LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE ONE

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD

Scripture Reading: 1 Chron. 1:1-27

There are twelve historical books in the Old Testament. The first three are Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, and the last three are Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. In between these two groups of three books, there are three pairs of books: 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles. With this message we begin the life-study of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. The burden of the life-study of these books can be expressed in the following four statements:

1. In the eternal economy of God, the Father has allotted the Son, the all-inclusive Christ typified by the good land, to the believers as their eternal portion and has transferred them into Him that they may partake of Him (Col. 1:12; 1 Cor. 1:30, 9).

2. The enjoyment of Christ differs in degrees according to the believers' pursuing of Christ and their faithfulness to Him, and the highest attainment of pursuing Christ is to reign with Christ in His divine life through His abounding grace (Phil. 3:13-14; Rom. 5:17b, 21b).

3. The captivity of the believers by the enemy is the top failure of the believers in the enjoyment of Christ by not knowing the power of Christ's resurrection nor living by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:10; 1:19b).

4. The omnipresent and omnipotent Triune God became the hiding God in taking care of His chosen people in the dispersion of their captivity, in the most wise secrecy of His highest sovereignty (Esth. 1—10).

The Bible actually tells us only one thing—God's eternal

economy according to the good pleasure of His heart's desire. Our God is exceedingly great, and surely He must have a good pleasure. Based upon His good pleasure He made an eternal economy. The reality, the center, and the goal of God's economy is the all-inclusive and excellent Christ. The entire Bible is for this one thing, not for anything else.

The Bible is arranged in two sections. The first section, the Old Testament, is the section of pictures. God is surely the best writer, and He uses pictures in the first thirty-nine books of His writing in the Bible. These books are therefore full of pictures accompanied by prophecies. The pictures are the types, figures, and shadows in the Old Testament. For instance, Adam is "a type of Him who was to come" (Rom. 5:14). Some types are also prophecies. These prophecies are not in plain words but in pictures. The greatest type in the Old Testament is the history of the people of Israel, who typify God's people on earth today. Thus, the history of Israel in the Old Testament is a big type signifying things to come.

When we come to the twelve books of history in the Old Testament, we should not be distracted by the history presented in these books. Why, then, should we pay attention to the books of history? To answer this question we need to realize that the entire Bible is for God's economy with Christ as the reality, the center, and the goal. In our reading of the books of history, we need to pray and seek the proper interpretation of all the types and prophecies in these books. In particular, we need to find and know the intrinsic significance of all the types. We should focus our attention on the center of these types, which is Christ as the center of God's economy. Therefore, as we are seeking to know the intrinsic significance of what is recorded in the books of history in the Old Testament, we must endeavor to link the history books to God's economy. This is what we are doing in this life-study.

I. FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES BEING ONE BOOK IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

In the Hebrew Scriptures, 1 and 2 Chronicles were one book.

II. THE WRITER

The writer of 1 and 2 Chronicles was probably Ezra. Regarding this matter, we should compare 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 with Ezra 1:1-3a. The repetition in these two portions might be a proof that 1 and 2 Chronicles were written by Ezra, the writer of the book of Ezra.

III. THE TIME

The first book covers about 41 years, from 1056 to 1015 B.C., not including the forefathers' genealogy. The second book covers about 479 years, from 1015 to 536 B.C.

IV. THE PLACE

These two books might have been written in Jerusalem after Ezra's coming back from the captivity.

V. THE CONTENT

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles cover the genealogy of mankind from Adam to Abraham and the genealogy of God's elect from Abraham to the family of Saul, and the history of Israel from Saul the king to Israel's return from their captivity. From this we see that 1 and 2 Chronicles cover three kinds of history: the history from Adam to Abraham, which concerns the whole world; the history from Abraham to Saul, which concerns the forefathers of the race of Israel, before they were formed into a nation; and the history of the kingdom of Israel, from the time of Saul to the coming back from their captivity.

VI. THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

The matter of the central thought of 1 and 2 Chronicles is very crucial.

A. To Give a Full Chronology of God's Move in Man's History

The central thought is, first, to give us a full chronology of God's move in man's history by including the genealogy from Adam to Samuel, indicating that God's move in man's

history to prepare the way for God to carry out His eternal economy in humanity by becoming a man that man may become God is not a matter that concerns only the history of God's elect but a matter that concerns the history of the entire race of mankind. The central point of view in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings is the chosen people of God, but in 1 and 2 Chronicles it is the entire race of mankind. This needs a lineage not from Samuel but from Adam to Christ, which corresponds to the genealogy of Christ as recorded in Luke 3, not as presented in Matthew 1. The view in Matthew 1 is narrow and is limited to Israel. The view in Luke 3 is broad and includes all of mankind. This is a strong evidence that the coming Christ as the embodiment of God is not only for the one race chosen by God but for the entire human race created by God.

We need to see that God's move is in man's history. Have you ever heard such a phrase as "God's move in man's history"? Do you believe that in today's tumultuous world situation God is still moving in man's history? We need to believe that God has been moving and is still moving in and through man's history. In Adam's history God moved, and in Abel's history God also moved. This was a move on the positive side. But God moved even in Cain's history. This was a move on the negative side.

I can testify from my observation of the world situation since 1918 and from my study of the prophecies in the Bible that God surely moves in man's history. Let us consider, for example, the dispute over Palestine, that is, over the good land, that has been going on for hundreds of years. Who is the landlord, the rightful owner, of the good land—Israel or the Arabs? The Jews say that Palestine is the land of their forefathers, and the Arabs claim that it is the land of their forefathers. This issue has not been settled but is still on the negotiating table. The statesmen involved in these negotiations are foolish men, for they do not know God or the Word of God, the Bible, yet they are talking about God's affairs. God is the landlord of Palestine, and only He can solve the problem concerning this land. I believe that while the statesmen are negotiating over the ownership of the good

land, the Lord is in the heavens laughing (Psa. 2:4). The decision regarding the good land will not be made by statesmen; it will be made by the One who is in the heavens. Soon the Lord Jesus may come back and settle this matter. When He comes He may say to the statesmen of the world, "This is not your business—it is My business."

We have pointed out that the chronology in 1 and 2 Chronicles indicates that God's move in man's history is to prepare the way for God to carry out His eternal economy in humanity by becoming a man that man may become God. If this cannot be accomplished, there is no way to solve the problems of today's world situation. All the problems on this earth are waiting for one thing—for a good number of men to become God-men. This matter concerns not only the history of God's elect, Israel, but also the history of the entire race of mankind.

The world situation has changed greatly during the past fifty years. In these fifty years God has blended together people from everywhere on earth. In our semi-annual trainings saints come together from fifty nations. This would have been impossible fifty years ago. This blending of the nations is something that could have been accomplished only by God.

Through such a blending thousands of God-men will be produced. In Russia, for instance, the God-men are spreading and increasing. The whole world is open to the ministry in the Lord's recovery. This ministry has reached to all six continents, and I have received letters of appreciation from saints in many different countries saying that they are open to receive this ministry.

Recently I released the matter of the high peak of God's revelation—the revelation that God became a man so that man may become God in life and in nature (but not in the Godhead) for the producing of the Body of Christ as His expression. Now we need to pray that the Lord will give us a new revival, a revival which has never been seen in man's history. Such a revival will be something new, for it is related to God's "hobby," to His good pleasure, to the desire of His heart. God's good pleasure is that God would become a man to make man God in life and in nature. This is the desire of

God's heart, the "hobby" in His heart, and He will accomplish it.

As we have seen, whereas the central point of view in 1 and 2 Samuel and in 1 and 2 Kings is the chosen race of God, the central point of view in 1 and 2 Chronicles is the entire race of mankind. This indicates that God thinks not only about Israel but also about the Gentiles. Most of us are not of the people of Israel, but God thought about us in eternity past. Ephesians 1:4 tells us we all were chosen by God before the foundation of the world. We praise the Lord for choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

B. To Present Some Important Details of God's Dealing with the Kings of Judah

The central thought of 1 and 2 Chronicles is also to present to us some of the important details of God's dealing with the kings of Judah that are not recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel and in 1 and 2 Kings. Many readers of the Bible feel that 1 and 2 Chronicles are somewhat repetitious, covering things which have been covered already in 1 and 2 Samuel and in 1 and 2 Kings. We need to see that at the beginning of 1 Chronicles a part of mankind's history is recorded that is recorded neither in 1 and 2 Samuel nor in 1 and 2 Kings. Furthermore, at the end of 1 Chronicles there is a supplement to David's history, and in 2 Chronicles there is a supplement to the history of the kings of Judah. Israel was divided into two nations: the northern kingdom, called the kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom, called the kingdom of Judah. The good kings were not in Israel but in Judah. Second Chronicles does not touch the kings of Israel but covers only the kings of Judah, giving us details not found elsewhere concerning God's dealing with them and also telling us the reasons why God dealt with them in the way He did.

C. To Give a Complete History of God's Move in Man's History

Finally, in 1 and 2 Chronicles we have a complete history of God's move in man's history from Adam to Abraham, from

Abraham to Samuel, and from Samuel, who brought in the kingship, to Israel's return from their captivity.

VII. THE SECTIONS OF THE COVERAGE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

In this life-study we will not cover all of 1 and 2 Chronicles but only certain parts of these books. Mainly we will cover those parts of 1 and 2 Chronicles that are a supplement to the history in 1 and 2 Kings. The matters covered in the life-study of 1 and 2 Samuel and in the life-study of 1 and 2 Kings will not be repeated here.

The sections of the coverage of our present study include the genealogy from Adam to the twelve tribes of Israel (1 Chron. 1—9); the supplement to the history of David (1 Chron. 22:2—29:30); and the supplement to the history of the kings of Judah (2 Chron. 11:5-23; 13:1-21; 14:6—15:15; 17:1-19; 19:1—20:30; 21:12-18; 24:14b-24; 25:5-16; 26:6-21a; 28:8-15; 29:3—32:8; 33:11-17; 34:3-7; 36:20b-23). Therefore, this study will cover three things: the genealogy of mankind, the supplement to the history of David, and the supplement to the history of the kings of Judah.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE TWO

THE REPRODUCTION OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26; 3:15; 22:18; 2 Sam. 7:12-14; John 12:24

In this message I have the burden to speak a word on a very striking matter—the reproduction of God.

MAN CREATED ACCORDING TO GOD'S KIND

After God created the heavens and the earth, one of the angels rebelled and became God's enemy, Satan. This ruined God's original creation. Eventually, God came in to repair, remodel, and restore the universe. In this restoration God created billions of living creatures, including all kinds of birds and animals. Although God created so many living creatures, not one of these creatures was like Him. So God made man in His image and according to His likeness (Gen. 1:26). Therefore, man was not created according to his own kind but according to God's kind. God did not create mankind; He created man according to God's kind.

After God finished the creation of Adam and his wife, He looked upon everything that He had made. As He looked upon the earth and everything in it, only Adam and Eve were His delight, His "hobby." Only they could make God happy because only they were His kind. When God looked at Adam, He might have said, "I am pleased to see man. This is My hobby; this is My kind." However, God's hobby was far from complete because at that time man had only God's image and God's likeness but not God's life and God's nature. Man had God's image, but he did not have God Himself.

GOD BECOMING A MAN

According to His eternal plan God Himself had to become a man. God is almighty and omnipotent, but He never does things in a fast way. We may have an idea and then act upon it immediately. God is not like this. He is very slow and full of patience. He made an economy in eternity past. Then He created the heavens and the earth. Later He repaired and restored the ruined creation, and as the last work in His restoration and further creation, God created man, His hobby. Yet that was not God's real hobby. God's real hobby is that God Himself would become a man.

After Adam's fall and after promising Eve that He would come as the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), God waited thousands of years before becoming a man. If I had been His companion, I would have said, "God, since the desire of Your heart is that You become a man, why would You not do this right now? You told the fallen man that You would come as the seed of the woman. Why would You not come as this seed today?" If God had been asked such questions, He might have said, "I am not small like you are. I am great, and with Me a thousand years are as one day."

Approximately two thousand years after making the promise in Genesis 3:15, God promised Abraham a seed that would be a blessing to all the nations (22:18). God seemed to be saying, "Abraham, you will have a seed. This seed will be I Myself becoming a man to be the blessing to all the earth." Unable to be patient, Abraham followed Sarah's suggestion that he have a child by her handmaid, Hagar. Instead of producing the promised seed, Abraham produced a wrong one, Ishmael. God, however, continued to wait before becoming a man.

After another thousand years, up to David's time, God still had not come as a man. But God told David that he would have a seed who would be God's Son (2 Sam. 7:12-14). This Son is just God Himself. God prophesied to David concerning this seed, but He still did not come as a man.

Eventually, after another one thousand years, four thousand years after the creation of Adam, God came to be a man, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a human virgin

(Matt. 1:20, 23). He grew up for thirty more years, but no one knew that He was God become a man, a God-man.

THE ONE GRAIN PRODUCING MANY GRAINS

One day the Lord Jesus, the God-man, said that He was a grain of wheat falling into the ground to die in order to become many grains (John 12:24). These many grains are actually many gods as the reproduction of God. The first grain—the first God-man—was a prototype, and the many grains—the many God-men—produced by this one grain through death and resurrection are the mass reproduction. This is the reproduction of God. When some hear that God has been reproduced, they may be shocked and say that such a word is nonsensical. Nevertheless, this is what is revealed in John 12:24.

God's real hobby is to have His reproduction in many nations around the globe. Such a reproduction makes God happy because His reproduction looks like Him, speaks like Him, and lives like Him. God is in this reproduction, and His reproduction has His life, His nature, and His constitution. What a great matter this is!

GOD DOING THE WORK OF TRANSFORMATION WITH PATIENCE

Although we are God's reproduction, this reproduction—God's hobby—is not so complete or perfect, because many of us who have God's life do not live by His life. Some do live by God's life, but they do not live by His life continually. Perhaps in the morning they live by God's life, but later in the day they may lose their temper and live like a scorpion. This means that in the morning they are gods, but later they are "scorpions." In the evening they may become even worse, living like the devil, Satan. It is not too much to say that a believer in Christ can live like Satan. One day the Lord Jesus turned to Peter, someone who loved Him, and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan!" (Matt. 16:23a). Because Peter had become Satan, he needed to bear his cross so that Satan could be put on the cross.

In our daily living we may be God at one time, a scorpion at another time, and Satan at yet another time. Because this

is our actual situation, we surely need to be transformed. Do you know what our God is doing today? God is doing the work of transformation in us with patience.

REVOLUTIONIZED BY REALIZING WHO WE ARE

Since the ministry began in the United States in 1962, I have actually ministered only one matter—God becoming a man that man may become God in life and in nature. However, it was not until February 1994 that I received such a clear view with a heavy burden to tell God's people that we all are God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

To know who we are and to realize who we are revolutionizes us. Suppose a certain brother who has been living like a scorpion realizes that, as a child of God, he is God in life and in nature. Immediately this brother will be radically changed. The atmosphere and everything related to him will also be changed. If all of today's Christians realized that they were God in life and in nature, the whole world would be different.

During the past ten months, I have often checked with myself: "Is a God-man like this? You have spoken that the believers have become God in life and in nature, yet what are you now? Are you God or are you something else?" My answer has been to repent and ask for the Lord's forgiveness because at least some of the things I did were not in Him or according to Him. This realization has revolutionized me.

THE STALENESS OF FUNDAMENTAL CHRISTIANITY

On the one hand, outwardly God as the Ruler of the universe has done many things so that people from everywhere in the world can be blended. On the other hand, God has a recovery on earth, and His recovery has been under His leading for seventy-two years. During these years He has released thousands of printed messages, and these messages are in thousands of homes. These messages have been received in many countries around the world. On a regular basis I receive letters of appreciation. Recently someone wrote to me saying that he had been listening to lies about us, but when he read the Life-study of Galatians, his eyes were opened and he could see the truth. Such publications have

reached many nations, and we believe that the Lord will use them to gain what He desires.

Christianity has been on earth for more than nineteen centuries. It has kept and continues to teach the fundamental faith. But its fundamental faith has not reached the peak of the divine revelation—that God became a man through incarnation and then passed through human living, death, and resurrection in order to have a mass reproduction of Himself. Because fundamental Christianity has not reached this peak, the fundamental teachings have become stale. As a result, many in the denominations do not have a goal, and they do not know where they should go. Even many leading ones in today's Christianity do not know how to go on; they have nowhere to go. Visit the Christian bookstores and see what kind of books are being sold there. Many books are filled with old, stale fundamental teachings.

Because fundamental Christianity has become stale, it has lost its impact and effect, like salt which has become tasteless (Matt. 5:13). Who is the salt among the Christians in the United States? Salt is supposed to kill corruption, but where is this killing power among today's Christians? In most communities it is hard to tell who are Christians and who are not Christians. All the people are about the same.

THE HIGH PEAK OF THE DIVINE REVELATION

I am glad that during the last ten months the Lord has released the matter of the high peak of the divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures. Recently, I wrote in Chinese a hymn on God becoming a man that man may become God in life and in nature. Many saints are beside themselves with joy when they sing this hymn. It is very difficult to translate this hymn into English. The following is a literal translation:

1 How great a miracle! How deep a mystery!
God and man are joined and blended as one!
God becomes man and man becomes God,
An economy incomprehensible to angels and
mankind;
Out of God's pleasure, in His love,
Attaining the highest purpose of God.

2 God incarnated to be a God-man,
In order that I may become God,
In life and nature the same kind as He,
Having no share in His Godhead;
His attributes become my virtues,
His glorious image livingly expressed through me.

3 It is no longer I living alone,
But God and I living together;
Coordinated with the saints in God
To be built up as the universal house
of the Divine Trinity
And to become the organic Body of Christ
As a great corporate vessel for Him to
express Himself.

4 Ultimately, the holy city, Jerusalem,
The aggregate of visions and revelations,
The Triune God and the tripartite man
To be the couple in love in eternity
as man yet God;
The mutual habitation of divinity and humanity
With God's glory shining forth radiantly in man.

The following is a translation of this hymn in poetry to the tune of #499 in *Hymns:*

1 What miracle! What mystery!
That God and man should blended be!
God became man to make man God,
Untraceable economy!
From His good pleasure, heart's desire,
His highest goal attained will be.

2 Flesh He became, the first God-man,
His pleasure that I God may be:
In life and nature I'm God's kind,
Though Godhead's His exclusively.
His attributes my virtues are;
His glorious image shines through me.

3 No longer I alone that live,
But God together lives with me.
Built with the saints in the Triune God,
His universal house we'll be,

And His organic Body we
For His expression corp'rately.

4 Jerusalem, the ultimate,
Of visions the totality;
The Triune God, tripartite man—
A loving pair eternally—
As man yet God they coinhere,
A mutual dwelling place to be;
God's glory in humanity
Shines forth in splendor radiantly!

According to this hymn, it is a great miracle and a deep mystery that God has a way to be joined to man and mingled with man. God became man that man may become God. Such an economy is incomprehensible to both angels and man. This economy is of God's desire, and it will reach, attain, the high peak of God's goal. Ultimately the holy city, Jerusalem, will be the aggregate of all the visions and revelations throughout the Scriptures. The Triune God and the tripartite man will become a loving couple in eternity as man yet still God. Divinity and humanity will become a mutual abode, and the glory of God will be expressed in humanity radiantly in splendor to the uttermost.

I hope that the saints in all the churches throughout the earth, especially the co-workers and the elders, will see this revelation and then rise up to pray that God would give us a new revival—a revival which has never been recorded in history.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE THREE

THE GENEALOGY FROM ADAM TO THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

Scripture Reading: 1 Chron. 1—9

In this message we will consider the genealogy from Adam to the twelve tribes of Israel. This genealogy is covered in the first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles.

I. THE GENEALOGY FROM ADAM TO ABRAHAM

In 1:1-27 we have the genealogy from Adam to Abraham. The main characters in this genealogy are Adam, Enosh, Enoch, and Noah.

II. THE GENEALOGY OF ABRAHAM

Verses 28 through 34 speak of the genealogy of Abraham. The main characters here are Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.

III. THE GENEALOGY OF ESAU

The genealogy of Esau (vv. 35-54) is not in the lineage of the genealogy of Christ as recorded in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38.

IV. THE GENEALOGY OF ISRAEL

Chapters two through nine are a record of the genealogy of Israel. Israel had twelve sons. All the twelve sons became the fathers of the twelve tribes. The following chapters through chapter nine are the genealogies of these twelve tribes.

V. THE GENEALOGY OF JUDAH

First Chronicles 2:3—4:23 is the genealogy of Judah.

A. The Main Characters

The main characters in this genealogy are Judah, Caleb, Boaz, Jesse, David, and Solomon.

B. The Tribe of Judah Being the Royal Tribe

The tribe of Judah is the royal tribe (5:2a), producing kings from David to Christ. Hence, the genealogy of Judah, among the twelve genealogies of the twelve tribes, is the only one that is counted as the lineage of the genealogy of Christ as recorded in Matthew 1 and Luke 3.

C. The Striking Matter in Judah's Genealogy

In Judah's genealogy the striking matter is that Judah begot Pherez of his daughter-in-law Tamar (2:4). The Bible is honest in recording this matter.

D. A Particular Prayer by One of the Descendants of Judah

In 4:10 we have a particular prayer offered by one of the descendants of Judah: "Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, Oh that You would richly bless me and enlarge my border, and that Your hand would be with me, and that You would so keep me from evil that it would not grieve me!" God caused what Jabez had requested to come to pass. I hope that all of us would have such a prayer, a prayer that God would enlarge the border of the enjoyment of the good land; that is, enlarge the border of our enjoyment of Christ. We all need to pray, "O God, enlarge my border in the gaining of Christ and in the enjoyment of Christ."

E. Matters Included in the Genealogy of Judah

The genealogy of Judah includes the genealogy of David and the genealogy of Solomon.

1. The Genealogy of David

The genealogy of David is recorded in 3:1-9. David had six sons born during his reign in Hebron for seven and a half years. Thirteen sons of David were born during his reign in

Jerusalem for thirty-three years, including Solomon, born of Bath-shua (Bath-sheba). In addition, David had a daughter, Tamar, and also sons born of his concubines.

2. The Genealogy of Solomon

The main characters in the genealogy of Solomon (vv. 10-24) are Solomon, Asa, Hezekiah, and Zerubbabel.

VI. THE GENEALOGY OF SIMEON

The genealogy of Simeon is recorded in 4:24-43. The remarkable thing concerning this tribe is that they had rich and good pasture, spacious, quiet, and peaceful, and that they defeated the Amalekites. We today should also have such a rich and spacious pasture. This means that our enjoyment of Christ as our good land should be spacious, quiet, and peaceful.

VII. THE GENEALOGY OF REUBEN

Next we have the genealogy of Reuben (5:1-10). Reuben was the firstborn son of Israel. Because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the two sons of Joseph for the inheritance of the double portion of the good land as the two tribes (vv. 1-2). This should be a warning to us that the birthright of enjoying Christ can be lost because of our failure.

VIII. THE GENEALOGY OF GAD

The genealogy of Gad is recorded in verses 11 through 17.

IX. AN INSERTION

Verses 18 through 26 are an insertion.

A. The Children of Reuben, the Gadites, and Half the Tribe of Manasseh Defeating Their Enemies and Possessing Their Land

The children of Reuben, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh defeated their enemies and possessed their land by the help of God, for they cried out to God in the battle and trusted in Him (vv. 18-23). This is a good example for

us today. We should cry out to God, telling Him that we want to gain more of Christ, possess more of Christ, and enjoy more of Christ.

B. The Children of Reuben, the Gadites, and Half the Tribe of Manasseh Trespassing against God

The children of Reuben, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh trespassed against God and went as harlots after the gods of the peoples of Canaan. Then the God of Israel stirred up the kings of Assyria to come to capture them and bring them away from their land (vv. 25-26).

X. THE GENEALOGY OF LEVI

In chapter six we have the genealogy of Levi, the priestly tribe.

A. One of the Sons of Levi Being Kohath

One of the sons of Levi was Kohath, one of the sons of Kohath was Amram, and Amram's sons were Aaron and Moses, and his daughter was Miriam (vv. 1-3). This is the genealogy of Aaron, Moses, and Miriam.

B. A Descendant of Aaron Being Captured to Babylon

A descendant of Aaron, Jehozadak, was captured to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar (v. 15). It was most unfortunate that even a descendant of the priestly tribe was taken away into captivity in Babylon.

C. The Prophet Samuel Being a Descendant of the Great Rebel Korah

The prophet Samuel was a descendant of the great rebel Korah, who was a descendant of Kohath, the son of Levi (vv. 16-27); and the grandson of Samuel, Heman, was a singer in the temple and a psalmist (v. 33; Psa. 88, title). Korah, the forefather, was a great rebel, yet one of his descendants was Samuel and another was Heman. This indicates that God's mercy and grace are unlimited.

D. David Setting the Descendants of Kohath over the Service of Song in the House of Jehovah

After the ark of testimony was given rest by David, David set the descendants of Kohath over the service of song in the house of Jehovah, and they ministered before the tabernacle with singing until Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem. They attended to their office, and their brothers the Levites were given to all the service of the tabernacle of the house of God (1 Chron. 6:31-48). In typology this signifies the church service, in which everything must be set in order by the arrangement of the Spirit.

E. Aaron and His Sons Being the Priests

Aaron and his sons were the priests, dwelling in thirteen cities (vv. 49-60).

F. The Levites Dwelling in Cities among the Tribes

In verses 61 through 81 we are told that the Levites dwelt in the cities among the tribes.

XI. THE GENEALOGY OF ISSACHAR

In 7:1-5 we have the genealogy of Issachar. The families of Issachar were famous in having mighty men of valor. They were excellent warriors.

XII. THE GENEALOGY OF BENJAMIN

The genealogy of Benjamin is found in 7:6-12 and 8:1-40. The main characters are Saul and Jonathan (8:33). The sons of Benjamin were warlike (7:9, 11; 8:40) and dwelt near Jerusalem.

XIII. THE GENEALOGY OF NAPHTALI

First Chronicles 7:13 records the genealogy of Naphtali.

XIV. THE GENEALOGY OF MANASSEH

Verses 14 through 19 are concerned with the genealogy of Manasseh.

XV. THE GENEALOGY OF EPHRAIM

The genealogy of Ephraim is given in verses 20 through 29. The people of Ephraim dwelt around Bethel.

XVI. THE GENEALOGY OF ASHER

In the genealogy of Asher (vv. 30-40), we are told that the tribe of Asher had mighty men of valor and were warlike (v. 40).

XVII. THE GENEALOGY OF THE RETURNED CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

In 9:1-34 we have the genealogy of the returned children of Israel. The first ones who dwelt in their possessions in their cities were the children of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the Nethinim, who were the servants, or the caretakers, of the temple (v. 2). Those who dwelt in Jerusalem were some of the children of Judah, some of the children of Benjamin, and some of the children of Ephraim and Manasseh (vv. 3-9). The priests (vv. 10-13) and the Levites (vv. 14-34) dwelt in Jerusalem. Among the serving Levites were the descendants of Korah, the great rebel against God and Moses (vv. 19, 31; Num. 16).

XVIII. THE GENEALOGY OF THE HOUSE OF SAUL

Finally, in 1 Chronicles 9:35-44 we have the genealogy of the house of Saul who dwelt in Gibeon.

In this message we have presented simply a general idea of the genealogy from Adam to the twelve tribes of Israel. I believe that if you read these chapters carefully, the Spirit will show you the spiritual significance of the things covered here.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE FOUR

THE HIGHEST POINT OF GOD'S GOSPEL

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 1:4; Gen. 1:26; John 12:24; 1 Cor. 10:17; Col. 3:11

In this message I have the burden to speak a word on the highest point of God's gospel—God becoming a man that man may become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

GOD'S KIND AND MANKIND

The eternal God in His eternity had a "dream" according to His heart's desire, and He made a plan, which in the New Testament is called God's economy (1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10; 3:9). Then God created the universe, making His heart's desire (Adam) the center. This heart's desire is nothing less than one who is the same kind as God is (Gen. 1:26), one who would reproduce and fill the whole earth (v. 28).

God made man after His kind. This means that before the fall of man there was no mankind, only God's kind. Contrary to the definitions given in Webster's dictionary, from God's point of view the word *mankind* is a negative term, for there should be no mankind, only the man created by God as God's kind. However, after the fall man separated himself from God and became mankind. Through this fall Satan came in to cause trouble, and the whole world was thrown into confusion.

Out of the confused world of mankind, God chose Abraham, whose descendants became the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel should not be listed with the nations, because it was among the nations but not with the nations. This nation was a separate people, a holy people sanctified unto God. God used His elect Israel as a type to signify that,

among fallen mankind, God would have a people to come in the future.

GOD BECOMING A MAN TO PRODUCE GOD-MAN KIND

Two thousand years after Abraham, the choosing God became a man. This God-man, through His death and resurrection, has made a mass reproduction of Himself. He as the one grain became many grains (John 12:24). The many grains are ground into fine flour and blended together to become one loaf (1 Cor. 10:17). The Lord Jesus as the only begotten Son of God was the one grain, and He made us the many grains, His many "twins," His many brothers (Rom. 8:29), to be blended into one loaf, one Body. Among us there is no difference in nationality, race, or social rank (Col. 3:11). We are a new kind, "God-man kind."

Just as there are new words to describe new developments in human culture, so we need new terms and expressions to describe matters in our spiritual culture. *God-man kind* is such an expression. In Christ God and man have become one entity, the God-man. In God's creation there was no mankind; there was only man as God's kind. It was through man's fall that mankind came into existence. Eventually God became a man to have a mass reproduction of Himself and thereby to produce a new kind. This new kind is neither God's kind nor mankind—it is God-man kind. Today as believers in Christ, we are God-man kind; we are God-men.

GOD BLENDING THE NATIONS ON EARTH THAT WE, THE GOD-MEN, MAY BE BLENDED INTO ONE BODY

According to our genealogy, we were scattered far away from one another. How could we be blended into one Body? This is now possible because of the great changes that have taken place on earth during the past fifty years. Through the modern means of transportation and communication, people from all over the earth can be blended. In our semi-annual trainings saints come together from as many as fifty nations. The globe today has become a small earth-ball, making it

possible for me to speak the holy Word to people from so many different nations.

On the day I was saved I told the Lord that from that time onward I wanted to travel from village to village in China, preaching the Bible and telling people about Jesus Christ. My intention was to speak only to my countrymen. I never dreamed that I would be here in the United States speaking to saints from fifty nations. From this we see that God has blended the earth together so that we may be blended into one Body.

One day, in 1938, I received from a sister in Peking a letter containing two checks. This sister told me that she believed that God would send me to America and that one check was for my trip there and back and the other was for taking care of my family while I was gone. I answered her, saying that I did not have any burden to go to the United States. But she told me that I should keep the checks and that sooner or later the Lord would send me to the United States. Twenty years later I visited this country, and eventually I became a citizen. This was the Lord's doing. Acts 5:31 tells us that in His ascension the Lord Jesus is the Leader and the Savior. He is the Ruler of all the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5), and I was sent here by Him.

God created the earth and made man according to His kind. Man fell and became mankind. From fallen mankind God chose Abraham to be the father of another people, and then two thousand years later God became a man and lived on earth as a God-man. I am glad that I have become an American, but I am much more glad that I have become a God-man. I am an American by naturalization, but I am a God-man by regeneration.

Do you know what God wants today? We may say that He wants Christians and believers in Christ. Actually, what God wants is not merely Christians or even believers in Christ; He wants a big group of God-men. I believe that our God, who is sitting in the heavens, is happy whenever He looks upon a gathering of God-men, especially a gathering of God-men from fifty nations. In such a gathering everyone has the appearance of a God-man.

At this juncture I would ask you to consider *Hymns,* #203:

1 In the bosom of the Father,
Ere the ages had begun,
Thou wast in the Father's glory,
God's unique begotten Son.
When to us the Father gave Thee,
Thou in person wast the same,
All the fulness of the Father
In the Spirit to proclaim.

2 By Thy death and resurrection,
Thou wast made God's firstborn Son;
By Thy life to us imparting,
Was Thy duplication done.
We, in Thee regenerated,
Many sons to God became;
Truly as Thy many brethren,
We are as Thyself the same.

3 Once Thou wast the only grain, Lord,
Falling to the earth to die,
That thru death and resurrection
Thou in life may multiply.
We were brought forth in Thy nature
And the many grains became;
As one loaf we all are blended,
All Thy fulness to proclaim.

4 We're Thy total reproduction,
Thy dear Body and Thy Bride,
Thine expression and Thy fulness,
For Thee ever to abide.
We are Thy continuation,
Thy life-increase and Thy spread,
Thy full growth and Thy rich surplus,
One with Thee, our glorious Head.

This hymn says that once Christ, the only begotten Son, was the only grain. Through His death and resurrection He has made us the many grains. As such grains, we are the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10), Christ's many brothers, His many "twins." Now the many grains are blended as one loaf, which is Christ's Body, His reproduction.

THE DEIFICATION OF MAN

In the second to the fifth centuries, the church fathers found three high mysteries in the Bible: (1) the Triune God, the Divine Trinity, the highest mystery; (2) the person of Christ; and (3) the deification of man—that man could become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. However, after the fifth century the truth concerning this last mystery was gradually lost. Using the Nicene Creed, today's Christianity affirms the first two mysteries—the mystery of the Divine Trinity and the mystery of Christ's person—but much of Christianity does not see anything about the third mystery—the mystery of God becoming man that man may become God in life and in nature. There is no teaching regarding this among most Christians today. But I feel strongly the Lord is going to recover this truth. As far as the truth is concerned, this may be the last item that the Lord needs to recover.

REVOLUTIONIZED BY REALIZING THAT WE ARE GOD-MEN

When we think of ourselves as God-men, this thinking, this realization, revolutionizes us in our daily experience. For example, a brother may be unhappy with his wife. But he remembers that he is a God-man, and immediately his attitude is changed. Then he will desire to be a God-man husband.

We need to understand that to be a part of mankind is to be something negative. In God's view *mankind* is a negative term referring to fallen man. As believers in Christ and children of God, we are not mankind—we are God-man kind. To realize this is to be changed, even revolutionized. When we realize that we are God-men, we will say, "Lord, You are the first God-man, and we are the many God-men following You. You lived a human life, not by Your human life but by God's divine life to express Him. His attributes became Your virtues. You were here on this earth dying every day. You were crucified to live. Lord, You are my life today and You are my person. You are just me. I therefore must die. I need to be conformed to Your death. I have to be crucified to die

every day to live a God-man's life, a human life yet not by my human life but by the divine life, with Your life and Your nature as my constitution to express You in Your divine attributes, which become my human virtues." This makes us not just a Christian or a believer in Christ but a God-man, one kind with God. This is the highest point of God's gospel.

PREACHING THE TRUTH THAT GOD BECAME A MAN THAT MAN MAY BECOME GOD IN LIFE AND IN NATURE AND LIVING THE LIFE OF A GOD-MAN TO BRING IN A NEW REVIVAL AND TO END THIS AGE

According to this gospel we were fallen, yet Christ died for us. If we believe in Him and receive Him, we will have the eternal life to be the sons of God. Christians today admit that all the believers in Christ are the sons of God or the children of God, but they do not dare admit that the believers in Christ are God. At the end of this age, we are teaching and preaching the truth that God became a man in order to make man God, the same as He is in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. It is a great blessing to hear this truth.

After hearing that God wants a group of God-men, how can you be content to be anything else? What do you want to be? Do you want to be a typical Chinese or a typical American? Do you want to be merely a Christian or a believer in Christ? We should all declare that we want to live the life of a God-man. Eventually, the God-men will be the victors, the overcomers, the Zion within Jerusalem. This will bring in a new revival which has never been seen in history, and this will end this age.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE FIVE

THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE HISTORY OF DAVID

Scripture Reading: 1 Chron. 22:2—29:30

First Chronicles 22:2—29:30 is a supplement to the history of David.

I. DAVID'S PREPARATION OF THE MATERIALS FOR THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE OF GOD IN ABUNDANCE

David's preparation of the materials for the building of the temple of God in abundance typifies Christ's provision for the building of the church of God with His unsearchable riches (22:2-5, 14-16a; 29:2-5a). All the riches provided by Christ are Christ Himself. David was a type of Christ, fighting the battle and gaining the victory. Christ is the unique One who is qualified to provide the materials for the building up of the church of God. The spiritual significances of all the materials provided by David are covered in the life-study of 1 Kings 5—7.

David's preparation in his affliction, in his trials, and in the victory of his fightings typifies Christ's rich provision for the building of the church of God in His trials and victory over Satan with his power of darkness. According to the record of the New Testament, Christ lived a fighting life, fighting mainly against God's enemy Satan. In His victory He prepared all the materials for the building up of the church of God.

II. DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON

In 1 Chronicles 22:6-13, 16b we have David's charge to Solomon for the building of the temple of God in peace. The

father David was a fighter to gain the provisions. The son Solomon was not a fighter but a peaceful king. In peace he enjoyed what was gained and attained through his father's victories.

III. DAVID'S CHARGE TO ALL THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL

In verses 17 through 19 David charged all the leaders of Israel to help Solomon in building the temple of God.

IV. DAVID'S ARRANGEMENT OF THE ORDER OF THE SERVICES OF THE PRIESTS AND THE LEVITES

Chapters twenty-three through twenty-six are a record of David's arrangement of the order of the services of the priests and the Levites. This typifies that as the Head of the Body Christ has set up an order in His Body for all the members to keep. We need to realize that there is an order in the Body of Christ, with the various members set in a particular place. The arrangement in the Body is not a matter of who is higher and who is lower; rather, the arrangement is altogether a matter of what has been ordered by Christ. We need to realize that all the members of the Body are necessary and useful, and we should be content with where Christ has placed us in His Body.

A. Making Solomon His Son King over Israel

David made Solomon his son the king over Israel, indicating that all the priests and Levites were under him (23:1).

B. The Priests Being Ordered in Twenty-four Divisions

The priests, the sons of Aaron, were ordered in twenty-four divisions, or sections (24:1-19). In the church life today we serve in different sections.

C. The Divisions of the Services of the Levites

David also arranged the divisions of the services of the Levites (23:2-32; 24:20—26:32).

1. The Services of the Descendants of the Three Sons of Levi

The services of the descendants of the three sons of Levi—Gershon, Kohath, and Merari—are described in 23:2-23. The total number of the Levites was thirty-eight thousand males from thirty years old and upward (vv. 2-3). Of these, twenty-four thousand were to oversee the work of the house of Jehovah; six thousand were to be officers and judges; four thousand were to be gatekeepers; and four thousand were to praise Jehovah with the instruments made by David (vv. 4-5). The genealogies of Gershon, Kohath, and Merari are given in verses 6 through 23.

2. All the Serving Levites Serving alongside the Priests

All the serving Levites from twenty years old and upward were to serve alongside the priests to take care of all the business affairs for the temple of God (vv. 24-32). In today's church life some of the younger ones should bear some service for the older ones.

3. The Rest of the Levites Casting Lots for Their Duty

The rest of the Levites, both old and young, cast lots for their duty even as their brothers the sons of Aaron (24:20-31). This is a further indication that every serving one had to be in the proper order.

4. David and the Leaders of the Army Setting Apart Some of the Sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun

David and the leaders of the army set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman (a descendant of the great rebel Korah—Num. 16—and a grandson of Samuel—1 Chron. 6:33), and Jeduthun, appointed by King David as the leaders, to prophesy (to sing) with lyres, harps, and cymbals, and divided them into twenty-four divisions (ch. 25). To sing praises to God was the main part of Israel's worship to God (cf. Eph. 5:19). Today we need to have more singing of praises to God.

5. The Doorkeepers Being Divided into Divisions

The doorkeepers, some of whom were the descendants of Korah the great rebel, were divided into divisions to keep the gates of the temple on the east, north, south, and west, and the gate of the storehouse (1 Chron. 26:1-19).

6. Of the Levites, Some Being Assigned to Keep the Treasures of the House of God

Of the Levites, some were assigned to keep the treasures of the house of God and the treasures of the dedicated gifts dedicated by David the king and the heads and the captains out of the spoil won in battles, for the repair of the house of Jehovah, and all that Samuel, Saul, Abner, and Joab had dedicated (vv. 20-28). This shows that whereas David prepared the materials for the building of the temple, others gained spoil through their victory over the enemies and then offered this spoil to God for the maintenance of the house of God. This can be compared to the situation with the church today. In a sense the church has already been built by Christ through His apostles, and now we are simply maintaining, or repairing, what has been built.

7. Of the Levites, Some Being Appointed to Outward Duties

Of the Levites, some were appointed to the outward duties over Israel, as officers and judges (vv. 29-32).

8. David's Arrangement Typifying the Spirit's Arrangement

David's arrangement in order of Israel's services to God related to the temple of God typifies the Spirit's arrangement in order of the church services in the New Testament (1 Cor. 12:4-11; 14:40).

V. THE OFFICERS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF DAVID'S GOVERNMENT

First Chronicles 27 speaks of the officers in the administration of David's government.

A. The Officers Who Served the King Being of Twelve Divisions

The officers who served the king were of twelve divisions, twenty-four thousand in each division, taking care of the king's affairs month by month throughout all the months of the year (vv. 1-15). This was excessive, and it might have been a hidden factor in the rebellion after the time of Solomon. Any enjoyment that is too luxurious cannot last. Today no one should have an enjoyment that is excessive and too luxurious.

B. Thirteen Captains Ruling over the Twelve Tribes and the House of Aaron

Thirteen captains ruled over the twelve tribes and the house of Aaron (vv. 16-22). Here we should note that David did not take the number of the children of Israel from twenty years old and under because of the fear of the wrath of God (vv. 23-24). David's numbering of the people had offended God (2 Sam. 24), and thus he did not dare to count the younger ones.

C. There Being Officers over the King's Treasures

There were officers over the king's treasures and overseers of the property that belonged to the king (1 Chron. 27:25-31).

D. David Having Counselors, Teachers, Friends, and the Captain of His Army

David had counselors, teachers, friends, and the captain of his army (vv. 32-34).

E. Typifying the Submission to the Authority and Headship of Christ in the Church

The governmental order in David's administration typifies the submission to the authority and headship of Christ in the church in the New Testament (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 4:15).

VI. DAVID'S ASSEMBLING AT JERUSALEM ALL THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL

First Chronicles 28 and 29 are a record of David's assembling at Jerusalem all the leaders of Israel.

A. His Address to the Assembly

In 28:2-8 we have David's address to the assembly.

1. Introducing His Son Solomon to Be the Builder of the Temple of God

David introduced his son Solomon to be the builder of the temple of God (vv. 2-7). David said that he had it in his heart to build a house for Jehovah. However, Jehovah told him that he would not build a house for His name but that Solomon his son would build His house (vv. 2-3, 6).

2. Charging Them to Observe All the Commandments of Jehovah

David charged the leaders to observe all the commandments of Jehovah in order that they might possess the good land and leave it as an inheritance forever to their children (v. 8). If they behaved properly before God, they would enjoy the land and leave the land as an inheritance to their children.

B. Charging Solomon His Son to Serve God and to Build the Temple of God

In verses 9 through 21 David charged Solomon his son to serve God and to build the temple of God. He charged Solomon to serve God with his "whole heart and with a willing soul, for Jehovah searches all the hearts and understands every imagination of the thoughts" (v. 9). Then David charged Solomon to build the temple of God according to the pattern that he had by the Spirit, having God's presence, with the priests, the Levites, the willing men with wisdom for any service, the leaders, and all the people wholly at his command (vv. 10-21).

C. His Preparation of the Materials and His Gifts for the Building of the Temple of God Stirring Up the Leaders of Israel to Offer Willingly to God

David's preparation of the materials and his gifts for the building of the temple of God stirred up the leaders of Israel to offer willingly their gifts to God for the building of His temple, so that both the people of Israel and David the king rejoiced with great joy (29:1-9). In this matter David and the leaders of Israel were one.

D. His Blessing to Jehovah in the Sight of All the Assembly

Verses 10 through 19 are David's blessing to Jehovah in the sight of all the assembly.

1. Praising God

First, David praised God for His greatness, power, splendor, victory, and majesty (vv. 10-12).

2. Thanking God

Next, David thanked God that it was of Him that he and the people could willingly offer back to God all things which they had received from Him (vv. 13-17). They had received so much from God, and what they had received they offered back to God for the building of the house of God.

3. Asking God

David continued by asking God to keep and establish the heart of His people Israel in this sound condition and give Solomon his son a wholeness of heart to keep God's commandments, testimonies, and statutes and to do all and build the palace (the temple) of God (vv. 18-19).

E. The Response of All the Assembly

Verses 20 through 25 describe the response of all the assembly.

1. Blessing Jehovah

The people blessed Jehovah, offered sacrifices to Him, and worshipped Him (vv. 20-21).

2. Eating and Drinking before Jehovah and Making Solomon the Son of David King a Second Time

The people ate and drank before Jehovah and made Solomon the son of David king a second time. All Israel obeyed him, with all the leaders and mighty men and all the sons of King David submitting themselves to Solomon the king. Jehovah magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel and bestowed upon him a royal majesty that had never been on any king before him over Israel (vv. 22-25).

F. David Dying at a Good Old Age

David died at a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor (v. 28).

Although we need to know these historical matters, I do not have much burden concerning them, for they are not the center, the reality, the goal, of the Bible. The center, the reality, and the goal of the Bible is God's economy. God's economy is that God would become a man to make man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead for the producing of the New Jerusalem as the increase and expression of the Triune God for eternity. The New Jerusalem is built by God's constituting Himself into man to make man the same as God in life, in nature, and in constitution so that God and man may become a corporate entity.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE SIX

THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH

(1)

Scripture Reading: 2 Chron. 11:5-23; 13:1-21; 14:6—15:15; 17:1-19; 19:1—20:30

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles are supplements to the other books of history in the Old Testament. In 1 Chronicles there is, first, a supplement to the history of mankind, for 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings do not include the genealogy of mankind, which is found in 1 Chronicles 1—9. In the previous message we covered the supplement to the history of David. In this message we will begin to consider the supplement to the history of the kings of Judah.

I. OF REHOBOAM

In 2 Chronicles 11:5-23 we have a word concerning the reign of Rehoboam.

A. Being Capable and Wise

Rehoboam was capable and wise (v. 23).

B. Not Laboring for God's Interest on the Earth

Although Rehoboam was capable and wise, he did not labor for God's interest on the earth to build up the kingdom of God. Instead, he worked for his own interest, transmuting the kingdom of God into a monarchy not only for himself but also for his descendants (vv. 22-23). For this he lost the greater part of his kingdom. The kingdom of his father Solomon was glorious and splendid, but not long after Rehoboam began to

reign, he lost nearly the entire kingdom. This loss was due to his failure to labor for God's interest.

C. His Way and Condition Not Being Proper

Rehoboam's kingdom was on the proper ground of oneness according to God's choice of a unique place (Deut. 12:13-14), and he was fundamental and not apostate, but the way he took and the condition he worked out were not proper. He remained on the proper ground in Jerusalem and he believed and kept the teachings of Moses according to God's revelation. He did not leave God's truth and God's speaking, but he labored for his own interest, not for God's interest.

All the elders should pay attention to this. Elders, you are on the proper ground and you may be fundamental, but for what are you laboring? Are you laboring for God's interest or for your own interest? If you are for your interest, you make the local church a monarchy, your own little empire, not a part of the kingdom of God.

D. The Priests and the Levites throughout All Israel Abandoning Their Property and Going to Judah and Jerusalem

Due to the proper ground of Rehoboam's kingdom and his fundamental faith, the priests and the Levites throughout all Israel abandoned their property and went to Judah and Jerusalem. Those from all the tribes of Israel who set their hearts to seek Jehovah came with the Levites to Jerusalem to sacrifice (that is, to offer their offerings) to the God of their fathers, thus strengthening the kingdom of Judah and supporting Rehoboam the son of Solomon for three years, for they walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years (vv. 13-17). Taking the proper ground and keeping the fundamental faith attracted the seekers of God, and they went to Jerusalem to join Rehoboam for the kingdom of God. However, actually he was not for the kingdom of God; he was for his own monarchy.

E. Rehoboam Indulging His Sexual Lust

Rehoboam indulged his sexual lust by taking eighteen wives and sixty concubines and begetting twenty-eight sons

and sixty daughters, and he sought for his sons many wives (vv. 21, 23). This brought in corruption to them, to their descendants, and to their monarchy. Although Rehoboam took the proper ground and was fundamental, he lived a life of the indulgence of lust. In this matter he was surely influenced by his father, who had hundreds of wives and concubines.

II. OF ABIJAH

Second Chronicles 13:1-21 gives us an account of the reign of Abijah.

A. Defeating Jeroboam the King of Israel

Abijah defeated Jeroboam the king of Israel (vv. 2b-20). In this matter Abijah was quite good.

1. Proclaiming the Apostasy of Jeroboam

Abijah proclaimed to Jeroboam and all Israel the apostasy of Jeroboam. Abijah and Judah took the fundamental standing, and Abijah advised Jeroboam not to fight against them with whom Jehovah stood (vv. 4-12). Here we see that Abijah stood on the fundamental ground to make a proclamation.

2. Jeroboam and the Children of Israel Being Defeated

Jeroboam and the children of Israel were defeated by Abijah and the children of Judah, and Jehovah struck Jeroboam to death (vv. 13-20). This indicates that Jehovah stood with Abijah.

B. Indulging in Sexual Lust

Abijah also indulged in sexual lust by marrying fourteen wives and begetting twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters (v. 21).

III. OF ASA

In 14:6—15:15 we have an account of the reign of Asa.

A. Asa Building Fortress Cities in Judah

Asa built fortress cities in Judah, for the land was quiet

and there was no war against him during those years, because Jehovah had given him rest (14:6-8). Asa was good, and God was pleased with him.

B. Asa Defeating the Cushites

Asa defeated the Cushites by calling out to God and trusting in Him (vv. 9-15).

C. Asa's Further Reforms

Asa carried out some further reforms (15:1-15). These reforms were in addition to those mentioned in 14:3-5 and 15:16, 18.

1. Through the Advice and Encouragement of the Prophet Azariah

Asa's further reforms were accomplished through the advice and encouragement of the prophet Azariah the son of Oded (15:1-7).

2. Putting Away the Abominations from All the Land of Judah and Benjamin

Asa put away the abominations (the idols) from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim and restored the altar of Jehovah (v. 8). The people had fallen to such an extent that they had given up the altar of God and had built altars for the worship of idols. But Asa dealt with that situation.

3. Gathering All Judah and Benjamin and All the Sojourners with Them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon

Asa gathered all Judah and Benjamin and all the sojourners with them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon (for many from Israel threw in their lot with him when they saw that Jehovah his God was with him), and they sacrificed to Jehovah from the spoil. They also entered into a covenant to pursue Jehovah and covenanted that anyone who did not pursue Jehovah would be put to death. Thus Jehovah gave them rest all around (vv. 9-15).

Although Asa was a good king, in chapter sixteen he did

some things that were wrong. When Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, Asa formed an alliance with Ben-hadad king of Syria (16:1-6). Hanani the seer came to Asa and rebuked him for trusting in the king of Syria and not trusting in Jehovah (vv. 7-9). Asa became angry with the seer and put him in prison. At that time Asa also oppressed some of the people (v. 10). In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became severely diseased in his feet, "yet even in his disease he pursued not Jehovah but the physicians" (v. 12). Eventually, Asa died in the forty-first year of his reign (vv. 13-14).

IV. OF JEHOSHAPHAT

Second Chronicles 17:1-19 and 19:1—20:30 are concerned with the reign of Jehoshaphat.

A. Strengthening Himself against Israel

Jehoshaphat strengthened himself against Israel and put forces in all the fortified cities of Judah and put garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim that Asa his father had taken (17:1-2).

B. Jehovah Being with Him Because He Walked in the Ways of David His Father

Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the former ways of David and did not pursue the Baals, the idols, and removed the high places and the Asherim from Judah. All Judah gave tribute to him, and he had riches and honor in abundance (vv. 3-6). In this record we see a principle that God keeps. This principle is that to whoever behaves before Him God gives rest to enjoy the good land.

C. Establishing the Kingdom of God

Jehoshaphat established the kingdom of God by sending his officials, the Levites, and the priests to teach the children of Judah by the book of the law of Jehovah (vv. 7-9).

D. Jehovah Causing All the Kingdoms around Judah to Fear Jehoshaphat and Give Him Tribute

Jehovah caused all the kingdoms around Judah to fear Jehoshaphat and give him tribute, so that he grew exceedingly great and built a strong national defense and a great army of 1,160,000 mighty men of valor (vv. 10-19). That means that he was strong and that in his kingship he enjoyed the good land.

E. Rebuked by Jehu the Seer for Helping Ahab

Jehoshaphat was rebuked by Jehu the seer for helping Ahab, the evil king of Israel (19:1-3; cf. ch. 18).

F. Setting Up Judges throughout All the Fortified Cities of Judah to Take Care of All the Cases of the People

Jehoshaphat set up judges throughout all the fortified cities of Judah to take care of the cases of the people. The judges were under Amariah the chief priest in all matters concerning Jehovah and under Zebadiah the ruler of the house of Judah in all matters concerning the king, with the Levites serving them as officers (19:4-11). Here we see a healthy situation. There was a good priest taking care of the worship of God and a good ruler taking care of governmental matters. In addition, the Levites were faithful to Jehoshaphat. In such a healthy situation, Jehoshaphat enjoyed the good land because he feared God.

G. Defeating the Army of the Children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir by Trusting in Jehovah

In 20:1-30 we see that Jehoshaphat defeated the great army of the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir by trusting in Jehovah.

1. Setting His Face to Pursue Jehovah

Jehoshaphat set his face to pursue Jehovah and proclaimed

a fast throughout all Judah, and all the cities of Judah came to seek Jehovah (vv. 3-4). It was very good that he proclaimed a fast that the people would have a time to pray about their situation.

2. Praying to Jehovah in the Assembly

Jehoshaphat prayed to Jehovah in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem with their little ones, wives, and children (vv. 5-13).

3. Jehovah Answering His Prayer through Jahaziel, a Levite

Jehovah answered Jehoshaphat's prayer through Jahaziel, a Levite. Jehoshaphat and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem worshipped Jehovah, with the Levites praising Jehovah, the God of Israel, with an exceedingly loud voice (vv. 14-19).

4. Jehovah Destroying and Demolishing Their Enemy

The next morning they went to meet the enemy with the encouragement of their king Jehoshaphat: "Believe in Jehovah your God, and you will be established; believe in His prophets, and you will succeed" (v. 20). They went also with the singers giving thanks in holy array before the army. Then Jehovah destroyed and demolished their enemy; and Jehoshaphat and his people gathered the spoil in abundance, more than they could carry, for three days. They came back to Jerusalem with harps, lyres, and trumpets to enter the house of Jehovah. This surely was a triumphant celebration. Thus the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God had given him rest all around (vv. 21-30).

From the cases of the kings covered in this message, we need to learn to be very careful to behave ourselves properly. God is great, but He also cares about all the details. We may be right in big things, but we may be wrong in small things, in the details. We should not think that it is a small thing to be wrong in the small things. In principle, to be wrong in anything, great or small, is a serious matter. In the record

of God's dealing with these kings of Judah, God took every detail of their behavior, even if it was quite small, as a reason to discipline them.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE SEVEN

BEING FUNDAMENTAL IN FULL AND WALKING ACCORDING TO THE ALL-INCLUSIVE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: 2 Chron. 11:5, 13-14; Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25

In this message I would like to say a word about our need to be fundamental in a full and complete way and also about our need in our daily living to walk according to the compound, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit.

STANDING ON THE PROPER GROUND AND KEEPING THE FUNDAMENTAL FAITH

I thank God that in 1 and 2 Chronicles there is a record showing us how God deals with His people in detail. God's dealing with His people in the details of their living is for His people to enjoy the good land, Christ, in a very proper way. To enjoy the good land, the kings had to stand on the proper ground and they had to be fundamental, keeping the faith given by God through Moses.

It is the same with us today. The church ground is quite important, and to keep all the truths, to be fundamental, is also important. Today's Christians claim to be fundamental, but they are fundamental only in part. They are not fundamental in full. Through the years we have been trying our best, by God's mercy and grace, to be perfectly fundamental, that is, to be fundamental not just in part but in full.

THE TRUTH CONCERNING THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION AND THE TRUTH CONCERNING CHRIST AS LIFE

Brother Watchman Nee, who was raised up by the Lord more than seventy years ago, read the Bible thoroughly again and again. The hundreds of missionaries who came to China

from Europe and America were faithful in a sense, but they did not make clear to the Chinese Christians the basic truth of the assurance of salvation. The missionaries translated the Bible, preached from the Bible, and taught the Bible, but they did not point out that the believers in Christ could have and should have the assurance of their salvation. After Brother Nee was raised up by the Lord, he preached and taught the truth concerning the assurance of salvation, and I followed him to do this. Wherever we went we asked people if they knew whether or not they were saved. When we would ask this question, the pastors and preachers would laugh at us and tell us that we were proud for saying that we knew that we were saved. In this situation Brother Nee fought the battle for the truth concerning the assurance of salvation. Today millions of Chinese Christians everywhere believe in the assurance of salvation. They know that as long as they believe in the Lord Jesus, they are saved and may have the assurance that they have been saved. The situation now is very different from the situation when Brother Nee began to fight for this basic truth.

Brother Nee continued to fight for the truth, and eventually he released the truth regarding Christ as our life and our taking Christ as life. This was another truth which the missionaries in China did not make clear to the believers. Once the believers have the assurance of their salvation, they need to see that they have Christ in them as their life and that they should take Christ as their life and live by Christ.

THE TRUTH CONCERNING THE NEW JERUSALEM

During the past seventy-two years, in His recovery the Lord has gone on and on to recover many other truths. In particular, the Lord has recovered the truth concerning the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and 22. Many expositors of the Bible do not have the proper understanding of what the New Jerusalem is. Very few Bible teachers have written anything about the spiritual significance of the New Jerusalem. Among these few are a German teacher from long ago named Tersteegen and our dear friend T. Austin-Sparks, whom I regard as the last of the inner-life teachers. Like

Tersteegen, T. Austin-Sparks saw that the New Jerusalem is not a physical city but a sign with a spiritual significance. Brother Sparks pointed out that the spiritual things concerning God, Christ, and the church are mysterious and that God uses signs to reveal the truth regarding such spiritual things. We took his word and still hold to it.

The book of Revelation opens with a word about signs: "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show to His slaves the things that must quickly take place; and He made it known by signs, sending it by His angel to His slave John." This indicates that the revelation in this book is composed of signs, that is, symbols with a spiritual significance, such as the seven lampstands, signifying the seven churches, and the Lamb, signifying Christ the Redeemer as the unique sacrifice to accomplish God's eternal redemption. Even the New Jerusalem is a sign, the last and consummate sign, signifying the ultimate consummation of God's economy. In the last fifty years, the truth concerning the New Jerusalem has become more and more clear to us. As a result, in our hymnal there are a number of hymns on the New Jerusalem.

THE TRUTH CONCERNING DEIFICATION—THAT GOD BECAME A MAN THAT MAN MAY BECOME GOD IN LIFE AND IN NATURE BUT NOT IN THE GODHEAD

If we would be fundamental in full, we must be fundamental with respect to all the truths. Among the many truths there are three great mysteries which were discovered by the church fathers in the second century: the mystery of the Divine Trinity, the mystery of Christ's person, and the mystery of man's deification—that God became a man that man may become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. Although Christians hold the truth concerning the Triune God and the truth concerning the person of Christ, after the first five centuries the truth concerning deification was gradually lost. In February of this year, I became burdened to release messages on this truth.

After I began to speak concerning God becoming a man that man may become God in life and in nature, I learned

that the Catholic Church is also paying attention to this matter of deification. Not long ago a brother showed me that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* recently published by the Roman Catholic Church, presents the following:

ARTICLE 3

"HE WAS CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND WAS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY"

Paragraph 1. The Son of God Became Man

I. WHY DID THE WORD BECOME FLESH?

460 The Word became flesh to make us "*partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Pet. 1:4): "For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres*. 3, 19, 1). "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God" (St. Athanasius, *De inc., 54, 3). "The only-begotten Son of God, want*ing to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opusc.* 57:1-4). (*Catechism of the Catholic Church,* pp. 115-116).

Here we see that the Catholic Church teaches that the believers in Christ can become God. Furthermore, another brother told me about a book, written in Arabic by a Catholic priest, which says the same thing about man becoming God. In order to be perfectly fundamental, we need to be clear concerning this great truth—the truth that God became a man that man may become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

CONDUCTING OURSELVES ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

However, it is not adequate just to have the proper ground and to be perfectly fundamental. What we are, how we live, and how we behave mean a lot. God's people in the Old Testament received of God through Moses a set of books called the law. Today God is dealing with us not according to the law but according to the compound, life-giving, indwelling, consummated Spirit. In the Old Testament time, God's people were required to behave themselves according to the law. Today we are required by the New Testament to conduct ourselves according to the compound, life-giving, all-inclusive Spirit (Rom. 8:4).

God dealt with all the good kings of Judah according to the law of Moses in detail. Anyone who was wrong with the law even a little would lose a great part of the enjoyment of the good land. This typifies and signifies that today we must conduct ourselves according to the spiritual law, and the spiritual law is just the Spirit Himself, the compound Spirit.

We need to be careful in every detail. For instance, when we talk to our spouse, we have to talk according to the spirit. We need to walk in all things according to the spirit (Rom. 8:4). We need to be warned and be on the alert that whatever we say, whatever we do, whatever we express, our attitude, our spirit, and our intention must be purified by the life-giving, compound, all-inclusive Spirit. Otherwise, we will lose much in the enjoyment of Christ, today's good land.

Now we are studying the books of history in the Old Testament. We need to learn the lessons from all the details recorded in these books. Consider the case of Asa. He was a good king and he did many good things. However, he offended God by forming an alliance with Ben-hadad king of Syria (2 Chron. 16:1-6). Furthermore, he became angry with the seer who rebuked him for trusting in the king of Syria instead of trusting in Jehovah. It might have been because of this offense that Asa became severely diseased in his feet. This disease caused his death (vv. 7-10, 12-13).

From the cases recorded in the books of history, we see that God is not only loving but also fearful. Therefore, as

Paul says in Philippians 2:12, we must learn to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE EIGHT

LEARNING FROM THE EXAMPLES OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH TO HAVE A GOD-MAN LIVING IN OUR DAILY LIFE

Scripture Reading: 2 Chron. 3:1; 11:5, 13-16; 15:9-10; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:13-14; Rom. 5:17b, 21b

Prayer: Lord, how we thank You for a time to be with You and with saints from around the globe. What a chance, Lord, to have a blending not only among ourselves but also a blending with You. Hallelujah, what a blending that we, the tripartite man, can be blended with the Triune God! Lord, give us a heart to treasure this time. We would not let You go and we would not let ourselves go until we have some blending with You. We believe that we are under Your anointing, the anointing of the compound, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit, who is the consummation of the Triune God dwelling within us. Lord, we praise You that we are living in this most blessed day, the day that will close this age and bring You back. Lord, thank You for Your presence. Thank You for opening up Your Word. Thank You that we have not only the printed Word but also the opened and interpreted Word. Your Word has been opened up to us, and You are waiting for us to take it. Help us, Lord. We are weak, we are nothing, and we need You. Amen.

THE KINGS OF JUDAH STANDING ON THE PROPER GROUND

The supplement to the history of the kings of Judah recorded in 2 Chronicles shows us that the kings in Judah stood on the proper ground—Jerusalem—the ground chosen, ordained, and established by God (Deut. 12:5-18). God's choosing of this ground according to His ordination is clearly

seen in Deuteronomy 12, a chapter that we need to study carefully.

Jerusalem is the place chosen by God to be His worship center for the whole earth. Today statesmen and world leaders are debating about who the rightful owner of Jerusalem is. This debate is foolish, and those who are debating do not know what they are talking about, for they do not know that God is the owner of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the center of God's worship, belongs to the Triune God.

We may say that God's choice of Jerusalem as the worship center began with His word to Abraham in Genesis 22:2. God told Abraham to go to the land of Moriah and to offer Isaac (a type of Christ) upon one of the mountains of which God would tell him. The place—Mount Moriah—where Abraham offered Isaac was also the site—Mount Zion—selected by God for the temple (2 Chron. 3:1; 2 Sam. 24:25). Zion is actually a peak of Mount Moriah. When Solomon was about to build the temple, there was no need for him to select a place because the place had already been selected by God and made known to David. I believe that this site was the very spot where Isaac was offered to God by his father. The choice of this place was God's ordination.

The kings of Judah remained on the proper ground, Jerusalem, chosen by God, but the kings of Israel abandoned the God-ordained ground. Jeroboam even set up other worship centers in Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:29-30). This action was an abomination in the eyes of the Lord. The kings of Judah were right with respect to the ground. The proper ground, the unique ground, the ground chosen, ordained, and established by God, signifies the ground on which we should practice the church life today.

THE KINGS OF JUDAH KEEPING THEIR FUNDAMENTAL FAITH IN GOD'S WORD

The kings of Judah also kept their belief in the Word of God given by Moses. Therefore, regarding their faith they were fundamental. Thus the kings of Judah were right in two things: remaining on the proper ground and keeping the fundamental faith in God's Word.

ATTRACTING TO JERUSALEM THE PRIESTS, THE LEVITES, AND THOSE FROM ALL THE TRIBES WHO SET THEIR HEARTS TO SEEK JEHOVAH

The proper ground and the fundamental faith were attractions for a good number of God's people, especially the priests and the Levites. During the reign of Rehoboam, the Levites abandoned their pasture lands and their property and went to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 11:13-14). Moreover, "those from all the tribes of Israel who set their hearts to seek Jehovah, the God of Israel, came after them to Jerusalem to sacrifice to Jehovah, the God of their fathers" (v. 16). Not only the priests and Levites but all those who sought Jehovah in other tribes gave up their property and came to the worship center in Jerusalem. Later, during the reign of Asa, "many from Israel threw in their lot with him when they saw that Jehovah his God was with him" (15:9). They were attracted to Jerusalem because the kings of Judah stood on the proper ground and kept the fundamental faith.

However, this is not all that we should have. We have seen that the kings of Judah were on the proper ground of Jerusalem and that they kept the fundamental faith, but now we need to consider how they behaved themselves.

EXAMPLES REFERRING TO THE WAY WE CONDUCT OURSELVES IN THE DETAILS OF OUR DAILY LIVING

In the Old Testament history books we can see many different pictures, but we may not have an accurate interpretation of these pictures. The correct interpretation of the pictures in the history of the kings of Judah recorded in the books of Chronicles is that these kings are examples showing us that it is not sufficient for us who love God and seek Christ only to stand on the right ground and keep the fundamental truth. We also need to take care of who we are, how we behave, and how we conduct ourselves. We must also pay attention to our interest, our intention, our purpose, our goal, our attitude, and our way of speaking. For example, we should pay attention to the tone of our voice. Sometimes our tone of voice may be like that of a roaring lion, not like that of a God-man.

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles give us many examples of how the kings of Judah conducted themselves in the good land. These examples show how they were, how they behaved themselves, how they did things, how they faced different situations, what their intentions were, what their interests were, and what their goals were as kings in the good land. These examples refer to the way we conduct ourselves in the details of our daily living.

Consider the daily situation in your married life. You are on the proper ground of the church and you keep the fundamental faith, but how do you speak to your spouse? How do you treat your spouse? What is your attitude toward your wife or husband? In your married life do you walk according to the spirit or according to something else? Do you live the life of a God-man with your husband or wife?

In order to live the life of a God-man, we must be crucified. We must be dying to live. If we live a crucified life in our married life, then in our married life we will have the living of a God-man.

Many saints are very good in the church meetings and in the church service, but at home they may live the life not of a God-man but of a "scorpion-man," exchanging words or quarreling. A certain couple may love the Lord and His recovery. However, at dinner the husband may criticize his wife for her attitude, and she may condemn him for his way of speaking. Then after dinner they attend the meeting of their vital group. But how can these two "scorpions" be vital? Because of such a daily situation, in this country it is very difficult to find a genuine vital group. According to my observation, in the vital groups I have seen only deadness, not vitality. All the vital members should be God-men, crucified in their natural life to live a God-man life by the divine life within them.

WHAT THE LORD WANTS TODAY

My burden in these messages is not to teach biblical history. Rather, my burden is to minister what the Lord wants today. The Lord desires that many of His believers would gradually be transformed into God-men. Second Corinthians

3:17 says that the Lord is the Spirit. Verse 18 goes on to say, "We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit." This means that we should keep our face unveiled and look at the Lord that we may be transformed into His image. Transformation requires a process; it cannot take place overnight. Furthermore, Romans 8:29 says God has predestinated us not just to be transformed but also to be conformed to the image of His Son, that this Son might be the Firstborn among many brothers. My burden is that we, the believers in Christ, would gradually be transformed and conformed to be God-men.

THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST DIFFERING IN DEGREES

In the first message we pointed out that our enjoyment of Christ differs in degrees according to our pursuing of Christ and our faithfulness to Him. The highest attainment of pursuing Christ is to reign with Christ in His divine life through His abounding grace (Phil. 3:13-14; Rom. 5:17b, 21b). Our pursuing of Christ and our faithfulness to Him determine how much we enjoy Him. To have the highest attainment in pursuing Christ is to reign with Him as kings in His divine life.

The kings of Judah attained to a position where they could enjoy the good land of Canaan in their kingship. They were kings to enjoy the good land. The extent of their enjoyment depended on what they were, on how they behaved themselves, and on what their goals, interests, and intentions were. We need to learn from their examples how to have a God-man living in all the details of our daily life.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE NINE

THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH

(2)

Scripture Reading: 2 Chron. 21:12-18; 24:14b-24; 25:5-16; 26:6-21a; 28:8-15

In our study of the supplement to the history of the kings of Judah, we are covering only twelve of the twenty kings of Judah because only the supplementary matters related to these twelve were not covered in 1 and 2 Kings. Furthermore, in this supplement in 1 and 2 Chronicles none of the kings of Israel are included, because they all forsook both the proper ground, the ground of Jerusalem, and the fundamental faith given by God through Moses. Thus, God forsook them because of their apostasy.

In this message we will continue to consider the supplement to the history of the kings of Judah, looking at the examples of Jehoram, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, and Ahaz.

V. OF JEHORAM

In 2 Chronicles 21:12-18 we have a word concerning Jehoram.

A. Warned by Elijah the Prophet

Jehoram, a descendant of David and Solomon, was warned by Elijah the prophet concerning his evils before God and his miserable end (vv. 12-15). Jehoram stood on the proper ground and he kept the fundamental faith, but he was evil in the sight of God. Because of this, Elijah told him that his life would come to a miserable end.

B. Jehovah Stirring Up the Philistines and Arabians against Him

Jehovah stirred up the Philistines and Arabians against Jehoram. They came up against Judah, broke through into it, and carried away all the possessions of his house as well as his sons and his wives, except Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons (vv. 16-17). What a miserable end to Jehoram's enjoyment of the good land in his kingship. His reign should have been glorious and splendid, but instead it was miserable. Everything and everyone was captured, including his wives and his sons. But in His mercy the Lord spared the youngest son to continue the throne.

C. Jehovah Striking Him with an Incurable Illness

After all this, Jehovah struck Jehoram in his bowels with an incurable illness (v. 18). This illness might have been cancer.

VI. OF JOASH

In 24:14b-24 we have an account of the reign of Joash.

A. Seeing the Good Pattern of the Chief Priest

Joash saw the good pattern of the chief priest Jehoiada of doing well in Israel and with God and restoring the house of God; and Jehoiada had shown him kindness in raising him up to be the prince to succeed the throne of David (vv. 14b-16, 22a). This means this high priest protected the royal family. He did well in three directions: with the people, with God, and with the house of God, keeping the house of God during a time of rebellion.

B. Listening to the Captains of Judah and Forsaking the House of Jehovah

After the death of the chief priest Jehoiada, Joash listened to the captains of Judah, the leaders of the army, and forsook the house of Jehovah the God of their fathers and served the Asherim and the idols, bringing in the wrath of God upon Judah and Jerusalem (vv. 17-18).

C. God Sending Prophets to the People of Judah and Jerusalem to Bring Them Back to Jehovah

In His mercy, God still sent prophets to the people of Judah and Jerusalem to bring them back to Jehovah. The Spirit of God clothed (that is, was poured upon) Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the chief priest to testify to them that they did not prosper because they transgressed the commandments of Jehovah. Joash the king, not remembering the kindness which Jehoiada the father of Zechariah had shown him, commanded the conspiring people to stone him to death in the court of the house of Jehovah (vv. 19-22).

D. The Army of the Syrians Coming Up against Him

At the turn of the year, the army of the Syrians came up against Joash and came to Judah and Jerusalem and destroyed all the leaders of the people. This took place even though the number of the Syrian army was smaller than that of the very great army of Judah (vv. 23-24a). This defeat of a great army by a smaller army was of God. It was God's discipline of His people that they would learn how to enjoy the riches of the good land in full and live a long life there in peace.

In God's mercy, Joash was the only one of his father's sons to be spared. He was then raised up by the great priest Jehoiada to be the prince. At the beginning of his reign he was good, and he remembered what Jehoiada had done for him. But when Jehoiada died, he listened to the leaders of the military power which came in. He was subdued by them and he followed them to worship the idols, and so forth. Eventually he conspired to martyr Zechariah, the son of the very one who had taken such good care of him. Forgetting all the kindness that had been shown to him, Joash was in company with those who conspired to put the son of Jehoiada to death. The next year the Syrian army came "because they had forsaken Jehovah the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash" (v. 24b).

VII. OF AMAZIAH

In 25:5-16 we have the example of Amaziah.

A. Preparing Three Hundred Thousand Chosen Men for War

Amaziah prepared three hundred thousand chosen men for war and hired from Israel one hundred thousand mighty men of valor to fight against the Edomites (vv. 5-6).

B. A Man of God Advising Amaziah Not to Fight with the Help of the Army of Israel

A man of God advised Amaziah not to fight with the help of the army of Israel, because God was not with Israel. Then he let the army of Israel go back to their own place, and their anger was greatly kindled against Judah (vv. 7-10).

C. Strengthening Himself to Fight the Children of Edom

Amaziah strengthened himself to fight the children of Edom with his own people and defeated them, capturing some of them (vv. 11-12). Here Amaziah had a clear standing and therefore was able to fight against Edom.

D. The Men of Israel Whom Amaziah Sent Back Raiding the Cities of Judah

The men of Israel whom Amaziah had sent back from going with him into battle raided the cities of Judah, killed three thousand of them, and took much spoil (v. 13).

E. Setting Up the Gods of the Edomites as His Gods for Worship

After Amaziah defeated the Edomites, he brought their gods and set them up as his gods for worship. This was his great failure. The anger of Jehovah was kindled against him, and He sent a prophet to warn him. But he would not listen to the prophet, and God determined to destroy him (vv. 14-16).

VIII. OF UZZIAH (AZARIAH)

Second Chronicles 26:6-21a speaks of the reign of Uzziah, whose other name is Azariah.

A. Defeating the Philistines, the Arabians, and the Meunim by the Help of God

Uzziah defeated the Philistines, the Arabians, and the Meunim by the help of God, and the Ammonites gave tribute to him. His fame went as far as Egypt. Thus he became exceedingly strong (vv. 6-8). This shows us that if we go along with the very God whom we worship, we will prosper. Otherwise, we will suffer.

B. Building Towers in Jerusalem and Works of Defense

Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem and works of defense and hewed out many cisterns for his ranch and farm. He had a mighty army and became strong by the marvelous help of God (vv. 9-15).

C. His Heart Becoming Uplifted to Trespass against Jehovah and Go into the Temple of Jehovah to Burn Incense

When Uzziah became strong, his heart became uplifted to trespass against Jehovah and go into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense (v. 16). You may think that it was not wrong for the king to burn incense. But according to God's ordination in the Old Testament, the kings were not allowed to touch the duties of the priests. Burning the incense was the duty of the priests, not of the kings. Uzziah, however, was proud and did not care for anyone other than himself. Therefore, he went into the temple to do the service of a priest. Azariah the priest, with eighty priests of valor, withstood him to stop him from burning incense to God. Uzziah became angry with the priests, and leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests. Because of the uncleanness of his leprosy, the priests rushed him out of the temple of God and put him in a separate house as a leper until the day of his death

(vv. 17-21a). Here in the case of Uzziah we have another example of a king who had a miserable end.

IX. OF AHAZ

In 28:8-15 we have an account of the reign of Ahaz.

A. Jehovah Delivering Him into the Hand of the King of Israel

When Jehovah delivered Ahaz into the hand of the king of Israel, the children of Israel carried away captive of their brothers two hundred thousand women, sons, and daughters, and also plundered much spoil from them (vv. 5b, 8).

B. Oded, a Prophet of Jehovah, Advising the Children of Israel to Return Their Captives from Judah

Oded, a prophet of Jehovah, came to advise the children of Israel to return their captives from Judah, their brothers, for the burning anger of Jehovah was upon them (vv. 9-11). Oded seemed to be saying that after defeating Ahaz, they should not have captured so many women and young people. God is a God of love, and He would not approve of such a thing. Therefore, His anger was burning upon the people of Israel.

C. The Heads of the Children of Ephraim Returning the Captives to Judah

The heads of the children of Ephraim returned the captives to Judah in a kind and loving way so that they avoided the burning anger of Jehovah upon them (vv. 12-15).

The record in the books of Chronicles reveals that God is just in dealing with His people. Do not think that God will not take the time to deal with you if you are wrong in small things. God has much more time than you have. If you have time to make a mistake, He surely has time to discipline you.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE TEN

THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH

(3)

Scripture Reading: 2 Chron. 29:3—32:8; 33:11-17; 34:3-7; 36:20b-23

In previous messages we covered nine kings of Judah who are examples regarding the enjoyment of God's good land, which is a type of the all-inclusive Christ. In this message we will consider three more kings.

X. OF HEZEKIAH

In 29:3—32:8 we have an account of the reign of Hezekiah. He was one of the best kings. But even with Hezekiah there was a hidden defect. This defect is not mentioned in 2 Chronicles, but it is exposed in 2 Kings and in Isaiah.

A. Restoring the House of Jehovah

Hezekiah restored the house of Jehovah and brought out the impurity (things related to idol worship) from the holy place (29:3-36). This was a great thing. The house of God, the temple of God, was the place for His elect to worship Him. But before Hezekiah came into his reign, Israelites put idols into that temple, and in verse 5 these idols are called "the impurity."

1. Charging the Levites and the Priests to Sanctify the House of Jehovah

Hezekiah charged the Levites and the priests to sanctify the house of Jehovah (vv. 4-11). His charge indicates that after the devastation of the temple, the priests and the

Levites were left with nothing to do. Hezekiah charged them to remove from the eyes of the holy God all the idols, all the things of impurity. In verse 11 he said to them, "My sons, do not now be negligent, for Jehovah has chosen you to stand before Him to minister to Him and to be His ministers and burn incense."

2. The Levites and the Priests Doing It according to Hezekiah's Charge

The Levites and the priests did the work of cleansing the temple according to Hezekiah's charge (vv. 12-19).

3. Hezekiah and the Leaders of the City Worshipping God in the House of Jehovah

Hezekiah and the leaders of the city worshipped God in the house of Jehovah (vv. 20-30). This indicates that the temple of God had been left to the idols and that in it there was not the worship of God. Hezekiah took the lead along with the leaders of the city to worship God in the house of Jehovah. In addition, they offered the burnt offering and the sin offering to God with the praising of God by the instruments made by David and with the words of David and Asaph. The burnt offering was for God's satisfaction, and the sin offering was for the forgiveness of their sins.

4. Charging the Assembly of the People to Offer Sacrifices and Thank Offerings to God

Hezekiah charged the assembly of the people to offer sacrifices and thank offerings to God, and all the people did it with rejoicing over what God had prepared for them (vv. 31-36). This was a great restoration, a great revival.

B. Recovering the Passover

In 30:1—31:1 we see that Hezekiah recovered the Passover. The Passover had been lost, and the people no longer kept it, but Hezekiah recovered it.

1. The Degraded Children of Israel Not Holding the Passover for a Long Time

The degraded children of Israel had not held the Passover for a long time as it was decreed in Moses' writing (30:5b).

2. Hezekiah Recovering the Passover by Sending Letters to All Israel and Judah

Hezekiah recovered the Passover by sending letters to all Israel and Judah telling them to come to Jerusalem to hold the Passover of Jehovah (vv. 1-12).

a. Trying to Keep the Oneness of All God's Elect

He sent letters not only to the people of Judah but to all the people of Israel in order to keep the oneness of all God's elect (vv. 1a, 6a). By that time God's elect people had been divided. Hezekiah tried to unite them by inviting them all to keep the Passover.

b. Asking All the People of Israel and Judah to Come to Jerusalem Where the House of God Was

Hezekiah asked all the people of Israel and Judah to come to Jerusalem where the house of God was to hold the Passover in order to remind them to keep the one unique ground of the worship of God among all Israel (v. 1b; cf. Deut. 12:5, 11, 13-14). He realized that keeping the unique ground pleases the heart of God.

c. Some Men from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun Humbling Themselves and Coming to Jerusalem

The divisive people of Ephraim and Manasseh and as far as Zebulun laughed the runners of the letters to scorn and mocked them, but some men from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 30:10-11). This is a type of today's situation. If we invite some denominational people to come to worship God on the church ground, they might know that this would be right, but they might not humble themselves and come to the proper ground, for this would cause them to lose face.

d. The Hand of God Being upon the People of Judah

Moreover, the hand of God was on the people of Judah, giving them one heart to perform the commandment of Hezekiah and the officers according to the word of Jehovah (v. 12). They listened to Hezekiah and the leaders, and then they took action according to God's word, according to God's revelation.

3. A Very Great Assembly Gathering at Jerusalem to Hold the Feast of Unleavened Bread

A very great assembly gathered at Jerusalem to hold the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month (vv. 13-22). The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days, was a continuation of the Passover, which lasted only one day.

a. Removing the Idolatrous Altars in Jerusalem

They removed the idolatrous altars that were in Jerusalem and they removed all the incense altars and threw them into the brook Kidron (v. 14). Everywhere in Jerusalem altars had been built for the idols, but Hezekiah and those who had gathered at Jerusalem to hold the Feast of Unleavened Bread cleared them away.

b. The Priests, the Levites, and the People Sanctifying Themselves unto God

The priests, the Levites, and the people sanctified themselves to God (vv. 15-17). The priests and the Levites brought burnt offerings to the house of Jehovah, and the Levites offered sacrifices for those who were not clean, to sanctify them to Jehovah.

c. Hezekiah Praying for Many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun

Hezekiah prayed for many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun who ate the Passover yet had not cleansed themselves. God heard Hezekiah and healed the people (vv. 18-20; cf. 1 Cor. 11:30-31). Some who ate the Passover had not cleansed themselves, and they got sick as a result. This is also a type. Once again we see that certain

details of the New Testament economy are clearly portrayed in the Old Testament types.

d. The Children of Israel at Jerusalem Holding the Feast of Unleavened Bread with Great Rejoicing and Praising

The children of Israel at Jerusalem held the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great rejoicing and praising, and they repeated it with joy for another seven days (2 Chron. 30:21-26). Have you ever enjoyed the Lord's table so much on the Lord's Day that you had the Lord's table again the next day? How good that would be! After the people repeated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for another seven days, the priests and the Levites blessed the people, and their voice was heard and their prayer went up to God's sanctuary, to heaven (v. 27).

4. All Israel in the Cities of Judah Going Out to Smash the Pillars, Hew Down the Asherim, and Pull Down the High Places and the Altars

When all this was finished, all Israel in the cities of Judah went out to smash the pillars, hew down the Asherim, and pull down the high places and the altars out of all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh (31:1). In doing this, Hezekiah was surely pleasing to God.

C. Setting the Services of the Priests and the Levites in Order

In 31:2-21 Hezekiah set the services of the priests and the Levites in order. This signifies Christ, as the Head, setting in order the services of God in the church.

1. Appointing the Divisions of the Priests and the Levites

Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites by their divisions for the offerings and praise in the gates of the temple of Jehovah (v. 2).

2. Appointing His Portion of His Substance for the Burnt Offerings

Hezekiah appointed his portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, the morning and evening burnt offerings and the burnt offerings of the Sabbath, the new moon, and the appointed feasts (v. 3). This indicates that he offered much of his substance to God.

3. Commanding the People Who Dwelt in Jerusalem to Give the Portion for the Priests and the Levites

Hezekiah commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion for the priests and the Levites (v. 4), thereby supporting the priests and the Levites according to their daily necessities. This indicates that prior to this time, the need of the priests and the Levites had been neglected. The children of Israel gave in abundance for the priests and the Levites in distribution according to their divisions (vv. 5-19). The people took the responsibility of supporting the priests and the Levites.

4. Doing What Was Good, Upright, and Faithful before Jehovah His God with All His Heart

What Hezekiah did in verses 4 through 19 he did throughout all Judah. He did what was good, upright, and faithful before Jehovah his God with all his heart, and he prospered (vv. 20-21). He was the kind of person who should prosper.

D. Building a Defense against the Invasion of the Assyrians, Trusting in God, and Encouraging His People to Do So

Hezekiah built a defense against the invasion of the Assyrians (32:1-5). He trusted in God and encouraged his people to do so by saying, "Be strong and be bold; do not be afraid or dismayed because of the king of Assyria or because of all the multitude that is with him, for there is Someone greater with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh, but with us is Jehovah our God to help us and to fight our battles" (vv. 6-8a). Here we see Hezekiah's faith, his trust in

Jehovah. Here we also see that the people relied on the words of Hezekiah king of Judah (v. 8b).

However, not even Hezekiah was perfect. Here in 2 Chronicles there is no mention of Hezekiah's shortcomings, but within him there was something for his own interest and desire. This is clearly revealed in 2 Kings 20:1-19 and Isaiah 38 and 39.

XI. OF MANASSEH

In 2 Chronicles 33:11-17 we have a word concerning Manasseh. He was the son of Hezekiah and he reigned for fifty-five years.

A. Being Disciplined by Jehovah

Manasseh was disciplined by Jehovah and was captured by the Assyrians and taken to Babylon (v. 11).

B. Entreating Jehovah His God and Humbling Himself Greatly before the God of His Fathers

Manasseh entreated Jehovah his God in his distress, humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him. God heard his supplication and brought him back to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then he knew that Jehovah indeed was God (vv. 12-13). He came to know this through God's discipline.

C. Fortifying the City of David

Manasseh fortified the city of David (Bethlehem) and put the valorous captains in all the fortified cities in Judah (v. 14).

D. Removing the Foreign Gods and the Idol from the House of Jehovah

Manasseh removed the foreign gods and the idol from the house of Jehovah and all the altars that he had built on the mount of the house of Jehovah and in Jerusalem and cast them out of the city (v. 15). This indicates that, having repented, he cleared away all the impurity from the holy place.

E. Restoring the Altar of Jehovah and Sacrificing on It

Manasseh restored the altar of Jehovah and sacrificed on it sacrifices of peace offerings and thank offerings. Also, he commanded Judah to serve Jehovah, the God of Israel (vv. 16-17). From this we see that although Manasseh had a bad beginning, he had a good ending.

XII. OF JOSIAH

In 34:3-7 there is a word concerning Josiah the grandson of Manasseh.

A. Beginning to Seek After the God of David His Father

In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to seek after the God of David his father (v. 3a). He was only eight years of age when he became king, and in the eighth year of his reign he began to seek after God. This indicates that man has the capacity to contact God at a young age.

B. Beginning to Purge Judah and Jerusalem of the High Places, the Asherim, the Idols, and the Molten Images

In the twelfth year Josiah began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, the idols, and the molten images. The people tore down the altars to the Baals in his presence, and he hewed down the incense altars and ground the Asherim, the idols, and the molten images to dust and scattered it upon the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. Then he burned the bones of the priests upon their own altars (vv. 3b-5).

C. Tearing Down the Altars throughout the Land of Israel

Throughout the land of Israel, Josiah, who was the king only of Judah, tore down the altars, beat the Asherim and

the idols into dust, and hewed down all the incense altars (vv. 6-7).

XIII. THE DURATION OF THE CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL AND THE PROCLAMATION OF THEIR RELEASE BY CYRUS

Second Chronicles 36:20b-23 speaks of the duration of the captivity of Israel and the proclamation of their release by Cyrus.

A. The Children of Israel Becoming Servants to the Kings of Babylon for Seventy Years

The children of Israel became servants to the kings of Babylon for seventy years, until the reign of the kingdom of Persia, so as to fulfill the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah (vv. 20b-21).

B. Cyrus Making a Proclamation for Israel's Return to Jerusalem to Build the Temple of God

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout all his kingdom for Israel's return to Jerusalem to build the temple of God (vv. 22-23; Ezra 1:1-3).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE ELEVEN

LIVING CHRIST FOR THE EXPRESSION OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Exo. 20:1-17; 25:16; Col. 1:15; Rom. 8:4; Phil. 1:19-21a

In this message I would like to give a word on the law as the testimony of God and as a type of Christ and on how the law is linked to God's New Testament economy.

THE LAW OF GOD

The examples of the kings of Judah show that God needed a people on the earth so that He could be incarnated in humanity. God also needed a land for His people that He might form a nation to set up His testimony. This testimony was set up according to the law of God.

We need to know what the law of God is. Some fundamental Christians may say the law of God consists mainly of the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20:1-17), that is, the moral law. However, the Ten Commandments with their statutes and ordinances occupy only a few chapters, Exodus 20—24. However, the law of God occupies not only these chapters but all the chapters from Exodus 20 to the end of Leviticus. Then what is the rest of God's law? The rest of God's law is the ceremonial law. From this we see that the law of God comprises the moral law (Exo. 20—24) and the ceremonial law (Exo. 25—Lev. 27).

THE MORAL LAW

The moral law includes the Ten Commandments with their statutes and ordinances. The first five commandments deal with our relationship with God and with our parents. The first three commandments are directly concerned with God; the fourth concerns God's Sabbath day; and the fifth concerns

our parents. Then the last five of the Ten Commandments deal with our relationship with one another. These are the commandments not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to bear false witness against others, and not to covet. These commandments, or laws, are brief, but they cover almost everything concerning our relationship with one another.

Eventually, the moral law, the Ten Commandments, became the base of the civil law of many nations. For instance, Roman law, which has been copied around the world, was based on the last five of the Ten Commandments.

THE COMMANDMENT REGARDING COVETING DEALING WITH AN INWARD MATTER

Let us consider the commandment regarding coveting. In Philippians 3:6 Paul says that as to the righteousness which is in the law, he was blameless. But in Romans 7 he admitted that he was unable to keep the commandment regarding coveting. "Neither did I know coveting, except the law had said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, worked out in me coveting of every kind" (vv. 7b-8a). Paul could keep the commandments about murder, adultery, stealing, and bearing false witness, for these four things are matters of outward conduct. The commandment about coveting, however, deals with an inward matter, and Paul could not keep himself from coveting.

Can you say that you have never coveted anything? When you were a student, you might have seen someone with a nice pen, and immediately you coveted that pen, desiring to have it. Even in our family life we may covet certain things. Suppose the members of a large family are having dessert after dinner. Each of the children is given a piece of cheesecake. One of the children may look at the cheesecake given to others and then complain that his piece is too small and ask why he was not given a bigger piece. This is coveting. None of us can say that we have never coveted anything.

THE LAW BEING A PORTRAIT OF GOD

The Ten Commandments were called the testimony of God (Exo. 25:16). As the testimony of God the Ten Commandments

are a picture, a portrait, of God. We may say that the law is a photograph of God.

A particular law is always a portrait of the person who makes that law. For example, if bank robbers could make laws, they surely would set up laws to make it legal to rob banks. Likewise, if evil people are elected to the United States Senate, they will make evil, sinful laws. The evil laws they make would be a portrait of the evil persons they are. On the contrary, good people establish good laws.

The law of God is a portrait of God. After a careful study of the last five of the Ten Commandments, we have seen that these five commandments are based on four of God's divine attributes: love, light, holiness, and righteousness. These attributes are the base upon which God's law was established. The more we consider the law of God, the more we realize that this lawmaker, this legislator, must be One who is full of love and light, One who is holy and righteous.

Because the law is God's portrait, God's image, it is called God's testimony. The ark in which the law was placed was called the ark of the testimony (Exo. 25:22).

THE LAW BEING A TYPE OF CHRIST

Based upon the fact that the law is the testimony of God, a picture of God, we may say that the law is also a type of Christ. How can the law be a type of Christ? The law is a type of Christ because Christ is God's portrait, God's picture, God's image (Col. 1:15).

THE LAW BEING LINKED TO GOD'S ECONOMY

Now we need to see how the law is linked to God's economy. In studying the books of history in the Old Testament, we need to learn how to link these books to God's economy. In His economy God chose Israel, established them as a people, formed them as a nation, and gave them the law. How can we link this with God's economy? God's economy is God becoming a man that man may become God in life and in nature (but not in the Godhead) to produce the organic Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem. Christ is the center, the reality, and the goal of God's economy.

The law seems to have nothing to do with such an economy. How, then, can the law be linked to God's economy? The law is linked to God's economy because the law was given as God's portrait, God's picture, God's image, and God's testimony. As God's testimony the law is a type of Christ, who, being the image of God, is God's portrait, God's picture, God's testimony.

TO KEEP THE LAW BEING TO EXPRESS GOD

God charged Israel to keep the law. In typology, to keep the law means to express God. Keeping the law by not killing, not committing adultery, not stealing, not lying, and not coveting is the living of a God-man. Those who have the living of a God-man bear the image of God. They are a portrait of God and even a duplication of God.

The situation of today's world is utterly different from this. In the world we see not the life of a God-man but murder, adultery, fornication, stealing, lying, and coveting. Who tells the truth today? It is common for people to lie in a court of law in order to get money and then to boast about their lying. Many compete with others in business or at school because of their coveting. All the competitive ones are covetous. Some will even kill to get what they covet. Therefore, instead of being full of God-men, the earth is full of "scorpions."

LIVING THE LIFE OF A GOD-MAN IN OUR MARRIED LIFE AND IN THE CHURCH LIFE

Let us now consider the situation in the recovery. We all are believers. We believe in the Lord Jesus. We have repented and come back to the Lord, and we have been saved, even dynamically saved. Yet in our daily life we may not have the living of a God-man.

We have pointed out that for the children of Israel to keep the law was to live God and express God. However, they did not keep the law, and therefore they did not live God and express God. The situation is the same with us today. For the most part, we do not express God in our daily living.

We need to have a God-man living in our married life. If a married brother would live the life of a God-man in his married life, he would surely be a good husband, for he would

be a real God-man in loving his wife. Likewise, if a married sister would live the life of a God-man in her married life, she would be a good wife, submitting herself to her husband.

We also need to have a God-man living in the church life, especially in relation to what we call the vital groups. How can we have a vital group if we ourselves are not vital? This is impossible. Suppose at dinner a brother and his wife are not happy with each other. They even exchange words and argue for quite a long time. Suddenly they remember that later that evening they must attend a meeting of their vital group. But how could this couple be vital in the meeting? Because they are not vital at home in their married life, they have no way to be vital in the meeting.

OUR NEED FOR A REAL REVIVAL

Because we are short of the God-man living, we need a real revival. The children of Israel had only an outward law, but today we have something much stronger and much higher than the law. We have the all-inclusive, life-giving, compounded, consummated Spirit in us, who is the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19). We need to live Christ by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (vv. 20-21a).

We have such a Spirit within us, but what do we live and how do we live? Do we live Christ? In the church meetings we may live Christ, but do we live Christ at home with our husband or wife and with our children? We need a real revival to be God-men who live a life of always denying ourselves and being crucified to live Christ for the expression of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE TWELVE

A CONCLUDING WORD TO THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH

Scripture Reading: Heb. 4:12; 5:12-14

In this message we will give a concluding word to the supplement to the history of the kings of Judah.

I. COVERING ONLY THE KINGS OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

The supplement in 1 and 2 Chronicles to the history of the kings covers only the kings of the kingdom of Judah and not one king of the kingdom of Israel.

II. REMAINING ON THE GROUND OF THE UNITY OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

Unlike the kings of Israel, the kings of Judah remained on the ground of the unity of God's chosen people (Jerusalem) and kept the oneness according to the fundamental teaching of Moses.

Both the people of Judah and the people of Israel were the people of God. However, the people of Israel forsook God and made themselves the same as the people of mankind. As the elect of God Israel should have been sanctified, separated, unto the holy God. But the people of Israel, especially the kings, forsook God, turned to the idols, and set up centers of worship other than Jerusalem. That offended God to the uttermost. Israel was like a wife who forsakes her husband for another man. God, the Husband of His people, would never tolerate such a thing.

The kings of Judah remained on the ground chosen by God and stayed with God. In this matter God was happy with

them. Although the condition of the kings of Judah was not pleasing to God, He was pleased with their standing on the proper ground and with their keeping of the fundamental faith according to God's word released to them through Moses. Because of their standing, God still had a people on earth who stood with Him and who at least tried to keep His word.

III. THEIR CONDITION NOT MATCHING THEIR STANDING

The condition of the kings of Judah did not match their standing on the unique ground and their fundamental belief. Most of these kings were wrong in their intention, purpose, desire, and preference.

To some extent this may also be the situation in some places in the recovery today. Certain ones take the proper ground and keep the fundamental faith, yet they live in the flesh, in the self, and in the natural man. They may be selfish and pursue their own interest, seeking glory and exaltation. Even worse, they may have ambition, something that is hateful and abominable in the sight of God. The root of every rebellion that took place among us in the past seventy-two years has been this ugly and evil matter of ambition.

IV. MOST OF THEM FORSAKING GOD AS THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS AND FOLLOWING THE IDOLS

Most of the kings of Judah, like the kings of the kingdom of Israel, forsook God as the fountain of living waters and followed the idols to hew out for themselves broken cisterns which hold no water (Jer. 2:13). In principle, certain local churches have fallen somewhat into this kind of situation, forsaking the fountain of the living waters and following something else.

V. NONE OF THEM SEEMING TO HAVE A HEART THAT WAS ABSOLUTELY PURE IN SEEKING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

It seemed that none of the kings of Judah had a heart that was absolutely pure in seeking the kingdom of God, not their monarchy, and in establishing and living for the kingdom of God on the earth and not laboring and struggling for a

monarchy for themselves and for their descendants. This is a picture of the situation in some so-called local churches.

VI. BREAKING THE LAW OF GOD

The kings of Judah broke the law of God, which was given to them through Moses to govern them and keep them in the enjoyment of the God-promised good land. God not only gave His elect people the good land and transferred them out of Egypt and into this land; God also gave them the law to govern them and keep them in the enjoyment of the good land. However, the kings of Judah broke the law of God.

VII. THE LAW OF GOD, WHICH WAS DECREED THROUGH MOSES, HAVING TWO SECTIONS

The law of God, which was decreed through Moses in the second part of Exodus, beginning from chapter twenty, and the entire book of Leviticus, had two sections—the moral section and the ceremonial section.

A. The Moral Section

The moral section (Exo. 20—24) was composed mainly of the Ten Commandments. The first five commandments governed the relationship of God's people with Him and their parents. The commandment regarding the honoring of parents was therefore ranked with the commandments which concerned their relationship with God. The last five commandments governed the relationship of God's people among themselves.

B. The Ceremonial Section

The ceremonial section (Exo. 25—Lev. 27) was composed of the laws of the tabernacle, the offerings, the priesthood, and the feasts. These four things are all types of Christ.

1. The Laws of the Tabernacle

The tabernacle typifies Christ as the embodiment of God (Col. 2:9; John 1:14) for God's people to contact Him and to enter into Him for their enjoyment. Christ has become a tabernacle, a dwelling place, which we can enter. This means

that we can enter into Christ. Perhaps we need to practice saying, "Brother, let us enter into Christ. Let us go together into Christ and stay in Him." To remain in Christ is to enjoy God in Christ as the tabernacle.

2. The Laws of the Offerings

The offerings typify Christ as all kinds of sacrifices (Heb. 10:5-12) to meet the need of God toward His people and the need of His people before Him.

3. The Laws of the Priesthood

The priesthood typifies Christ as the High Priest (Heb. 8:1) taking care of God's chosen people before God.

4. The Laws of the Feasts

The feasts typify Christ as the bountiful enjoyment in every aspect assigned by God to His chosen people (Col. 2:16-17; Phil. 1:19).

The law of God is the portrait, the photograph, of God. Human laws always are a picture of the people who make them. This is true of the laws of every country. This is true even in your family life. The laws and regulations you make at home are your picture. The principle is the same with the law of God as a portrait of God. God's law portrays what kind of God He is.

I appreciate the commandments about not killing, not committing adultery, not stealing, not lying, and not coveting. How good it would be if everyone on earth kept these commandments! Suppose in the whole world there were no killing, no adultery, no stealing, no lying, and no coveting. If you took away these five things, the earth would be like heaven. However, everywhere people are killing, committing adultery, stealing, lying, and coveting.

God's people, His elect Israel, should have been different from mankind. They should have been a testimony of God, that is, the expression of God. If they had lived according to the law of God, they would have been the expression of God, for to keep the law is to express God. The kings of Judah stood on the ground chosen by God and they kept their belief

in the Word of God, but they did not express God, because they did not keep the law of God. They did not live, conduct themselves, and have their being according to God's law.

As the portrait of God and as the testimony of God, the law is a type of Christ. Christ is the end of the law (Rom. 10:4). He is the totality, the consummation, of the law. Since the law is the image of God, to keep the law is to bear the image of God and express God.

The kings of Judah stood on the proper ground and kept the fundamental faith, but they did not keep the law of God and thus they did not bear the image of God. They broke the law again and again, and this caused God to be angry with them. Eventually God came in to take them away from the good land. He would not allow them to enjoy the good land which He had given them, because they did not express Him but instead expressed His enemy, the devil.

Today Christ is the good land (Col. 1:12). We have been put into Christ; we have been transferred into Him. We need to stand on the proper ground and keep the proper faith as Paul did (2 Tim. 4:7). We also need to live and walk in Christ (Col. 2:6), conducting ourselves according to God to be His expression. Then we will enjoy Him, and the border of our enjoyment of Christ as the good land will be enlarged (1 Chron. 4:10).

VIII. GOD KNOWING THAT NO MAN CAN KEEP THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AS THE MORAL SECTION OF HIS LAW TO BE JUSTIFIED BY HIM

God knew that no man can keep the Ten Commandments as the moral section of His law to be justified by Him (Rom. 3:20). So, by His grace and according to His economy, He also gave His people the ceremonial section of His law, through which the condemned sinners, the breakers of the moral law of God, could contact Him and enter into Him to enjoy Him as their everything. In this way sinners could be justified by God to be righteous men (cf. Matt. 1:19a; Luke 1:6, 75; 2:25; 23:50). Foreknowing that we could not keep His commandments, God prepared the ceremonial law to be our salvation, to save us from the condemnation under the moral law.

IX. THE ENTIRE LAW OF GOD BEING DECREED WITH THE INTENTION OF EXPOSING AND CONVICTING HIS PEOPLE BY THE MORAL SECTION THAT THEY WOULD BE CONDUCTED TO THE CEREMONIAL SECTION

The entire law of God was decreed to His people by Him with the intention to expose and convict His people by the moral section of His law, that they would be conducted to the ceremonial section of His law, that is, conducted to the all-inclusive Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God for their redemption, salvation, and bountiful enjoyment in every aspect (Gal. 3:23-24) through all the ages unto eternity.

X. THE KINGS BREAKING THE ENTIRE LAW OF GOD AND PROVOKING THE WRATH OF GOD

Since the kings broke the entire law of God, both the moral and the ceremonial sections, again and again, they provoked the wrath of God and caused Him to give their good land to the Gentiles and make them captives to the pagan nations. Thus, they lost their portion in the enjoyment of the God-promised good land. This miserable outcome has lasted for twenty-seven centuries until today.

XI. TO STUDY THE HISTORY BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE WAY OF LIFE BEING TO COMPLY WITH GOD'S PURPOSE

To study the history books of the Old Testament in the way of life is to comply with God's purpose, that these books were written in His divine revelation for our admonition and enlightenment (1 Cor. 10:11).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES

MESSAGE THIRTEEN

THE RESEMBLANCE OF GOD AND MAN IN THEIR IMAGES AND LIKENESSES

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26; 1 John 3:2b; Rev. 4:3a; 21:11b

In this message I would like to give a very brief word on the resemblance of God and man in their images and likenesses. We may think that we are very clear regarding this matter. Actually we may not be at all clear. Therefore, I would encourage you to study all the following points very carefully. As we consider these we may wonder whether man resembles God or God resembles man.

I. THERE BEING NO "MANKIND" CREATED BY GOD IN HIS CREATION

There was no "mankind" created by God in His creation. Genesis 1 tells us that God created all the fish, the birds, the beasts, and the cattle after their kind (vv. 24-25). Although God created everything after its kind, God did not create "mankind." In God's creation there was not such a thing as "mankind."

II. GOD CREATING ADAM IN HIS OWN IMAGE

If God did not create "mankind," then after what kind was man created? Genesis 1:26 indicates that man is after God's kind. This verse says, "Let us [the Divine Trinity] make adam [Heb. *adam*, denoting red clay] in our image, after our likeness." Hence, what God made here was after His own kind, that is, God-kind. The word *man* is not used in the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:26. Here we are told that God created *adam*, which means "red clay." God created something of red clay in His own image and after His own likeness.

Having the image of God, this work of red clay looked like God. At least we can say that this clay was a figure of God, made after God's kind. Therefore, it was God-kind.

In Genesis 1:26 God created something according to Himself. What He made was a reproduction of Himself. If God had made ten thousand pieces of clay in His image and after His likeness, those ten thousand pieces of clay would all have been figures of God, the mass reproduction of God.

III. THREE MEN APPEARING TO ABRAHAM BEFORE CHRIST'S INCARNATION

In Genesis 18:2-13 three men appeared to Abraham. One of these men was Christ—Jehovah—and the other two were angels (19:1). The appearing of these three men to Abraham took place before Christ's incarnation. This means that two thousand years before His incarnation, God appeared as a man when He visited His friend Abraham. Abraham prepared water for Him to wash His feet, and Abraham's wife, Sarah, prepared a meal that this man ate. This is a mystery. When did Christ become a man—at the time of His incarnation or before the incarnation?

IV. THE ANGEL OF GOD APPEARING TO MANOAH AND HIS WIFE

The angel of God (God, Jehovah, a man of God—Christ) appeared to Manoah and his wife before Christ's incarnation (Judg. 13:3-6, 22-23).

V. A SON OF MAN COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN

According to Daniel 7:13-14 Daniel saw a vision of a Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven, and He came even to the Ancient of Days—the God of eternity—and they brought Him near before Him. There was given Him dominion, glory, and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. Daniel saw such a vision of Christ as the Son of Man before Christ's incarnation.

VI. ADAM BEING A TYPE OF CHRIST

Adam was a type, a prefigure, of Christ (Rom. 5:14).

VII. CHRIST BEING THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

The piece of red clay in Genesis 1:26 was a type of Christ, and Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15).

VIII. THE WORD BECOMING FLESH

The Word (God) became flesh (John 1:14), becoming the flesh of sin only in its likeness (Rom. 8:3). God as the Word who became flesh had only the outward appearance of the flesh of sin, not the sinful nature of the flesh of sin.

IX. CHRIST TAKING THE FORM OF A SLAVE

Christ, who exists in the form of God, took the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, in His incarnation (Phil. 2:6-8).

X. STEPHEN SEEING THE SON OF MAN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD

Stephen saw the heavens opened up and the Son of Man—Christ—at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). Stephen saw this after Christ's ascension to the heavens. This indicates that Christ is in the heavens still as the Son of Man. Concerning this, *Hymns,* #132 says:

Lo! in heaven Jesus sitting,
Christ the Lord is there enthroned;
As the man by God exalted,
With God's glory He is crowned.

XI. THE SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN

In Matthew 26:64 the Lord Jesus said, "You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power [God] and coming on the clouds of heaven." This refers to Christ's second coming. When the Lord Jesus comes back, He will still be the Son of Man.

XII. CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF GOD'S SON

In Romans 8:29 Paul tells us that those whom God foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers. This verse assures us that we, the believers in Christ, will all be conformed to the image of the Son of God.

XIII. BEING TRANSFORMED INTO THE SAME IMAGE

Second Corinthians 3:18 says, "We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit." Romans 12:2a speaks of our being transformed by the renewing of the mind. He as God has done a lot to make Himself in the form and likeness of man. Now He intends to transform us into the same image and conform us to the image of the Son of God.

XIV. CHILDREN OF GOD WITHOUT BLEMISH

Philippians 2:15 speaks of our being blameless and guileless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom we shine as luminaries in the world.

XV. THE LORD TRANSFIGURING THE BODY OF OUR HUMILIATION TO BE CONFORMED TO THE BODY OF HIS GLORY

The Lord Jesus Christ will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself (Phil. 3:21). He has the power to transfigure our body in such a way that it will be conformed to the body of His glory.

XVI. WE BEING LIKE HIM

We know that if Christ is manifested, we will be like Him wholly, perfectly, and absolutely because we will see Him even as He is (1 John 3:2b).

XVII. GOD BEING LIKE A JASPER STONE

All this will consummate in the New Jerusalem. Revelation 4:3 says, "He [God] who was sitting was like a jasper stone." This tells us that the appearance of God, the One sitting on the throne, is like jasper.

XVIII. THE NEW JERUSALEM'S LIGHT BEING LIKE A JASPER STONE

According to Revelation 21 the New Jerusalem's light is like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone (v. 11b). The building work of its wall is jasper, and the first foundation of the wall is also jasper (vv. 18a, 19). The wall is jasper, the first foundation of the wall is jasper, the light of the city is jasper, and God on the throne is like jasper. Eventually God and man, man and God, all have the appearance of jasper. This is the conclusion of the Bible

The consummation of the Bible is the New Jerusalem—divinity mingled with humanity. Divinity becomes the dwelling place of humanity, and humanity becomes the home of divinity. In this city the glory of God is manifested in man, brightly and splendidly. We will be there, and we are on the way. We are in the process of being made "a piece of God," to look the same as God—jasper.