotion, is also a part of the soul is seen in Isaiah 61:10 and Psalm 86:4. Then there is the matter of grief, another expression of the soul, mentioned in 1 Samuel 30:6 and Judges 10:16. These verses establish the ground to verify the three parts of the soul. The mind is the leading part, followed by the will and the emotion.

### **III. SPIRIT**

As the body is our outward organ to contact the physical world, the spirit is our inward organ to contact God (Zech. 12:1; Job 32:8; Prov. 20:27; John 4:24; Rom. 1:9; Ezek. 36:26). We are a being, a soul, with two organs—the body outwardly and the spirit inwardly. The spirit is a complete unit composed of three parts or functions: conscience, fellowship, and intuition. We are all familiar with the function of the conscience, which is to perceive right from wrong and to condemn or justify. It is also easy to comprehend the fellowship. The fellowship is our communion with God. Within our spirit we have a function which makes it possible for us to contact God. It is not very easy, however, to understand the intuition. Intuition means to have a direct sense or knowledge. There is such a direct sense in our spirit, regardless of reason, circumstances, or background. Intuition is a direct sense of God and a direct knowledge from God. Thus, the spirit is known by the conscience, the fellowship, and the intuition.

That the conscience is a part of the spirit is proved by comparing Romans 9:1 with Romans 8:16. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit. On the other hand, our conscience bears witness with the Holy Spirit. This proves that the conscience must be a function of our spirit. Psalm 51:10 speaks of “a right spirit within me”—that is, a spirit which is right. Since knowing right from wrong is related to the conscience, this verse also proves that the conscience is in the spirit.

## Week 13 – Day 3 (7/4)

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

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What is the scriptural ground for saying that the fellowship is in the spirit? John 4:24 says that we must worship God in our spirit. To worship God is to contact God and fellowship with Him, proving that the function of worship or fellowship is in our spirit. In Romans 1:9 the Apostle Paul says, “I serve God with my spirit.” To serve God is also a type of fellowship with God. This also proves that the organ for fellowship is in our spirit. Luke 1:47 says, “My spirit hath rejoiced in God,” meaning that the human spirit has contacted God. Once again, fellowship with God is a function in the spirit. First Corinthians 6:17 says, “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” Real fellowship means that we become one spirit with the Lord. This fellowship is in the spirit.

How about the intuition? First Corinthians 2:11 reveals that the spirit of man can know what the soul cannot. This proves that something extra is in our spirit. Our soul can know things by reason and by circumstantial experiences, but the human spirit can discern things without these. This direct sense shows that the intuition is in our spirit. Mark 2:8 says that the Lord perceived in His spirit. To perceive in our spirit comes from a direct sense of discernment which is not dependent upon reason. This is the intuition, the third function of our spirit. Therefore, we do have the scriptural ground for saying that the conscience, fellowship, and intuition are the three functions of the human spirit.

Our spirit is the deepest part of our being, a spiritual organ by which we contact God. It is in our spirit that we are regenerated (John 3:6). It is in our spirit that the Holy Spirit dwells and works (Rom. 8:16). It is in our spirit that we enjoy Christ in His grace (2 Tim. 4:22; Gal. 6:18). Hence, the writer of the book of Hebrews advised the Hebrew believers not to stagger in the wandering of their soul, but to press on into their spirit to partake of and to enjoy the heavenly Christ.

### IV. HEART

Our spirit is the organ by which we contact God, while our heart is the organ by which we love God (Mark 12:30). Our spirit contacts, receives, contains, and experiences God. However, it requires that our heart love God first.

The heart is not a separate part in addition to the soul and the spirit, but rather a composition of all the parts of the soul plus the conscience, the first part of the spirit. It is composed of the conscience, the mind for thoughts, the will for intents, and the emotion. Man does not have more than three main parts in his whole being. As a human being, we have a body, a soul, and a spirit. We do not have a fourth and separate part called the heart.

What is the scriptural ground for saying that the mind, will, emotion, and conscience compose the heart? Hebrews 4:12 and Genesis 6:5 speak of the thoughts of the heart. Since thoughts are in the mind, the mind must be a part of the heart. That the will is a part of the heart is proved by Acts 11:23, which speaks of “purpose of heart” or “purpose in the heart.” Purpose is a function of the will, showing that the will is also part of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 speaks of the intents of the heart. The intents correspond to the purposes, which are of the will. This again proves that the will is part of the heart. John 16:22 says that the heart rejoices. To rejoice is surely an element of the emotion in our soul, but here we are told that the heart rejoices. Therefore, the emotion is also part of the heart. In John 16:6 the Lord speaks of sorrow filling the disciples’ hearts, again proving that emotion is found in the heart. Concerning the conscience, Hebrews 10:22 says that our hearts have been sprinkled from an evil conscience. The conscience has much to do with the heart. If we would have a pure heart, we must have a conscience that is without offense. Our conscience must be sprinkled in order that we might have a pure heart. First John 3:20, which speaks of our heart condemning us, also proves this. Since to condemn is a function of the conscience, this verse proves that the conscience is undoubtedly a part of the heart. Thus we have adequate scriptural ground to prove that the three parts of the soul and the first part of the spirit compose the heart.

## V. MAN'S THREE PARTS CORRESPONDING TO THE THREE SECTIONS OF GOD'S TEMPLE

Man's three parts correspond to the three sections of God's temple. God's temple, or tabernacle, is composed of three sections: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. First Corinthians 3:16 says that we are God's temple. Our body corresponds to the outer court; our soul, which is somewhat inward, corresponds to the Holy Place; and our spirit, the innermost part of our being, corresponds to the innermost part of God's temple, the Holy of Holies.

In our heart is the mind with the thoughts and the will with the intents. The thoughts affect the intents, and the intents carry out the thoughts. The living word of God is able to discern the thoughts in our mind and the intents in our will. What was quoted from the word of God by the writer in chapters three and four is able to expose what the thoughts and intents of the Hebrew believers were while they were staggering in the process of their salvation.

Now we can understand why the writer of Hebrews spoke in 4:12 of the living word of God piercing into us, dividing our spirit from our soul, and discerning the thoughts and intents of our heart. He realized that the staggering Hebrew Christians were wandering in their soul and had neglected their spirit. But the new testament is absolutely a matter in our spirit, not in our soul. The new testament is altogether heavenly, not at all earthly. The earthly things belong to the physical body and to the mind. Judaism is earthly. As an earthly religion, it suits the thinking of our natural mind. The new testament, on the contrary, is heavenly and belongs to the spirit. In order to touch the heavenly things, we must be in our spirit. Ephesians 2:6 says that we are sitting with Christ in the heavenlies. But if we are in our mind, we can never experience being in the heavenlies. In our mind we may mentally visit various places on earth, but we cannot touch the heavenlies. To touch the heavenlies, we must be in our spirit.

Some criticize us for shouting in the meetings, but we who have experience know why we shout. If we would not shout, we would stay in the mind. After just a brief shout, we are in the heavens because we have turned from the mind to the spirit. Although I am not an easily excited person, I sometimes have the need to shout. If I do not shout, I will be in the low dungeon of self and reasoning. How can we stop our devilish reasonings? By releasing our spirit in shouting praises to the Lord. Occasionally, when I have difficulty falling asleep at night, I shout silently and am freed from my thoughts and am soon asleep. The best way to touch the heavens is to shout.

In the book of Hebrews we have the gate of heaven. In this book we have the church as Bethel, the house of God with Christ as the heavenly ladder. Wherever there is Bethel, there is the gate of heaven with Christ, the heavenly ladder, joining earth to heaven and bringing heaven to earth. Where can we enjoy such a wonderful sight? In our spirit. Today the gate of heaven is joined to our spirit. Ephesians 2:22 says that God's habitation on earth today is in our spirit, and 2 Timothy 4:22 says that Christ, the heavenly ladder, is with our spirit. Thus, our spirit is one with the gate of heaven. We should no longer stagger in our mind but get into our spirit where we have the house of God, the heavenly Christ, and the gate of heaven.

It is very difficult for any of us to be unaffected by the contagious germs in today's world. But we have a place of refuge from the germs of the world—our spirit. In a sense, our spirit is our refuge today; it is a high tower. As we pointed out in the last message, the church life is our refuge because the church is God's habitation in our spirit. As we are on the stormy sea, many thoughts may come. How can we escape the storm and come into the refuge? Only by turning to the spirit. How can we withstand the rumors and the negative talk? Only by getting into our spirit, where the church, the house of God, and the heavenly ladder are. The church is a hospital. In a hospital all the germs are killed and everything is cleansed. Likewise, in the church, all the demonic germs are killed. The churches in the Lord's recovery are very healthy. In order to remain healthy, we must continually exercise our spirit. If you are infected with some negative thoughts and remain in your mind, you will be sick. But if you turn to your spirit, the germs will be killed and you will be healthy and strong in the church life. The writer of Hebrews seemed to be saying, "My dear Hebrew brothers, you must turn from your soul to your spirit through the living word of God. If you will

### **Week 13 – Day 3 (7/4) (Cont'd)**

turn to the spirit by the living word, you will be healthy and have no problems. Brothers, you are staggering in your soul and must get into the spirit. Once you get into the spirit you will be in the house of God and will enjoy all the riches of the gate of heaven.”

It is not easy to understand this portion of the Holy Word because it requires a good deal of experience on our part. For years I was troubled by the writer’s sudden mention of the living word of God and the dividing of the soul and spirit. I could not understand it. Eventually, I considered my experience. I realized that whenever we have problems with the church, it is always due to the thoughts in our mind. Thus, we need the living word to pierce into the depths of our being, dividing our soul from our spirit. Then we would not stand with the devilish soul but with the heavenly spirit. If we will do this, we will immediately find ourselves in the church life.

Everyone in the church life has had some problems with the church. We may not like a particular elder or a certain brother or sister, thinking that they are unqualified, too strong, or too loud. What can deliver us from such thoughts? The living word which pierces into the depths of our being and divides our spirit from our mind. When our devilish mind is exposed, we shall declare that we love all the brothers and sisters because they are all so lovely in the spirit. When we are in our mind thinking about the brothers and sisters, none of them is lovely. We think that we are the only ones who are any good. How we need the living word to divide our soul from our spirit that we may be in the church life! This is the way to enter into today’s Sabbath rest. And this is also the way to remain in the Sabbath and not to break it. To break the Sabbath is to leave the church life. Those that have forsaken the church life, having left today’s Sabbath, can testify that there is no rest outside the church. It is in the spirit that we enjoy the rest of the church Sabbath. This is why 4:12 is placed where it is in the book of Hebrews.

Nothing can discern the thoughts and intents of our heart like the living word of God. Before the living word comes in, we think that we are right and altogether for the Lord. But when the word pierces our depths, we see that our thoughts and intents are altogether selfish and we judge ourselves. Without the living word to discern our thoughts and intents, it is difficult to remain in the church Sabbath. The church Sabbath depends upon the piercing, dividing, and discerning of the living word of God. It is by this that we enter into, remain, and keep the Sabbath of the church life.

- Exo. 12:7-8 And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. 8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread with bitter herbs.
- Jos. 5: 12 And the manna ceased on that day, when they ate of the produce of the land; and there was no longer manna for the children of Israel, but they ate of the yield of the land of Canaan that year.
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## MESSAGE TWENTY-SIX

### THE THREE STAGES OF SALVATION

According to the whole revelation of the Bible, God's salvation is of three stages. It is a matter of a gradual process.

#### I. WITH THE ISRAELITES

The salvation which God intended for the children of Israel to partake of was related to three places: Egypt, from which they were delivered; the wilderness, in which they wandered; and Canaan, into which they entered. Their history in these three places signifies the three stages of their participation in God's full salvation. The children of Israel did not partake of the whole of God's salvation in one place.

##### A. Salvation from Egypt

In Egypt, the Israelites participated in the first stage of God's salvation. At the time of the Passover, they experienced the redeeming blood of the lamb (Exo. 12:7) and the nourishing meat of the lamb (Exo. 12:8) and were saved from God's righteous judgment. When they made their exodus out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, they were saved from Egyptian slavery and tyranny. After crossing the Red Sea, they were a released and liberated people. In this sense, they all were saved. No one can deny that they had been saved from God's judgment and from Egyptian bondage, tyranny, and slavery. However, they had only shared in one-third of God's full salvation. Although they had been saved from God's judgment and from Pharaoh's slavery, what about God's eternal purpose? What about God's expression and dominion? With the children of Israel at that time, there was not yet the divine expression nor the divine dominion. The tabernacle had not yet been erected, and God's divine government had not been established on earth. Although the children of Israel had been saved from Egypt, they had to experience two further stages of God's salvation for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

##### B. Salvation through the Wilderness

After the Israelites were saved from Egypt where they ate the Passover lamb and the unleavened bread, they experienced salvation through the wilderness. Although they had had a sweet enjoyment of Christ, typified by the lamb in Egypt, that was merely the initial stage, the beginning. They had to enjoy, partake of, and experience Christ more, as typified by the manna and the rock flowing with living water. After the exodus from Egypt, God brought them into the second stage, which was signified by the wilderness. In the wilderness they enjoyed the feeding manna (Exo. 16:31-32) and the quenching water (Exo. 17:6).

Because of the influence of past teaching, whenever we hear the word wilderness we think of it as a bad word. Although it is not a good word, it is not altogether bad. If you consult a map, you will see that the children of Israel could not have gone from Egypt into the good land without passing through the wilderness. The wilderness was bad because the children of Israel did not go directly through it into Canaan but wandered in it for over thirty-eight years. It was that waste of time which made the wilderness so bad. If, however, they had crossed the Red Sea and gone directly through the wilderness into the good land, the wilderness would have been a good word. That the wilderness was not altogether bad is proved by the fact that there the Israelites enjoyed the manna and the water from the rock, both of which were types of Christ.

### **C. Salvation into Canaan**

After wandering in the wilderness, the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered into the good land of Canaan, the third stage of their salvation. Here, in the third stage, in the good land, they enjoyed something more than the lamb, the unleavened bread, the manna, and the water—they enjoyed the rich produce of the land of Canaan. Although they had eaten manna daily in the wilderness for nearly forty years, immediately after they entered into the good land, the manna ceased and they began to enjoy the rich produce of the all-inclusive land (Josh. 5:11-12). The Passover lamb, the heavenly manna, the living water, and the produce of the good land of Canaan are all types of the different aspects of the riches of Christ. If the children of Israel had only been saved in Egypt, they would have never tasted the manna. If they had not entered into the land of Canaan, they would never have enjoyed the rich produce of the good land. Hallelujah for the rich enjoyment of Christ in the various stages of salvation!

In the third stage of their salvation, salvation into Canaan, the Israelites entered into the rest (Deut. 12:9). All the rich enjoyment of Christ in the three stages of salvation is for the securing of the good land and the building up of the temple that there might be the expression of God and the divine government of God among men on earth. The full salvation of God with the rich enjoyment of Christ is for God's expression and kingdom. Salvation from Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the good land is absolutely for God's expression and kingdom. As we have seen, where there is God's expression and kingdom, there is the Sabbath rest. When God's glory filled His house, the temple, all His people rested in His presence. That was a Sabbath to God and to His saved people. Therefore, we clearly see that the three stages of God's salvation are for His expression and kingdom so that God may have rest with His saved people.

As we have pointed out, God's full salvation, which He intended for the children of Israel, included redemption through the Passover lamb, exodus from Egypt, feeding by the heavenly manna, thirst-quenching by the living water from the cleft rock, and partaking of the riches of the good land of Canaan. All the Israelites shared in the Passover lamb, the heavenly manna, and the living water, but of those who shared the exodus from Egypt only Joshua and Caleb entered into the good land and partook of it; all the rest fell in the wilderness (Num. 14:30; 1 Cor. 10:1-11). Though all were redeemed, only the two overcomers, Joshua and Caleb, received the prize of the good land.

The Passover lamb, the heavenly manna, the living water, and the good land of Canaan are all types of the different aspects of Christ. According to what has been depicted of the children of Israel, not all believers who have been redeemed through Christ will partake of Christ as a prize to them as their rest, their satisfaction, both in the church age and in the coming kingdom. Only those who, after being redeemed, seek Christ diligently will do so. This is why the Apostle Paul, though fully redeemed, was still pressing toward the mark that he might gain Christ as the prize (Phil. 3:10-14). In Philippians 3, Paul tells us that he was in Judaism but that for Christ's sake he gave it up (vv. 4-9). Here in the book of Hebrews the writer holds the same concept in encouraging the Hebrew believers to forsake Judaism and press toward Christ that they may not miss the prize.

## **II. WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS**

### **A. Salvation from the World**

According to the type of the salvation of the children of Israel, the salvation of the new testament believers is also in three stages. Firstly, we experience salvation from the world. We are justified through the blood of Jesus (Rom. 3:22-25) and separated from the world (Gal. 1:4; 6:14). If anyone has not made his exodus from the world, he has not completed the first stage of his salvation. The salvation offered in Christianity is mainly a salvation with justification by faith through the blood of Christ, but without an exodus. Today there are millions of real Christians who have been justified by faith through the blood of Christ but who are still in the world. They need an exodus. We praise the Lord that we are out of the world, which includes religion. We are out of Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

## B. Salvation through the Soul

The second stage of our salvation is salvation through the soul, which includes being sanctified (Rom. 6:19, 22) and being transformed (Rom. 12:2). Many think that the word soul is not a good word. We should not say this. The soul may be either very good or very bad. The New Testament reveals that after we have been justified and regenerated, we need to be sanctified and transformed. In the past years, it has been made clear that transformation, including sanctification, concerns our soul. Our soul, that is, our being, must be sanctified and transformed, saturated with all that Christ is. The very essence, element, and substance of Christ in our spirit must spread into our soul. Undoubtedly, Christ's divine essence has been sown into our spirit. Now it must permeate and saturate our soul until our soul is completely transformed by His divine element. Transformation is not merely a change; it means that the divine essence of Christ is wrought into us. Andrew Murray used the word "woven," saying that something of Christ is woven, like textile, into us. During the early years of our ministry we also used this expression as an illustration. Although it is not wrong, we cannot find such a term in the Bible. Instead, the Bible uses the words mingling or mingled.

Leviticus 2:4, speaking of the meal offering, says that fine flour is to be mingled with oil. The word mingled, a biblical term, is much better than the term woven. Consider the picture of the meal offering in Leviticus 2. Fine flour is mingled, that is, permeated and saturated with oil. Eventually, the fine flour is transformed, not by changing itself but by having the oil mingled with it. The fine flour signifies humanity and the oil signifies divinity. God's intention in His economy is that our humanity be mingled with His divinity. We, the fine flour, and He, the oil, shall be mingled together. When the fine flour is mingled with the oil, both the fine flour and the oil still have their own substance. Likewise, in the mingling of divinity with humanity, the substance of humanity and divinity both remain, but these two substances are mingled together as one entity. This is a marvelous and clear picture of God's mingling with us. This mingling is our transformation.

What is transformation? It is not a moral correction nor a change of ethical behavior. Transformation means that our humanity is firstly cleansed by the Lord's redeeming blood and then mingled with the anointing oil—the Holy Spirit—until we are sanctified, made holy, both positionally and dispositionally. In this stage, the second stage of our salvation, we enjoy Christ as the heavenly manna and as the living water, as the life-giving Spirit which comes out of the cleft rock which is Christ Himself. In this stage of transformation, we enjoy Christ in a richer and more subjective way. We praise the Lord that in the past years many saints in the Lord's recovery have been brought into the actuality of such a transformation. Although there has been some outward adjustment and correction, our trust is not in this but in the Lord's marvelous transforming work. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding and reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit" (Gk.). We all need this transformation. Hallelujah, we are now passing through the second stage of our salvation!

## **Week 13 – Day 5 (7/6)**

Rom. 8: 4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

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The real church life is filled with transformation. I am more than encouraged with the transformation taking place among the young people in the churches. The churches are going on. We do not need to correct the saints very much, although we do need to take care of the young ones in the way of life. We are seeing the young people in the church being transformed by the divine life. What a wonderful transformation!

### **C. Salvation into the Spirit**

The third stage of our salvation is salvation into our spirit. We must all leave the wilderness and cross the river into our spirit, where we enjoy Christ as our life (Rom. 8:10; 2 Tim. 4:22) and where we should live and walk (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25). Here, in the spirit, we have God's habitation, the heavenly ladder, and the gate of heaven. Therefore, in our spirit is the expression of God with the kingdom of God. Here we are enjoying the Sabbath of the heavenly rest.

## **III. CORRESPONDING TO THE EXPERIENCES IN THE TABERNACLE (TEMPLE)**

### **A. Experiences in the Outer Court**

Since the tabernacle and the temple are of three sections, the three stages of God's salvation correspond to the experiences in the tabernacle and the temple. Firstly, we have the experiences in the outer court, where we are redeemed at the altar (Lev. 4:7) and washed at the laver (Exo. 30:18-21). The washing at the laver is the real crossing of the river. This corresponds to our salvation from the world.

### **B. Experiences in the Holy Place**

Secondly, we have the experiences in the Holy Place, where we are fed with the showbread (Exo. 25:30), enlightened by the lampstand (Exo. 25:37), and accepted through the incense altar (Exo. 30:7). This corresponds to the transformation in our soul.

### **C. Experiences in the Holy of Holies**

Thirdly, we have the experiences in the Holy of Holies, where we enjoy God's presence (Exo. 25:22) and share God's shekinah glory. Here, in the Holy of Holies, we are in God's habitation. Here we are in the Sabbath rest. This corresponds to the salvation into our spirit.

## **IV. THE SITUATION OF THE HEBREW BELIEVERS**

The Hebrew believers had been saved in the first stage but were staggering in the second stage. They were wandering in the soul by wondering in the mind and were in danger of drifting back to the first stage. The book of Hebrews was written to warn them and to encourage them to go on and enter into the third stage—into the rest of the good land (Heb. 4:11) and into the Holy of Holies in the spirit (10:19-20). To enter into the rest of the good land is to enter into the church life with the expectation of being ushered into the coming kingdom. To enter into the Holy of Holies is to be in the spirit. Entering into the Sabbath rest and into the proper church life are altogether a matter of our spirit. Today the throne of God and the Holy of Holies, both of which are in the heavens, are joined to our spirit. Hence, our spirit is a most crucial spot. Here, in our spirit, we have God's habitation, the heavenly ladder, the gate of heaven, the throne of God, and the Holy of Holies. Here, in the spirit, we enjoy the church life and are in the present Sabbath which will usher us into the Sabbath rest in the coming kingdom.

In 4:11 the writer said, “Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience.” As the rest covered in this portion of the Word is the all-inclusive Christ, so to fall from it is to fall from Christ (Gal. 5:4, Gk. “you are severed from Christ”). In Galatians, the danger was that the Galatian believers would drift into the bondage of law from the liberty of grace (Gal. 5:1-4). Paul advised them to stand fast in the liberty of grace, that is, not to be severed from Christ. Here in Hebrews, the danger was that the Hebrew believers would not forsake their old religion which was according to the law and press on into the enjoyment of Christ as their rest. If they still staggered in their old religion, that is, in Judaism, they would come short of Christ, who is their rest. The writer of this book earnestly encouraged them to press on with Christ as His partners into the rest so that they, as His partakers, might enjoy Christ as their rest.

Hebrews 3:7 through 4:11 refers to the children of Israel falling away from entering into the rest of the good land. We have seen that with them there were three places—Egypt, the wilderness, and Canaan—that their history in these three places signifies the three stages of their participation in God’s full salvation, and that this is a type of us, the New Testament believers, in our participation in the full salvation of God. In the first stage we received Christ and were redeemed and delivered from the world. In the second stage we became wanderers in following the Lord. This wandering always transpires in our soul. In the third stage we partake of and enjoy Christ in a full way. This is experienced in our spirit. When we pursued the pleasures of material and sinful things, we were in the world, typified by Egypt. When we wander in our soul, we are in the wilderness. The wilderness in which the Israelites wandered signifies our soul. When we enjoy Christ in our spirit, we are in Canaan. When the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, they were always murmuring, reasoning, and chiding. That was surely in their soul, not in their spirit. But Joshua and Caleb believed in the word of God, obeyed the Lord, and pressed toward the goal. This was surely not in their soul but in their spirit. The receivers of this book, the Hebrew believers, were at that time wondering what they should do with their old Jewish religion. This wondering in their mind was a wandering in their soul, not an experience of Christ in their spirit. Thus, the writer of this book says that the word of God, that is, what has been quoted from the Old Testament, can pierce like a sharp two-edged sword into their wondering and divide their soul from their spirit.

As the marrow is concealed deep in the joints, so is the spirit concealed deep in the soul. The dividing of the marrow from the joints requires mostly the breaking of the joints. In the same principle, the dividing of the spirit from the soul requires the breaking of the soul. The Hebrew believers’ soul with its wondering mind, doubting concerning God’s way of salvation and considering its own interest, had to be broken by the living, operative, and piercing word of God that their soul might be divided from their spirit. Hence, the writer of this book advised the Hebrew believers not to stagger in the wandering of their soul, which soul they must deny, but to press on into their spirit to partake of and enjoy the heavenly Christ that they may participate in the kingdom rest of Christ’s reign in the millennium. If they staggered in the wandering of their soul, they would have missed God’s goal and suffered the loss of the full enjoyment of Christ and the kingdom rest.

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### Study Questions

1. Why does the writer of Hebrews use the words merciful and faithful to describe the High Priest and how is Christ qualified to be such a High Priest?
2. What is the basic significance of the priesthood, and how does the first mention of the word priest in the Bible show us this?

## **Week 14 – Day 1 (7/9)**

Heb. 5:13-14 For everyone who partakes of milk is inexperienced in the word of righteousness, for he is an infant; 14 But solid food is for the full-grown, who because of practice have their faculties exercised for discriminating between both good and evil.

6:1 Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God,

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### **MESSAGE TWENTY-SEVEN**

## **A GREAT HIGH PRIEST AND THE THRONE OF GRACE**

### **A GREAT HIGH PRIEST**

The book of Hebrews is a book of comparisons. In the foregoing messages we have seen three comparisons: the comparisons between our God and the God of the Jewish people, between Christ and the angels, and between Christ and Moses. Now we come to another subsection in this book (4:14-7:28) where we find still another comparison—the comparison between Christ and Aaron. Our God is more excellent than the God whom the Jews worship, and our Christ is much superior to the angels, Moses, and Aaron. As we have seen, in each section of Hebrews there is a warning. The first warning is in 2:1-4 and the second is in 3:7 through 4:13. In this subsection we have the third warning, found in 5:11 through 6:20.

In the previous chapters we have seen that Christ is the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Captain of our salvation, and the Apostle. All this qualifies Him to be our High Priest. In the Bible, no one is more wonderful or excellent than Christ as our High Priest. He comes from God and ministers God to us. Before His coming, we had nothing of God. God was God and we were simply men, having nothing to do with Him. He came not only as our Savior and Redeemer but also as our High Priest. The titles of Savior and Redeemer are understood by most people in a superficial way. If we only know Christ as our Savior and Redeemer, we may know Him just in a superficial way. We must go on to know Him as the Captain of our salvation, the Apostle, and the High Priest. Although many Christians realize that Christ is our High Priest, not many know what this truly means. If we would know what it means for Christ to be our High Priest, we must thoroughly cover the whole book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 4:14 says, “Having therefore a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession.” The Lord Jesus firstly was sent from God to us through incarnation (2:14) to be our Apostle (3:1), our Captain, our Leader (2:10), the One superior to Moses (3:3), and our real Joshua (4:8) to bring us, His partners (1:9; 3:14), into glory and rest (2:10; 4:11). He then went back from us to God through resurrection and ascension (5:5-6) to be our High Priest to bear us in the presence of God and to care for all our needs (2:17-18; 4:15).

The very Christ whom we need and have today in the Sabbath rest of the church life is our High Priest. A high priest, properly speaking, is not on the street nor in the wilderness but in the Holy of Holies. Where is our Christ today? He is continually in the Holy of Holies. Our High Priest is not at the altar offering the sacrifices, nor in the Holy Place preparing the showbread, lighting the lamps, and burning the incense. He is in the Holy of Holies. Most Christians only have a Christ who is at the altar, that is, a Christ on the cross. Many hymns speak of the crucified Christ. Some Christians have a Christ only in the Holy Place. The highest attainment in their spiritual seeking is that of a Christ preparing the showbread, lighting the lamp, and burning the incense in the Holy Place. They have missed the High Priest in the Holy of Holies. The main function of our High Priest today is neither at the altar nor in the Holy Place but in the Holy of Holies, where God’s presence and shekinah glory are. Yes, He was once on the cross, but, as 1:3 reveals, His work on the cross has been finished. Never ask Him to go back to do it again. Now, having finished His work, He is sitting at the right hand of God in the heavens. No place is closer to God than this. The book of Hebrews was written to help us come forward to this Christ who is now in the presence of God.

The Christ who is in the Holy of Holies is not merely our Savior, Redeemer, Apostle, or Captain of salvation; He is our High Priest. What is He doing there in the Holy of Holies? He is ministering God into us. As we have seen in a previous message, the major function of the High Priest is to minister God into God’s chosen people. Oh, how we need our High Priest in the Holy of Holies to minister God into us! We

should forget our environment, weaknesses, troubles, and even ourselves and only remember that today Jesus Christ is our High Priest in the Holy of Holies. As long as we have such a High Priest, we have everything we need.

According to the Old Testament, whenever the high priest went into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, he bore upon his shoulders two onyx stones on which were engraved the names of the children of Israel (E.o. 28:9-12). He also wore the breastplate in which were set twelve precious stones engraved with the names of the children of Israel (E.o. 28:15-30). This signified that the people of Israel were on the shoulder and breast of the high priest. Since the shoulder signifies strength and the breast signifies love, the people of God were on the strength and in the love of the high priest. When the high priest was in the Holy of Holies, he brought all the people of God along with him. In the eyes of God, when he was there, all the people of God were there with him. Likewise, when God looks at Christ, our High Priest in the Holy of Holies, He sees us upon His shoulder and breast. How we need to see this vision! Our High Priest in the Holy of Holies in the heavens bears us and wears us before God. Right now we are upon His shoulder and upon His breast in the Holy of Holies. We are there with Him in the shekinah glory of God.

As Christ bears us before God in the Holy of Holies, He ministers God into our being. When the Apostle Paul prayed to the Lord, asking Him to remove the thorn (2 Cor. 12:7-8), the Lord said, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). The Lord seemed to be saying, “Paul, I will not remove that thorn, but I will impart Myself into you as grace. When I do this, you will know how precious and sufficient I am, and more of Me will be added into you.” This experience of Christ as our High Priest who bears us on His shoulder and breast and ministers God into us is an experience in the Holy of Holies, where we enjoy God Himself and all His riches. When we get into this experience, it is difficult to say where we are or what is happening. We can only say that we are upon the shoulders and breast of our High Priest and that He is ministering something comforting and strengthening into us. Perhaps all we can say is, “I have received something from the Lord, but I simply cannot describe it or give it a name.” This experience of Christ as our High Priest is the highest experience and enjoyment. We all must learn to stay here on His shoulders and on His breast in the Holy of Holies. This is an experience in the third stage of our salvation which corresponds to the experiences in the Holy of Holies. We should not be content to remain outer court Christians; neither should we be Christians staggering in the Holy Place. We must press on into the Holy of Holies where God’s presence and shekinah glory are.

This experience of Christ as our High Priest undoubtedly is in the heavens. However, it is also in our spirit and in the church because the church today is God’s habitation in our spirit. Christ, the heavenly ladder which joins earth to heaven and brings heaven down to earth, is in our spirit. By the habitation of God and the heavenly ladder, the Holy of Holies in the heavens is joined to our spirit. Consider the illustration of electricity. By the flow of the current of electricity, our homes are joined to the power plant. Electricity is both in the generator in the power plant and in our homes. Without this flow of electricity, the power plant is far off from our homes. But by the flow of electricity, these two are made one. Likewise, heaven is certainly far away from our spirit. But the wonderful Christ is both in the heavens and also in our spirit. Romans 8:34 says that Christ is at the right hand of God interceding for us, and Romans 8:10 says that Christ is also within us. There are not two Christs, one in the heavens and one within us; neither is it a matter of one Christ at two different times. Just as the electricity in the power plant is joined to our homes, so the Christ in the third heaven is joined to our spirit. He is much more wonderful than the flow of electricity. If by the flow of electricity two places can be made one, how much more can our wonderful Christ be both in the heavens as well as in our spirit.

### **I. GREAT**

Verse fourteen also says that Jesus, the Son of God, is a great High Priest. According to our experience, the word great here means excellent, wonderful, glorious, and most honorable. The Chinese version of the Bible says that we have an honorable and glorious High Priest. Christ today is such an excellent, marvelous, wonderful, glorious, and most honorable High Priest that no human word can fully describe Him. Although we cannot find the adequate word in any lexicon, the experience of being on His shoulders and on His breast in the Holy of Holies tells us that He is a great and wonderful High Priest.

## **Week 14 – Day 2 (7/10)**

Heb. 1: 5 For to which of the angels has He ever said, "You are My Son; this day have I begotten You"?  
And again, "I will be a Father to Him, and He will be a Son to Me"?

2:6 But one has solemnly testified somewhere, saying, "What is man, that You bring him to mind?  
Or the son of man, that You care for him?"

8 You have subjected all things under His feet." For in subjecting all things to Him, He left nothing  
unsubject to Him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to Him,

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### **A. In His Person**

Our High Priest, Christ, is great firstly in His Person. He is the Son of God, God Himself (1:5, 8). He is also the Son of Man, man himself (2:6). He, being both God and man, has the divine nature and the human nature. He not only knows the things of God and the things of man; He is also in the things of God and the things of man. No other high priest has ever been like Him.

### **B. In His Work**

Secondly, our High Priest, Christ, is great in His work. He has made purification of and propitiation for our sins (1:3; 2:17). He has taken away sin and has solved the problem of sin. He has tasted death, not only for every man but also for everything (2:9). By tasting death, He conquered and subdued it. Death could not hold Him (Acts 2:24, 27). He has also destroyed the Devil who has the might of death (2:14). By His death on the cross, Christ has annulled Satan, the power of death. By conquering death and destroying the Devil, He has released us from the slavery of death (2:15). We have been freed by Him not only from the slavery of sin but also from the slavery of death. Through His suffering, He has been perfected to be the Captain of our salvation (2:10). He has fought the battle and has entered into glory. As the Pioneer, He is leading us on in the same way to glory. He is now taking care of God's house as Moses did (3:5-6). As the Builder of the house, He surely knows how to take care of it. He is now also bringing us into rest, as Joshua did (4:8-9). He has given us the Sabbath rest in the church age, and He will bring us into the Sabbath rest of the kingdom age. As our High Priest, He is great in all these wonderful and excellent works of His, which no high priest in the Old Testament had ever accomplished.

### **C. In His Attainment**

Our High Priest, Christ, is also great in His attainment. His attainment is so high that He has entered into the Holy of Holies in the heavens and has been crowned with glory and honor (6:19; 9:24; 2:9). He is no longer on earth bearing the crown of thorns; He is now in the highest heavens wearing the crown of glory. No high priest can exceed Him in His attainment; no one can even compare with Him in this manner.

## **II. HAVING PASSED THROUGH THE HEAVENS**

Our High Priest, Christ, who is great in His Person, qualification, work, accomplishment, and attainment, has passed through the heavens (4:14). After He was crucified and before He was resurrected, Christ walked through Hades, having a good sightseeing tour. Although Satan and all the powers of death tried to hold Him, at the time of His resurrection, He arose from the grave (Acts 2:24, 27). Later, as He was ascending to the heavens, He overcame the gravitation of earth. The demons desperately tried to prevent Him from leaving the earth, but He made a wonderful takeoff. Then He ascended to the heavens. As He was passing through the air, the evil spirits, the principalities and powers, tried to grasp Him and hold Him back, but He stripped them off, making a display to the whole universe. This is the meaning of Colossians 2:15 which says that Christ "stripped off principalities and powers" and "made a show of them openly, triumphing over them" (Gk.). In this verse we see three main points: that Christ stripped off the principalities and powers; that He made a show of them; and that He triumphed over them. Now, having risen from Hades, having stripped off the principalities and powers and having passed through the heavens, He is now sitting on the throne at the right hand of God where He is restfully enjoying a Sabbath. But He is desirous to see that all His members come into His Sabbath rest. The way to enter into His Sabbath is by experiencing Him as our High Priest. As we shall see, we simply need to come forward to the throne of grace on which He is sitting and receive mercy and find grace. When we do this, we are immediately in the Sabbath rest of the church life, waiting with Him for the better Sabbath to come. Praise Him!

### **III. HAVING BEEN TRIED IN ALL RESPECTS**

As our High Priest, Christ has been tried in all respects like us, but without sin (4:15). Since He has been tried, He is qualified and able to help us who are being tried (2:18). In all His trials, He was never stained with sin. He suffered the trials without being touched by sin. He is truly equipped to help us to pass through trials and to keep us from any entanglement of sin.

### **IV. SYMPATHIZING WITH OUR WEAKNESSES**

As the One who has been tried in all respects like us, our High Priest, Christ, is able to sympathize with our weaknesses (4:15). He is easily touched with the feeling of our weaknesses and quickly enters into a fellow-suffering with us in our weaknesses. Whatever happens to us and whatever suffering we may have, He feels it with us and sympathizes with us.

## **THE THRONE OF GRACE**

### **I. THE THRONE OF GOD, SIGNIFIED BY THE PROPITIATION COVER**

After the unveiling of our High Priest, the writer encourages us to “come forward with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help” (4:16). The throne of grace is undoubtedly the throne of God which is in heaven (Rev. 4:2). The throne of God is the throne of authority to all the universe (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 5:1) on which God sits to control and rule over the universe. It is the throne of God’s administration. But to us, the believers, it is the throne of grace, signified by the propitiation cover (the mercy seat) over the ark of testimony (Exo. 25:17-21; Rom. 3:25) in the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:3, 5) sprinkled with the blood of Christ (Lev. 16:15; Heb. 9:12). It is here that God meets and communes with His people (Exo. 25:21-22). When we come to the throne of grace through the blood of Christ, we meet with God and commune with Him.

### **II. THE THRONE OF GOD AND THE LAMB**

The throne of grace in Hebrews 4 is the throne of authority in Revelation 4 which becomes in Revelation 22:1 and 2 the throne of God and of the Lamb, out of which proceeds the crystal clear river of water of life. This river flows through the whole city of New Jerusalem. Within this river grows the tree of life, revealing that the rich Christ with the living Spirit flows out of the throne of grace. What is grace? It is the flowing river in which the tree of life grows. To the unbelievers and to the demons, the throne of God and of the Lamb is a throne of authority; to us, it is the throne of grace. Whenever we come to this throne, we have the sense that something is flowing to water and supply us. This is grace. We can surely drink and eat of this supply.

### **III. GOD’S HABITATION IN OUR SPIRIT**

Hebrews 4:16 tells us to “come forward with boldness to the throne of grace.” Since the throne of grace is in the heavens, how can we come forward to it? According to fundamental teaching, we must wait until we die and go to heaven. But how can we come forward to it while we are still on earth? The secret is in verse 12 of the same chapter which speaks of the dividing of the soul and spirit by the living and operative word of God. As we have seen, the very Christ who is sitting on the throne of grace in heaven (Rom. 8:34) is also now in us (Rom. 8:10), that is, in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22), where the habitation of God is (Eph. 2:22—“through the Spirit” should be rendered “in spirit”). As Christ is in our spirit, both the Father and the Spirit are also in our spirit (John 14:20, 23; Rom. 8:16). The Triune God is here in our spirit. At Bethel, the house of God, the habitation of God, which is the gate of heaven, Christ is the ladder who joins earth to heaven and brings heaven to earth (Gen. 28:12-17; John 1:51). Although the throne of grace is in the heavens, our wonderful Christ has brought the third heaven into our spirit, the very place where God’s habitation on earth is today. Our spirit may be called today’s Bethel. According to Genesis 28, Bethel is firstly a place and secondly God’s habitation. Both the place and the stone were called Bethel. According to principle, where God’s habitation is, there is the heavenly ladder and the gate of heaven. Christ, the wonderful One who came to us from God, who has accomplished and attained so much, and who is our Captain, Apostle, and High Priest, has come into our spirit, making it the gate of heaven. Now it is easy for us to come forward to the throne of grace, for it is right within the gate. While the throne of grace is in the heavens, by and through Christ it has been joined to our spirit.

## Week 14 – Day 3 (7/11)

Luke 15:20-24 And he rose up and came to his own father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately. 21 And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. 22 But the father said to his slaves, Bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry, 24 Because this son of mine was dead and lives again; he was lost and has been found. And they began to be merry.

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Coming forward to the throne of grace is absolutely a matter in our spirit. If we are in the mind, it will be difficult for us to enter into the Holy of Holies. If we are a soulish person staggering in the wilderness of our soul, we shall be far away from the Holy of Holies. Since our spirit is the place of God's habitation today, it is the gate of heaven where Christ is the ladder that joins us, the people on earth, to heaven, and brings heaven to us. Whenever we turn to our spirit, we enter into the gate of heaven and touch the throne of grace in heaven through Christ as the heavenly ladder. For this, we need the living word of God to pierce into the depths of our being and separate our spirit from our wandering mind. As long as we are in our spirit, we have the gate of heaven. Within the gate is the throne of grace. It takes no time whatever to enter into the Holy of Holies, because there is no distance between it and our spirit. Whenever we say from the depths of our being, "O Lord Jesus," we are immediately in the Holy of Holies, touching the throne of grace. How we need to touch the throne of grace!

### IV. RECEIVING MERCY AND FINDING GRACE

When we come forward to the throne of grace, we "receive mercy and find grace for timely help." Both God's mercy and His grace are the expression of His love. When we are in a pitiful condition, firstly His mercy reaches us and brings us into a state where God is able to favor us with His grace. Luke 15:20-24 says that when the father saw the prodigal son returning, he had compassion on him. This is mercy, expressing the father's love. Then the father clothed him with the best robe and fed him with the fatted calf. This is grace, which also manifests the father's love. God's mercy reaches farther than His grace, bridging the gap between us and God's grace. Often, because of our pitiful condition, we must receive mercy before we can find grace. We come to the throne of grace like beggars, in somewhat the same way as the prodigal son came to his father. A beggar, like the prodigal, needs mercy. When we are in a poor condition and someone gives us something, that is mercy. But when we are in a qualified condition and someone gives us something, that is grace. Many times when we have come to the throne of grace we have had the sense that we were pitiful and said, "Father, I am not worthy of anything." But the Father said, "That doesn't matter. You are unworthy, but I am merciful. My mercy reaches you, qualifies you, and adorns you. It clothes you with the best robe." After receiving the Father's mercy, we soon feel like a very important person. Then we are qualified to sit down and enjoy the fatted calf. This is grace. This is not merely a doctrine but something which has been confirmed by our experience.

Who is on the throne of grace? Not only God but also the Lamb, the Redeemer. On the wonderful throne of grace, God is sitting, and at His right hand is the Redeemer, our High Priest. That the throne is not only the throne of God but the throne of God and of the Lamb means that God in the Lamb is flowing Himself out as grace for our enjoyment. We need not do anything. We simply need to come forward, open up, and receive mercy and find grace for timely help. Every day the help which comes from this grace is very timely; it is always new and exactly fits our situation and need. The real Christian life according to Hebrews is a life which not only comes forward to the throne of grace but which also abides in the Holy of Holies in front of the throne, continually receiving mercy and finding grace. This is the life we need today. If, by the Lord's mercy, these crucial points are wrought into us, we will never be the same.

God's mercy and grace are always available to us. However, we need to receive and find them by exercising our spirit to come forward to the throne of grace and touch our High Priest who sympathizes with us in all our weaknesses. By this word, the writer of Hebrews encouraged the wearied Hebrew believers to receive mercy and find grace for timely help that they might be set upright (12:12).

**MESSAGE TWENTY-EIGHT**

**THE HIGH PRIEST ACCORDING TO  
THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEC  
AND THE CAUSE OF ETERNAL SALVATION**

In this message we need to see that the High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec is the cause of eternal salvation. Have you ever heard that eternal salvation has a cause, origin, and author? Our High Priest, Christ, is the cause of this eternal salvation. As we shall see, He is not a High Priest according to the old priestly system, the order of Aaron, but according to the order of Melchisedec.

**THE HIGH PRIEST ACCORDING TO  
THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEC**

**I. SUPERIOR TO AARON**

Aaron did not take honor unto himself but was called and established by God to be the high priest (5:4, 1). This is even more true with Christ. He did not glorify Himself to become a High Priest; He was ordained by God in His resurrection, according to the order of Melchisedec (vv. 5-6). Aaron, as the high priest, took care of things pertaining to God on behalf of the people (v. 1). Christ is superior to him in taking care of all our cases before God. Aaron offered both gifts and sacrifices for sins in type for the people and for himself (vv. 1, 3). But Christ offered Himself as the sacrifice for sin in reality.

In 5:2 we are told that a high priest was “able to exercise forbearance toward the ignorant and straying, since he also is encompassed with weakness.” The Greek implies a feeling toward the ignorant and straying which is neither too severe nor too tolerant. It is to be moderate or tender in judgment toward their situation. The thought in this verse is a continuation of the thought in 4:15. Christ as our High Priest, though not encompassed with weakness as the high priests taken from among men, has been tried in all respects like us. Hence, sympathizing with our weaknesses, He is able to exercise forbearance toward us, the ignorant and straying ones.

**II. GLORIFIED BY GOD**

**. Through Resurrection**

As the High Priest, Christ was glorified by God through resurrection. Hebrews 5:5 says that “Christ did not glorify Himself to become a High Priest, but He Who said to Him, You are My Son, this day I have begotten You.” The word glorify in this verse replaces the word honor in the foregoing verse. With the high priest taken from among men, there is only honor, a matter of position. With Christ as the High Priest, there is not only honor, but also glory; not only the preciousness of His position, but also the splendor of His Person. Verse 5 contains a quotation from Psalm 2:7, saying, “You are My Son, this day I have begotten You.” This refers to Christ’s resurrection (Acts 13:33), which qualifies Him to be our High Priest. For Christ to be our High Priest, He must partake of our humanity, as mentioned in 2:14-18, and enter with this humanity into resurrection. With His humanity, He can sympathize with us and be merciful to us (4:15; 2:17). In resurrection, with His divinity, He is able to do everything for us and be faithful to us (7:24-25; 2:17).

In 5:7 we are told that Christ “in the days of His flesh... offered up petitions and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him Who was able to save Him out of death.” The words “out of death” here do not mean that He did not enter into death and suffer death. They mean that Christ was resurrected out of death. Before He died, Christ prayed for this, and God answered His prayer by raising Him from among the dead.

## **Week 14 – Day 4 (7/12)**

Heb. 7:26 For such a High Priest was also fitting to us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners and having become higher than the heavens,  
Col. 2: 15 Stripping off the rulers and the authorities, He made a display of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

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### **B. In Ascension**

Verse 6, a quotation from Psalm 110, says, “You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec.” This refers to Christ in His ascension and enthronement (Psa. 110:1-4), which, in addition to His resurrection, are further qualifications for Him to be our High Priest (7:26). Christ was not only resurrected from among the dead, but He ascended to the height of the universe. In the previous message, we pointed out that Christ overcame the gravitation of earth, overcoming the frustrating attack of the demons on the earth. When He entered into the air, as Colossians 2:15 reveals, He stripped off the principalities and powers and made a show of them. The Greek word translated “stripped off” means to dust off as with a feather duster. When Christ was ascending through the air, the principalities and powers came, like insects, to prevent Him from ascending. The Lord Jesus did not struggle against them; He simply dusted them off and made a show of them. After that, He ascended into the heavens where He is now sitting at the right hand of God. Whenever we touch Him, we touch the One who is above all, and we also are above everything. The attraction of the earth, the demons, the principalities and powers, and all negative things have been overcome by Him. How we need to experience the Christ unveiled in the book of Hebrews!

### **C. According to the Order of Melchisedec**

Christ is our High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec (5:6). The order of Melchisedec is higher than the order of Aaron. The order of Aaron was for the priesthood only in humanity, whereas the order of Melchisedec is for the priesthood in both humanity and divinity. This is fully developed in chapter seven.

### **D. Forever**

Aaron was established in honor to be the high priest only for his lifetime, for he was prevented by death from continuing. But, as the Son of God, Christ was ordained in glory to be our High Priest forever (v. 6). With Him there is no preventing of death. He is glorified forever to be our High Priest.

## **III. A PRIEST LIKE MELCHISEDEC**

According to the Bible, there are only two orders of the priesthood—the order of Aaron and the order of Melchisedec. The order of Melchisedec came before that of Aaron. The priesthood of Melchisedec did not come in with Abraham’s descendants but with Abraham himself. We have seen that Adam was the head of the created race and that Abraham was the head of the called race. Since the created race under the headship of Adam had become a failure, Adam having failed God in His eternal purpose, God eventually gave up the created race. At the time of Babel, the created race had become altogether a land of Chaldea. Since the time of Nimrod, Chaldea was filled with idols. Idolatry is utterly opposed to God Himself. Because mankind under the headship of Adam had become a land of idols, even the Almighty God found it impossible to do anything with them. Although He gave up the created race, He could never forsake His eternal purpose which needed man for its fulfillment. Therefore, according to His economy, God called Abraham out of the fallen created race, making him the head of the called race.

We, the chosen ones of God, also belong to the called race. We all were once part of the created race belonging to Chaldea” under the headship of Adam. We all have come out of an idolatrous land. Where were you before you were saved? You were in a land of idols. In the eyes of God, everything, whether it was moral or immoral, ethical or unethical, good or bad, high or low, was an idol. Praise the Lord that He called us out of our “Chaldea”! Romans 8:29 and 30 say that God foreknew, predestinated, and called us. This calling of God is not an insignificant matter; it is a high, heavenly matter, and we must behave ourselves worthy of it. God’s calling is higher, richer, and more important than His creation. Hallelujah, we are members of the called race! Our father Abraham is the head of this race. The priesthood which

## Week 14 – Day 4 (7/12) (Cont'd)

came to the father of the called race was not that which was according to the order of Aaron but that which is according to the order of Melchisedec. Melchisedec met Abraham with bread and wine, and Abraham gave him tithes (Gen. 14:18-20). Melchisedec did not come to Abraham to receive tithes from him, but to minister to him the bread and wine.

One night, before He left His disciples, the Lord Jesus ministered to them the bread and wine (Matt. 26:26-27). The Bible is wonderfully consistent. Melchisedec ministered bread and wine to Abraham, and the Lord Jesus ministered bread and wine to His disciples. Not many of us who have been partaking of the Lord's table for years have ever realized that it is related to Christ's priesthood according to the order of Melchisedec. The first time the priesthood is mentioned in the Bible we are told that a priest came from the Most High God and ministered bread and wine to the father of the called race.

We do not know where Melchisedec came from. In the biblical record, he had no parents, no genealogy, no beginning of days nor end of life (Heb. 7:1-3). He simply came and went.

Melchisedec was the king of Salem, which was the ancient site of Jerusalem. "Salem" means peace, and "Jeru" means foundation. Hence, Jerusalem means "the foundation of peace." At the time of Melchisedec, there was Salem but not yet Jerusalem; there was peace but no foundation of peace. The first time the Bible speaks of the priesthood, it tells of a wonderful person who was the king of peace. The second aspect of his title is that of the king of righteousness. If we do not have righteousness, we cannot have peace, because peace always comes from righteousness. With Melchisedec there was both righteousness and peace. Based upon this righteousness and peace, he ministered the bread and wine to Abraham. What is our basis for coming to the Lord's table? Is it pity or mercy? No, it is righteousness and peace. According to Romans 3, 4, and 5, righteousness has been reckoned to us and we have been justified. As a result, we enjoy peace. Romans 3 and 4 give us righteousness and justification, and Romans 5 gives us peace under righteousness. Based upon this righteousness and peace, we may enjoy the bread and the wine at the Lord's table. The One who brought in righteousness and peace is the One who ministers the bread and wine to us. He is our High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec.

What is the significance of the bread and wine used at the Lord's table? The Lord Himself said of the bread, "This is My body" (Matt. 26:26), and of the wine, "This is My blood" (Matt. 26:28). This indicates that the bread and wine on the table signify the processed God, portraying the Christ who, as the embodiment of God, has been processed that He might be ministered into us.

If we would understand any item in the Bible, we must consider it at its source, the place where it is first mentioned in the Scriptures. This is in keeping with the basic principle of the first mention. Although the book of Hebrews speaks of Melchisedec, if we would know him, we must consult Genesis 14, the place where Melchisedec and the priesthood are first mentioned. When Christians think of Christ as their High Priest, very few of them go back to Genesis 14. Hebrews 7 refers us to Genesis 14, the time when Melchisedec, king of righteousness and king of peace, met Abraham after the slaughter of the kings. Although Melchisedec was a king, he did not come as a king but as the priest of the Most High God, coming to Abraham with bread and wine. This seems simple and rather unexciting, but it is profound. In the Bible bread denotes the life supply. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), meaning that He is the bread from heaven which gives us life. In the Bible wine signifies the blood which accomplishes redemption in order to quench our thirst. As fallen people, we are under God's condemnation. We are thirsty because the fire of righteous judgment burns within us. Since our thirst comes from being under God's condemnation, water cannot quench it. Our thirst can only be quenched by some liquid of life. Wine is not water; it is a life liquid, coming from grapes, which are something of life. The Lord Jesus chose wine to signify His redeeming blood, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:27-28). Melchisedec's coming to minister the bread and wine to Abraham, the father of the called race, signified Christ's coming to minister Himself as the processed God into us. He was processed on the cross that He might be our life supply with the redeeming wine to quench our thirst under God's condemnation. He is the redeeming God imparting Himself into us for our supply and satisfaction.

## Week 14 – Day 5 (7/13)

Heb. 4:14, 16 Having therefore a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. 16 Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.

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When the priests according to the order of Aaron are mentioned in the Bible, we are told that they were chosen and called to offer the sacrifices for sin, not to minister bread and wine to the people. They mainly ministered to God by offering Him gifts and sacrifices for sins. The priesthood according to the order of Aaron mainly took care of God's people in a negative way. But the high priest according to the order of Melchisedec did something more. He did not go to God with the sacrifices for sin; he came from God with bread and wine.

At the time of the Passover, the blood was applied and the unleavened bread was eaten. The bread and wine ministered to us are the issue of the Passover. This means that Christ as our High Priest today ministers into us that which has come out of His redemption. He died for us, sacrificing His body and shedding His blood. All this was accomplished before He went back to God the Father. According to the book of Hebrews, Christ offered Himself as the unique sacrifice for sin and solved the problem of sin once for all. Then He brought His blood into the Holy of Holies in the heavens and sprinkled it in the presence of God, thereby accomplishing redemption. Now, as far as redemption is concerned, Christ has nothing more to do. He is sitting on the right hand of God. However, He still needs to be our High Priest, not to go to God but to come to us. He does not come to us to deal with our sins but to minister the bread and wine, which signify Himself, who, for our supply and satisfaction, was processed through death and resurrection. This surpasses redemption.

Most Christians today dwell on Christ as their Redeemer and Savior, the One who shed His blood for them, offered Himself for them, and made propitiation for their sins that God might be appeased on their behalf. But the book of Hebrews goes further than this; it has truly crossed the river. It unveils a Christ who is no longer only a Redeemer offering the sacrifice for sin to God and shedding His blood for our sins. The Christ revealed in this book is the One who, after accomplishing all this, comes to us in a mysterious way. As He comes in our spirit, He does not come as our Redeemer but as our High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec. He does not come to offer anything for us, but to minister Himself to us in the form of bread and wine as our daily supply and for our satisfaction. Many Christians are so weak because they do not enjoy this supply. Although the book of Hebrews is in their hands and they have the words "High Priest" as a term in their vocabulary, they do not have much experience of Christ ministering Himself into them as the High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec.

The book of Hebrews reveals that Christ has already accomplished everything God requires. This is the reason both God and the Redeemer have a Sabbath rest today. According to this book, Christ is not working for redemption; He is sitting because He has fulfilled all the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. Today, He is the resting Christ, and God is resting in Him, enjoying the Sabbath rest. When we come into the church life, we also rest and enjoy the Sabbath with Him and God.

The book of Hebrews also reveals that although this resting Christ has completed His redemptive work, He is very active as our High Priest, ministering Himself into us as the processed bread and wine for our daily supply. This is why Christ is not the High Priest according to Aaron but according to the order of Melchisedec. Today He is not the sacrifice-offering High Priest; He is the bread-and-wine-ministering High Priest. Hallelujah! We have righteousness and peace, but righteousness and peace alone cannot satisfy us; we need something to eat and drink. We need our daily supply. Thus, based upon God's righteousness and peace, our Melchisedec ministers the bread and wine for us to eat and drink. He has redeemed us and now He feeds us.

Firstly, we need Christ’s priesthood as typified by Aaron to offer the sacrifices for sin. Then we need His priesthood according to the order of Melchisedec to minister the life supply to us. Having the processed God ministered into us as our supply is to fulfill God’s eternal purpose. However, offering the sacrifices for sin is merely to deal with the negative situation. God’s original purpose was not to redeem us; it was to impart and work Himself into us. Since we were fallen, He had to rescue us, redeem us, and reconcile us to God. While this is the function of His priesthood as typified by Aaron, His priesthood according to the order of Melchisedec is for God’s original purpose. If we had not fallen, we would not need the priesthood typified by Aaron, but we would still need Christ’s priesthood according to the order of Melchisedec to minister God into us. Most Christians only know Christ’s priesthood as typified by the priesthood of Aaron for reconciliation. They have not seen that, according to the order of Melchisedec, Christ ministers God into us. But according to Hebrews, Christ as our High Priest is not mainly the One who offers the sacrifice for sin, but the One who ministers the bread and wine.

In the early days of my experience, nearly every time I knelt down to pray, I said, “Lord, thank You for being my Redeemer and for shedding Your blood for me.” At that time I never realized I could come to the throne of grace and enjoy such a positive High Priest ministering the bread and wine. Every morning I confessed the failures of the day before, hoping I could do better that day. But that day also ended in failure and the next morning I would confess once again. This went on and on day after day. I only knew Christ as the High Priest typified by the order of Aaron. Only after many years did I learn that I could come to the throne of grace and touch our High Priest who ministers to me the bread and wine. I do not need to try to be a success. I simply need to come forward to the throne of grace and enjoy the positive High Priest ministering the bread and wine. This is the best breakfast. Whenever I enjoy such a breakfast, my whole day is a success. Just as we need a physical breakfast every day, so every morning we should enjoy Christ as our breakfast. The best breakfast table is the throne of grace where we enjoy Christ in such a positive way. Christ is our Melchisedec today. How we need to come forward to the throne of grace to Him, the One who ministers the bread and wine!

In 4:14 we are told that we have “a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,” and in 4:16 we are told to “come forward with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help.” When we come to chapter five, we see that the High Priest whom we meet at the throne of grace is not a priest typified by the order of Aaron but a High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec, ministering to us the bread and wine as our supply.

Christ, our High Priest, is the Son of God, having been constituted to be our High Priest not according to the law of a fleshy commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life (7:16). Having the qualifications of His divinity and His resurrected life, He is able to minister the processed God with the divine blessing, not to sinners but to those who fight for God’s interest, as Abraham did (Gen. 14:18-20).

## **THE CAUSE OF ETERNAL SALVATION**

### **I. THE ETERNAL SALVATION**

The eternal salvation we have in Christ (5:9) is based upon the eternal redemption He has accomplished for us (9:12), which is much better than the temporary atonement carried out by the priests according to the order of Aaron. That temporary atonement covered sin but never put it away; whereas Christ’s eternal redemption has put away sin, solving the problem of sin forever. Furthermore, Christ’s eternal salvation is not merely an objective redemption to solve our problem of sin on the negative side, but also a subjective salvation to save us into His perfection and glorification on the positive side. Such an eternal salvation is not limited by time and space, but is all-embracing with the divine element and nature. The divine element and nature of Christ are the basic constituents of His eternal salvation, which not only saves us from the most negative things but also saves us into the most positive things, even into God Himself. Such a saving is all-embracing, not limited by time and space.

## **II. THE CAUSE**

### **A. The Person of Christ as the High Priest Being the Cause**

The very Person of Christ as our High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec is the cause of our eternal salvation (5:6-10). As long as such a One is with us, we could never be weak. He is the cause of eternal salvation, of which all the effects, benefits, and issues are of an eternal nature, transcending the conditions and limitations of time and space. Some brothers have come to me saying that they were afraid to return home because their wives were so mean. Some sisters have told me the same thing about their husbands, saying that they could not stand the situation at home. It seemed that their salvation was not eternal and did not reach their home environment. When some brothers have told me that they did not want to return to their hometown because the situation in the church there was too difficult, I said to them, “If your salvation is not good for your city, then your salvation is not the eternal salvation.” In any and every place, we do have the cause of eternal salvation. This is why I have encouraged the disappointed brothers and sisters to return home. I have told the sisters, “Why be afraid of your husband? He is not a tiger. Go back and swallow him up by Christ in life.” I can testify to you that a good number of sisters went back and swallowed up their husbands by Christ in life and brought them into the church as a prey. Do not be afraid of your wife or husband, because Christ, as our High Priest, is the cause of your eternal salvation.

Although we have Christ as the Captain of our salvation in Hebrews 2, we do not have the cause of eternal salvation until we come to Christ as our High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec in Hebrews 5. Our Christ is not only today’s Joshua; He is also our eternal Melchisedec. As our Joshua, the Captain of salvation, He takes the lead and we follow Him. As our Melchisedec, the cause of eternal salvation, He ministers Himself to us as bread and wine, and we eat and drink of Him. When our Melchisedec comes to us, He does not come with demands or requirements; He comes with bread and wine. Are you tired? He is your bread. Are you thirsty? He is your wine. Let us eat of Him, drink of Him, and enjoy Him for our supply. Whenever we come to the Lord’s table, we declare to the whole universe that we live by eating the divine bread and by drinking the divine wine as our daily supply. This is our way of living. Not many of us have had this realization at the Lord’s table. May we all be helped to see that the table symbolizes that our Christ today is our Melchisedec who ministers to us the bread and the wine. I say once again that this is the cause of our salvation.

### **B. The Experience of Christ in His Sufferings for His Perfection**

Christ was perfected to be our High Priest through His sufferings (5:8-10). In His eternal salvation, we need to experience Him in His sufferings. When we experience Him in His sufferings, we shall also be saved into His perfection. This experience of Christ in His suffering for perfection is by our enjoying Him as our High Priest. We shall cover this matter in detail when we come to chapter seven.

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### **Study Questions**

1. What are the nine main points related to the holy brothers?
2. What are the eight main points related to the partakers of the heavenly calling?

Matt. 4: 4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."

Jer. 15: 16 Your words were found and I ate them, And Your word became to me The gladness and joy of my heart, For I am called by Your name, O Jehovah, God of hosts.

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## MESSAGE TWENTY-NINE

### THE WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE WORD OF THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST

My burden in this message is the basic principle of the word of righteousness. Hebrews 5:13 says that “everyone who partakes of milk is inexperienced in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.” Although many Christians understand the word of grace (Acts 14:3; 20:32), the word of life (Phil. 2:16), and even the good word of God (Heb. 6:5), not many know what the word of righteousness is. Why must the word be the word of righteousness? The writer mentioned the word of righteousness at a time when he was speaking of Christ as the High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec. Concerning Melchisedec he had “much to say” which was “hard to interpret” since the receivers of this epistle had “become dull of hearing” (5:11). They had been learners for quite a long time. In verses 12 and 13 the writer said of them, “For when because of the time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you what are the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God, and have become those who have need of milk and not of solid food.” Although they should have been teachers, at the time of the writing of this epistle, they still needed someone to teach them. They were still babes. Since “everyone who partakes of milk is inexperienced in the word of righteousness” (Heb. 5:13), we see that the word of righteousness is for the mature, not for babes. Now in this message we need to see what the word of righteousness basically is.

#### I. THE WORD OF GOD BEING OUR NOURISHMENT

If we would understand this matter of the word of righteousness, we must firstly be deeply impressed that the word of God is not mainly for knowledge. In this short portion of the Word (5:11-14), there seems to be a contradiction. Verse 12 uses the words “teachers” and “teach.” This surely refers to knowledge. However, in these verses it is clearly and definitely indicated that the word of God is for nourishment, for it likens His word to either milk or solid food. Milk and solid food are not for knowledge. People do not study them; they drink and eat of them as nourishment.

For years we have been saying that our need is not mere teachings; it is food. Many have argued with me, saying, “How can you say that we don’t need teaching? Don’t you believe that the Bible is a book of teaching? Even you yourself teach people.” Yes, the Bible is a book of teaching, but it does not teach us merely for mental knowledge; its teaching ministers food to us. The aim of the Bible is not for our mental comprehension and knowledge; it is absolutely for our spiritual realization and nourishment. According to the word of the Lord Jesus, the words of God are for us to eat. In order to live, we must take the word of God as our food. When the Lord was tempted by the Devil, He answered him, saying, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). The word of God should be our food, and we must eat it daily and live by it. Even in the Old Testament times, Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them” (Jer. 15:16). The prophet realized that the word of God is for nourishment, not for knowledge. Furthermore, the New Testament not only tells us that we must feed ourselves with the word of God but that we must feed others with it. Paul’s concept concerning his ministry of the word was that of feeding. He fed the Corinthians with milk and desired to feed them with the solid food (1 Cor. 3:2). Therefore, according to the basic principles of the Bible, the word of God is for nourishment rather than for knowledge.

#### II. MILK

The Bible itself classifies God’s word into two categories— milk for babes and solid food for the mature (5:12-13). Paul told the Corinthians that because they were babes he could only feed them with milk (1 Cor.

## **Week 15 – Day 1 (7/16) (Cont'd)**

3:1-2), and Peter, holding the same concept, said, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word” (1 Pet. 2:2). In Hebrews 5:12, milk refers to “the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God.” The Greek word translated “rudiments,” which also may be rendered as “primary elements,” denotes elementary things. For example, learning the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and the numbers from one to ten are the rudiments. If you were to talk with children in a philosophical way, they would be unable to understand. Recently, one of my grandchildren was pleased to show me how he could write the letters L E E. He was very happy with his elementary “candies.”

In Christianity there are many old babes who can barely write the letters of the spiritual alphabet. If you were to talk with them about Matthew 25, they would say, “Oh, that is too difficult. As long as I have been redeemed and will go to heaven when I die, that is enough for me.” They are content with “candy bars.” They can only take the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God, not solid food.

The “rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God” in 5:12 are “the word of the beginning of the Christ” in 6:1. These are special terms found in the book of Hebrews. Even Christ, like your education, has a beginning. Some little children only know the ten numbers, being unable to do even the simplest addition. Likewise, in our spiritual education we have the word of the beginning of Christ. Many Christians can only say, “Christ died for me. I am a sinner and I should go to hell, but God loves me and sent Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. Now I believe in Him and I am saved.” This is the word of the beginning of Christ. How poor is the situation among most Christians today! They are even unable to discern the difference between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit. Whenever they see the word “spirit,” they take it to mean the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, regarding the Holy Spirit, they are unfamiliar with the term “life-giving Spirit.” Many of them do not even want to hear about it. It seems that when they read 1 Corinthians 15:45, which tells us that the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit, they cover their eyes and pass it by. Have you not also passed by many verses in your reading of the Scriptures? I am quite sure that many of you have skipped over the first seventeen verses of the Gospel of Matthew. Perhaps you never paid attention to these verses before coming into the church life. Others might even have advised you to begin your reading of the New Testament with Matthew 1:18. Then you might have proceeded to read a little of chapter two regarding the visit of the wise men and chapter three concerning the baptism of Jesus. Perhaps you skipped chapters like thirteen, twenty-four, and twenty-five, finding them too difficult to comprehend, and gave some attention to chapter twenty-six. Maybe you shed a few tears for the crucified Jesus in chapter twenty-seven and then were happy to hear that He was resurrected in chapter twenty-eight. As you came to the end of Matthew, you thought of the Lord Jesus as ascending to the heavens, although Matthew does not speak of His ascension; yet, according to your traditional mentality, you added an extra point about Christ ascending to the heavens. This is the way many Christians understand the Bible today.

There is only one Bible. However, nearly every Christian has his or her own version of the Bible. It is not the Bible printed with black and white letters as God revealed; it is the “Bible” printed with their kind of mentality. They have their own mental version of the Scriptures. Very few Christians care for the solid word of God. They only take the rudiments, the word of the beginning of Christ. Perhaps some would argue with me, saying that the word of the beginning is not wrong. Of course it is not wrong, but it is simply the A B C’s. We need to go on!

The word of the beginning of Christ is the good word of God (6:5). We all have tasted this good word. John 3:16 and Romans 6:23, both of which speak of eternal life, are examples of the good word. But even many Christians misinterpret these verses, taking eternal life to mean blessing and happiness in a heavenly merry land. What poverty in understanding the word of God! What a pitiful way of dealing with God’s holy oracle! This is the reason that in the Lord’s recovery we are burdened for the release of the richer, higher, and deeper word. In His mercy, the Lord is opening His word to us.

Please keep in mind that in this portion of the Word, milk refers to the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God and to the word of the beginning of Christ. May we all, especially the young people, become familiar with these terms and use them in our fellowship. We all need a new vocabulary. We should not stay in the region of old religious terminology, but cross the river into a new way of conversation and use the terms and phrases found in God’s pure word.

- 1 Cor. 3:2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it. But neither yet now are you able,  
Heb. 3:14 While it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the provocation."  
10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.  
12:29 For our God is also a consuming fire.
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### III. SOLID FOOD

Solid food, which is for the mature, refers to the word of righteousness (5:14; 1 Cor. 3:2). The word of righteousness is more difficult to discriminate than the word of grace and the word of life. Righteousness always refers to God's government and governmental dealings. After considering the whole book of Hebrews, I have found that it is not only an unveiling of Christ on a higher level but also of God's divine government among His chosen people. For instance, 10:31 says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Furthermore, 12:29 says that "our God is a consuming fire." In 10:30 we are told that the "Lord will judge His people." Verses like these can be found throughout the book of Hebrews. All five warnings in this book are based upon the fact that in Hebrews God is not the God of love but the God of righteousness, a consuming fire in His governmental dealings with His people. The book of Hebrews is not constructed with God's love; it is constructed basically with God's righteous government. It is a revelation of God's dispensational and governmental dealings with His people.

Consider the children of Israel. Although God loved them, delivered them from Egypt, and took care of them in the wilderness, their whole history is a picture of God's governmental dealings. In the wilderness God dealt with the Israelites in a governmental way. Because of this, not many of those who came out of Egypt during the time of the exodus entered into the good land of Canaan. Consider, for example, the way in which God dealt with Miriam, Moses' older sister, who had criticized him for marrying an Ethiopian woman (Num. 12:1-15). As a result of her criticism, she became leprous and was shut out of the camp for seven days. Moreover, due to God's governmental dealing, she was not allowed to enter into the good land but died in the wilderness (Num. 20:1). It was the same with Aaron (Num. 20:22-29). Even Moses touched God's government wrongly and was governmentally dealt with by Him (Num. 20:12). He earnestly desired and longed to enter into the good land, but God, according to His governmental dealing with him, did not allow him to enter in. Sympathizing with Moses, He did allow him to look upon the good land (Deut. 3:23-27; 4:21-22; 32:48-52). By these cases we see that it is a serious thing to touch God's government.

Christians do not understand the word of righteousness concerning God's governmental dealings. Such words are like hard bones, and many, unable to understand them, throw them away. But whether we understand these words or not, we are still under God's governmental dealings. In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy we see God's righteous governmental dealings. The word regarding God's governmental dealings is the word of righteousness, not the word of grace nor the word of life.

If you still do not understand what the word of righteousness is, read Hebrews 3 and 4 again. The word about not entering into God's rest is a word of righteousness, not a word of grace. In 3:15, a quotation from Psalm 95, we are told, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the provocation." Hebrews 4:11, another word of righteousness, says, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience." Keep in mind that the word of righteousness is deeper than the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God, because it embodies the deeper thought of God's justice and righteousness in His dispensational and governmental dealings with His people.

Very few Christians today care for this kind of word. When we began to teach people about Matthew 25 more than forty years ago, telling them that the slothful servant would be cast into outer darkness, many rumors were spread about us. Some would not take the word of righteousness which unveils the truth that a saved person can be cast into outer darkness. Matthew 25 is not a word of grace, nor a word of life; it is a word of righteousness. The same is true of 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. In that portion of the Word we are told to take heed how we build in the church life. If we build according to the human, fleshly, and earthly way,

## **Week 15 – Day 2 (7/17) (Cont'd)**

we shall be building with wood, hay, and stubble. Everything built with these materials will be burned, and those who build with them will suffer loss. This does not mean that a saved person can be lost; it means that all he does may be burned and that “he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Cor. 3:15). This certainly is the word of righteousness. Few Christians care for such a word. They only want “candies,” messages that comfort and soothe them. If anyone would stand up and declare to them that if they do not heed the Lord’s word of righteousness they might be cast into outer darkness (Matt. 25:30) or be “saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Cor. 3:15), they would not listen to him, but rather would oppose and condemn him as heretical. While most Christians only want “candies,” in this Life-Study of Hebrews we are burdened to care for the solid food, the word of righteousness. We all must be careful about this, for someday the Lord will meet us.

In the past, I have pointed out a number of times that the book of Revelation closes with a promise and a call. The promise is in Revelation 22:14: “Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to eat the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Gk.). The call is in verse 17: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” In these two verses we have a word of grace (v. 14) and a word of life (v. 17). However, now I wish to point out that the book of Revelation also ends with a word of righteousness. We find this in Revelation 22:12: “And, behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Are you ready for His coming? His coming will not be a time of grace nor of life; it will be a time of righteousness. This is the reason the Apostle Paul, who was very much concerned that when he had preached to others, yet he himself might be “a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27), said, “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” (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Revelation 2:10 speaks of the crown of life, and 1 Peter 5:4 mentions a crown of glory, but here Paul refers to the crown of righteousness. Many Christians are curious about the Lord’s coming, but they do not realize that He is coming with a reward. He will not come with two eyes of mercy but with seven burning and searching eyes of judgment. This is a word of righteousness. We do not need a word of “sweets,” “candies,” or “desserts.” We need solid food—the word of righteousness. In these messages the Lord has released a solemn word to us. We must cross the river and go on. Do not fool around with the Lord.

### **IV. THE DISCRIMINATING OF THE SENSES**

Hebrews 5:14 says that “solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their faculties exercised for discriminating between both good and evil.” The Greek word translated “faculties” may also be rendered “senses,” implying powers of perception, depending not only on our mental capability but also on our spiritual apprehension. These senses, implying both our mind and our spirit, discriminate the distinction between the different kinds of words of God. The words “good and evil” used here refer to what is superior in contrast to what is inferior, such as, the superiority of Christ in contrast to the inferiority of the angels, Moses, and Aaron; the superiority of the new covenant in contrast to the inferiority of the old covenant. According to the context of this verse, it is similar to the matter of discriminating between different foods, with no reference whatever to the moral nature of things. We need to discern, to discriminate, God’s word as we do food, asking whether a particular word is like milk or solid food. In this way we can discern the word of righteousness.

### **THE WORD OF THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST**

#### **I. THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE**

The word of grace and the word of life, being the word of the beginning of Christ, are good. They are the foundation of our Christian life. Although the foundation is good, we should not lay it again and again. We would never do such a thing in building a meeting hall. The foundation requires the building up.

The word of the beginning of Christ includes the six items mentioned in 6:1 and 2. These six items, arranged in three pairs, constitute the foundation of the Christian life. The first item of each pair refers to our emergence from a negative situation, and the last speaks of our entering into the positive things.

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the gospel.

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

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## II. THE FIRST PAIR

The first pair is that of “repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.” Repentance is on the negative side and faith toward God is on the positive side (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21). The Christian life is firstly based upon our repentance and faith. Repentance from dead works and faith toward God Himself are a real turn. The work we did before we were saved might have been good, but it was dead. We had to repent from our dead works and believe into God.

## III. THE SECOND PAIR

The second pair is “the teaching of baptisms and of the laying on of hands.” On the negative side, baptism eliminates the negative things (Heb. 9:10) and terminates the old things (Rom. 6:4). “Baptisms,” the same word as washings in 9:10 and Mark 7:4, refers to the washings of the utensils and vessels used in the tabernacle or temple for God’s service (Lev. 6:28). The washings of the priests are probably also included (Exo. 30:18-21; Lev. 16:4). This, of course, is related to the background of the Hebrew believers. However, it is the same in principle as the New Testament baptism, that is, the washing away and terminating of the negative things. In our baptism we eliminated our old man and buried him. On the positive side, laying on of hands is the identification and fellowship with the divine things. Whenever a sacrifice was offered in the ancient times, the offerer laid his hands upon it, signifying that he was identifying himself with it (Lev. 1:4; 3:2). Hence, laying on of hands was for identification and union. It was also used for the imparting of gifts into others (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). When Paul laid his hands upon Timothy, a spiritual gift was imparted to him.

## IV. THE THIRD PAIR

The third pair consists of “the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment.” Resurrection of the dead (Matt. 22:31; Acts 23:6; 24:21) is the coming out of death, Hades, and the tomb on the negative side. Eternal judgment (Rom. 2:5; Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:11-12) is the entry into eternity and the eternal destiny on the positive side. Whether we are saved or not, judgment will bring us into eternity. The situation with the dead unbelievers has not yet been settled. Only when they all have been resurrected will they be judged, and through that judgment they will be brought into eternity.

These six items are the word of the beginning of Christ, the foundation of our Christian life. The writer of this epistle was encouraging the Hebrew believers to go on from this word to the word of righteousness. Today many Christians do not even adequately know the word of the beginning of Christ, much less the word of righteousness. Nevertheless, we must go on. Our foundation has been laid and we must go on to build upon it. We have repented and believed. We have been baptized and have been identified with Christ and we are assured that there will be resurrection and judgment to come. Anyone who does not believe this is not a genuine believer. Since we all believe this and have laid the foundation, let us go on from the elementary word to the word of righteousness; from the word of foundation to the word of perfection, the word of building up; from the words of grace and life to the word of God’s righteous governmental dealings.

## MESSAGE THIRTY

### TO BE BROUGHT ON TO MATURITY AND FLEEING INTO THE REFUGE WITH THE ANCHOR AND THE FORERUNNER TO BE BROUGHT ON TO MATURITY

The book of Hebrews is a book on maturity. In order to be brought on to maturity we need to cross the river. Whenever we have a handicap or are unable to go on, that is the time for us to cross the river. Just as the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea and the Jordan River, we must cross river after river.

What does it mean to be mature? Throughout the years, we have learned that if we are in ourselves or are individualistic, we are immature. If we are trying to be holy, spiritual, or victorious, that also is

### **Week 15 – Day 3 (7/18) (Cont'd)**

immaturity. Real maturity is not only in our spirit, but also in the church life. The church life is the sign of our having become mature. As a result of my watching and observing for almost fifty years, I can testify that there is no real maturity in life outside the church. Real maturity can only be found in the church life. The Hebrew believers to whom this book was written were staggering in their Christian life. They were wondering in their mind whether to go on or to go back. At that very point, this book was written to encourage them to go on.

The best way to go on is to forget everything. Once we forget everything, we shall go on. We may spend much time to consider our environment, our past, our future, and all the things related to it, yet we would not spend one hour in going on. Many times dear saints have come to me asking about the past, present, future, and many other things. I became famous for never answering their questions. I only gave them one word of advice: “Go on. Don’t talk and don’t remember your past. You should even forget the present and not care for the future. If you really want to go on, then just go on.” Those who are going on the best are those who do not remember anything. Consider the runners in a race. While they are running, they have no time to think of anything else. They only know one thing—running the race.

Here we see a basic principle: if anyone of us has fallen from the right track, or has stopped running in the race and then is stirred up to go on, he should not hesitate or ask questions. He should just go on. When many of the young people are stirred up to go on with the Lord, some of them are concerned with what they should do before they can go on, wondering whether the Lord will forgive them or be happy with them. If you are like this, it will be difficult for you to go on with the Lord. If you mean business with the Lord, simply go on with Him. Forget about whether He will forgive you or be happy with you. Do not take time to consider such things until you have reached the goal and gained the prize. Do not wonder whether you are right or wrong—just go on.

According to Hebrews 6, to go on does not need the laying of another foundation. Suppose the brothers who are building a new meeting hall have laid the foundation, but have become frustrated and have stopped working. After they are stirred up to continue working on the meeting hall, should they start over from the beginning and lay another foundation? No, that would be foolish. If they did that a few times, the whole building site would be filled with foundations. There would be no walls, roof, or building, only many foundations. Although doing such a thing would be foolish, many Christians, including myself, have done this very thing in their Christian life. In the early years of my Christian life, I laid many foundations. After I had been revived, I would gradually go down again. Then, after being stirred up again, I would purposely and thoroughly go back to the beginning to repent and make confession all over again. This is what it means “to renew again to repentance,” which is to lay again “a foundation of repentance.” After a while, I would be distracted again and then go back to confess and make confession still another time. Finally, I became tired of this, but I did not know what to do. One day, as I was reading Hebrews chapter six, I realized how foolish I had been. I did not need to repent again of what I had repented already or go back to the beginning to make another thorough confession. I simply needed to go on.

Most of the so-called revivals in today’s Christianity only stir up people to go back and lay another foundation again and again. A famous preacher comes and stirs the people up. After a few months they begin to go down, and another preacher comes to revive them once again. Each time the people are revived they lay another foundation. Most Christians lay the same foundation again and again. This is why we need Hebrews 6.

We should forget about laying another foundation and just go on. Do not consider whether the Lord will forgive you or not—just go on until you reach the goal. Once you have been stirred up to go on with the Lord, you do not need that much repentance. Repentance has been overemphasized in today’s revivalistic Christianity. Nearly every revivalist has learned one skill—to stir up people to repentance. But now I must tell you that you do not need to repent that much. The Lord is bored with your repentance. In a sense, the Lord is disgusted with so many repenting prayers. He wants to see you going on, not repenting of the same thing over and over again. To go on simply means to cross the river, to go from one side to another, from one stage to another, from one standing to another. Do not talk or consider. Go on. Leave your old concepts, understandings, doctrines, and teachings, and go on. The faster you go on, the better.

Heb. 6:1-2 Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God, 2 Of the teaching of baptisms and of the laying on of hands, of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment.

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## **I. LEAVING THE WORD OF THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST**

If we are to go on, we must leave the word of the beginning of Christ (6:1). This means that we must leave the foundation stage, the milk stage, and the baby stage. As we have seen in the previous message, the word of the beginning of Christ is the milk for the babes in Christ. In order to go on we must leave the doctrines we received at the beginning and no longer feed on baby food. We must go on from the baby stage to maturity by feeding on the solid food, which is the word of righteousness (5:13-14) ministered to us in this book.

## **II. NOT LAYING AGAIN THE FOUNDATION**

### **A. The Foundation Being Laid Already and There Being No Need to Lay It Again**

The foundation has already been laid, and there is no need to lay it again (6:1). The foundation is of six things: repentance from dead works, faith toward God, teaching of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment (vv. 1-2). This is the foundation of our Christian life which was laid at the beginning when we were saved. Since it has already been laid, there is no need to lay it again. If we fall away after being saved, we do not need to go back to repent of the things which we have repented of already. If we go back to repeat our past repentance, it means that we are going back to lay another foundation. If after falling away we come back and desire to go on with the Lord, we do not need to repeat our old repentance. We simply need to go on. Let us use again the illustration of construction work. If the work on a meeting hall is stopped after the laying of the foundation, there is no need to lay another foundation for the further building work. The workmen should simply build upon the foundation already laid. We may also use the illustration of running a race. If a runner falls after starting the race, he does not need to go back to start the race again. He simply needs to press on from the very place where he has fallen. Our Christian life is a building project and a race. If we fall away after we have begun, we do not need to go back to the beginning and start again; we only need to go on from where we fell.

### **C. Being Impossible to Renew Again to Repentance**

Verse 4 says, “For it is impossible to renew again to repentance those who were once enlightened, and who have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit.” Many Christian teachers misinterpret this verse and many preachers misuse it. They claim that Hebrews 6 says that if we sin after believing in the Lord, it is impossible for us to repent and be forgiven. This is not the meaning of this verse. It means that after you have repented once and have been stirred up to go on with the Lord, you do not need to repent again. In the eyes of the Lord, it is impossible for you to do this. Once the foundation has been laid, it is impossible to lay it again. Those who were once enlightened, who have tasted of the heavenly gift, have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, have tasted the good word of God and the works of power of the coming age, laid the foundation already at the time they believed. Once they have fallen away and returned back, there is no need for them to lay the foundation again. They should just rise up, go on, and be brought on to maturity. There is no need to repeat their repentance, for “it is impossible to renew again” that repentance. Verse 1 indicates that this is not needed; verse 4 says that it is not possible; and verses 7 and 8 show that it is not right. Thus, this verse does not mean that it is impossible for a believer to be forgiven if he has sinned. It means that there is no need for a Christian who has fallen to go back to repeat his original repentance. In the eyes of God, this is impossible.

## **Week 15 – Day 4 (7/19) (Cont'd)**

The heavenly gift mentioned in verse 4 refers to God's giving of the heavenly things, such as His forgiveness, righteousness, divine life, peace, and joy at the time of our conversion. The Greek word translated "word" in verse 5 is *rhema*, meaning the instant word of God. The "good word of God" here refers to the word of the beginning of Christ mentioned in verse 1, which is the milk the Hebrew believers tasted when they believed in the Lord. Now they must go on to the deeper word, the word of righteousness (5:13), which is not mainly concerned with God's redemption but with the way of His economy, and which is the solid food for them to reach maturity (v. 1).

The word "power" in verse 5 refers to the divine power, and the "coming age" refers to the age of the coming kingdom. The divine power of the coming kingdom is to restore, renew, and revive the things which have become old (Matt. 19:28). At the time of the believers' regeneration (Titus 3:5), they all tasted this divine power that caused them to be restored, renewed, and revived.

Most Christian teachers say that the fallen-away one mentioned here is a false Christian. But how could one who has been enlightened, has tasted of the heavenly gift, has become a partaker of the Holy Spirit, and has tasted the good word of God and the works of power of the coming age be a false Christian? Most Christian teachers, not seeing the matter of reward and punishment, make a big mistake here. According to the context, such a fallen one is certainly a real Christian. He will never perish, but, as verse 8 reveals, he will suffer some punishment. Thus, he needs to come back and go on. In order to go on he does not need to go back to lay the foundation again. Even if he would go back to lay the foundation again, it would be impossible for him to do so, because whatever he would do could not be counted by God.

### **C. Crucifying Again the Son of God, Putting Him to Open Shame**

The words "fallen away" in verse 6 refer to the Hebrew Christians' deviating from the pure Christian faith by returning to their old, traditional, Judaistic religion. In principle, this can be applied to any Christians who fall away from the right track of God's way.

This verse also speaks of "crucifying again for themselves the Son of God, and putting Him to open shame." The words "crucifying" and "putting" modify the predicate "renew" in verse 4. To renew again to repentance means to repeat the repentance which one already has. This is not needed. To do this means that we crucify again the Son of God and put Him to open shame. If we would try to return to our original repentance, we would be laying again the foundation. In the eyes of God, this is to crucify the Lord again. The Lord was crucified for us, and at our original repentance we accepted that. If we would return to our original repentance, we would be crucifying Him again and putting Him to open shame. We must never do this.

### **D. Being Not Right to Lay the Foundation Again**

It is not right to lay the foundation of repentance again. It is a waste for anyone to do this. It would not only be wrong for the brothers to lay the foundation for the meeting hall once it had been laid; it would also be a waste.

At this point we need to read verses 7 and 8. "For the earth which drinks the rain which often comes upon it and brings forth vegetation suitable to those for whose sake also it is tilled, partakes of blessing from God; but bringing forth thorns and thistles, it is disapproved and near a curse, whose end is to be burned." Those who go back again and again to renew their original repentance are like the earth which drinks the rain which falls upon it and does not bring forth proper vegetation. The "rain" in verse 7 refers back to the five categories of good things mentioned in verses 4 and 5. Bringing forth vegetation is an illustration of being brought on to maturity. The believers, as the earth, are tilled for God's sake that they might bring forth Christ as the vegetation to maturity. By this they partake of blessing from God. Christ is the proper vegetation. If instead of bringing forth Christ, we bring forth thorns and thistles, that will be a waste.

Heb. 12:7-8 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom the father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all sons have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

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An unbelieving sinner is a real curse, but Christians who bear thorns and thistles are near a curse. Strictly speaking, the thorns and thistles in verse 8 refer to the traditional things of the old religion of the Hebrew Christians. The Greek word translated “disapproved” may also be rendered “disqualified,” “counted worthless,” “rejected,” “cast away.” If any believer would not be brought on to maturity but rather would fall back to the old things, he will be disapproved of by God. The believers, once saved, can never be a real curse. But if we do not go on to grow Christ, but rather hold on to things which displease God, we are near the curse of suffering the punishment of God’s governmental dealing. (Consider this with the discipline of chastisement in 12:7-8.) This is absolutely different from the suffering of eternal perdition, which is the real curse.

The earth can never be burned, but what it grows may be burned. Likewise, the believers can never be burned, but all they bring forth that is not according to God’s economy will be burned. The believers are God’s farm. Whatever they grow as wood, hay, and stubble will be burned (1 Cor. 3:9, 12). When the earth is burned, it is not lost; it is dealt with.

This portion of Hebrews 6 is a word of righteousness, not a sugar-coated word that many Christians like to hear. I do not know what the burning which is mentioned in this portion of God’s word will be like. I only know that the pure word of God tells us so. This word in Hebrews 6 is similar to the word regarding the burning of the wood, hay, and stubble and being saved “yet so as through fire” in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. This is not the word of grace, the word of life, nor the good word; it is a sobering and solemn word—the word of righteousness.

### **III. BEING BROUGHT ON TO MATURITY**

The writer did not open this book by telling the Hebrew believers to go on. Before he said, “Let us be brought on to maturity,” he used five chapters to cover many wonderful items. The way to be brought on to maturity is in these five chapters.

#### **A. Sharing with Christ in His Attainments**

In order to be brought on to maturity, we need to share with Christ in His attainments (1:9; 3:14). We are His partners and we share His anointing. The way to share with Him in His attainments is by faith. We do not need to understand that much. We simply need to believe the word which is the glad tidings for us today and say, “Praise the Lord, I am His partner. I have the position and the right to share with Him in His anointing.” Do not say that you lack the feeling of participating in His anointing. The more you say that you do not have the feeling, the less feeling you will have. Faith calls things not being as being. We believe what the word of God says, whether we feel it or not. The word of God says that we are a partner of Christ, and to this we must say, “Amen. I am a partner of Christ.” The word of God also says that He has been anointed and that, as His partners, we share in His anointing. To this we must also say, “Amen. I have a share in His anointing.”

#### **B. Being Diligent to Enter into the Remaining Sabbath Rest**

If we would be brought on to maturity, we must be diligent to enter into the remaining Sabbath rest (4:9, 11). As we have seen, the remaining Sabbath rest today is the church life. We do not need to be that concerned about the coming kingdom in the future; we simply need to get into the church life today. Do not say, “Oh, in the past years I have been so sloppy. I hope I can still make it to enter into the kingdom in the future.” You need to forget your past, not care for the future, and enter into the church life today. The enemy is subtle. I am afraid that many of us still talk about, our past and have expectations for the future. Let us forget them both and be diligent and take action to be in the church life and in the race today.

## **Week 15 – Day 5 (7/20) (Cont’d)**

### **C. Coming Forward to the Throne of Grace to Receive Mercy and Find Grace**

We also need to come forward to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace (4:16). To grow in life, to be brought on to maturity, we need both God’s mercy and grace. It is impossible to grow by ourselves. It is God’s far-reaching mercy and sufficient grace that can bring us on to maturity. And the way to receive mercy and find grace is to come forward to the throne of grace. Thank God that for us today His throne is the throne of grace. We all need to practice coming forward to the throne of grace that “we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help.”

### **D. Feeding on the Solid Food to Enjoy Christ as Our High Priest according to the Order of Melchisedec**

If we would grow to maturity, we need to leave the baby food, the word of the beginning, and feed on the solid word, the word of righteousness, in order to enjoy Christ as our High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec (5:9-10, 14). We have received Christ as our Redeemer and Savior, and He has come into us to be our life. This very Christ whom we have received as our life within is also our High Priest in the heavens according to the order of Melchisedec, whose function is not to offer the sacrifice for sin but to minister the riches of God for our supply. In order to grow into maturity we need to enjoy such a God-ministering Christ that we may participate in the riches of the divine element. This is the solid food, not the baby food. Most Christians stay on the baby food, not desiring the solid food and not experiencing anything of Christ as their Melchisedec. This book encourages us to go on by feeding on the solid food and enjoying the heavenly Christ that we may receive the rich element of God for our growth into maturity.

The beginning of chapter six is a strong conclusion encouraging us to practice all we have heard in the five foregoing chapters. If we do this and go on, we shall reach the goal and be matured. How simple this is! Let us all go on.

### **FLEEING INTO THE REFUGE WITH THE ANCHOR AND THE FORERUNNER**

Now we come to the capstone of all we have covered in these messages—fleeing into the refuge with the anchor and the Forerunner (6:9-20).

#### **I. THE REFUGE**

Verse 18 speaks of having “fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.” Have you ever heard that the New Testament tells us to flee into a refuge? The Greek word translated “have fled for refuge” means to flee intensively; it refers to an intensified fleeing. The Greek word does not have the meaning of refuge. The simple English equivalent is “fled.” The Greek word is the same word used in Acts 14:6, where we are told that the Apostle Paul fled the persecution in the city. Although it is not wrong to add the words “for refuge,” it may be better not to use them.

We are not only river crossers; we are also fleers. From what are we fleeing? From everything other than Christ and the church life. We must flee from the world, Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and from ourselves. We must flee the department stores, the course of this age, religion, our old concepts, and every kind of tradition. We must flee anything that keeps us away and holds us back from Christ. I have consulted a number of translations of this verse. Some versions say, “fled the world.” We must flee our old position, ambition, and self-love. We must flee everything. The writer of this book undoubtedly wanted the Hebrew believers to flee Judaism, their old religion. It would have been dangerous for them to remain in it; they had to flee. The Greek word for flee implies fleeing to a safeguard. This is the reason the translators added the words “for refuge.” The writer seemed to be saying, “Hebrew Christians, you are in a very dangerous situation and you need to flee to a safeguard.”

Where is this safeguard, this safety, into which we must flee? It is in the spirit, in the church, and in the heavenlies. What is there in the heavenlies? The Holy of Holies within the veil. The Hebrew Christians were in danger of being held back in the camp. They had to flee into the veil. The writer seemed to be saying, “Flee within the veil, into the Holy of Holies, into your spirit. Don’t stay in your staggering soul. Flee your wandering mind. Flee into your spirit where you can be safe.” Although it is difficult to say definitely what the refuge is, we may say that it is the heavenlies where the Lord Jesus is today.

## **II. THE ANCHOR**

According to the context of 6:9-20, the writer, using the word “anchor,” pictures us all as being on a stormy sea. Since we are in a boat sailing on a stormy sea, we need an anchor. Undoubtedly, the safeguard into which we must flee is our haven. This haven is in our spirit, in the church life, and in the Holy of Holies in the heavenlies where the Lord Jesus is. If we would stay in this haven, we must have an anchor. The anchor is our hope (vv. 18-19) which is constituted with two unchangeable things—God’s promise and God’s oath (vv. 12-18). God’s promise is confirmed by His oath. God’s promise is God’s word, and God’s oath is His final confirmation. By God’s promise and oath, both of which are unchangeable, we have our faith and patience, issuing in our hope which is the anchor of our soul. Our hope, as a secure and firm anchor, has entered into the Holy of Holies within the veil and holds on to it, and we may now enter in spirit (10:19-20). By this anchor of hope we are held to the Holy of Holies. Without it, we may shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19).

We must flee whatever situation we are in. Every situation is a stormy sea. Are you rich? Your riches are a stormy sea. Are you poor? Your poverty is a stormy sea. To say that every situation is a stormy sea simply means that it can hold you back, keeping you from entering into today’s rest. This is the danger. Consider the type of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt. Although maybe two million came out of Egypt, only two of them entered into the rest. All the others were distracted. Do we not face the same possibility today? There is not one thing which cannot hold us back. Even the eldership in the church can hold you back. Elders, you must flee the eldership. We are the fleers. We even must flee our own country and locality. The writer included himself in this matter of fleeing, for he used the word “we” in verse 18. After saying so many good things in the foregoing chapters, he concluded with the word “flee.”

## **III. THE FORERUNNER**

The writer now tells us that Christ is not only the Captain of our salvation, but also our Forerunner. The Lord Jesus as the Forerunner took the lead to pass through the stormy sea and enter the heavenly haven to be the High Priest for us according to the order of Melchisedec. As such a Forerunner, He is the Captain of our salvation (2:10). As the Forerunner, He has cut the way to glory, and as the Captain, He has entered into glory, into the Holy of Holies within the veil. In order to enter into the Holy of Holies within the veil, the Lord Jesus fled everything. He fled His mother. He fled His brothers (Matt. 12:46-50). He fled Judaism and entered within the veil. Here we are not told that Jesus entered into the heavens, but that He entered “into that which is within the veil.” He entered into the presence of God. He fled everything to enter into the presence of God within the veil, where we anchor our hope with full assurance (vv. 19, 11).

After covering so many messages thus far in our Life-study of Hebrews, we must pay attention to this one thing—fleeing. We must flee everything because everything is a danger. Flee your old concepts. Flee your non-church life. If you do not have the church life, you are on the stormy sea without a safeguard. Your wandering mind is a stormy sea. Flee into your spirit and into the church life that you may have a safeguard. This fleeing is the real river crossing. I am concerned that many of those reading this message will not flee and cross the river. Let us flee into our spirit and into the church life. Let us flee into the veil, into the Holy of Holies.

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### **Study Questions**

1. In what aspects does Paul indicate the superiority of Christ to Moses?
2. Why is it so important that we be in God’s house and care for His house?

## Week 16 – Day 1 (7/23)

Heb. 7: 1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

8: 2 A Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

9:11-12 But Christ, having come as a High Priest of the good things that have come into being, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not of this creation,

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### MESSAGE THIRTY-ONE

#### **THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY OF THE HEAVENLY CHRIST**

The book of Hebrews has two main sections, and these two sections are based upon the two aspects of Christ's priesthood. Firstly, Christ is the High Priest of God typified by Aaron, and secondly He is the High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec. Christ's ministry is of two main aspects, the one typified by Aaron on earth and the other according to the order of Melchisedec in heaven.

#### **I. A TURN IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS**

According to the work and ministry of Christ, this book has a turn at 7:1, a turn from earth to heaven. To the end of chapter six, what is mainly revealed is Christ's work on earth typified by the priesthood of Aaron. That section is the word of foundation. From 7:1, Christ's ministry in heaven according to the order of Melchisedec is unveiled. This section is the word of perfection, which shows us how the heavenly Christ ministers in the heavenly tabernacle. His purification of sins is typified by the work of Aaron, while His sitting down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (1:3) is according to the order of Melchisedec (Psa. 110:1, 4). His work on the cross on earth typified by the work of Aaron affords us forgiveness of sin. His ministry on the throne in heaven ministers to us the overcoming of sin. His cross delivered us out of Egypt; His throne brings us into Canaan. Although the Hebrew believers had participated in His work on the cross, they had to press on to enter into the enjoyment of His ministry on the throne.

We may say that the forgiveness of sin is on the ground floor and that the overcoming of sin is on the second floor. During the past centuries, a great many Christians have sought for the overcoming of sin. However, not many of them ever succeeded in this matter because they were seeking something that is on the second floor while they were on the ground floor. How could you ever have the things on the second floor while seeking for them on the ground floor? The forgiveness of sin is on the ground floor. Every saved Christian can testify that he has fully, successfully, absolutely, and thoroughly experienced the forgiveness of sin. But we must be on the second floor in order to experience the overcoming of sin. The forgiveness of sin is related to Christ's work on earth typified by the work of Aaron. This is on the ground floor. The overcoming of sin is related to Christ's work today in heaven according to the order of Melchisedec. This is on the second floor. Are you on the ground floor or on the second floor? I am quite sure that I am on the second floor. How wonderful it is to be on the second floor enjoying not only the forgiveness of sin but also the overcoming of sin! Sin is beneath our feet! If you are going to overcome a certain thing, that thing must be underneath you. Although in terminology it sounds like a small thing to speak of the overcoming of sin, in experience it is tremendous. How good it is to enjoy the overcoming of sin! If you want to have the overcoming of sin, you must come to the second floor to experience the heavenly ministry of the heavenly Christ according to the order of Melchisedec.

As I have already mentioned, Christ's cross delivers us out of Egypt and His throne brings us into Canaan. Where are you—in Egypt or in Canaan? How do you know that you are in Canaan? It is easy to tell. I know that I am in Canaan because I am no longer around the cross but around the throne. The sermons, messages, conversations, and fellowship of most Christians is around the cross. I hardly ever heard of a group of Christians fellowshiping around the throne. Is your Christ today on the cross or on the throne? I can testify to you that my Christ today is on the throne. I am not seeking Him at the cross; I am enjoying Him on the throne. This is marvelous. Today our Christ is no longer on the cross but on the

throne. The Passover in Egypt signified Christ on the cross. But today our Christ is on the throne, and where the throne is, there is Canaan. We are in Canaan. We are in the Sabbath rest because our Christ is on the throne. Although we have participated in Christ's work on the cross, we must now press on to enter into the enjoyment of His ministry on the throne. The Christ who is with me in the present ministry is the Christ on the throne. Oh, may the fact that Christ is now on the throne be experienced by us! We need to see all the details concerning this enthroned Christ. When we enjoy such a Christ, we are on the second floor, in Canaan, and around the throne.

This message is on the heavenly ministry of the heavenly Christ. As we have seen, the book of Hebrews makes a great turn at 7:1. Not many readers of Hebrews have seen this point clearly, but by God's mercy and grace He has shown us this turn. My burden in this message simply is to impress you with this turn. May the Holy Spirit inscribe this turn deeply into your spirit. This turn is not merely a doctrinal turn; it is a turn in our experience of Christ in an active way, even in a subjectively objective way. In the next message I shall explain what I mean by subjectively objective. For the time being, I ask you to keep in mind that at 7:1 we must make a turn so that we may experience Christ in a subjectively objective way.

### **A. From the Outer Court on Earth to the Holy of Holies in Heaven**

This turn is from the outer court on earth to the Holy of Holies in heaven (8:2; 9:11-12, 24). This reminds us of the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle. Firstly, there was the outer court. Then there was the tabernacle, which was divided into two parts—the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies where God's presence was. Thus, there were three parts: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. According to the type, both the outer court and the Holy Place are for the Holy of Holies. The purpose in entering the outer court is to come through the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies. Both the outer court and the Holy Place are for the people to come into the Holy of Holies. The outer court is for people to enter the Holy of Holies, and the Holy Place is the threshold of the Holy of Holies. If you come to the outer court without entering into the Holy of Holies, you are aimless. If you remain around the altar and the laver for a long time, you have no aim or destination. Neither the altar nor the laver in the outer court is the goal. The goal is the Holy of Holies. Whenever you are at the altar or at the laver you must aim for the Holy of Holies. Even when you are in the Holy Place you should say, "Lord, I am not for this place. I am passing through this place to the Holy of Holies. My aim, my goal, is Your Holy of Holies." The book of Hebrews firstly presents us the things in the outer court. Then, beginning at 7:1, it turns us to the Holy of Holies. This is the turn from the outer court through the Holy Place to the Holy of Holies.

### **B. From the Altar for Sin in the Outer Court to the Propitiation-cover for Grace (the Throne of Grace) in the Holy of Holies**

This turn is also from the altar for sin in the outer court to the propitiation-cover for grace (the throne of grace) in the Holy of Holies (13:10, 12; 10:12; 4:16). Here we see two things—the altar and the propitiation-cover. The propitiation-cover is the throne of grace where God meets with us, speaks with us, and communes with us, and where we are one with God in His economy. The throne of grace is the very place where God and we, we and God, are one. The altar is in the outer court, and the propitiation-cover is in the Holy of Holies. The altar symbolizes the cross, which is dear and precious. The altar is dear and precious because it deals with our sins. But it is in the outer court. The cross, on which the problem of sin was solved is still on the earth, on the ground floor. While many Christians are occupied continually with the cross in the outer court, I doubt if many Christians properly touch the propitiation-cover hourly or even daily. We all need to learn to touch the throne of grace, the propitiation-cover, moment by moment. We need to pray, "Lord, I need to touch Your throne of grace every minute." The throne of grace is the place where we must be. The cross is good, but it is not our goal or destination. It is not the place where we should remain forever. The place where we should remain forever is the propitiation-cover, the throne of grace. Where are you right now? We are around the propitiation-cover, around the throne of grace.

## **Week 16 – Day 2 (7/24)**

Heb. 12:2 Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.  
13:12 Therefore also Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

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In the Bible we are never told that God speaks from the cross. According to the Bible, where do we hear God's voice? At the throne of grace, the oracle in the Holy of Holies. If you are still around the cross, it will be difficult for you to hear God's speaking. But whenever you come to the throne of grace, the propitiation-cover, you will immediately hear the divine voice. You will hear God's voice because you are in the oracle, at the throne of grace. It is here that we hear God's speaking, see His countenance, and enjoy His presence. It is here that we are one with Him in His economy. So the book of Hebrews turns us from the altar in the outer court to the place of God's oracle in the Holy of Holies.

At the throne of grace, it is no longer a question of sin. Sin is under our feet. At the throne of grace, it is a matter of grace. Are you still occupied with sin? Are you still entangled and troubled by your temper? Forget about it. Although you might have lost your temper with your wife this morning, now, as you are reading this message, you can be at the throne of grace. A few hours ago you were under sin, but now you are with grace over sin. None of us should be occupied with sin any longer. Sin is over. We all need to be occupied, filled, saturated, and permeated with grace. Hallelujah for grace! Are you now around the cross or around the throne of grace? We need to be brothers and sisters around the throne of grace.

What is grace? Grace is God Himself flowing into, through, and out of us to do everything for us. Have you not enjoyed grace in this way, as the very God flowing into, through, and out of you to do everything for you? This is the grace that we enjoy around the throne of grace. We all must know grace in this way. The ministry of the book of Hebrews is simply to turn us to the throne of grace. Through the rich church life, the Lord has brought us to the throne of grace. I do not like to linger around the cross any longer. However, I am not saying that we should give up the cross. I am saying that we should not linger at the cross but stay at the throne of grace. I would like to linger here at the throne of grace for eternity.

### **C. From the Christ on Earth to the Christ in Heaven**

This turn in the book of Hebrews is also from the Christ on earth to the Christ in heaven (7:26). The Christ whom we now experience and enjoy day by day is the Christ in heaven. While many Christians are anxious to go to heaven, we are now enjoying the Christ who is in heaven. Hebrews turns us from the Christ on earth to the Christ in heaven.

### **D. From the Suffering Jesus on the Pathway of the Cross to the Glorified Christ on the Throne of God**

Furthermore, this turn is from the suffering Jesus on the pathway of the cross to the glorified Christ on the throne of God (12:2; 13:12; 8:1). Many books have been written on the suffering Jesus and on the pathway of the cross. Many who are still on the pathway need the book of Hebrews to turn them to the glorified Christ on the throne of God. Christ is now on the throne.

## **II. THE TWO ASPECTS OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD**

### **A. Typified by Aaron on Earth**

Not many Christians know the two aspects of Christ's priesthood. Although many know that Christ is our High Priest, very few realize that with Christ's priesthood there are two aspects. The first aspect is the priesthood of Christ typified by Aaron on earth. This is fully revealed in 5:1-5.

### **B. According to the Order of Melchisedec in Heaven**

The second aspect of Christ's priesthood is that according to the order of Melchisedec in heaven (6:20;

7:1). In 6:20 we read that as the Forerunner the Lord is now within the veil, in the Holy of Holies in heaven. As we have seen, the first aspect of Christ's priesthood is mainly for the forgiveness of sin, and the second aspect is mainly for the overcoming of sin. The first aspect brings us out of Egypt, and the second aspect ushers us into Canaan. On the cross, Christ was a High Priest typified by Aaron. Now we must press on to enter into the full participation in His priesthood according to the order of Melchisedec. If we do this, we shall have a complete overcoming of sin and sin will be absolutely under our feet. We shall be on the second floor, in the Holy of Holies, having nothing to do with sin but continually enjoying grace. This is altogether related to the second aspect of Christ's ministry.

### **III. THE TWO SECTIONS OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY**

Based upon the two aspects of Christ's priesthood, there are two sections of Christ's ministry—the section on earth and the section in heaven. It is very interesting to see that in both sections of Christ's ministry there are exactly eleven items. Now, in a brief way, we need to consider the two sections of Christ's ministry.

#### **A. The Section on Earth**

##### **1. Having Offered Himself to God for Our Sins**

Christ offered Himself to God for our sins (7:27; 9:14, 26; 10:10, 12). The first thing that our Lord did in His priestly ministry was to offer Himself to God for our sins. He was the real sin offering, the unique sin offering. From the foundation of the world, Christ was the unique sin offering (Rev. 13:8). As such an offering, He offered Himself to God for our sins. If you read the book of Hebrews carefully, you will discover that it presents Christ only as the sin offering, not as any other kind of offering. In the book of Hebrews the unique offering is the offering for sin. Christ offered Himself to God for our sins once for all and He does not need to do it again. It was accomplished once for all for eternity.

We all must declare and announce the good tidings that the problem of sin has been solved. Do not listen to the lies. Even your experience is a lie. Sin is no longer here. We all must declare, "Sin has been taken away." Christ's offering of Himself put away sin. Thus John 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!" However, many Christians do not realize or believe that sin has been taken away. Do you believe that sin has been taken away? Do not believe that sin is still here. Even if you have a failure or defeat you must tell Satan, "Satan, I don't believe you. I believe the Holy Word which says that sin has been taken away." We all must believe this. We must forget our experiences and what we are, strongly take the Lord's word, and declare to the enemy and to the whole universe, "Hallelujah, sin has been taken away. Sin has nothing to do with me any longer because Christ offered Himself to God to take it away."

##### **2. Having Made Propitiation for Our Sins**

In His ministry on earth Christ also made propitiation for our sins (2:17). Sin, which has been taken away, caused many issues. All of those issues became problems between us and God. Therefore, at the time when Christ took away sin He also made propitiation for us with God. In a sense, He has appeased God for us. Although there were many problems between us and God, Christ's sin offering has appeased God for us. Now there are no problems between us and God. Do not pay attention to your feelings. You may still feel that there is a problem between you and God, but that is a lie. Do not listen to it. Tell the enemy, "Sin has been taken away and God has been appeased." These are glad tidings. Hallelujah, sin is gone and God is here!

##### **3. Having Made Purification for Our Sins**

Christ has also made purification for our sins (1:3). Christ offered Himself for our sins, made propitiation for our sins, and made purification for our sins. If Christ had only offered Himself for sin and made propitiation for our sins without making purification for them, His work would not have been clean-cut. But His work was the best cleaning work, for He has accomplished the purification of sins. In the eyes of God, we are not only forgiven but also purified. Now we have a purified conscience.

## **Week 16 – Day 3 (7/25)**

Heb. 10:10, 14, 29 By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. 29 By how much do you think he will be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has considered the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

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### **4. Having Sanctified Us through His Offering with His Blood**

Christ has also sanctified us through His offering with His blood (10:10, 14, 29; 13:12). He not only purified our sins but also sanctified us, separated us, set us apart, unto God. I do not care how you feel about yourself. According to Christ's figuration, you have been separated, sanctified. You do not belong to the city where you live; you belong to God. We have all been sanctified, separated unto God by Christ through His offering with His blood. When Christ died on the cross, offering Himself for us, He separated us to God. When you hear this, you may say, "It is not like that according to my experience." Be patient. Wait for a few years, the next age, or, at the latest, for eternity, and you will see that you have been sanctified unto God. In the New Jerusalem we all shall be set apart unto God. I not only believe this for myself but for all the children of God. Do not believe your present situation, for it is altogether a lie. Sometimes I am told by the brothers that a church in a particular place is not very good. I do not like to be told that. Whenever I hear such a report, deep within me I say, "You are wrong. Every church is wonderful." If we do not believe this today, we shall believe it some day. One day we shall see that every church is wonderful and that every church is separated, sanctified, unto God. But do not wait until eternity to believe it. Believe it today. If you wait for eternity to believe this, you will miss a great deal of enjoyment. If you believe it today, you will enjoy it. What glad tidings it is to hear that we have been separated to God through the offering of Christ with His blood!

### **5. Having Perfected Us through His Offering**

Christ has perfected us through His offering (10:14). In Greek, the word translated perfected also means completed. Christ has already perfected and completed us. Regardless of how weak, young, or new you are, you have been perfected and completed by Christ through His offering. This is the gospel, the glad tidings.

### **6. Having Consummated a New Covenant for Us with His Blood**

In His ministry on earth Christ consummated a new covenant for us with His blood (8:6; 9:14-15). After Christ offered Himself as the sin offering and made propitiation and purification for our sins, He consummated the new covenant for us. In this covenant all of the foregoing items are included. Christ sealed this new covenant with His blood. Hence, it is a blood-sealed covenant. In other words, He signed this covenant with blood, not with ink. No one can change it.

### **7. Having Bequeathed to Us the New Testament**

After Christ consummated the new covenant, He went to heaven, leaving the covenant for us (9:16-17). After He left for heaven, the covenant immediately became a testament, a will. The word testament is an ancient term for the modern term will. Christ consummated a covenant and He bequeathed to us as a will, the will of our beloved One who died for us.

### **8. Having Suffered Death for Everything**

On the cross Christ suffered death for everything (2:9). We should not only be concerned about sin, for, due to the fall of Adam, everything of the old creation is out of order. Everything is wrong. Therefore,

Christ suffered death not only for us but for everything. Colossians 1:20 says that through His death Christ reconciled all things to God. Because of Christ's death, everything must be in its proper order. We need to believe this.

### **9. Having Destroyed the Devil on the Cross**

Christ has destroyed the Devil (2:14). The Devil, the leading troublemaker in the universe, has been destroyed by the death of Christ. Sometimes you need to remind Satan of this, telling him, "Satan, why do you come here to bother me? You were destroyed on the cross. Who gave you permission to come here? I command you to get out." We need to believe that the Devil, the leading troublemaker, has been destroyed.

### **10. Having Released Us from the Slavery under Fear of Death**

Christ released us from the slavery under fear of death (2:15). We do not need to be afraid of death any longer, because the sting of death has been abolished. Christ accomplished this on the cross before He went to the throne. Satan has been destroyed, death has been abolished (2 Tim. 1:10), and we have been released.

### **11. Having Cut the Pathway of the Cross**

Lastly, after finishing everything else, Christ cut the pathway of the cross. Now we have a highway, a freeway, leading directly from here to the throne. A straight and flat highway has been paved from the cross on earth to the throne in heaven. There are no dips or curves on this highway. The way from the cross to the throne is a highway, not a rugged way. If you say that the way is rugged, it means that you do not have the map of the book of Hebrews. You have the wrong map. Your map is too old, and you need to drop it. According to the new map, the way from the cross to the throne is a highway paved by the suffering Jesus and the glorified Christ. Today we do not see Christ suffering on the cross; we see Him glorified on the throne. When Stephen was being stoned to death, he was, in a sense, on the rugged way of the cross. But, in another sense, he was on a highway. He saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God in glory and his face shone like that of an angel (Acts 7:55-56; 6:15). Stephen was on the highway leading to the throne.

#### **B. The Section in Heaven**

##### **1. Having Opened a New and Living Way into the Holy of Holies**

Now we come to the section of Christ's ministry in heaven. On earth, Christ cut the pathway of the cross, and in heaven He has opened a new and living way into the Holy of Holies (10:19-20). He has cut the highway and opened the new way into the Holy of Holies.

##### **2. Having Purified the Heavens and the Things in the Heavens with His Blood**

Christ has purified the heavens and the things in the heavens with His blood. Although we may not have seen this, it is mentioned in the Holy Word. Not only do we need the purification by the blood of Christ, but the heavens and the things in the heavens also need it, as the tabernacle and all things pertaining to it were sprinkled and purified by the blood of the sacrifice.

##### **3. Having Confirmed the New Covenant and Found Eternal Redemption**

By ascending to the heavens, Christ has confirmed the new covenant and found eternal redemption (9:12). His ascension to the heavens confirmed the new covenant that He consummated on earth. There, in the heavens, He found eternal redemption for us.

## **Week 16 – Day 3 (7/25) (Cont'd)**

### **4. Having Obtained a More Excellent Ministry**

Christ has obtained a more excellent ministry (8:6). His ministry on the throne today is more excellent than that of the Old Testament priests in the tabernacle. This is His ministry in the Holy of Holies.

### **5. As the Surety and Mediator of the New Covenant, Enforcing the Covenant**

As the Surety and Mediator of the new covenant, Christ enforces the covenant (7:22; 8:6; 9:15). In Greek the word surety means both a guarantee and a person who is a bondsman or sponsor. Christ is the Surety of the new covenant, the One who enforces it.

### **6. As the Executor of the New Testament, Executing the Testament**

As the Executor of the New Testament, Christ executes that testament (9:16-17). Christ is the Surety of the covenant and the Executor of the testament. For the will there is a need of an executor, someone to execute it. In His ascension, Christ is the Executor of the testament He bequeathed to us.

### **7. As the High Priest, Interceding for Us and Saving Us to the Uttermost**

Christ is the High Priest who intercedes for us and saves us to the uttermost (7:25-26). This is not according to the order of Aaron on earth but according to the order of Melchisedec in heaven.

### **8. As the Heavenly Minister, Ministering Heaven, Life, and Power into Us**

As the heavenly Minister, Christ ministers heaven, life, and power into us (8:2) that we may live the heavenly life on earth. This is not merely to save us from the negative things but to sustain us with the heavenly supply of the divine life.

### **9. As the Sanctifier, Sanctifying Us with His Holy Nature and Life**

Christ is also the Sanctifier sanctifying us with His holy nature and life (2:11). He has sanctified us with His blood through His offering on the cross. That was the objective, positional sanctification which He accomplished for us on earth. Now He is sanctifying us with His holy nature and life. This is the subjective, dispositional sanctification which He is accomplishing for us in heaven.

### **10. As the Perfecter of Faith, Perfecting Us in Faith for Our Life**

Christ is the Perfecter of faith (12:2). As such a Perfecter, He is perfecting us in faith for our daily life. As the Author, the Originator, of our faith, He originated faith on earth. He is now perfecting faith for us in heaven that we may live and walk by His faith.

### **11. As the Captain of Our Salvation, Leading Us Into Glory**

Christ is also the Captain of our salvation leading us into glory (2:10). All that He is doing in heaven today is to bring us into His glory for the full expression of God. This is the ultimate goal of God's eternal plan.

All of these eleven items are Christ's more excellent ministry in heaven today.

- Heb. 10:22 Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.
- 7:25 Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them.
- 11: 6 But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
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MESSAGE THIRTY-TWO

**A KINGLY HIGH PRIEST,  
PERPETUAL AND GREAT**

In the last message we said that our Christ is subjectively objective. What does this mean? This is a very exciting matter. One night, in 1968, a brother said to me, “Brother Lee, in the whole U.S.A., the preachers, pastors, and ministers have been telling people for years to look to the Lord who is in heaven. But since coming to this country, you have been telling people to turn to their spirit to meet with the Lord. This is absolutely different. It seems that there are two directions.” Yes, there are undoubtedly these two directions. As we pointed out in the last message, the Lord today is no longer here on earth but is on the throne in heaven. There is no doubt about this. But if the Lord were only on the throne in heaven, how could the people on earth have Him as their life? If He were only in heaven, He would be too far away from us for us to have Him as our life and our daily life supply. How can the Lord, who is in fact objective, become subjective to us in our daily life? This is the problem.

The secret to the answer to this question is in the book of Hebrews. This secret in the book of Hebrews is in 4:12, which speaks of the dividing of soul and spirit. It seems that the writer introduces this point suddenly for no apparent reason. Chapter four deals with the Sabbath rest. Doctrinally speaking, there is apparently no relationship between the Sabbath rest and our human spirit. The Sabbath rest is the Sabbath rest, and our human spirit is our human spirit. These two things seem to be far removed from one another. But 4:14 goes on to say that we have “a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,” and verse 16 tells us to “come forward with boldness to the throne of grace.” Our great High Priest is on the throne in heaven. How can we touch Him? How can we experience Him?

The writer of Hebrews tells us to “come forward.” I need to say a word about this phrase. It is used several times in Hebrews: “come forward to the throne of grace” (4:16); “come forward to the Holy of Holies (10:22); ”come forward to God” (7:25; 11:6). We need to come forward to three things: to the Holy of Holies, to the throne of grace, and to God Himself. Do not shrink backward—come forward. In Greek, the words “come forward” are one word. Most versions render it either as approach, draw near, or come near. According to the best Greek lexicon, however, the primary meaning of this word is come forward.

We need to understand the background of the book of Hebrews. As we have already seen clearly, the recipients of this book, the Hebrew believers, were in danger of shrinking back. They were staggering and hesitating, and the book of Hebrews was written to encourage them to come forward. The writer did not tell them to go forward but to come forward. This means that the writer was in a particular place and that he wanted his readers to come forward to the place where he was. So he told them to come forward to the Holy of Holies, to the throne of grace, and to God. Where is God? He is on the throne of grace. Where is the throne of grace? It is in the Holy of Holies. At the time of the writing of this book, the writer was there in the Holy of Holies, calling the Hebrew brothers to come forward.

At this point we have a problem. Where are the Holy of Holies and the throne of grace? According to our experience, we would say that they are joined to our spirit. If they, the Holy of Holies and the throne of grace, are joined to our spirit, then undoubtedly God must be in our spirit, because God is on the throne of grace. As long as the Holy of Holies and the throne of grace are joined to our spirit, God must be in our spirit.

## Week 16 – Day 4 (7/26) (Cont'd)

If you were to ask many Christians where the Holy of Holies and the throne of grace are, they would say that they are in heaven. There is a strong ground in the Bible for saying this. Doctrinally speaking, it is absolutely correct to say this. Nevertheless, we need to ask this question: If the throne of grace is in heaven and we are on earth, how can we come forward to it? Is there any way for us who are on earth today to touch the throne of grace in heaven? According to their theology, many Christians have no way to touch the throne of grace today. The throne of grace is far away from them. The Holy of Holies in heaven is also far away. Yes, doctrinally speaking, the Holy of Holies and the throne of grace undoubtedly are in heaven. Since we all are on the earth, how can we enter the Holy of Holies and touch the throne of grace today? And today Christ is also on the throne in heaven objectively. How can this objective Christ be our subjective experience? According to the objective teachings, there is no way.

The Bible speaks of a place called Bethel, the house of God (Gen. 28:19). In this place there is the ladder joining earth and heaven (Gen. 28:12), and on this ladder the angels of God are ascending and descending. This indicates that the ladder joins earth to heaven and heaven to earth. Between earth and heaven there is a great deal of traffic, as indicated by the angels' ascending and descending. This traffic is not found in any place on earth except in one special place—Bethel, the house of God.

We may use electricity as an illustration of the traffic between earth and heaven. An electrical power plant may be far away from your home, but between your home and the power plant there is the traffic of electricity. Wires bring the electricity from the power plant into your home. Likewise, there is traffic between earth and heaven. Christ is the ladder that affords this traffic. Upon this ladder there is much ascending and descending, much going and coming. This ladder is in the house of God.

All of this, however, is still doctrinal. Where is the house of God on earth today? After studying the Bible for many years, I eventually found out that today Bethel, the house of God, is in our spirit. Ephesians 2:22 (Gk.) says that we “are being builded together into an habitation of God in spirit.” The church today is the habitation of God, the house of God, and this is in our spirit. When we, the church people, all meet together in our spirit, the house of God, Bethel, is here. Immediately, that very place is joined to heaven, for there is a ladder joining earth to heaven and bringing heaven down to earth. Spontaneously, we have traffic between earth and heaven. However, whenever we get out of our spirit and into our mind or emotions, Bethel disappears. Where is Bethel today? It is in our spirit. Since Bethel, God's house, is in our spirit, our spirit is the very place where Christ, the heavenly ladder, joins us to heaven and brings heaven to us. According to this revelation and according to our experience, we may boldly say that the Holy of Holies and the throne of grace are joined to our spirit.

This is why the writer of Hebrews told us in 4:12 that firstly we must experience the dividing of our spirit from our soul and that, following this, we can come forward to the Holy of Holies, to the throne of grace, and to the very God who is on the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies. The secret of this experience is the dividing of soul and spirit.

Is Christ objective to us? Yes, He is, in fact, objective. Nevertheless, in experience, He is subjectively objective to us. In fact, He is objective because He is there in heaven. But we do not need to go to heaven in order to experience Him. While we are on earth today, we may experience in our spirit the Christ who is in heaven. Christ is objective, but our experience of Christ is subjective. We have the subjective experience of the objective Christ. How can the objective Christ be transmitted into our subjective experience? By the heavenly ladder that joins us to heaven and brings heaven to us. How can the objective electricity far away in the power plant become the subjective application of electricity in our homes? By the wires that carry the current of electricity from the power plant to our homes. In fact, the electricity is objectively in the power plant, but in application, it is subjectively present in our homes. In like manner, we can subjectively experience the objective Christ. While we are on earth, we can experience the Christ who is in heaven. This is wonderful. Day by day, I experience the very Christ who is in heaven. Though He is objective, in my experience He is subjective.

Where is Christ today? This question cannot be answered in such a simple way. We must say that, in fact, Christ is objectively in the heavens, but, in our experience, He is subjectively in our spirit. In this way,

the objective Christ in heaven becomes our subjective experience in our spirit. In the last message we saw that we need to be on the second floor of the experience of Christ. Where is this second floor? It is joined to our spirit. Because this second floor is joined to our spirit, we must turn to our spirit to experience the very Christ who is in heaven.

### **I. A KINGLY HIGH PRIEST**

The Christ in heaven who can be experienced by us subjectively in our spirit is mainly the High Priest. The book of Hebrews is focused on the heavenly Christ, and the chief point of this heavenly Christ is that He is the High Priest. The main point here is not that Christ is the Savior or Redeemer but that He, as the heavenly Christ, is the High Priest. This is the reason why the book of Hebrews is primarily concerned with the priesthood of Christ. Please remember the following statements: the focus of Hebrews is the heavenly Christ, the main point of the heavenly Christ is that He is the High Priest, and Hebrews is concerned primarily with the priesthood of Christ.

Among most Christians, the priesthood of Christ has been very much lowered. Whenever most Christians speak about Christ as our High Priest, they still cling to the concept that He is the High Priest offering sacrifices to God for our sins. This, of course, is correct. But it is on the negative side. Christ as the High Priest offering sacrifices to God for our sins is typified by Aaron. That was in the past. Today Christ is no longer offering sacrifices for our sins but ministering God to us as our supply. In the past, Christ offered sacrifices to God for our sins as typified by Aaron. Today He is ministering God to us as our supply according to the order of Melchisedec.

This is proved by the coming of Melchisedec to Abraham (Gen. 14:18-22). The first mention of the word priest in the Bible is with Melchisedec. Melchisedec was the priest of the Most High God. As the priest of the Most High God, Melchisedec did not offer sacrifices to God for Abraham's sin; he ministered bread and wine to him. As indicated by the symbols of the Lord's table in the Bible bread and wine signify the processed God as our supply. Our High Priest, Christ, is not according to the order of Aaron offering sacrifices to God; He is according to the order of Melchisedec ministering the processed God to us.

Who are we? We are no longer poor sinners but victorious fighters. When Melchisedec came to Abraham, Abraham was not a pitiful sinner, begging, "O priest Melchisedec, be merciful to me. Look at how sinful I am. You need to take care of my sins. My situation is so poor. You need to bring all the offerings to God for me." Abraham was not in such a situation. When Melchisedec came to him, Abraham was the victor, the fighter, the slaughterer. Abraham had just slaughtered Chedorlaomer and the other kings (Gen. 14:17). Abraham was a victorious fighter who had taken many spoils. What are you—poor sinners or victorious fighters? I am glad to say that in the church life we are not pitiful sinners but victorious fighters.

No longer are we in the book of Leviticus with Aaron; we are in Genesis 14 with Melchisedec. We do not have Aaron any longer, for Aaron is past. We are now with Melchisedec. Our Christ today is much superior to Aaron. In the book of Leviticus we need to appreciate Aaron, but when we come to Hebrews, we must say that Aaron is past. In the book of Hebrews, Melchisedec is our High Priest. We do not want to linger in Leviticus but go all the way back to the beginning in Genesis. This is a real recovery. Let us go back to Genesis 14 where we see that the priest did not offer sacrifices for pitiful sinners but ministered bread and wine to glorious victors.

How happy we would be if, before we went to bed at night, Melchisedec would come ministering to us the bread and the wine because during the whole day we had slaughtered many Chedorlaomers. We need to slaughter some Chedorlaomers all day long. We need to slaughter Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and so many negative things. If we slaughter the enemies during the day, every evening we shall have the chief spoils. Then our Melchisedec will come and say, "Are you tired after your victory? Here is bread and wine, the processed God for your enjoyment." This is the ministry of the priest of the Most High God who comes not to offer sin offerings for pitiful sinners but to minister God to victorious fighters. Tell me honestly, have you ever seen before that we have such a High Priest? I never saw this when I was in religion.

## **Week 16 – Day 5 (7/27)**

Isa. 32:1 Indeed a King will reign according to righteousness, And the rulers will rule according to justice.  
Heb. 7:13-14 For He of whom these things are said belongs to a different tribe, from which no one has attended to the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord has risen out of Judah, concerning which tribe Moses spoke nothing about priests.

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### **A. The King of Righteousness**

This High Priest is of another order, not of the order of Aaron but of the order of Melchisedec. Melchisedec was a king, and his name means the king of righteousness. In Isaiah 32:1 we see that the title, king of righteousness, also refers to the Lord Jesus. Christ is the King of righteousness, today's Melchisedec. As the King of righteousness, Christ has made all things right with God and with one another. He has reconciled man to God and has appeased God for man. Righteousness issues in peace (Isa. 32:17). By His righteousness Christ has brought forth the fruit of peace.

### **B. The King of Peace**

Melchisedec is also the king of Salem, which means the king of peace, signifying that Christ is also the King of peace (Isa. 9:6). As the King of peace through righteousness, Christ has brought in peace between God and us. In peace He fulfills the ministry of His priesthood, ministering God to us for our enjoyment.

### **C. From a Kingly Tribe**

Neither Aaron nor any of his descendants has ever been a king. They were just priests. They were not of the kingly tribe but of the priestly tribe. The kingly tribe was the tribe of Judah, and the priestly tribe was the tribe of Levi. Christ came out of the tribe of Judah (7:13-14). So we should not rank Him with Aaron, for He does not belong to Aaron's tribe. Christ is a kingly Priest.

### **D. Combining the Kingship Together with the Priesthood**

Christ is the High Priest, but His status is that of a king. As He functions as a Priest, He is a King. He is the King to be the Priest; so His priesthood is kingly, royal (1 Pet. 2:9). He combines the kingship together with the priesthood (Zech. 6:13) for God's building and for His glory. Christ's kingship maintains a peaceful order through righteousness. This peaceful order is necessary for God's building. The building of God's house is in a situation of peace. Christ's priesthood ministers all the supply needed for the building of God. In this His glory is manifested.

A priest who offers sacrifices for pitiful sinners does not need to be a king. In order to have such a priest, you do not need a king of righteousness or a king of peace. But, in order for the High Priest to minister the processed God to a victorious fighter, He must be both the King of righteousness and the King of peace.

Do you believe that before Melchisedec came to Abraham and ministered the processed God to him, God did not come to Abraham? I have already said that in the evening you need to spend some time with Melchisedec. But this does not mean that during the morning and afternoon God does not come to you. Genesis 14:20 says, "And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." Do not think that Abraham was able to slaughter Chedorlaomer and the other kings by himself. He did not do it by himself. According to Genesis 14:22, before Abraham went out to fight the battle, he lifted up his hand to the Most High God. This means that before he fought with the enemies, he contacted God. So it was not Abraham who slaughtered the enemies but God.

When Abraham lifted up his hand to God, the situation was without righteousness and peace. There was no righteousness because Lot and all of his things had been captured by the enemies. There was no peace because the enemies had not been defeated. But as Abraham went out to fight the battle, he trusted in God. After Abraham had slaughtered the enemies and Melchisedec had come to meet him, there was

righteousness and peace. Who brought in this righteousness and peace? Melchisedec, the priest of the Most High God. While Abraham was slaughtering Chedorlaomer and the other kings, Melchisedec must have been praying. It must have been through his intercession that righteousness and peace were brought in.

Do you believe that while Abraham was fighting Melchisedec was sleeping? Do you believe that after Abraham won the victory, Melchisedec suddenly awakened and came in a hurry to minister the bread and wine to Abraham? I do not believe this. I believe that while Abraham was fighting the enemies, Melchisedec was praying for him. The Most High God answered Melchisedec's prayers and delivered Abraham's enemies into his hands. After this intercession and Abraham's victory, Melchisedec appeared. Perhaps he said, "Abraham, how are you doing? I know that you are fine because I have been praying for you. Are you tired? I have come to minister bread and wine to you."

If you read Hebrews 7 again, you will see that the Christ who ministers as the High Priest is the interceding One. As you are fighting during the day, slaughtering the negative things, Christ, the High Priest, is interceding for you. This is clearly mentioned in 7:25. At the end of the day, when you have finished your fighting and He has finished His interceding, He comes to you with bread and wine to have a good time with you. This is our High Priest. While the victor was fighting, Melchisedec was watching and interceding. He saw Abraham's victory and knew when to come with the bread and wine. The Bible does not need to tell us certain things because if you see the front side you automatically know the back side. If you see the front of my face, you know something about the back of my head. The ministering Melchisedec must also have been the interceding high priest. This is the kind of High Priest that we have today in Christ.

Our High Priest, Christ, is not according to the order of Aaron but according to the order of Melchisedec. Aaron is past. I am sorry to say that many Christians still hold on to the past Aaron. But how many Christians have the present Melchisedec? Very few. We need to be occupied with the present Melchisedec. Melchisedec is not a High Priest for the purpose of offering sacrifices to God for our sins but for ministering the processed God as grace into us. Now sin is over and grace is here. Sin has gone and the enjoyment of God has come. It is no longer a matter of offering sacrifices for sin but of ministering bread and wine for our enjoyment. This is the priesthood in the book of Hebrews.

While so many Christians still stay with Aaron, we need to be recovered back to Genesis 14. Hebrews is a continuation of Genesis 14. Between these two books is a bridge— Psalm 110. Psalm 110 is the bridge that brings us from Genesis 14 to the book of Hebrews, passing over the book of Leviticus. The book of Hebrews, being concerned with the heavenly Christ as our High Priest, refers to this psalm a number of times.

Before our Melchisedec ministers the processed God to us, He intercedes for us, praying that we may take up our sword and slaughter the enemies. We must slaughter the self, the natural mind, the wild emotion, the stubborn will, and other enemies. While we are slaughtering the enemies, He is interceding for us. After we have finished our slaughtering, He will change His interceding to the ministering of bread and wine. The proper Christian life is to slaughter the enemies during the day and to enjoy the ministry of our Melchisedec with the bread and wine in the evening. At the end of every day, when the slaughtering and interceding have been accomplished, He and we, we and He, may have a good time enjoying the bread and wine in righteousness and peace.

Melchisedec was the king of righteousness and the king of peace. After he came, there was righteousness and peace. It was in such an environment and condition of righteousness and peace that Melchisedec ministered the bread and wine to the victor. It is the same today. We need to fight for righteousness, and righteousness will issue in peace. Eventually our environment and condition will be full of righteousness and peace, and our Melchisedec will appear to have a good time with us. This is the ministry of our kingly High Priest.

## **II. PERPETUAL**

Our kingly High Priest is perpetual, eternal, without beginning or ending. Hebrews 7:3 says of Melchisedec that he is “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, abides a priest perpetually.” According to Genesis 14, Melchisedec suddenly appeared and then disappeared. He seems to have had no coming or going, no beginning of days or end of life. Because our Melchisedec is eternal, He has no genealogy. For all the important persons in Genesis there is a genealogy, but not for Melchisedec. In the divine writing, the Holy Spirit sovereignly gave no account of the beginning of his days or of the end of his life so that he might be a proper type of Christ as the eternal One to be our High Priest perpetually. This is like the presentation in the Gospel of John of the Son of God, who, being eternal, has no genealogy (John 1:1). But as the Son of Man, Christ has genealogy (Matt. 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38). It is such a Christ who is the kingly, royal High Priest ministering the processed God to us as our daily supply. He is the perpetual One, the constant One, the eternal One, having no beginning of days or end of life. He may come to us in the evening and, while we are experiencing Him, He may seem to disappear. He never says good-bye to us, and we never say good-bye to Him. But when we awake the next morning we find that He is still there. With Him there is no coming or going. He abides the High Priest perpetually.

## **III. GREAT**

### **A. Having Tithed Abraham**

Our High Priest, Christ, is great, much greater than Aaron and all the Levitical priests. He was also greater than Abraham. This is proved by the fact that Abraham gave tithes of the choice spoils to Melchisedec (7:4, 6; Gen. 14:20). When Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, the Levitical priests, who, as descendants of Abraham were in his loins, also paid tithes to him in Abraham. Therefore, all the Levitical priests are lesser than Melchisedec, and the order of Aaron is inferior to that of Melchisedec.

### **B. Having Blessed Abraham**

Melchisedec blessed Abraham (7:6). Verse 7 says, “But without dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.” This also indicates the greatness of Melchisedec. He was greater than Abraham and he blessed him with God as the blessing (Gen. 14:19).

### **C. Being Ancient before Abraham**

Christ is very ancient, much more ancient than Abraham. John 8:58 proves this: “Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham came into being, I am” (Recovery Version). We see by this that Christ is greater than Abraham. Before Abraham was, Christ was there already. Christ is not old, but He is ancient. As our Melchisedec, Christ is more ancient and greater than Abraham. Hence, He is greater than all the Aaronic priests. Our High Priest, Christ, today does not offer sacrifices for sin but ministers the processed God to the victorious fighters. This is the kingly priesthood in the book of Hebrews.

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## **Study Questions**

1. What is the difference in our being a partaker of Christ and partner of Christ and what is the relationship between the two?
2. What is the purpose of our being Christ's partners?

Heb. 7:2 To whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all; first being interpreted king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace;

28 For the law establishes men as high priests who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which was after the law, establishes the Son, perfected forever.

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### MESSAGE THIRTY-THREE

## A DIVINE HIGH PRIEST, LIVING AND ABLE TO SAVE

### I. A DIVINE HIGH PRIEST

Hebrews 7, a chapter on the priesthood of Christ, reveals two aspects of Christ's priesthood. The first aspect is the kingly priesthood, and the second aspect is the divine priesthood. As we saw in the last message, Christ is a kingly priest. His status is kingly, royal. Although He is a High Priest, He did not come out of the tribe of the priests but out of the tribe of the kings—Judah. Kingship is His status and makes Him a kingly priest.

Kingship is related to both righteousness and peace because kingship is a kind of rule and authority. In order to maintain righteousness and peace, we need authority. If Christ is to minister the processed God to us as our bread and wine, there must be an environment that is full of righteousness and peace. Whenever we come to the Lord's table, we need to have the deep sensation that we are in a condition of righteousness and peace. Suppose, on the contrary, that we are continually fighting with one another. In such a case, there would be no righteousness and peace, and there would be no ministering of the bread and wine to us. In order to have the processed God ministered to us for our enjoyment, everything between us and God and between us and one another must be all right. When everything is right, there will be peace, and in peace Christ will minister the processed God to us. Righteousness and peace come out of His kingship, for when the King is here, no one will fight. Everything will be peaceful. Christ's kingship maintains an order of righteousness and peace. His kingly status is for the purpose of preserving a righteous and peaceful order.

The second aspect of Christ's priesthood in Hebrews 7 is the divine priesthood. For Christ to be kingly is a matter of status, but for Him to be divine is a matter of constituent, a matter of His having the necessary, basic element that constitutes Him to be such a High Priest. Christ's being divine refers to His nature. Christ is kingly according to His royal status and divine according to His divine nature. He is kingly because He is a King and He is divine because He is the Son of God. Christ, the Son of God, not only has kingship but also divinity. While His kingship maintains a condition that is full of righteousness and peace so that He may minister the processed God to us for our enjoyment, His divinity constitutes Him as a High Priest who is living and full of life so that He may be able to continue His priesthood perpetually.

Divinity is Christ's nature and life. As such a divine person full of divinity, He is the living One. With Christ as the kingly High Priest there is no unrighteousness or strife but righteousness and peace. With Christ as the divine High Priest there is no death. He has conquered, subdued, and swallowed death. Why is there no death with our divine High Priest? Because He is life. Christ is divine. Divinity is His very essence, nature, element, and makeup. His kingly status solves all problems and maintains a peaceful environment. But He is divine, not just kingly. Since Christ is divine, wherever He is, there is no death. Wherever He is, there is resurrection and death is swallowed. Wherever Christ is, there is the absence of death. Christ's priesthood is the absence of death. Have you ever heard that the priesthood of Christ is the absence of death? Light is the absence of darkness, for whenever light is present, darkness must be absent. Likewise, Christ's presence means the absence of death.

Why does Christ's presence mean the absence of death? Because He is divine. Divinity is the constituent of His priesthood. His priesthood is constituted, composed, with His divinity. As wood is the element of a table, so divinity is the element of Christ's being the High Priest. When His ministry comes in, it means the absence of death. On the one hand, the priesthood of Christ is the absence of death; on the other hand, it is the presence of life. Thus, the priesthood of Christ is the absence of death and the presence of life. As

## Week 17 – Day 1 (7/30) (Cont'd)

the kingly High Priest, Christ ministers the processed God to us, and as the divine High Priest, wherever He is, life is present. His priesthood is the presence of life.

Have you ever noticed the two aspects of Christ's priesthood in this chapter—the kingly aspect and the divine aspect? Perhaps you are wondering how we can prove that there are these two aspects. This is easy to do. In 7:2 we have the King of righteousness and the King of peace, and in 7:28 we have “the Son, Who is perfected forever.” The Son of God has been appointed to be the High Priest, and the Son of God is certainly divine. Hence, at the beginning of this chapter we have the King and at the end we have the Son of God. Although I spent much time on this chapter, I could not understand it until one day I got the two words kingly and divine. When I saw that the first part is the kingly aspect and the second part is the divine aspect, the whole chapter became clear.

This wonderful High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec has not been constituted “according to the law of a fleshy commandment, but according to the power of an indestructible life,” (v. 16) for “the law perfected nothing” (v. 19). Since the law did not perfect anything, we need to say to the law, “Law, you are nothing. You never profited anyone. Law, stay away from me.” Our High Priest has not been constituted with the law but with the power of an indestructible life. Who is He? He is the Son of God. You may also say to the law, “Dear Law, can you compare yourself with the Son of God? I have been cheated by you for years, thinking that you were something when actually you were nothing. Now, Law, I have life!” We have the Lord's life, the life that is the Son of God Himself.

The Son of God is not simple, for He has two aspects. Most Christians only know that the Son of God is the Only Begotten Son, but the Bible says that He is also the Firstborn Son. The Only Begotten Son is one aspect, and the Firstborn Son is the other aspect. The Only Begotten Son, who existed from eternity past, only had divinity. The Firstborn Son, who according to Psalm 2 and Acts 13:33 was born as such on the day of resurrection, has both divinity and humanity. On the day of resurrection, the man Jesus was born to be the Son of God. This does not relate to the aspect of His being the Only Begotten Son but to the aspect of His being the Firstborn Son.

Do not think that this is merely a doctrinal matter. It is related to the qualifications of Christ as the High Priest. Although the Only Begotten Son was wonderful, He had only divinity but not humanity, which is necessary for Him to be our High Priest. Verse 28 says that the Son of God has been perfected forever, proving that the Son of God here must not be just the Only Begotten Son but also the Firstborn Son. The Only Begotten Son of God needed no perfection because He was eternally perfect. But, in order for Him to be the Firstborn Son of God, He needed a great deal of perfection. He had to put on humanity in His incarnation and live on earth for thirty-three and a half years, passing through all the experience of human living. Then He needed to pass through death, tasting, overcoming, subduing, and swallowing death. After that, He had to come out of death in resurrection. After His resurrection, He, as the Firstborn Son of God with humanity, was fully perfected. Now He is not just the eternal Only Begotten Son of God, but also the perfected Firstborn Son of God. Therefore, now He is completely perfected, equipped, and qualified to be our divine High Priest.

How was Christ constituted to be such a High Priest? In the way of having His divinity incarnated into humanity, living on the earth, going into death, and coming out of death in resurrection. Who is He now? He is the Son of God in two aspects, the aspects of the Only Begotten Son and of the Firstborn Son. Now He is human as well as divine. Having passed through incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection, He is fully equipped and qualified for the divine priesthood. In this High Priest there is not only no worldliness or sin, but there is absolutely no death. Death has been completely swallowed up by His divine life.

Heb. 7:25 Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them.

12 For since the priesthood is transferred, of necessity there comes into being a transfer of law also.

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Christ lives forever. Death cannot prevent Him from continuing as the High Priest. All of the Levitical priests lived until a certain age and then died. Death prevented them from continuing as priests. After the first high priest died, he was replaced by the second who, in turn, was replaced by the third because death prevented them from continuing in the office of high priest. There is no need to say that those priests were unable to save others; they were even unable to save themselves. They were all a hopeless case. But Christ's priesthood is different. While the Aaronic priesthood was still subject to death, the priesthood according to the order of Melchisedec, constituted with the element of life, is the absence of death. The life with which it is constituted has passed through death and has swallowed up death. This life is indestructible. How do we know that this life is indestructible? Because it has been tested by everything and by every kind of situation. It was tested by the Lord's mother in the flesh, by all the members of His fleshly family, by all the sufferings of His human life, and by all the temptations of the Devil, Satan. Ultimately, it was tested by death, the grave, Hades, and the power of darkness. This life has been tested by everything, and nothing can destroy it. It is absolutely indestructible. Our High Priest is constituted with the element of such an indestructible life.

Christ's kingly priesthood is for ministry and His divine priesthood is for saving. Verse 25 says, "Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, seeing He is always living to intercede for them." Why is He able to save to the uttermost? Because He is living and because He is the indestructible life. Nothing can destroy Him. Although I may have the heart to save you all, I can easily be destroyed and terminated. But Christ can save us to the uttermost because His priesthood is composed with an indestructible life. Regardless of our situation or the condition in which we may find ourselves, we can tell Satan, "Satan, do your best. Send all of your armies against me. I am not afraid of them, because I have the divine priesthood to take care of me!" What is this divine priesthood? It is the saving power of the indestructible life. While the ministry of the kingly High Priest is to minister the processed God to us for our enjoyment, not to offer sacrifices to God for our sins, the work of the divine High Priest is mainly to save us.

### **A. A Transfer of Priesthood**

#### **1. From the Order of Aaron to the Order of Melchisedec**

In verse 12 we are told that the priesthood has been transferred. It has firstly been transferred from the order of Aaron to the order of Melchisedec (vv. 11, 15, 17). In the old covenant, the priesthood was according to the order of Aaron, which was often interrupted by death. In the new covenant, the priesthood has been transferred to the order of Melchisedec, which is perpetual.

#### **2. From the Priestly Tribe of Levi to the Kingly Tribe of Judah**

The priesthood has also been transferred from the priestly tribe of Levi to the kingly tribe of Judah (vv. 13-14). In the Old Testament, Levi was the tribe of the priests and Judah was the tribe of the kings. The Lord's descending from the tribe of Judah caused a transfer in the priesthood and combined the priesthood together with the kingship in one tribe (Zech. 6:13), as manifested in Melchisedec who was both the high priest and the king (v. 1).

#### **3. From Men to the Son of God**

Verse 28 indicates that the priesthood has also been transferred from men to the Son of God. All the men who were priests in the Old Testament were fragile, subject to death, but the Son of God is eternal, living forever. He is the Only Begotten Son and the Firstborn Son of God as the very life that constitutes the priesthood of the new covenant. The priesthood has been transferred from men to such a One, to the Only Begotten Son and the Firstborn Son of God. In such a One we have divinity incarnated and humanity

## **Week 17 – Day 2 (7/31) (Cont’d)**

uplifted. In such a One we have human living, the all-inclusive death, and the resurrection. In such a One we have the divine birth of the Firstborn Son of God, the birth that produced the many sons of God. In the new covenant, the priesthood has been transferred to such a One.

### **4. A Transfer of Law Needed**

Verse 12 says, “For the priesthood being transferred, there is of necessity a transfer of law also.” With the priesthood of the old covenant, there was an old law. Now, with the priesthood of the new covenant, there should be a new law. So a transfer of law is needed.

#### **a. From the Law of Letters to the Law of Life**

This transfer of law is from the law of letters to the law of life, according to which Christ has been constituted a living and perpetual High Priest (v. 16). Christ has not been constituted High Priest according to the law of letters but according to the power of an indestructible life. The priesthood of Christ in the new covenant is not a matter of letters but of life. Christ as our High Priest takes care of us now with His indestructible life. Nevertheless, many Christians still want to go back to the law of letters on the other side of the river. By the Lord’s mercy, we have crossed the river from the other side, the side of letters, to this side, the side of life. It is in this indestructible, eternal life that we participate in and enjoy the priesthood of Christ today.

#### **b. From the Weak and Unprofitable Commandment to a Better Hope**

Verses 18 and 19 say, “For there is indeed a disannulling of the preceding commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, (for the law perfected nothing), and the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” The commandment, or the regulations, of the law concerning the Levitical priesthood has been disannulled because of its weakness in letters. It was not a matter of life but a dead commandment in letters; so it was unprofitable. Due to the weakness of man, the law perfected nothing (Rom. 8:3).

The transfer of law annuls the old law and brings in a better hope. What is this better hope? It is the priesthood in life. This hope mainly depends upon life, the indestructible life. Because the priesthood that takes care of us is in such a life, we are full of hope. When you feel weak and consider that feeling as a lie, it indicates that you are full of hope. If your wife tells you that you are weak, you need to say, “That is a lie. Dear wife, wait awhile. I’ll be a strong fighter just like Abraham. I am full of hope because of the priesthood of my Melchisedec.” If you say this, it means that you are full of a better hope. This better hope is the priesthood in life. As long as there is life, there is hope. Only a dead person has no hope. As long as we are alive, there is a certain amount of hope. The transfer of law annuls the dead letters and brings in the hope in life. Never be disappointed—we have a better hope. We have a priesthood of the indestructible life.

A number of times people have said to me, “Brother Lee, we never see that you are troubled. Don’t you have any trials or troubles in your Christian life?” I have at least as many troubles as anyone else. The only difference is that I do not believe in my troubles. I believe in my hope. There is a better hope in me. We all have such a hope because the law according to which the priesthood that takes care of us is constituted, has been transferred from the weak and unprofitable commandment to an indestructible life.

**B. The Only Begotten Son  
as Well as the Firstborn Son of God  
Becoming the High Priest**

Christ’s being the Only Begotten Son as well as the Firstborn Son of God are both qualifications for Him to be the High Priest (v. 28). He became our High Priest with these two qualifications. Christ’s becoming our High Priest depends upon both His being the Only Begotten Son and the Firstborn Son of God.

Acts 2:24 Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it.

Rev. 1: 18 And the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

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### **1. Constituted According to the Power of an Indestructible Life**

Christ has not been constituted the High Priest according to the powerless letters of the law but according to the powerful element of an indestructible life (v. 16). Nothing can dissolve this life. It is an endless life, being the eternal, divine, uncreated, resurrection life that has passed through the test of death and Hades (Acts 2:24; Rev. 1:18). It is by such a life that Christ ministers today as our High Priest. Hence, He is able to save to the uttermost (v. 25). Christ as our High Priest is the living Son of God Himself. He is powerful. On the one hand, He is in heaven; on the other hand, He is in our spirit. Between these two ends, heaven and our spirit, there is the traffic on the heavenly ladder because His priesthood is continually flowing from the throne into our spirit. It does not flow with knowledge but with the power of an indestructible life.

### **2. With the Taking of an Oath by God**

As the Only Begotten Son and the Firstborn Son of God, Christ became the High Priest with the taking of an oath by God (vv. 20-21, 28). Not one of the Levitical priests was ever established by God's oath. According to Psalm 110, God swore to make Christ a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec. In Hebrews 7 the writer quotes that oath from Psalm 110. This is very weighty, proving that Christ's becoming the divine High Priest was consummated by God's oath.

### **3. Perfected Forever**

In verse 28 we see that Christ has been perfected forever. We have already mentioned that, as the Only Begotten Son of God, Christ did not need perfection. However, in order to be the Firstborn Son of God, He needed perfection. After His resurrection, He was perfected forever. Now He is completed, equipped, and qualified to be our High Priest for eternity. We may trust in Him with our full confidence because He has been so perfected.

### **4. Becoming the Surety of a Better Covenant**

Verse 22 says, "By so much also Jesus has become the Surety of a better covenant." That Christ has become the Surety of a better covenant is based upon the fact that He is the living and perpetual High Priest. The root of the Greek word translated surety means a limb, a member of the body. The meaning here is that a member of the body pledges itself to the body. For example, my hand may pledge itself to my arm to do everything for my arm. This pledge is a guarantee. The word surety in this verse means that Christ has pledged Himself to the new covenant and to all of us. He is the bondsman, the guarantee that He will do everything that is necessary for the fulfillment of the new covenant.

Once the hand has pledged itself to the arm, it becomes the surety to guarantee that it will do everything for the arm. Even if the hand does not want to do things for the arm, it must do them nonetheless because it has pledged itself to the arm. Christ, of course, would never be unwilling to do things for us. But even if He were unwilling, it would be too late for Him to refuse, because He has pledged Himself to the new covenant and to all of us who are under the new covenant. He must do everything for us.

This thought is deep and is absolutely a matter of life. Do you not realize that your physical life has pledged itself to you? Whether or not your physical life wants to do things for you, it has to do them because it has pledged itself to do them. So your physical life is itself the surety that it will do everything for you. It has made a bond to do this.

In like manner, a bond has been signed by Christ. In what way was it signed? By the way that Christ has

## **Week 17 – Day 3 (8/1) (Cont’d)**

pledged Himself to the new covenant and to us. There is no possibility for Him to change His mind. It is too late. Whether we understand this or not and whether He is willing to do it or not, He must do it because He has pledged Himself. Thus, He is the Surety of the new covenant. This pledge depends completely on His divine priesthood.

Although my hand has pledged itself to my arm, my hand is limited in its ability. It may be able to carry a book but not a heavy table. But there is no limitation with Christ. His pledge is unlimited. The very Christ who has pledged Himself to us is unlimited. He will do everything and He can do everything for us. He is the qualified, capable, and able Surety. He is always available and prevailing, fulfilling whatever He has guaranteed.

Suppose you are asked by a friend to sign a pledge for him at his bank. If the bank manager learned that you only had a few dollars, he would not allow you to sign the pledge, even if you promised to be faithful to fulfill that pledge. But Christ has billions in resources. When He pledged Himself, that included everything. Therefore, the new covenant, the covenant enacted on the law of life, can never fail because Christ is the Surety of this covenant. Everything included in it will be fulfilled. It is not fulfilled by us but by our Surety. Christ is not only the consummator of the new covenant; He is also the Surety, the pledge that everything in it will be fulfilled.

### **II. LIVING**

Christ is capable because He is living (v. 25). He is available and prevailing also because He is living. Everything He can do depends on one thing—that He is living.

#### **A. Continuing Forever without the Preventing of Death**

Because He is living, Christ can continue His priesthood forever without being prevented by death (vv. 23-24). In the Old Testament times, all of the priests were prevented by death from continuing their priesthood, but death can never prevent Christ, the ever-living One, from continuing His priesthood.

#### **B. Unalterable**

Christ’s priesthood is unalterable; it cannot be changed. What He is, He is once for all and forever. He is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (13:8), and so is His priesthood.

### **III. ABLE TO SAVE**

#### **A. To the Uttermost**

Verse 25 tells us that Christ is able to save to the uttermost. The word translated uttermost also means completely, entirely, perfectly, for all time and eternity, and to the end. Because He lives forever without any change, Christ is able to save us to the uttermost in extent, in time, and in space. Both in extent, in time, and in space, His saving of us reaches to the uttermost.

#### **B. By Interceding for Us**

Christ is able to save us because He intercedes for us. As our High Priest, Christ undertakes our case by interceding for us. He appears before God on our behalf, praying for us that we may be saved and brought fully into God’s eternal purpose. You may say that you have never realized that He is interceding for you. There is no need for you to realize this. What good would it do if you did realize it? Do not try to realize His intercession. Simply rest in it, trust in it, and enjoy it. Be assured that your divine High Priest is continually interceding for you. My experience tells me that many times I have been saved by His intercession. We have a perpetual, constant, and eternal Intercessor.

Our divine High Priest intercedes for us constantly, knowing how easy it is for us to fall and, once we have fallen, to remain in our fallen state. Sooner or later His intercession will overcome, subdue, and save us. If this does not happen today or tomorrow, it may happen next year, in the next age, or, at the latest, in the new heaven and the new earth. We all shall be completely subdued and saved by His intercession. God has appointed Him to take care of us, and He is now taking care of us by interceding for us. Although you may forget that you have called upon His name, He will never forget it. He is interceding for you and He will save you to the uttermost.

Heb. 7:26 For such a High Priest was also fitting to us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners and having become higher than the heavens,

Eph. 4:10 He who descended, He is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.

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### **C. Befitting Us**

#### **1. Holy, Guileless, Undefiled, Separated from Sinners**

Verse 26 says that “such a High Priest befits us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners.” Christ is holy, guileless, undefiled, and separated from sinners. As such a perfect One, He surely befits us. We, having a fallen and corrupted nature, need such a High Priest to save us all the time.

#### **2. Higher Than the Heavens**

Verse 26 also says that He has “become higher than the heavens.” In His ascension, Christ “has passed through the heavens” (4:14). Now He is not only in heaven (9:24) but also “higher than the heavens,” “far above all heavens” (Eph. 4:10). How high are your troubles? Do you have any that are higher than the heavens? Because our High Priest is higher than the heavens, He is able to rescue us and save us to the uttermost.

#### **2. Having Offered up Himself for Our Sins Once for All**

Verse 27 says that our High Priest “does not have daily need as the high priests, to offer up sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the sins for the people; for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.” This does not refer to what Christ is doing today but to what He did in the past. This verse assures us that never again need we be bothered by sin, for Christ has offered Himself for sins once for all. On the cross He solved the problem of sin once for all. Now, on the throne, He is carrying out His priesthood forever. How marvelous it is that we have such a kingly and divine High Priest!

### **MESSAGE THIRTY-FOUR**

#### **THE INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE**

This message is on the indestructible life, the life that is the essence, element, and constituent of Christ’s divine priesthood. To say that Christ’s priesthood is kingly is not too difficult to grasp because the logic there is not that deep. But to say that Christ’s divine priesthood is constituted with life, having life as its element, essence, component, and constituent, is very deep. The logic here is quite deep. As I pointed out in the previous message, Christ’s divine priesthood is the absence of death. Before we consider the matter of the indestructible life, I need to say more about Christ’s divine priesthood being the absence of death.

According to the Scriptures, there are three aspects of the priesthood: the aspect of the Aaronic priesthood, the aspect of the kingly priesthood, and the aspect of the divine priesthood. The Aaronic aspect of the priesthood is for offering sacrifices to God for our sins. Hence, the Aaronic priesthood is mainly concerned with the sin offering. The kingly aspect of the priesthood is for ministering the processed God to us as our life supply. The aspect of the divine priesthood is for saving us to the uttermost. Therefore, we have three words to describe the three aspects of the priesthood: offering for the Aaronic aspect, ministering for the kingly aspect, and saving for the divine aspect. Offering solves the problem of sin, ministering imparts the processed God to us as our daily supply, and saving rescues us to the uttermost. The saving of the divine priesthood rescues us especially from death and all of the environment of death.

While the Aaronic priesthood solves the problem of sin, the kingly priesthood ministers God to us, not as the object of our worship but as our enjoyment for our daily supply. Whenever you mention God to most Christians, they think of Him as the object of their worship. But, for the time being, we must forget

## Week 17 – Day 4 (8/2) (Cont'd)

this. When we mention God, we must think of Him as the One who has been processed and imparted to us to be our daily supply. There is no better worship to God than enjoying Him as your supply. Although you may like to kneel down to Him, He may say, “Child, don’t do this. I like to be the bread and wine that you eat and drink. The more you eat and drink of Me, the more worship you render to Me.” Eating and drinking of God is the best worship. The worship that satisfies God’s heart desire to the uttermost is that we enjoy Him as our supply.

That man should eat and drink of God was the original and initial intention of God in His eternal plan (Gen. 2:9-10). In God’s eternal plan, God intended to dispense Himself into man to be man’s everything that man might become His complete expression. This intention can only be accomplished by Christ’s kingly priesthood, which ministers the processed God to us as our daily supply. However, before this was accomplished, sin came in. Therefore, the problem of sin had to be solved. But solving the problem of sin was not intended by God to fulfill His eternal purpose; it was added later due to the entrance of sin caused by the fall of man. Because of man’s fall, sin came in to frustrate and damage God’s purpose of ministering Himself into man as man’s daily supply. Since Satan had brought in sin to frustrate God’s purpose, the problem of sin had to be solved. Hence, there was the need of the Aaronic priesthood, which was brought in to solve the problem of sin. By this we can see that the Aaronic priesthood was not a part of God’s initial intention but was added later. Many Christians, forgetting the initial things and concentrating on what was added later, neglect the kingly priesthood and concentrate on the Aaronic priesthood. The Aaronic priesthood solves the problem of sin, whereas the kingly priesthood fulfills God’s eternal purpose. The Aaronic priesthood took away sin, and the kingly priesthood brought in God as our grace.

Why then is there the need for the third aspect of the priesthood, the divine priesthood? Although sin is over, it caused a tremendous result—death. According to Romans 5, the issue of sin is death. We should not understand death according to the narrow view of our human concept. According to the broadest understanding of death in the Bible, death includes vanity, corruption, sighing, groaning, and decay. Everything is decaying. You may have a strong body, but before too long it begins to decay. The matters of vanity, corruption, bondage, groaning, and decay are fully developed and covered in Romans 8. In Romans 5, we have sin and death; in Romans 8 we have vanity, corruption, bondage, groaning, and decay. The whole universe has been polluted by death, which is the result of the sin that came in through Adam, the head of the old creation. What is the pollution that comes from death, the result of sin? It is corruption, vanity, decay, and groaning. Romans 8:22 says that the entire creation is groaning. Why do people today have so many sports and entertainments? Because they, along with the whole creation, are sick and are groaning. Every person is groaning deep within. Since people want to escape from this groaning, they go dancing or partake of other worldly entertainments. All of these entertainments are drugs, like opium, that take away the feeling of the sickness. But opium does not heal; it merely drugs you. The dancing and all sports and entertainments are drugs. When many people come home from dancing or from a sporting event, they find that the inward groaning is still there. The only thing that has been changed is that they have been drugged. Education is also a drug. Although you may attain the highest degree, once you have graduated, you will say, “What is this?” and will throw away your diploma. This groaning is one of the issues of death.

Because of the issues of death, we need the divine priesthood, which is the presence of life and the absence of death. When you visit the homes of some of the dear saints in the church, you see nothing but vanity, corruption, groaning, and decay. If this is the situation in your home, it means that there is a lack of the divine priesthood in your home. When your home is filled with the divine priesthood of Christ, there is the absence of death and the presence of life. There will be no more vanity, corruption, groaning, and decay. Contrary to the concept of many Christians, Hebrews 7:25 does not mean that Christ will save us from such things as gambling; it mainly means He will save us from all of our corruption, vanity, groaning, and decay. Oh, we need to be saved to the uttermost! When you come to my home, there should be praising, reality, building up, and growth, not groaning, vanity, corruption, and decay. To be saved from these issues of death is what it means to be saved to the uttermost. This is not the saving of the Savior but the saving of the divine priesthood.

The Greek word translated uttermost in 7:25 has the same root as the Greek word for perfection. Hence, to be saved to the uttermost means to be saved into perfection. Into what kind of perfection is Christ saving us? Into His perfection. To be saved to the uttermost is to be brought into Christ's perfection. The divine Son of God was incarnated, lived on earth, passed through death, was resurrected, and has been fully perfected forever. This means that in His perfection there is no groaning, vanity, corruption, bondage, or decay. In Christ, the perfected Son of God, the One who has been resurrected and uplifted, there is no groaning. Do you think that within Him there is any vanity, bondage, corruption, or decay? No, He is absolutely free from these things. Vanity, groaning, decay, bondage, and corruption are all by-products of death. Christ, the perfected One, is able to save us from all of these by-products of death and to bring us into His perfection. In this wonderful perfection there is no vanity, corruption, bondage, groaning, or decay. This is the saving to the uttermost, the saving to perfection. This is the saving of the divine priesthood of Christ.

While Christ was on earth, He solved the problems of sin and death. As we saw in message thirty-one, the work of Christ typified by the Aaronic priesthood was only on the first floor, and the ministry of His kingly priesthood is on the second floor. Now we are on the second floor enjoying His kingly priesthood. The kingly priesthood does not solve the problem of sin. Sin is over, and there is no longer an offering for sin. This is what 10:26 means when it says that there "no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." Here, on the second floor, we are enjoying Christ's kingly priesthood in which He ministers God as our enjoyment for our daily supply.

As we are enjoying His kingly priesthood, we participate in the divine priesthood that diminishes and even swallows up all of the by-products of death. While we enjoy God being ministered into us as the processed One, we partake of the divine priesthood that diminishes, eliminates, and swallows up all of the by-products of death such as vanity, corruption, bondage, groaning, and decay. Day by day, there is within us a diminishing, a swallowing up, of our groaning and vanity. The more we participate in the divine priesthood of Christ, the less groaning we have. The more we enjoy His divine priesthood, the less sighing we have. No longer do we sigh—we shout. The most striking characteristic of certain Christian meetings is their sighing. All you can hear in the meetings is sighing. When we came into the church life and began to say "Amen," we were told, "You should not say amen so loudly or shout hallelujah. You must keep a decent order." Those who sigh all the time in their meetings are not even on the first floor but in the basement. We shout in our meetings because we have been uplifted to the second floor. The more we enjoy the divine priesthood of Christ, the less we shall sigh and the more we shall shout.

Many Christians only have the Aaronic priesthood. In their preaching of the gospel they stay on the level of the Aaronic priesthood. Praise the Lord that today our level has been elevated to that of the kingly priesthood and the divine priesthood! The divine priesthood is constituted with the indestructible life. Thus, it is able to save us to the uttermost from the by-products of death into Christ's perfection.

According to Romans 8, the last step of God's work on us is to glorify us. What does it mean to be glorified? It is to be thoroughly saturated with the divine priesthood. When we have been thoroughly saturated with the divine priesthood, that will be our glorification. To be glorified is also to be delivered from vanity, corruption, bondage, groaning, and decay. This is exactly the meaning of glorification in Romans 8—the full sonship, the redemption of our body. The redemption of our body is its being transfigured out of vanity, corruption, and decay into a stage in which it is completely filled with the divine priesthood. That will be our glorification. The Aaronic priesthood is in Romans 3 and 4, the kingly priesthood is in Romans 6 and in the first part of Romans 8, and the divine priesthood is in the middle and the last part of Romans 8. Hebrews 7 does not correspond with Romans 3 or 4; it firstly corresponds with Romans 6 and the first part of Romans 8, and eventually it corresponds completely with the middle and the last part of Romans 8 dealing with glorification and our deliverance from vanity, corruption, bondage, and decay into the freedom of glory.

## Week 17 – Day 5 (8/3)

Zech. 6:12-13 And speak to him, saying, Thus speaks Jehovah of hosts, saying, Here is a man, whose name is the Shoot; and He will shoot forth from His place and will build the temple of Jehovah. 13 Indeed, it is He who will build the temple of Jehovah; and He will bear majesty and will sit and rule on His throne; and He will be a priest on His throne; and the counsel of peace will be between the two of them.

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We are now on our way toward this perfection; we are under the process of being perfected. As our Forerunner, Christ has already entered into that complete perfection, and we also shall be brought there. We shall be saved to the uttermost. To be saved to the uttermost is to be brought into Christ's complete perfection where there is no vanity, corruption, bondage, groaning, decay, or sighing. To save us in this way is the ministry of the divine priesthood. When we come to Hebrews 8, we shall see that this is the more excellent ministry spoken of there. The more excellent ministry is the ministry of the kingly priesthood and the divine priesthood.

The kingly priesthood is for God's building. According to Zechariah 6:12-13, Christ, as the King Priest, combines the kingship and the priesthood together for the purpose of building the Lord's temple. Hence, the kingly priesthood is for the building of the church, for it is the kingly priesthood that maintains the order of righteousness and peace. Such an order of righteousness and peace gives the opportunity for God's building work to go on. While this ministry of the kingly priesthood is taking place, the divine priesthood, being constituted with the element of the indestructible life, comes in to reduce all the by-products of death. Now we need to see what is this indestructible life, the element of the divine priesthood.

### I. THE LIFE OF GOD

Firstly, this indestructible life is the life of God. This term, "the life of God," is used only once in the entire Bible, in Ephesians 4:18, which says, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." While the unbelievers are alienated, cut off, from the life of God, we are attached, joined to it, for God has pledged His life into our being. The English word for this is articulated, meaning that a member of the body is pledged to another member. The hand, for example, is articulated to the arm. This is not merely a positional matter but a matter of life. Since the life of God has been articulated into our being, we are no longer alienated from God's life. First Corinthians 6:17 says, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." It is not a small thing that God's life has pledged itself into our being. I believe that the Lord will develop this more and more in the church life in the coming years. We must forget all the human teachings that say we need good ethics and behavior and focus on what we really need—the life of God.

This life is the divine life. Tell me, are you a human being or a divine being? The way to answer this question is to say, "Undoubtedly, I am a human being, but I am a human being with the divine life." We should make a declaration to all the angels: "Angels, don't you know that I have the divine life? Angels, you don't have the divine life, but I do. I have the life of your Creator." We have the divine life!

Nothing is better than life. In the whole universe the best item is life. If you were to take life away from the earth, this planet would be a desolation. The loveliness, pleasantness, and beauty of the earth all come out of one thing—life. If there were no life on earth, this planet would be meaningless. Today we have the highest life, not the vegetable life, the animal life, the angelic life, or even just the human life—we have the divine life! If we saw this, we would be beside ourselves with joy and praise.

### II. THE ETERNAL LIFE

The indestructible life is also the eternal life (John 3:16). What does the term eternal mean? A number of times the King James Version says everlasting life instead of eternal life, but this translation misses the mark. Eternal life is not just everlasting life, although the matter of everlastingness is included in it. Eternal life is a super life, a life without beginning or end, a life without the limitations of time and space. Eternal life is so high that it is beyond description; it far transcends our understanding. The divine priesthood of Christ is constituted with such a life as this.

### **III. THE UNCREATED LIFE**

This indestructible life is the uncreated life (John 1:4). Every kind of life, from the angelic life to the vegetable life, is a created life. Only the indestructible life is uncreated. Although it is uncreated, it is creating. This life is always creating something positive in our church life, family life, and Christian life. Day by day we may enjoy this creating, yet uncreated, life. This is our life today.

### **IV. THE LIFE WHICH IS CHRIST HIMSELF**

This indestructible life is just Christ Himself (John 14:6a; 1 John 5:12; Col. 3:4a). Anything less than Christ, who is God Himself, is not the indestructible life. The indestructible life not only has functions and abilities—it has a wonderful Person. We need to experience this life day after day.

### **V. THE LIFE WHICH HAS BEEN TESTED IN CHRIST'S HUMAN LIVING**

The indestructible life has been tested in Christ's human living (John 18:38; 19:4, 6). This life was tested during Christ's thirty-three and a half years on earth. At the end of the Lord's earthly life, Pilate, a governor of the Roman Empire, made the last three tests, and at the end of every test he declared, "I find no fault in this man." Can you find another person concerning whom your conscience can say that he has no fault? Although my dear wife loves me very much, she would have to admit that she has found fault with me. I believe that every wife has found fault with her husband. Although none of us can stand the test, the Lord Jesus withstood every test. The kind of life that we have today is a life that has passed through every test. This life is perfect.

### **VI. THE LIFE WHICH HAS PASSED THROUGH DEATH**

The indestructible life is a life that has passed through death (Rev. 1:18). Death is powerful. When it comes, no one can resist it. In the whole universe there is only one thing that is more powerful than death—the divine life. The life in reality, the real life, not the life in shadow, is more powerful than death. Which is more powerful—darkness or light? Light is more powerful than darkness because whenever it shines it overcomes darkness. Which is more powerful—life or death? Praise the Lord that life is more powerful than death. This is the reason that life was able to pass through death. This life did not just scarcely pass through death; it passed through death like a tourist on a sightseeing tour. After the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He went to take a tour of the region of death. After visiting the region of death and having a good sightseeing tour, the Lord simply walked away from death. Death could do nothing with Him. This should not merely be a doctrinal understanding to us. We must see that the very life that has passed through death is ours today; it is in us right now.

### **VII. THE LIFE WHICH DEATH CANNOT HOLD**

The indestructible life is a life which death cannot hold (Acts 2:24). When Christ was in Hades, taking a sightseeing tour of the region of death, death energized all of its power in an attempt to hold Him, but death could not do anything. Although death tried its best to hold Him, it could not do it because life is more powerful than death.

We all have both death and life within us. Even your losing your temper or feeling unhappy with the brothers and sisters is death. Your inability to praise, pray, or function in the meetings also is death. Life never says, "I can't." In life's dictionary there are no such words as "I can't." Life always says, "I can. I can do everything: I can function, I can pray, I can shout, I can say amen, and I can praise." Whenever you say, "I can," that is life. Whenever you say, "I can't," that is death. In the church life from now on we must avoid saying, "I can't." If you are asked to give a word, you must reply, "Hallelujah, I can do it. There's no problem." Whenever a brother or sister says, "I can't," we should remind them that that is death. Death says, "I can't," but life says, "I can." There is no impossibility with life. Life can do anything. Life can enable the brothers and sisters in the local churches to love one another to the uttermost, to perfection. In Isaiah 6:8 the Lord said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah, the prophet, responded,

## **Week 17 – Day 5 (8/3) (Cont’d)**

“Here am I; send me.” When we hear the Lord asking us, “Whom shall I send?” we should not say, “No, Lord, not me”; we should say, “Lord, here I am—send me.” If all the local churches will get into life, the church life will be higher than the heavens. I hope that soon the churches will be like this. May all the churches be in life!

### **VIII. THE RESURRECTION LIFE**

The indestructible life is the resurrection life (John 11:25). What is the difference between life and resurrection life? Life has not been tested by death; it has never passed through death. Resurrection life is life that has been tested by and has passed through death, proving that death is unable to do anything with it. Our life today is the resurrection life, the life that has passed through death and has proved that death cannot hold it down.

### **IX. THE LIFE OF WHICH THE SPIRIT IS**

The indestructible life is the life of which the Spirit is (Rom. 8:2). Romans 8:2 speaks of the Spirit of life. Where life is, there the Spirit is because the Spirit is the essential reality, actuality, and practicality, of this life. When you have life, you have the Spirit, and when you have the Spirit, you have life. Life and the Spirit can never, never be separated.

### **X. THE SAVING LIFE OF CHRIST**

The indestructible life is the saving life of Christ (Rom. 5:10). As such a saving life, it is able to save us to the uttermost. Romans 5:10 says that we have been reconciled through the death of Christ and shall be saved by the saving life of Christ.

### **XI. THE REIGNING LIFE**

This life is also the reigning life (Rom. 5:17). We are not only being saved in life, but we are also reigning in life. We have a life that enthrones us, that puts us on the throne as a king. This is the reigning life.

### **XII. THE LIFE OF THE TREE OF LIFE**

The indestructible life is the life of the tree of life (Gen. 2:9; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14). The tree of life was the life at the beginning, for in the beginning of the Bible there was the tree of life. This tree of life will also be the life in eternity. In Genesis 2 we have the life at the beginning, and in Revelation 22 we have the life that is for eternity. This life, the eternal life without beginning or ending, is the life of the tree of life.

### **XIII. THE LIFE WHICH IS WITH INCORRUPTION**

The indestructible life is a life that is without corruption but is always with incorruption (2 Tim. 1:10). Where this life is, there is no corruption. Corruption is a by-product of death, but the divine priesthood, being constituted with the indestructible life, diminishes all corruption.

### **XIV. THE LIFE WHICH IS INDISSOLUBLE, INDESTRUCTIBLE**

The indestructible life is indissoluble (Heb. 7:16). It can never be dissolved. Certain chemical compounds can be dissolved by placing them in a particular liquid, but nothing can dissolve this indestructible life. It will remain the same forever. This is the kind of life that we have within us and that we may enjoy today. This life is called the indestructible life because nothing can destroy or dissolve it. If you burn it or pour water on it, it still remains. If you kill it, it lives all the more. If you put this life into the grave, the grave will burst, and if you place it into Hades, Hades will be powerless to hold it down. Since we have this wonderful life in us, we should stop groaning and looking at our weaknesses. The life that we have received is an indestructible life, and nothing on earth, in heaven, or in hell can deal with it. This is the life that constitutes the divine priesthood. The divine priesthood of Christ is constituted with such a wonderful life. This is the reason why the divine priesthood is able to save us to the uttermost, saving us from all the by-products of death into Christ’s complete perfection—glorification.

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### **Study Questions**

1. How does the land related to both Christ and the proper people of God?
2. What was the ultimate consummation of entering the good land? How does this relate to the church life and New Jerusalem?

Rom. 8:2-3 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.  
3 For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh,  
34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

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MESSAGE THIRTY-FIVE

**A HEAVENLY MINISTER WITH A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY**

In this message we come to the subject of a heavenly Minister with a more excellent ministry. After the foregoing messages on Christ's kingly priesthood and divine priesthood, we are surely prepared, equipped, and even positioned to hear this message. We have seen the two sections of Christ's ministry: the Aaronic section on earth and the kingly and divine section in heaven. It is not a small thing for us to be clear regarding these two aspects of Christ's ministry. With this understanding as our background, it is not difficult to understand this matter of the heavenly Minister with a more excellent ministry.

Before we come to this, however, I would like to speak further about the comparison between Hebrews and Romans. Sin and death are mentioned in both Romans 5 and 8. Romans 8:2 says that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed us from the law of sin and death, 8:3 says that God has condemned sin in the flesh, and 8:6 says that the mind set on the flesh is death. When we come to the middle and last part of Romans 8, there is no more mention of sin and death but of groaning, vanity, corruption, and bondage, which are the by-products of death. It is one thing to overcome sin and death and quite another thing, a most crucial thing, to eliminate these by-products of death.

In Romans 3 through 8 we can see three steps of God's economical salvation: justification, sanctification, and glorification. Justification is related to God's righteousness, sanctification to God's holiness, and glorification to God's glory. God's righteousness, holiness, and glory all have requirements upon us. In order for us to be thoroughly and ultimately saved, we need to meet all of these requirements. God's justification meets the requirements of His righteousness, God's sanctification meets the requirements of His holiness, and God's glorification meets the requirements of His glory.

God's economical salvation is not only to justify us or to sanctify us but also to glorify us. As we pointed out in the last message, to be glorified is to have our being completely saturated with Christ's divine priesthood. When our whole being has been saturated and permeated with His divine priesthood, that will be our glorification, the last step of God's salvation. At that time we shall enjoy full sonship, which will be consummated by the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23). Glorification does not save us from sins or even from death; it saves us from the by-products of death, from groaning, vanity, corruption, bondage, and decay. These by-products of death require that we be saved to the uttermost, and Christ is able to do this. Salvation to the uttermost not only rescues us from sin and death but also diminishes and swallows up all the by-products of death. When all the by-products of death are swallowed up, that will be the time of the manifestation of the sons of God in glory (Rom. 8:19). At that time not only the sons of God but also the whole creation will be freed from the bondage of vanity and corruption into the freedom of glory (Rom. 8:21). When we have been saved to the uttermost, we shall be brought into complete perfection. This is what it means to be glorified.

Romans 8:30 says, "And whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Recovery Version). We see from this verse that glorification is salvation to the uttermost. This glorification is the definition of Hebrews 7:25, which says that Christ is able to save us to the uttermost. This uttermost salvation is glorification, and glorification means to deliver us from the by-products of death. At the time of glorification, there will be no more groaning, slavery, bondage, vanity, corruption, or decay. Who is doing this work of saving us to the uttermost? Our Melchisedec, the kingly and divine High Priest.

## Week 18 – Day 1 (8/6) (Cont'd)

Only two verses in the Bible, Hebrews 7:25 and Romans 8:34, tell us that Christ is interceding for us, and these two verses correspond to one another. According to Romans 8, Christ is not interceding for poor sinners to be justified—justification is in Romans 4—but He is interceding for us to be glorified. This corresponds to the interceding in Hebrews 7:25, for here Christ intercedes for us that we may be saved to the uttermost. Being saved to the uttermost is the equivalent of glorification. Hence, both of these chapters tell us the same thing. Without Hebrews 7 we would never realize that the interceding Christ is the kingly, divine High Priest. Without Hebrews 7 we might think, according to Romans 8, that the interceding Christ is only the Savior. But the interceding Christ is more than the Savior—He is the kingly and divine High Priest, the heavenly Minister. Now we know who is the heavenly Minister—it is our Melchisedec.

The ministry of Melchisedec is not to save sinners. If you are still a sinner, then you need Christ's ministry as typified by Aaron. But we are no longer pitiful sinners; we are fighters, fighting against the by-products of death. Chedorlaomer, who was slaughtered by Abraham, does not represent sin but represents the by-products of death. When Abraham learned that Lot had been captured, that capture was a matter of the by-products of death. All of the elders in the churches must be slaughtering elders. When the elders come into the meetings and see that many of the dear brothers have been captured by Chedorlaomer, they must slaughter that king. Do not rebuke or condemn the brothers who have been captured but slaughter Chedorlaomer, the by-products of death that have captured the brothers and sisters and hold them in bondage. If you do this, our Melchisedec will come in, and you will enjoy His ministry.

Many Christians do not understand Hebrews 7 and 8 because they maintain the position of being pitiful sinners. Hardly any one of them is a slaughtering Abraham. We must slaughter all of the by-products of death mentioned in Romans 8; we must slaughter groaning, vanity, bondage, slavery, corruption, and decay. How can we slaughter these by-products of death? Through the intercession of our High Priest. While we are slaughtering Chedorlaomer and all of the by-products of death, He will be interceding for us. This is the ministry of our High Priest, the heavenly Minister, today.

We see a picture of this ministry in the case of the warfare between Israel and Amalek (Exo. 17:8-13). Moses was holding up his hand (that is, praying) on the top of the hill and Joshua was fighting in the midst of the battle. While Moses was praying, Joshua was slaughtering the enemy. Likewise, I believe that while Abraham was slaughtering the kings, Melchisedec was praying for him. In the same way, while we are slaughtering the by-products of death, Christ, our heavenly Minister with a more excellent ministry, is in heaven interceding for us.

What is Christ's more excellent ministry today? It is to intercede for the fighters. Christ's intercession is like a powerful motor which energizes a machine that it may operate. How can power be brought into the machine? By the motor. When the motor runs, the power is transmitted into the machine. In like manner, the interceding Christ in the heavens is transmitting the heavenly power into us.

Consider once again the case of Abraham's defeating the kings. Suppose you had been Abraham hearing the news that Lot had been captured. If that had happened to us, we would have been frightened to death and would have gone into the inner part of our tent and prayed, "O Lord, have mercy on us and protect us. Don't allow the kings to come here." But when Abraham heard the news, he seemed to say, "They have captured my brother Lot! I don't care how many men they have—I have the Most High God, and I am going to fight against the kings and rescue Lot." Abraham and his three hundred eighteen men were bold because they were energized by the intercession of Melchisedec. They were empowered by a heavenly, universal motor. When Melchisedec came to bless Abraham, he blessed the Most High God for delivering Abraham's enemies into his hands (Gen. 14:20). In other words, Melchisedec was telling Abraham that his victory was the result of his intercession to the Most High God on his behalf.

We need to have a high vision of Christ's more excellent ministry. It is not a low ministry for pitiful sinners; it is a high ministry for victorious fighters, for God's victors, the proper descendants of Abraham. This is not the priesthood that we find in Leviticus but the continuation of the priesthood that we see in Genesis 14.

Heb. 8:1 Now in the things which are being said the chief point is this: We have such a High Priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,  
2 A Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.  
5 Who serve the example and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to complete the tabernacle; for, "See," He said, "that you make all things according to the pattern that was shown to you in the mountain."

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The Lord is opening up His Word to us so that we might be fighters like Abraham and his three hundred eighteen men. We need to fight the battle, slaughtering all the by-products of death. We should no longer hold to the objective view that, after the mere passing of time, we shall be glorified and all the sons of God will be manifested and brought into the freedom of glory. In Romans 8 we see Christ's intercession in heaven as well as the groaning throughout the whole universe. The whole creation is groaning for liberation, groaning to be released from the by-products of death. This is the situation today: we have the intercession of our Melchisedec in the heavens and the groaning throughout the whole universe. Today God must find a people on earth to be His operating machine to bring in that glorious freedom. Who are the people through whom God is operating to bring in glorification? We are.

This glorious freedom must firstly be brought into our being. This is accomplished through our interceding Melchisedec. The motor in the third heavens energizes the machine on the earth: it makes a lot of "pum, pum, pums" in our spirit. Sometimes the Lord's transmission of energy from the motor in the heavens is so strong that I can hardly contain myself. Whenever I kneel down to pray in my bedroom, I sense the "pum, pum, pum," the empowering, the energizing from the Lord's intercession. Let the religious people wait and see the result of the energizing of the heavenly motor. Do not think that the Lord's recovery is merely another type of Christian work. No, it is the work accomplished by the "pum, pum, pum" with the energy transmitted into us by the heavenly dynamo. Whenever we pray for the Lord's recovery, we have the deep sense that the Lord's intercession is empowering us from within. This is why we, the partners of the Lord in His recovery, are the most aggressive Christians on earth today. Christ's heavenly ministry is not a ministry that takes care of pitiful sinners; it is the more excellent ministry operating God's economy.

I have the full assurance that the heavenly Minister is ministering on our behalf. Many times as I was writing the notes for the Recovery Version of Hebrews, the heavenly electricity came to my pen, and I had a new vision of the things in the Bible. Although the Bible has been on earth for centuries, few Christians, if any, have seen the things that we are seeing today. Are we smarter than they are? No. What we see is the result of the intercession of the heavenly Minister. This is why what we are ministering is absolutely different from what is found in today's religion. If I withheld what the Lord has been showing me and doing within me, I would explode. I must tell the Lord's people of His heavenly ministry. I have seen the Lord's kingly priesthood and I know that the Lord is interceding for us and ministering to us. We have such a heavenly Minister with a more excellent ministry.

## **I. A HEAVENLY MINISTER**

### **A. A High Priest Sitting on the Throne of the Majesty in the Heavens**

Hebrews 8:1 says that we have a "High Priest, Who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." This is the heavenly Christ, the kingly and divine High Priest, our today's Melchisedec. Our High Priest today is not standing on earth to accomplish the work of redemption; He is sitting on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. His sitting there indicates that the work of redemption has been accomplished by Him, that He is now in glory in the majesty of the Godhead in the heavens, and that He is interceding restfully for the perfecting of His redeemed ones. This is not the work of the Aaronic priesthood but the ministry of the kingly and divine priesthood. He is not our Aaron standing on earth but our Melchisedec sitting in the heavens, even on the throne of God with the divine majesty.

## **Week 18 – Day 2 (8/7) (Cont’d)**

### **B. Ministering in the True Tabernacle in Heaven Joined to Our Spirit**

In God’s economy three things are always combined: the tabernacle, or the sanctuary, the priesthood, and the law. These three things, which are one, are combined for the fulfillment of God’s economy. During the time of the Old Testament, no one could separate these three things from each other. It is the same today. We have the sanctuary, which is both in heaven and in our spirit, the priesthood, and the better law of life. The sanctuary, priesthood, and law that we enjoy today are much better than the old sanctuary, priesthood, and law. Those old things were merely a shadow. These new items, which we are enjoying today, are the reality of the shadow.

Hebrews 8:2 says that Christ is a “Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.” Christ ministers in the true tabernacle in heaven which is joined to our spirit. As our High Priest in the heavens, Christ brings us into heaven, from the earthly court into the heavenly Holy of Holies, which is joined to our spirit by Him as the heavenly ladder (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51). The priests on earth served the shadow (Heb. 8:5), but this Minister in heaven serves the reality. Whatever was done by the priests on earth in the Old Testament was a shadow of the real things to come. Their work on earth did not accomplish anything. What they did on earth only served a shadow of the reality, but whatever this Minister ministers in heaven in the New Testament is the reality. His more excellent ministry in heaven serves the reality of the heavenly things in the divine dispensation.

### **II. A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY**

The ministry of the priests on earth in the Old Testament was good, but the ministry of Christ, our High Priest, in heaven in the New Testament is more excellent. It is more excellent in the following aspects.

#### **A. As the Mediator of a Better Covenant Enacted upon Better Promises**

##### **1. The Mediator**

In this priesthood today we have a Mediator, a man who goes between God and us. This Mediator is also the Executor, the One who executes the will, the testament. Christ, as the Mediator, is the Executor in resurrection of the new covenant, the new testament, which He bequeathed to us by His death.

##### **2. A Better Covenant**

The covenant which was enacted for us and bequeathed to us as the new testament by Christ is a better covenant. Not only has this better covenant been enacted upon better promises of a better law, the inner law of life (8:10-12), but it also was consummated with Christ’s better sacrifices (9:23), which have accomplished for us eternal redemption (9:12), and with the better blood of Christ, which purifies our conscience (9:14). As the High Priest of this better covenant, Christ, the eternal Son of the living God, ministers with the more excellent ministry (8:6) in the greater and more perfect tabernacle (9:11).

##### **3. Better Promises**

This better covenant has been enacted upon better promises (8:6). The better promises, which are given in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and quoted in 8:8-12 and 10:16-17, are of two things—the forgiveness of sins and the law of life. Under the old covenant there was no forgiveness of sins, only the covering of sins. In the new covenant we do not have just the covering of sins but the forgiveness of sins. In the new covenant today we also have the law of life, not the law of letters.

#### **B. To Carry Out the Better Covenant**

##### **1. Making the Facts in the New Covenant Effective**

As our heavenly Minister with a more excellent ministry, Christ carries out the better covenant. He does this by making the facts of the new covenant effective. As we shall see later, every fact in the new covenant is made effective by the heavenly Minister with His more excellent ministry.

Heb. 6:13, 17 For God, when He made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, swore by Himself, 17 Therefore God, intending to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His counsel, interposed with an oath,

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## **2. Executing the Bequests in the New Testament**

Christ, the heavenly Minister, executes the bequests in the New Testament. Whatever is a fact in the covenant is a bequest in the testament. What is the difference between facts and bequests? Facts refer to certain things that have been accomplished but which are not yet designated until they are bequeathed. After the accomplished facts have been bequeathed, they immediately become bequests designated for us. This is the difference between a covenant and a testament: whatever is in a covenant is a fact, but whatever is in a testament is a bequest. What were facts in the covenant have now become legally designated for us as bequests in the will, in the testament. There are four facts of the new covenant which have all become bequests in the new testament: the propitiation for unrighteousnesses and forgiveness of sins; the imparting of the law of life; the blessing of having God and of being His people; and the inward ability of knowing the Lord. We shall see all of these items more clearly in the following messages.

### **MESSAGE THIRTY-SIX**

#### **THE NEW COVENANT**

After the five foregoing messages, we are now qualified to understand the new covenant. In this message we need to see what the new covenant is.

God has an eternal purpose with His divine intention. God's intention is simply to dispense Himself into us and to work Himself into us as our life and our everything until eventually He and we, we and He, are mingled together and we become His expression to the whole universe. In this process, divinity is wrought into humanity and humanity is mingled with divinity. God is God, but He became man. We are men, but we have God's life and nature. This is a brief definition of God's eternal purpose.

Before God accomplished this purpose, Satan caused the fall of man and of many of the angelic creatures. In one sense, this caused God a great deal of trouble, but, in another sense, it afforded Him a good opportunity to manifest His wisdom. Firstly, on the negative side, because sin had come in as a frustration to the fulfillment of God's purpose, God had to solve all the problems related to sin and to put sin away. Secondly, on the positive side, God has put Himself into us as our life. This life must now be developed into the regulating laws imparted into every inward part of our being. God has put Himself as life into our spirit, and from our spirit He is developing this divine life into laws that are spreading into all of our inward parts. Thirdly, according to this life law, God is our God and we are His people. Fourthly, when this life comes into us and is developed into laws that are imparted into our whole being, this life with its laws gives us a spontaneous and automatic inward ability to know God in the way of life. This is not to know God by knowledge, by being taught; it is to know Him by the inward ability of life. In order for God to accomplish His eternal purpose He had to do four things: take away sin; put Himself as life into our spirit and develop this life into the laws that are imparted into all of our inward being; make Himself our God and make us His people according to the life law; and grant us the inward ability to know Him in life in an automatic way.

Before God did these four things, He firstly promised His people that He would do them by making a covenant with them. A covenant is a biblical term for what we call a contract or an agreement. The content of this contract is that God assures us that He will take away our sins, that He will put Himself as life into our spirit and develop this life into laws in our inward parts, that He will be God to us and that we will be His people according to the life law, and that we shall have the spontaneous inward ability to know Him. These four things are the content of the divine contract. This is the new covenant.

## Week 18 – Day 3 (8/8) (Cont'd)

Why is it called the new covenant? Because before the new covenant was enacted and consummated, God made an old one. Why did He firstly make an old one? Because all of the things in the new covenant are too mysterious and abstract. If God had immediately made such a new covenant, the people would not have been impressed with it or able to understand it. God teaches us in the same way as a kindergarten teacher instructs the little children in her class. For example, before teaching the children the word dog, the teacher shows them a picture of a dog. First there is a picture and then the clear word. Likewise, God firstly gave us the picture and then He told us the real thing. The old covenant was a picture. In the old covenant there was the covering of sin but not the forgiveness of sin. The covering of sin in the old covenant foreshadowed the coming forgiveness of sin in the new covenant. In the old covenant there was the old law, the law of letters. The law of letters in the old covenant was a shadow of the law of life in the new covenant. Furthermore, in the old covenant God told His people that He was going to be their God according to the law of letters and that they were going to be His people also according to that law of letters. Today, in the new covenant, God is our God not according to the law of letters but according to the law of life, and we are His people also according to the law of life. Moreover, in the old covenant the people were taught to know God by the knowledge of the law, but in the new covenant we are enabled to know God by the inward ability of life. All of the four items of the new covenant were found in the old covenant in the way of shadows, not in the way of reality. Now in the new covenant we have the real thing to replace the shadows.

Suppose before I come to see you, I send you my photograph. Although that photograph closely resembles me, it is not I myself; it is merely my picture. When I, the living person, come to see you, my presence surely replaces the photograph. If when I come you do not care for me but continue to treasure my photograph, you would be a most foolish person.

As we consider the matters of the old and new covenant, we must know the difference between a promise, an oath, a covenant, and a testament. A promise is an ordinary word spoken by God promising you that He will do something for you. An oath is a confirmation of an ordinary word. God confirmed His ordinary word of promise by means of His oath (6:13, 17). When the promise has been confirmed by an oath, it immediately becomes a covenant. What we have received from God is not just an ordinary word as a promise but a covenant, a contract, confirmed by God's oath and sealed with His divine being. A covenant always binds people more than a promise does. In this binding covenant there are four things which are no longer promises but accomplished facts. All of these facts are clearly itemized in the covenant. The One who made the covenant died so that the covenant might become a bequeathed will, that is, a testament. Now the covenant is no longer merely a covenant but a testament bequeathed by the One who enacted the covenant. In this bequeathed testament, the four accomplished items have all become bequests. Thus, we do not need to wait for the accomplishment of these things or to pray that God will be faithful to remember His promise and keep His word. We do not need to pray because everything has been accomplished. Each of the four items is an accomplished fact that has been bequeathed to us. These four items are not only promises and facts but also bequests that we may inherit, participate in, and enjoy. What we have today is not a promise or even merely a covenant, but a testament, a will, which is an advanced covenant. An advanced covenant is one that is bequeathed with the accomplished facts, which are the fulfilled promises. When the promise has been fulfilled, it becomes the covenant, and when the covenant has been bequeathed, it becomes the testament. In the promise we have the promised matters, in the covenant we have the accomplished facts, and in the testament we have the accomplished facts bequeathed as bequests. Do not pray that God will fulfill His promises or that He will give you the facts. All of the promises have become accomplished facts, and all of the accomplished facts have been bequeathed to us. We should simply take them and enjoy them.

Heb. 7:18-19 For there is, on the one hand, the setting aside of the preceding commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness 19 (For the law perfected nothing), and, on the other hand, the bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

8:13 In saying, A new covenant, He has made the first old. But that which is becoming old and growing decrepit is near to disappearing.

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Let us consider once again the four promises that have become accomplished facts and bequests. The first item is that sin has been put away. But suppose sin comes back. What will you do? Will you kneel down and pray, “O Lord, keep Your promise. Lord, You promised me to deal with sin, and now sin has come to bother me. Lord, keep Your word, Your promise to deal with sin.” The Lord will never answer this kind of prayer. This is why the more you ask the Lord to deal with your temper, the more temper you have. Whenever you pray in this way, the Lord will not answer you. What then should we do if sin comes to bother us? Simply say to sin, “Sin, where have you come from? Don’t you know that you have been put away?” The putting away of sin is a bequest in the testament. Just be simple enough to declare it to be so. Very few Christians have this kind of faith. Even after I received this vision, a number of times I still prayed, “O Lord, take care of my temper. It’s so hard, Lord, for me to overcome it. Lord, didn’t You promise to help me?” Although this may seem to be a good prayer, actually it is a foolish prayer.

The second bequest in the new covenant is that God has put His life into us and that this life is developing into many laws in our inward parts. This is not a promise but a fact that was accomplished and bequeathed to us before we were even born. Before our parents imparted their physical life into us, God had already imparted His life into us. Do you believe this? This accomplished fact has been bequeathed to us by Christ as our inheritance. We all need to see this. If you have never seen the city of Anaheim, you may have difficulty believing what you hear about the city, but once you have come to Anaheim and have seen the city for yourself, it will be impossible for you not to believe what you have seen. Likewise, we all need to see our bequests. Hallelujah, sin has been put away, and before we were born the divine life was put into us! Not only has the divine life been put into us, but it has been developed into laws in every part of our being.

The third bequest is that God is to be God to us and that we are to be a people to Him. Both of these things are according to the law of life. In the old covenant God was God to His people according to the outward law of letters, and His people were a people to Him also according to that law of letters. But in the new covenant God being God to us and we being a people to Him are according to the inward law of life. It is a matter of the inner life, not a matter of the outer knowledge. In the new covenant God deals with us not according to the outward regulations but according to the inward laws of life, and we are living with Him not according to the knowledge of letters but according to the sense of life.

The fourth bequest is the inner ability to know God. Do you believe that we have the inner ability to know God? How could you prove to me that we have such an inner ability? It cannot be proved by doctrine, but it can be proved by our experience. Suppose a sister goes shopping and sees many items on sale. As she is about to purchase a particular item, something within her says, “Don’t touch it. God doesn’t like that.” When she goes on to choose another item, something within says, “God doesn’t like this either.” I believe that nearly every sister has had this kind of experience, showing that the sisters have the inner ability to know God. You cannot deny that you have this ability.

The brothers also know by their experience that they have this ability to know God. We brothers have the peculiar character of vindicating ourselves. Regardless of your age, as long as you are a man, you like to vindicate yourself. A good wife is one who has learned the secret that her husband will always vindicate himself and will never lose the case, even if he does not have a case to lose. If you are a wise wife, you will not fight with your husband, because no husband will lose the case. But whenever we brothers try to vindicate ourselves, the divine presence immediately disappears, and we know that such vindication is not of God. We do not need any teaching according to the law of letters in order to know this; we have an inward ability in life to know God.

## **Week 18 – Day 4 (8/9) (Cont’d)**

Although all of these four items were accomplished and bequeathed to us before we were born, we had no experience of them before we believed in the Lord Jesus. From the day that we believed in the Lord Jesus, all of these four things were wrought into us. One day we said, “O Lord Jesus, You are my Savior. I believe in You. Thank You for Your blood and for Your washing.” Immediately after praying this, all four items of the new covenant become real to us.

### **I. THE OLD COVENANT**

#### **A. Having Fault**

In order to see the new covenant we must first see the old covenant. Hebrews 8:7 says. “For if that first covenant was faultless, no place would have been sought for a second.” The old covenant had fault because it was weak and unprofitable (7:18). Why was it unprofitable? Because it was only a photograph of the reality and not the reality itself. Moreover, the old covenant perfected nothing (7:19). The old covenant could not perfect anything because it was merely a shadow. Suppose I sent you my photograph and you believed in it and said to it, “Brother Lee, talk to me. Don’t you know that I love you? Why don’t you love me? What’s the matter with you, Brother Lee? I have talked so much to you, but you won’t say a word to me.” How foolish it would be for us to address a photograph in this way. But many of the Judaizers were just this foolish, dealing with the picture, the old covenant, and expecting much from it in return. The prophet Jeremiah, however, prophesied that there would be a better covenant (Jer. 31:33-34). The prophecy of Jeremiah came about because fault, weakness, and unprofitableness were found in the old covenant.

#### **B. Becoming Old and Growing Decrepit**

Referring to the old covenant, Hebrews 8:13 says, “In saying new, He has made the first old. Now that which is becoming old and growing decrepit is near to disappearing.” When Jeremiah prophesied of the coming new covenant, that indicated that the old covenant had become old and decrepit. It might have been that Jeremiah realized the weakness and unprofitableness of the covenant and was deeply burdened about this matter. So God had an opportunity to come in and say through him, “Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, and I will consummate a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (8:8). That might have been a great comfort to Jeremiah. Not only was the old covenant decrepit, but it was also near to disappearing and eventually was disannulled, abolished. I am so happy for the Hebrew brothers and sisters among us because they are no longer with the decrepit old covenant but with the refreshing new covenant.

### **II. THE NEW COVENANT**

#### **A. A Better Covenant**

Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant (8:6). The new covenant is better than the old covenant, just as the reality of a person is better than his photograph. The old covenant, like a photograph, had only the outward form, but the new covenant, like the real person, has the inward life with all its reality. The old covenant was lifeless, but the new covenant is constituted with the indestructible life. Everything in the new covenant is much better than the things in the old covenant because everything in the new covenant is the reality. Hence, it is a better covenant.

#### **B. Enacted upon Better Promises**

The new covenant has been enacted upon better promises. These promises are given in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and are quoted in Hebrews 8:8-12 and in 10:16-17. In these promises there is the law of life, not the law of dead letters, there is the blessing of having God and of being His people, and there is the inward ability of knowing God. All these three things are of the divine life imparted into us in God’s regeneration. Furthermore, in these better promises there is the forgiveness of sins, not just the covering of sins as under the Mosaic law. The forgiveness of sins, being the putting away of sins, is better than the covering of sins, which never removed the sins. Because of the imparting of life and the forgiveness of sins, these are the better promises.

Heb. 8:10 For this is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them; and I will be God to them, and they will be a people to Me.

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### **C. Replacing the Old Covenant**

The new covenant has replaced the old covenant (8:7, 13). When a real person comes, he replaces his photograph, for the reality replaces the picture, the shadow. The old covenant had fault and became old, decrepit, and near to disappearing, and the new covenant has been consummated to replace it. Now it is meaningless for anyone to still remain in the old covenant.

### **D. The Contents**

#### **1. Imparting of the Law of Life**

##### **a. One Law Becoming Many Laws**

What are the contents of the new covenant? The contents include four things, the first of which is the imparting of the law of life. Verse 10 says, “For this is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them.” In Jeremiah 31:33, the source of this quotation, the word laws is singular, proving that it is one law that spreads into a number of laws. The one law that eventually develops into many laws is the law of life (Rom. 8:2). Every life has a law. The higher the life, the higher is its law. The divine life we receive of God is the highest; therefore, it has the highest law, the law referred to here. By imparting His divine life into us, God puts this highest law into our spirit, from whence it spreads into our inward parts, such as our mind, emotion, and will, and becomes several laws. We all know this by experience. When we called on the name of the Lord, the divine life came into our spirit. Gradually, as we have been growing in this life, this life has had the opportunity to develop from our spirit into all of our inward parts. When this life develops into our inward parts, in every part there will be a law to regulate us. Many laws develop out of that one law of life.

This law of life differs from the law of letters. The law of life regulates us from within by and according to its life element, while the law of letters regulates us from without by and according to its dead letters. The law of dead letters depends upon outward teachings, but the law of life depends upon the inward consciousness, the inward sense of life. Since we all, great or small, have this law of life, we do not need outward teachings according to the law of letters (8:11).

##### **b. Imparted into Our Inward Parts**

The law of life is imparted into our spirit and from our spirit it spreads into our mind and into all of our inward parts (v. 10). In Jeremiah 31:33, “inward parts” is used for “mind.” This proves that the mind is one of the inward parts. It is also an interpretation of the term inward parts. The inward parts include the mind, the emotion, and the will, which are the composition of the heart mentioned in the following clause in verse 10.

##### **c. Inscribed on Our Hearts**

Verse 10 also says that the Lord will inscribe His laws on our hearts. Firstly, God imparts His laws into us; then He inscribes them upon us. He does the inscribing in our experiences of the law of life. The more we experience the law of life, the more its laws will be inscribed into the different parts of our heart. They will be constituted into the different parts of our inward being through our experiences.

## **2. The Blessing of Having God and of Being His People**

The second item of the new covenant is the blessing of having God and of being His people. The last part of verse 10 says, “I will be God to them, and they shall be a people to Me.” In the new covenant we have the privilege of having God as our God and of being His people—the enabling of life for us to participate in the enjoyment of God in fellowship with Him. The people under the old covenant had God according to the Ten Commandments. God was God to them according to the old law of letters, and they were His people also according to the law of letters. But today our God is God to us not according to letters but according to the inward life, and we are His people not according to any written regulations but also according to the inner life. It is according to the law of life that God is God to us and we are a people to Him. God’s relationship with us today is fully based upon the law of life; it is a relationship in life. So today we do not need to walk according to the knowledge of the law of letters but according to the consciousness of the law of life.

It is very difficult, for example, to find a verse in the New Testament which tells us what time God wants us to get up in the morning. How then shall we know what time to get up? We shall not know it by any regulation of letters outwardly but according to the inner life. When tomorrow morning comes, the inner life will tell us what time God wants us to get up. If we do not rise up at that time, we shall miss God’s presence. Another example is the matter of getting a haircut. All of the young people should realize that we are God’s people. As God’s people, how should we cut our hair? Since the term haircut is not found in the Bible, how can we know how short or how long to cut our hair? We know it by the law of life. If we go according to the inner law of life, we shall know how short or how long our hair should be.

## **3. Inward Ability of Knowing the Lord**

In the new covenant there is also the function of the law of life by which we know God in the inward way of life. Verse 11 says, “And they shall by no means teach each one his fellow citizen and each one his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me from the little one to the great among them.” There is no need for the outward teachings, because we know the Lord by the sense of life. Some today oppose us for saying that we no longer need the teachings. They are not merely opposing us; they are opposing the Bible. It is the Holy Bible that says that we do not need the teachings because we have the inner sense of life.

In this verse two Greek words are used for know: the first is ginosko, which signifies the outward, objective knowledge; the second is oida, referring to the inward, subjective consciousness. In John 8:55 the Lord Jesus told the Pharisees that they have not known (ginosko) God the Father (even in the outward, objective knowledge), but He knows (oida) the Father (in the inward, subjective consciousness).

## **4. Propitiation for Our Unrighteousnesses and Forgiveness of Our Sins**

The last of the contents of the new covenant is propitiation for our unrighteousnesses and forgiveness of our sins. Hebrews 8:12 says, “I will be propitious to their unrighteousnesses, and their sins I will by no means remember anymore.” To be propitious is to make propitiation for our sins. Christ made propitiation for our sins to appease God’s righteousness, to reconcile us by satisfying the demand of God’s righteousness (2:17). God is propitious to us because Christ has made propitiation for our sins. Based upon this propitiation, God forgives our sins. In 8:12 we are told by the Lord that “their sins I will by no means remember anymore.” Here we see that God will forget our sins. To forgive means to forget, for the forgetting of sins is the real forgiveness of sins. If you forgive me, it means that you must forget my faults. Without forgetting, forgiveness is not real. God not only forgives us our sins but also forgets our sins.

In the new covenant the primary blessing is the imparting of the divine life which brings in the inner law of life, the blessing of having God and of being His people, and the inward ability of knowing the Lord. For God to do this, He had to be propitious to our unrighteousnesses and forget our sins. The propitiation for our unrighteousnesses and the forgiveness of our sins give Him the ground to impart His life into us. The little word “for” in verse 12 proves this. He imparts life to us, “for” He is propitious to our unrighteousnesses and forgets our sins. God’s original intention for His eternal purpose was to impart His life into man, but sin came in to frustrate this. In order to carry out His original intention, God made propitiation through Christ for our sins and granted us the forgiveness of sins so that He might impart the divine life into us for the fulfillment of His purpose. This divine life brings in the law of life, our relationship with God in life, and the inward ability of knowing the Lord. In the new covenant, life with its riches has been brought in and sin with its sinfulness has been put away. This is the content of the new covenant. Praise the Lord!

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**Study Questions**

1. What are the three stages of Christ as the Sabbath rest to us?
2. How may we say that the church life is the Sabbath rest?