LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE ONE

A FOREWORD

The book of Hebrews is profound and rich. It is profound in the heavenly concepts and rich in the heavenly inheritance. In our Life-Study of Hebrews, we shall be concerned with the profound concepts of this book and with its heavenly inheritance. We need to plunge into the depths of this book.

I. THE BACKGROUND

If we are to enter into the concepts and riches of the book of Hebrews, we must understand the background of its writing. This is crucial. It is difficult for anyone to gain information concerning Hebrews. We are not told the name of the author and it is not clearly mentioned to whom the book was written. Hebrews is absolutely different from all of the other epistles. It has its own peculiar character. All of the other epistles begin by telling us by whom and to whom they were written. However, Hebrews begins in this way: "In many portions and in many ways, God, having spoken of old to the fathers in the prophets, has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son" (1:1-2). Who wrote this book? The Bible does not tell us. To whom was it written? It is altogether a mystery, for the Bible does not tell us that either. This is the reason that very few Christians know this book well.

The epistle to the Hebrews is not superficial. It is exceedingly deep. So, I say again that we need to plunge into this book. Do not stand on the surface and gaze at it. Dive into it and discover the treasures that are beneath the surface. Whenever you read one verse of this book, you must read its context. For one verse you probably will need to read a few chapters.

A. The Receivers Were Hebrew Believers

Although the book of Hebrews does not itself say to whom it was written, it was written to the Hebrew believers. The saints who collected the divine writings in the early days entitled this book "the Epistle to the Hebrews." This is very interesting. Why does it say "to the Hebrews" and not to the Jews or Israelites?

For many years I was troubled by this word Hebrews. I studied much in the attempt to learn the meaning of this word. I became familiar with different schools of opinion. One school says that the word Hebrew denotes a descendant of Eber, a son of Shem (Gen. 10:21). Since Eber may be spelled Heber in Greek, some Bible students have thought that the Hebrews are descendants of Eber. Although I adopted this school for a while, I did so with a question mark. Later, after further study, I could no longer agree with this school because Eber had more than one son. Eber had two sons, Peleg and Joktan (Gen. 10:25), and Abraham was a descendant of Peleg. If you say that Abraham's descendants should be called Hebrews because they are the descendants of Eber, the same should be true of the descendants of Joktan, Eber's second son. Thus, this school of opinion is illogical. Furthermore, the Bible says that Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. If Abraham's descendants are called Hebrews because they are the descendants of Eber, then all the Arabs, who are also descendants of Abraham, should be called Hebrews. But this is ridiculous! Therefore, this interpretation is illogical; it is neither believable nor trustworthy.

After further study, I learned that the word Hebrew was first used in Genesis 14:13, at the time when Abraham was about to fight for the rescue of his nephew Lot. Genesis 14:13 says, "And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew." Abraham was a Hebrew. As a result of considerable study, we discovered that the root of the word Hebrew means "to pass over." It especially means to

pass over a river from one region to another and from one side to another. Therefore, the word Hebrew means a crosser, a river crosser, one who crosses a river. Abraham was a river crosser. He crossed that great flood (Josh. 24:2-3). Abraham crossed the Euphrates. The Euphrates is the modern name of that great river which in Hebrew is called Perath. That great river separated the old region out of which Abraham was called from the new land into which he entered.

Abraham was born in Chaldea, the site of ancient Babylon, Babel. Between Chaldea and the good land of Canaan was a great river flowing from north to south. This is very meaningful. All things, including the land, were created by God to fulfill His purpose. The land of Chaldea became satanic, devilish, and demonic. It was a land filled with idols, a land totally usurped by God's enemy and possessed by the evil one. So God intervened to call Abraham out of that idolatrous land, out of that land which had been usurped, possessed, poisoned, corrupted, and ruined by Satan. God simply called Abraham out without telling him where he should go (11:8). Abraham had to look to the Lord step by step, saying to Him, "Lord, where should I go?" Abraham knew what he had to leave, but he did not know where he was to go. Eventually God led him to that great river, and Abraham crossed it. Joshua 24:2-3 says that Abraham "dwelt on the other side of the flood" and that the Lord took him from "the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan." Therefore, a Hebrew is a person from the other side of the water.

Now we can understand the real meaning of baptism. Why must all repentant people be baptized? Because the world in which we are has been usurped, possessed, corrupted, and ruined by God's enemy. It is no longer good for the fulfillment of God's purpose. God's salvation is not merely to rescue us from hell to heaven. God's salvation is to bring us out of the land that has been possessed and ruined by Satan. How can we pass out of it? By being

baptized. Every baptistery is a great river, a great flood. After you have been baptized, you come out on the other shore. Hallelujah! I am one who has crossed over from the other side. Are you still on the other side? You may be on the other side, but I am on this side. I have crossed the great river. I am a Hebrew, a river crosser. What are you--American, Chinese, British, German, New Zealander, Japanese, Filipino, Mexican? We must all declare, "We are Hebrews! We are typical Hebrews." We are not Jews, but we are Hebrews. We are the true, genuine Hebrews because we have passed over the river. Everyone among us is a real river crosser.

As we have seen, the first river crosser, the first Hebrew, was Abraham. Abraham was called by God and passed over the great river Euphrates, entering into the land where God eventually built His temple. The land which Abraham entered was a good land, a holy land, the land in which God's house was built. God stayed there in His house. It was not His motel; it was His habitation on earth. On the other side were the idols, the devilish things, and all the works of Satan. On this side was God's temple with His shekinah glory. What separated these two sides? A great river.

Even before the time of Abraham there was a man who was a flood crosser--Noah. Noah passed over the flood (1 Pet. 3:20-21). That flood separated him from the old, crooked, perverse, and evil generation. The flood separated him from the devilish world and ushered him into a new land where he built an altar and offered sacrifices. Noah passed over the flood, and Abraham crossed over the great river. The principle in each case is the same.

What about Abraham's descendants? The children of Israel crossed the water of the Red Sea. The principle was the same. After they had crossed the sea and reached the other side, they sang and danced. They could say, "Egypt, you are on the other side. We are on this side!" What did they do after they reached the other side? They built God's tabernacle. They did not engage in business, not even

farming, for a period of forty years. There were no schools, sanctuaries, cathedrals, seminaries, or Bible institutes. There was nothing but the tabernacle. What was on the other side of the sea? All the Egyptian, worldly things.

We are people who have crossed over from the other side. What is for us on this side? Churching! We are the water crossers. We are Hebrews. The water has separated us. What are we doing here? We are building the tabernacle, today's ark. The first of the ancient water crossers, Noah, built the ark. The Hebrews in Moses' time built the tabernacle. Now we, today's Hebrews, are building the church.

Our God is "the God of the Hebrews." Have you ever heard this term--"the God of the Hebrews"? Although I have been a student of the Bible for years, I have only recently seen that our God is "the God of the Hebrews." For years I have known that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and that He is the God of Israel. But the God of Abraham is also "the God of the Hebrews." He is the God of the river crossers, the ones who have passed over. Exodus 3:6 says, "Moreover He said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." This word was not spoken to Pharaoh; it was spoken to God's people, the children of Israel (Exo. 3:15-16). When God spoke to His people, He called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But notice the difference that occurs when the Lord speaks to Pharaoh. "Then the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me" (Exo. 9:1, 13; 7:16). When God spoke to Pharaoh, He called Himself "the God of the Hebrews." It seems that the Lord was saying, "Pharaoh, don't you know that I am the God of the Hebrews. I am the God of all the river crossers. Let My people go. Let them cross the Red Sea that they may serve Me in the wilderness. Pharaoh, you must realize that I am the God of the Hebrews." Our God is "the God of the Hebrews." We must proclaim to the

world that our God is "the God of the Hebrews," that we are Hebrews, and that we have passed over the water. We, like Noah, Abraham, and the children of Israel, have passed over the water.

When the children of Israel became old in the land of Egypt, God gave them a new start with the Passover (Exo. 12:1-2). God even changed their calendar, changing it from the civil calendar to the sacred calendar. According to the civil calendar, the Passover was in the seventh month, but God called it the first month. It was the beginning of the year, a new beginning. As a result, the people became new and fresh. They crossed the water and entered into the wilderness where they, as a new people, built God's tabernacle in a new way. However, after forty years, they became old and needed to cross the river once again. Firstly, they crossed the Red Sea; secondly, they crossed the Jordan River and entered into the good land. The crossing of water is very meaningful. After the children of Israel came into the good land, they built God's temple.

After many generations, the Israelites became old again. They were possessed by the enemy, and even the temple with all of its services was utilized, usurped, possessed, and ruined by the enemy of God. Suddenly, much to the surprise of the Israelites, John the Baptist appeared and told them to repent (Matt. 3:5-6). What did John the Baptist do? He helped them to cross the river. He helped them out of their oldness, out of the old, religious, Jewish land. He told them to cross the river and be a real Hebrew. That was the true meaning of baptism for those repentant Pharisees and Jews. They were baptized out of their old religious land and were baptized into a new region. That baptism was a separation. After they were baptized they could say, "Once we were on the other side of the river, but now we are on this side."

Not many have had this understanding of baptism. Baptism makes you a real Hebrew, for a Hebrew is a water crosser. Have you crossed the water? You may say, "Yes, I crossed the baptismal water twenty-five years ago." How

are you now? Are you still fresh and new? Doctrinally, I do not teach the matter of burial in water, but experientially I encourage you all to be buried in water. After you were saved and baptized, you wandered in the wilderness for years and became old. Although you have crossed the Red Sea, you now must cross the river Jordan. This water crossing is very meaningful. Consider the children of Israel once again. The first water crossing, that of the Red Sea, delivered them from Egypt. The second water crossing, that of the Jordan, delivered them from wandering in the wilderness and ushered them into the good land. Forget about the traditional teachings that claim that Christians should not be rebaptized and that according to the New Testament baptism should be only once. The number of times depends upon your actual situation. If you have never been in a land possessed by Satan, you do not even need to be baptized once. If you have always been in the heavens, you do not need to be baptized at all. However, since you fell into Egypt, you certainly need to cross the Red Sea. If, after crossing the Red Sea, you immediately enter into the good land, you do not need to cross the river Jordan. But you did not enter the good land immediately. You wandered in the wilderness for a definite period of time. After that wandering you became old. Now, because you have become so old, you must cross a river before entering into the good land. You need to cross the river. If as you read this message you are still old, you need to be renewed as a Hebrew. You need to cross the river.

In Revelation 15:2 we find a peculiar type of sea, a sea of glass mingled with fire. In this sea is not only water but also fire. When God executed His judgment upon the fallen and condemned creation, He first did it with water. Genesis 1:2 reveals that the pre-Adamic world was judged by water. The world of Noah's time was also judged by water. Water was God's judgment. After the judgment of the flood in Noah's time, God changed His judgment from water to fire. Thus, Sodom and Gomorrah were burned, not flooded (Gen. 19:24). Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron,

were also judged by fire (Lev. 10:1-2). Eventually, all negative things will flow into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15). God's judgment upon the fallen creation, the fallen world, and fallen man is a mingling of water and fire. Hence, in Revelation 15 we have the vision of the sea of glass mingled with fire. Ultimately, this sea of glass mingled with fire will consummate in the lake of fire.

The sea of glass is in front of the throne of God (Rev. 4:6). In the vision of the sea of glass mingled with fire, the overcomers are shown as standing upon the sea. Those who have overcome God's enemy will stand upon the sea of glass. This signifies that they have crossed the water. They all have crossed the sea. For eternity they will be the real water crossers, the real Hebrews. Where are you? I hope that you can say that you are upon the sea of glass. We are the Hebrews. We have crossed the sea. I have the full assurance that I have crossed the water. I am not on the other side. My forefather crossed over from the other side, and I have followed him. Now I am on the sea of glass, and all the negative things are under my feet. The overcomers will be upon the sea of glass just as the children of Israel were upon the seashore having passed through the Red Sea. When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they looked back and saw that Pharaoh and all his forces had been drowned in the sea. We, like the Israelites that crossed the Red Sea and sang the song of Moses (Exo. 15:1), will sing the song of the Lamb (Rev. 15:3). One day we will be upon the sea of glass and look down and see all the worldly things beneath the sea. Although I know that this will happen in the future, I still hope that it is happening now. We all are here on the sea of glass. We are the Hebrews, the water crossers.

Because we are the real Hebrews, the book of Hebrews is for us. Do not think that only the Jewish believers are Hebrews. We are Hebrews also. We are Hebrews, and this wonderful book of Hebrews is for us. As long as you remain worldly, you are disqualified from receiving this book. As long as you consider yourself as a world dweller, you are

through with the book of Hebrews. This book is only for the Hebrews. Since we are the real Hebrews, we have at least one book in the Bible written to us. I am neither Timothy nor Titus, but I am a genuine Hebrew. We all are Hebrews. How we must thank the Lord that the most profound, rich, and deep book is for us! No other book is more profound than Hebrews. God loves His Hebrews. We have crossed the river and we are upon the sea of glass. Surely we can understand such a wonderful book because we have crossed the river. Our God has written such a book to us.

Today our good land is not Canaan; it is the holiest of all. We are now in the holiest of all. Our water crossing has ushered us into this holiest of all. This is our holy land. Where is this holy land, this holiest of all? It is both in the heavens and in our spirit. Between our spirit and the heavens there is the heavenly ladder--Christ, the Son of Man, who joins our spirit to heaven and brings heaven into our spirit. Here we have Bethel, the house of God (Gen. 28:10-22). Here is the habitation of our God (Eph. 2:22). This is the church life. This is our good land.

Look at the tabernacle. In front of it was a laver, a small sea (Exo. 30:18). In front of the temple there was a sea of brass with ten lavers (1 Kings 7:23, 27). Both the laver before the tabernacle and the brass sea with its ten lavers before the temple signified that all the people who entered into the holiest of all had to cross over the water. Eventually, Revelation 15 tells us that in the universe there is a sea of glass in front of God's temple. Everyone who comes into the presence of God has passed through that sea. We are such a people. We are not in the world and we are not in religion. We are not in Judaism, Catholicism, or Protestantism. We are in the holiest of all. We are in God's habitation, God's house, which is both in the heavens and in our spirit, and Christ is the heavenly ladder that joins them. Hallelujah! Here heaven is open to us. Now not only is the book of Hebrews open to us, but we are open to the book of Hebrews. Now we are ready to probe the riches of this book.

B. Believing in the Lord and Still Wanting to Hold on to Their Jewish Religion

The Hebrews to whom this book was written believed in the Lord, but they still wanted to hold on to their Jewish religion. Are you like this? Can you strongly say that you are not? I am concerned that you may still hold on to something. Perhaps you are clinging to your good experiences in the past, to something that is not the good land. Considering the whole universe, Canaan is just a small spot. You may be in millions of places and not be in that spot. Likewise, you may be in millions of things, but not in the proper spot, which is Christ. As long as you are not definitely, absolutely, and all-inclusively for Christ, you are still holding on to something. I am concerned for many of you. You still hold on to something other than Christ. It may be good, even very good, but it is not Christ. You need to cross the river again. Cross the river and be buried.

C. Persecuted by the High Priest, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees

In A.D. 63 Ananias, one of the high priests in the Jewish religion in Jerusalem, rose up with the Sadducees and Pharisees to persecute the Hebrews. At that time those dear Hebrews appreciated the Lord Jesus, but they were unwilling to forsake their old religion. Eventually, the Lord sovereignly raised up a circumstance which forced them out of it. If they were unwilling to go out, they would be forced out. Perhaps the high priest said, "If you want to remain here with us, you must be like us. Don't be such a Christian--be a Jew. Be a typical Jew. If you want to be a Christian, get out!"

At times our experience is the same. On the one hand, we may appreciate the church life; on the other hand, we may be unwilling to forsake the old things. We may stay where we are. In the fall and winter of 1925 my eyes were opened and I saw the church. However, I did not obey that light so willingly and quickly. I wandered. After two years,

some saints with whom I met in the past rose up and said, "If you want to stay with us, be like us. Don't be something else. If you don't want to be like us, then get out!" That was a great help, and I was thankful for it. I got out.

Some saints may see the reality of Christ and realize that the church life is right. However, they have a small "but." That "but" is the tail of the fox. They want to go on, but someone holds their tail. They want to have the church life, but something subtlely holds their tail. Nevertheless, even Satan himself has a limit, a deadline. He can hold your tail only for a certain period. Eventually, the religious people will say, "You must have a real turn, or we will kick you out. If you are going to be with us, you must be like us. If not, get out!"

Those Hebrew Christians truly suffered under that persecution. The Jewish religionists robbed them of their property and even threatened their lives (10:34). The Hebrew believers were troubled. Perhaps those Hebrews said to themselves, "If it is right to follow Christ, God would certainly grant us His blessing. But this persecution does not come from the Romans or from the heathen; it comes from the Sanhedrin, the holy council of God's people. Could they be wrong? Maybe we are wrong." The Hebrew brothers were bothered and began to wander. They could not say that what Peter and Paul preached and talked was wrong; neither could they say that the temple, the sanctuary, was wrong. They were in a dilemma, finding it difficult to decide whether to go on or to retreat. It was at this juncture that the book of Hebrews was written to them.

D. This Book Being Written to Confirm to Them the Christian Faith and to Warn Them Not to Deviate from It, But to Forsake Their Jewish Religion

While they were under this persecution and in this situation, the epistle to the Hebrews was written to them to confirm to them the Christian faith and to warn them not to deviate from it, but rather to forsake their Jewish

religion. This epistle was written to them to tell them to go ahead and not to wander or retreat. They should neither stagger nor hesitate. They must go ahead and cross the river. It seems that the writer of the book was saying, "You are Hebrews, yet you are not willing to cross the separating water. That water is in front of you, and you need to cross it. Christ is not here; He is there. He is the Forerunner. He has already entered into the veil. You shouldn't stay here. You must go there. He is our Captain and He has entered into glory. Let us follow Him. Let us fight on and on until we enter into glory. Let us go out of the gate and outside the camp and follow Him within the veil." The two vital slogans of the book of Hebrews are "outside the camp" and "within the veil." The writer of Hebrews was apparently telling them, "You shouldn't stagger between the camp and the veil. Go on and enter within the veil immediately. Jesus is neither in the camp nor on the way. He is within the veil. We must go to Him there. That is our goal. Let us all go!" Christ is within the veil. When we get into our spirit, we cross the river out of our wandering minds, pass through the veil, and come into the holiest of all. The epistle to the Hebrews was written for the purpose of confirming to the staggering Hebrew believers the genuine Christian faith and to warn them not to deviate from it. They had to forsake their Jewish religion.

II. THE CONTENTS

A. The Heavenly Christ, the Present Christ, the Christ Now, the Christ Today

This book, with the concept of all positive things being heavenly, points us to the very Christ who is in the heavens. In the gospels is the Christ who lived on the earth and died on the cross for the accomplishment of redemption. In the Acts is the resurrected and ascended Christ propagated and ministered to man. In Romans is the Christ who is our righteousness for justification and our life for sanctification, transformation, conformation,

glorification, and building up. In Galatians is the Christ for our living versus the law, religion, tradition, and forms. In Philippians is the Christ lived out of His members. In Ephesians and Colossians is the Christ who is the life, the content, and the head of the Body, the church. In Corinthians is the Christ who is everything in the practical church life. In Thessalonians is the Christ who is our holiness for His coming back. In Timothy and Titus is the Christ who is God's economy for us to behave ourselves in the house of God. In the epistles of Peter is the Christ who is for us to take God's governmental dealings through sufferings. In John's epistles is the Christ who is the life and fellowship of the children of God in God's family. In Revelation is the Christ who is walking among the churches in this age, ruling over the world in the kingdom in the coming age, and expressed in full glory for eternity. In Hebrews is the present Christ who is now in the heavens as our Minister (8:2) and our High Priest (4:14-15; 7:26), ministering to us the heavenly life, grace, authority, and power, and sustaining us to live a heavenly life on earth. He is the Christ now, the Christ today, and the Christ on the throne who is our daily salvation and moment by moment supply. This is the Christ revealed in Hebrews. I love this description of Christ. I would do my best to influence you, impress you, and even compel you to love Him.

Here is a little illustration. Consider the chicken eggs we have for breakfast. The outside of the egg is a shell, and inside is the reality of a chicken. You do not eat the shell but the reality of the chicken within the shell. Often a baby chicken will hatch out of the egg, leaving the eggshell behind. In such a case, no one would eat the eggshell. You will forget about the eggshell and cast it into the trash can. This is an illustration of Judaism. Before Christ came, Judaism was an egg. One day, the chicken came out of the egg, meaning that Christ came out of that eggshell. Formerly, the chicken and the shell were one. At that time it was worthwhile to treasure the egg because the chicken was in the egg. One day Jesus was produced. The chicken

came out of the shell. Now the chicken is not just walking on earth or soaring in the air; he is sitting in the third heaven. The chicken is there in heaven, and the shell is here on earth. Do not be so foolish as to wonder whether you must go to the chicken or remain with the shell. Certainly you must go to the chicken. Do not stay with the shell.

Let me say a word to the Jewish friends who still attend the synagogue. What you are treasuring is just the empty, broken shell. Forget about that, cast it into the trash can, and come to the chicken. The chicken is Christ. As the chicken, Christ is the life element, the life essence, and the life substance. Why were the Old Testament and Judaism so precious? Because until Christ came out of the shell, He was in them. Now, since He has come out of the shell, you must go to the chicken and not stay with the shell.

This principle may be applied to any religious thing. Baptism is good whenever Christ is in it. But once Christ has been removed from baptism, baptism becomes a shell. Any religious thing without Christ is a shell. We have the Lord's table every Sunday, but if it is merely a table without the Lord in it, it is a shell. Even your Bible or your Bible reading may be a shell if you do not have Christ in it. Your ministry, your preaching, and Christian work might all be shells if they are merely religious activity without Christ. Anything that is fundamental, scriptural, religious and anything that is for God, yet which does not have Christ as its reality is a shell. Sisters, your head covering should have Christ in it, for without Christ, your head covering is merely an empty shell. Do not think that I am condemning just one thing. I condemn everything that does not have Christ in it. Even my message is a shell if it does not have Christ in it. Even this entire Life-Study is a shell if it does not minister Christ.

We all must see how easy it is to have the shell without the chicken. It is very easy. What is religion? Religion is serving God, worshipping God, and behaving yourself to please God without Christ. Worshipping God, serving God,

behaving ourselves before God, all are good, but if they are void of Christ they are merely a religion. Such worship, service, or behavior becomes religion. Only Christ is reality. Whatever we do and whatever we are might just be a shell. Some of these things are not even a shell, but even if they are a shell, they are nothing without Christ. We must have Christ! Do you like being an elder? That is fine, but Christ must be in that eldership. If you do not have Christ in your eldership, your eldership is a shell. Whenever you are treasuring a shell, you have to cross the river and bury yourself out of that shell. This is the message of the book to the Hebrews.

Hebrews is a book that is one hundred percent of and for Christ. This Christ is not a doctrinal Christ; He is a Christ today for our experience. Hebrews 1:1-3 tells us that Christ has accomplished everything and that He is now sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Hebrews 4:14 says that He is the High Priest who has passed through the heavens. He has not only crossed over the river, but has passed through the heavens, entering into the third heaven where the holiest of all is within the veil. He is there now. Hebrews 6:20 says that He is the Forerunner. He has run the race, becoming the first to reach the goal. He was the first to enter within the veil. Hebrews 7:26 says that He is such a High Priest because He has become higher than the heavens. He is at the height of the universe. Hebrews 8:1, 9:24, and 10:12 all tell us that the Christ who died is now in the heavens; yet He is present. Oh, how we must come to contact Him! Forsake the shell! Forget the shell! We all must touch this heavenly Christ, this present Christ, this Christ today. He is so real, so living. He is now supplying us with all the heavenly life, authority, and power that we might live a heavenly life on earth. He is not only our daily salvation but also our moment by moment supply. He is such a Christ. We all must know and experience Him. Forget religion! We have the chicken! We no longer have forms or rituals--just reality. This is the content of the book of Hebrews. As we

continue in our Life-Study, we shall see the depths, the profoundness, and the richness of this book.

B. With All the Heavenly Items

The contents of this book are not only the heavenly Christ, but the heavenly Christ with all the heavenly items: the heavenly calling (3:1), the heavenly enrollment (12:23), the heavenly gift (6:4), the heavenly things (8:5; 9:23), the heavenly holy places (9:24), the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22), and the heavenly country (11:16). We must see all these heavenly things.

III. THE SECTIONS

It is a simple matter to recognize the sections of this book. Firstly, we have the introduction, which shows that God has spoken in the Son (1:1-3). Lastly is the conclusion (13:20-25). Between the introduction and the conclusion, this book shows the superiority of Christ (1:4--10:39) and also reveals the way to take and enjoy this Christ, the way of faith (11:1--13:19). Christ is superior to everything: to the angels, to Joshua, to Moses, and to Aaron. The covenant that He has made is superior to the covenant made with Moses. Christ is superior to everything. The way for us to reach this Christ, the way to take Him, is the unique way of faith. This is the book of Hebrews.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWO

GOD HAS SPOKEN

The book of Hebrews begins with God speaking. The divine speaking is the opening point of this book. God has spoken! Praise Him! It is absolutely not a small thing that God has spoken. Without speaking God is mysterious. But He has revealed Himself in His speaking. He is no longer mysterious. Now He is the revealed God.

The emphasis of this book is that God, not man, has spoken. Therefore, it does not mention who the writer of this book is, nor, in all its quotations from the Old Testament, does it mention the speakers' names. According to the concept of this book, the entire Scripture is the speaking of God. Hence, when it refers to the Old Testament, it always says that it was the Holy Spirit's speaking (3:7; 9:8; 10:15-17).

We need to consider this matter of God's speaking. If there were a God in the universe, what would be the first thing that He would do? Certainly, before doing anything else, He would speak. If God is living, He must certainly speak. If He is real, His speaking testifies His reality. If He is moving, He will move by speaking. If He is working, He will surely work by speaking.

A living person is a speaking person. If you are a living person, I do not believe that you will be able to be silent for even one hour. If you are at home alone, you will find that you simply must speak. If you do not speak to the angels, you may speak to something or to yourself. A living person must speak.

Our God is living! So our God is speaking, and His speaking testifies that He is living. We know that our God is living because He speaks. How foolish it is to say that

there is no God! Have you not heard His speaking? God has spoken! Since eternity, this speaking God has spoken millions of times. If He never spoke, then where did the Bible come from? No one can deny the wisdom expressed in the Bible. If not every sentence, then at least a great many sentences in the Bible could never have come out of a human mind. One great French philosopher has said that if the four gospels were falsehoods and there were no Christ, then the person who wrote the gospels is fully qualified to be Christ. If you do not believe that the writer of the gospels is qualified to be Christ, then you try to write such books. Who can utter things in such a profound and wise way? Peter was a Galilean fisherman and John was a mender of nets. They did not graduate from a university. Where did they get their wisdom? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:1, 4). Who can utter such simple yet such profound words? Certainly not a little mender of nets from Galilee. Only God Himself can speak in this way. How can you say that there is no God? Can you find another book to compare with the Bible? There is no other book that can compare with it. The Bible is the book among all books because it bears profound wisdom.

The Bible also bears light. No other book enlightens people as does this book. Many of you who are reading these messages are very well educated. You have read many books and newspapers. Please tell me, have you been enlightened by any of those books or newspapers? Whenever people read the newspapers, they are darkened, veiled, drugged, doped, and befuddled. However, so many of us can testify that whenever we come to the Bible, regardless of the chapter, the light shines upon us. Light may even shine through such a verse as Genesis 3:1, a verse that speaks about the serpent. Perhaps light may not shine immediately because you are not ready. The light is ready to shine, but you are not ready to open up to it. Eventually, however, the light comes.

Let us use Genesis 3:1 as an example. "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." One morning, a young sister read through this verse and it got into her. As she read that verse early in the morning, she had no understanding of it. Later on in the day, one of her schoolmates came to her with a certain kind of temptation. Immediately, the word came to that young sister, "The serpent was more subtle." The more her schoolmate talked, the more this word came to her. Eventually this sister said within herself, "Little serpent, get away from me." Throughout my ministry I have heard hundreds of these kinds of testimonies.

People are enlightened by reading the Divine Word. Can anyone testify of being enlightened as a result of reading a magazine or newspaper? There are no such testimonies, because such writings are not the Word of God. But the whole Bible is a composition of the speaking of God. If you put the word Satan in a newspaper, it means nothing, but when you read it in the Bible, especially when you pray-read over it, you are enlightened and Satan is exposed.

Many times we are not only enlightened by the Word, but are enlivened, quickened, and made alive. Try to pray with the words of a newspaper and see what happens. The more you repeat the words, the more you will be darkened and killed. However, when you pray-read the Bible, you are made alive. This is a strong proof that the Holy Bible is God's speaking. God has spoken! More than a hundred times I have seen great sinners saved just by reading one verse of the Bible. In an instant their whole life was changed. That was the result of the working of the Holy Word.

God has spoken and He is still speaking today. He is speaking to your heart and in your spirit. How do we know that our God is living? Because He speaks to us. How do we know that He is moving and working? Because He speaks. Consider your experience in the past forty-eight hours. Can you say that during that time God has not spoken to you?

So many of us can testify that during the past forty-eight hours we have heard God speaking. We know that He is real, living, and moving because He speaks. Where is God? God is in His speaking. He is speaking day by day.

What is God's speaking? God's speaking is not only the Word; it is also His breathing. When God speaks, He breathes Himself into us. Whenever God speaks to you, He gets into you. Therefore, whenever you listen to God's speaking or take the Word of God, you will be involved with God. He bothers us constantly by His speaking. I do not know how many times I have been bothered by Him. If you do not want to get involved with God, you had better close your ears when He is speaking. His speaking is constant. He will never swallow His words. Once He breathes His Word out, He will never take it back. Suppose God says to you, "Go to your wife and apologize to her." You may argue, saying, "Why must I go to her and apologize? I can't do it." But the word continues to come to you, "Go and apologize." Some who have not obeyed such a word from the Lord have testified that even in their dreams they have expressed His word to go and apologize. The wife is awakened and says, "What do you mean, 'Go and apologize'?" God spoke to that brother to go and apologize to his wife. He did not do it. So eventually in his dreams he spoke the words, "Go and apologize." God's speaking is that constant.

In 1925 I began to hear the Lord's speaking to me. Although for eight years I did not obey Him, that word never left me. Week after week, I argued with God and reasoned with Him. I said to Him, "No, I can't do it." He did not argue with me. When I reasoned, He was quiet. When my reasoning ceased, He began to speak again. I said, "Lord, I've heard this already." Nevertheless, although He did not say a word when I argued with Him, when I was quiet, He spoke again and again for a period of eight years. Eventually I had no choice except to listen to Him and surrender. I obeyed and the speaking stopped. Once we obey, that speaking stops.

Once God's Word has come out of His mouth, no one can send it back to Him. If you do not obey what God speaks in this lifetime, you will obey it in the next. All mankind will believe what God has spoken. If they do not believe it today, they will believe it in eternity.

God has spoken and is still speaking. We know that our God is real because He is speaking. How do we know that God is working in His recovery? Because He is speaking. Although I have been a Christian for many years, I have never heard so much of God's speaking as among us today. First Samuel 3:1 says that the word of the Lord was rare in those days. The King James Version uses the word precious instead of rare. Anything that is rare is precious. In the days of 1 Samuel 3 the Word of God was rare, but it is not rare today. In the Lord's recovery today there is the multiplication of God's Word. There is the abundance of God's Word. God is speaking day after day and meeting after meeting. Do you not realize that He is speaking? His speaking proves that He is working.

Everyone among us has some amount of God's speaking. However, many Christians that are not in the Lord's recovery would say that they do not understand what we are talking about when we say that we have the abundance of God's speaking. Once this matter has been explained to them, they would say, "It has been a long time since I heard God speak." Why is there no speaking of God among so many Christians? Because there is no moving of God among them. There is no working of God.

It is a punishment not to have God's speaking. In the days of 1 Samuel 3, the Word of God was rare. That was a punishment to the family and house of Eli the priest. When you are under God's blessing, God will be speaking every minute. God's speaking to you proves that you are under His blessing. There is an abundance of God's speaking among us in His recovery. Everyone hears His speaking. Is God speaking to you? That means that He is real, living, and moving.

Before many of the sisters came into the Lord's

recovery, they had no conviction whatsoever when they were angry with their husbands. They felt that they were angry with their husbands for a good reason and that such anger was altogether right. They could even tell others that their anger was absolutely justified. Now that these same sisters are in the Lord's recovery, they find that God speaks to them immediately whenever they lose their temper. They are no longer free to be angry with their husbands. Now if they become angry with their husbands, God speaks to them about it. If they are angry with their husbands on a Saturday night, they may have no peace to take the Lord's table the next day. This speaking proves that God is moving and working among us.

The living God imparts Himself into us by speaking. During the Life-Study of Romans the Lord gave us a good word--transfused. God wants to transfuse Himself into us. This is mainly accomplished by speaking. The more He speaks to you, the more His divine element will be imparted or transfused into your being. The more you are in His speaking, the more you are infused with all of His divine elements. Once you hear His speaking you can never be the same.

Without exception, God's Word brings us three things. The first of these is light. When God speaks, the light shines. The first element with God's Word is light. Where God's Word is, there is light. There is no need for you to expound it or interpret it. The light shines, for the Word bears light. The Divine Word is the best illuminator, the best light-bearer. When He speaks, He shines. We can all prove this by our experience. Whenever we hear His Word, we are under His shining, and this shining brings us light. With this light there is the understanding, vision, and the proper wisdom, knowledge, and utterance. Light includes several things: understanding, vision, knowledge, wisdom, and utterance. When you have light, you have the seeing power, the view, and the vision. When you have light, you have knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. This gives you utterance, and you cannot be dumb. None of the

tourists who visit Disneyland in Anaheim are dumb. When they see all the sights that are there, they are bubbling. Once you get into Disneyland, how could you be dumb? Even the little children, who cannot speak well, will have utterance because they see so many things.

Why do the pew members in the Christian denominations sit dumbly in their pews during the Sunday eleven o'clock service? Because they are short of light and see nothing. When you are in darkness, it is very difficult to speak. Try to speak when you are in darkness. You will be dumb because you see nothing. You will have nothing to say. If I am blind and you ask me to speak, I will have nothing to say. How different it is when we are in the light! When light comes, you have a great deal to say because you see so much. You see so many people, places, and things. You see so much that you speak spontaneously.

Light produces seeing, and seeing produces utterance. Why are all the church members so bubbling when they come to the meetings? Because they all have seen something and have something to say as a result. What we see spontaneously comes out in our utterance. There is no need to think of something to say. We talk about what we see. Light produces sight. Light comes from the Word. When you have the Word, you have light.

In my speaking throughout the years, many people have been surprised and have asked me where I get all my messages. My messages all come from the heavenly seeing, from the heavenly holy land tour. Nearly every morning I have a tour and see many things. I have much to say because I see much in the Word. The Word brings in light, light brings in the sight and the vision, and the vision gives the knowledge, wisdom, and utterance. This is not the knowledge in dead letters; it is the life knowledge, the knowledge that is full of life. It all comes from the Word.

The Word also brings us life. The Lord Jesus said that the words He speaks are spirit and life (John 6:63). "In the beginning was the Word...in Him was life" (John 1:1, 4). In the Word is life. When you touch the Word, you are

enlivened. Why are we so living? Because of the Word. Throughout the years I have seen many groups of Christians, but I have never seen such a group as are in the church life today. So many of the young ones deal with the Holy Bible day and night. This is a good sign. Some people have spread the rumor that Witness Lee tells people to throw away the Bible. That is a devilish lie! No one charges the saints to take the Word more than this ministry does. Look at the number of verses we use for each message!

Why are the church people so living? It is because of the life that is in the Word. Before you came to the church, you were not very living. You were starved to death. You were lacking the Word. Even now, if you were to keep yourself from the Word, the messages, and the meetings for two weeks, you would be dead. Today so many are living because they are filled with the Word. I am so happy to see that in this age, an age full of evils, the young people have sold themselves to the Holy Word. To so many of you the thing most precious in your heart is the Word. This is a good sign that the Lord is moving among you. His speaking is with us, and His Word is in us. Today everyone in the church life is bubbling because of the Word of life. We have the living Word.

The life that is in the Word includes a great deal. It includes holiness, love, humility, kindness, and patience. Life includes all the divine attributes and all the human virtues. We cannot exhaust the richness of life. Who can tell the riches of life? There is no need to speak of the divine life, for even the life in a carnation seed is very rich. It may be a tiny seed with seemingly a small amount of life in it, but it grows. As the carnation seed grows and blossoms, you can see the richness of life. All the riches are in the life. I ask you to consider the life we have, the life we touch. What riches are in the divine life! I have the full assurance to say that all the riches of God are in the church because the Word is in the church and the Word brings life. This life includes all the rich attributes, virtues, and qualities. As long as we have life, we have the riches.

Do not try to be humble, for humility is like a bird. If you try to catch it, it flies away. Do not try to love your wife or to submit to your husband. You cannot do it. Simply take the Word. The Word brings life, and this life will issue in love and submission. Humility, love, and submission are all found in this life. We cannot acquire these virtues by our effort or work. They are all in the divine life.

How can we have life? Simply take the Word and life comes. When life comes, every good thing comes with it. In this life is the humility and beauty of a human being. Since God created man in His image, there certainly is beauty in humanity. But this beauty of humanity can only be found in the divine life, and the divine life is in the Divine Word. When the Word comes, life comes, and beauty comes with the life. Look at the church people; everyone is handsome and beautiful. If the same people were not in the church life, they would have the appearance of scorpions, turtles, or monkeys. I have truly fallen in love with the church people. Even the older ones are so lovely. This beauty, this loveliness, comes from life, and life comes from the Word. When God speaks, life is there. This life is so rich.

When the Word comes, it also brings power. The Word brings light, life, and power. Many Christians trust in the so-called Pentecostal things. I also fully believe in the Pentecostal things, but not in the so-called "Pentecostal" way. Many say that if you do not have a certain "Pentecostal" experience, you do not have power. I do not agree with this. In my home town, very close to the church meeting place, was a Pentecostal meeting place. After ten years, they were less than a hundred in number. They practiced the "Pentecostal" things and claimed to have power. The church meeting place, however, was always crowded. One day, a leader from that Pentecostal group talked with me. I said, "Brother, according to your opinion, you have the power and we do not. But look at the facts. How few you have! How many we have here!" Power is with the Word.

When we preach the living Word, the power is there.

This power is not the instant power; it is the constant power. It is not the mushrooming power; it is the growing power. During the past years I have seen many mushrooming movements. One night a hundred repent, but after two months you can only find a few of them. What we are doing in our labor is like sowing a little carnation seed. It seems that after two weeks nothing has happened. Gradually a green sprout appears. Eventually, it blossoms, produces seed, and a second reproduction occurs. This is the power of life.

In the churches in the Lord's recovery we have no mushrooming developments. If the brothers in a certain locality would claim to have gained three thousand people in a week, I would say, "Let us wait and see. After a short time, most of them will disappear." We like to see the Word being sown and grown in the church field. Year after year it will grow and reproduce. You wait and see. Nothing will last so prevailingly as what is in the churches. It will be prevailing and it will endure forever because the power here is nothing other than life. This life comes from the Word. The Word brings in life, and life remains and reproduces. If the Lord would take me away from this country, I would have the complete assurance that the Lord's recovery in this country would still go on because it is not a movement of man's doing. It is a move of the divine life growing. The seed has been sown here, the Word has come, and life is here. Hallelujah! Where the Word is, there is power in life. Now we can see why God speaks. He speaks to shine, to enliven, and to empower.

I. TO THE FATHERS

God speaks in two stages: to the fathers and to us. Of old, He spoke to the fathers; in these last days, He speaks to us. Before God spoke to men, He spoke to nothing. He spoke to that which was not being. At that time there was nothing; so He spoke to nothing. By His speaking He called things not being as being (Rom. 4:17, Recovery Version).

He spoke, "Light!" and light came into being. The whole universe was created by His speaking, by His Word. The whole universe was framed by the Word of God (11:3). "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psa. 33:9). God worked by speaking. The real working of God among us today is His speaking. If God does not speak among us, we can do nothing regardless of how much we work. If God does not speak, the elders and the leading ones in the churches can do nothing. But when He speaks, we must say, "Praise the Lord!" God speaks to nothing, yet something comes. He calls things not being as being. By His speaking everything came into being. The whole universe was made by His word. After this, mankind came into being.

After man was created, God spoke to the fathers. He spoke to the fathers of old in the prophets and in many portions and in many ways (1:1). In the Old Testament, God spoke to people not once for all and only in one way, but in many portions and in many ways: in one portion to the Patriarchs in one way; in another portion through Moses in another way; in one portion through David in one way; in other portions through a number of prophets in several different ways. Even the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, contains many different portions. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy--each book is a different portion and each book has many portions. Have you ever seen any writing that is as rich as the Bible? The Old Testament has various portions: the histories, the chronicles, the Psalms, the Proverbs, and many different prophets. Some books are long, more than sixty chapters; others are short, only a few chapters. All the different ways of speaking have been exhausted by the Bible: the way of prophecy, type, shadow, pre-figure; the way to use the women, the serpent, the man, the lion, the scorpion, and the lamb, the water, the sun, the moon, the stars, and different kinds of trees and plants; clear words, illustrations, proverbs, parables, allegories, and types. Every way of utterance has been used in the Scripture.

When God spoke to Moses, He did not do it through a clear word, but through a bush that was burning yet was not burnt (Exo. 3:1-6). That was a most wonderful way of speaking. Moses understood by it that there was no need for him to be burnt. He needed to be burning, but he did not need to be burnt. God was not going to use him as the fuel. A little burning bush spoke a great deal to Moses. That was the way in which God spoke to Moses. Oh, the wisdom in the Bible! The most simple things are used in a profound way for God's speaking. Truly God has spoken in many portions and in many ways.

II. TO US

A. At the Last of These Days

Hebrews 1:2 uses the phrase "at the last of these days." This may also be rendered "the end of these days." This is a Hebrew expression indicating the end of the dispensation of law, with Messiah introduced (Isa. 2:2; Micah 4:1).

B. In the Son

In the last of the days God spoke and still speaks in the Son.

1. Being the Word

The Son is the Word (John 1:1; Rev. 19:13). "In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God." He was God's Word for God's speaking. The Son is altogether the Word for the speaking of God.

2. Declaring God the Father

The Son's being the Word is mainly to declare God the Father (John 1:18), that is, to declare, define, express, and reveal God. The more the Son speaks, the more God is expressed and revealed.

3. Conveying Life

The whole Person of the Son is the divine speaking. The Son as God's Word and God's speaking constantly conveys life to us. As the Word, He bears life. He always conveys life to us. When we receive Him, we have life.

4. Revealing Reality Through the Spirit

As the divine Word for the divine speaking, the Son reveals reality through the Spirit (John 16:12-15). Reality is all that God is to us. This reality is revealed to us by the Son as the Word through the Spirit.

C. In the Son as the Spirit

1. Speaking to the Churches

Whenever the Son speaks, He is the Spirit. The speaking Son is the Spirit. The Son of God is the Word. When the Word voices, it becomes the Spirit. This is proved by the seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3. At the beginning of each epistle, it says that the Lord is speaking, but at the end it says that we should hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. This proves that whenever the Lord Jesus speaks He is the speaking Spirit. Whenever the Son is speaking, it is the Spirit speaking. If you consider the seven comparisons in Revelation 2 and 3, you will see that whatever the Son speaks is the speaking of the Spirit (Rev. 2:1 cf. 7; 2:8 cf. 11; 2:12 cf. 17; 2:18 cf. 29; 3:1 cf. 6; 3:7 cf. 13; 3:14 cf. 22). We have the Son who is the Word of God. He is not only the Word of God, but also the speaking of God. Whenever He speaks, He is the speaking Spirit. "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63).

2. Speaking with the Church

Today the Son as the speaking Spirit is speaking with the churches. He not only speaks to the churches but also with the churches. Revelation 22:17 says, "And the Spirit

and the bride say, Come." At the beginning of the book of Revelation it is the Spirit speaking to the churches, but at the end of Revelation it is the Spirit speaking with the churches because the speaking Spirit and the church have become one. Hallelujah! This is God's speaking.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THREE

THE SON

God is mysterious. He is altogether a mystery. But this mystery has been revealed by God's speaking. Without the divine speaking, God would remain forever unknowable. But our God no longer is mysterious. He is not a mystery, but a story. The story of God is absolutely a matter of speaking. God has a history, and His history is a speaking story. We can tell the story of God. The story of God is a matter of continual speaking; it is a speaking history.

Firstly, God spoke through some people who were chosen and moved by Him. He spoke in various ways through Adam, Abel, Enosh, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. After Abraham, God spoke through Moses and many other chosen ones--priests, kings, and prophets. Everyone who spoke for God, whether he was a king or a prophet, was motivated by God's Spirit. Therefore, the history of God is a history of speaking.

After God spoke through so many different kinds of people, through high and low, educated and uneducated, kings and shepherds, His speaking was still insufficient. Regardless of how much these people were used to speak for God, their speaking was not adequate. God had to speak by Himself directly. So He came in the person of the Son. Hebrews 1:2 says that God has spoken to us in the Son. According to the Recovery Version of Hebrews, in 1:1 there is a definite article before the word "prophets." However, in 1:2 the definite article before "Son" is in italics, indicating that this word is not in the Greek text, but that it is necessary for the sake of English idiom. In the English language it is difficult to say, "God spoke to us in Son." Some of the better versions say, "God has spoken to us in

the person of the Son." Even the Amplified Version uses the phrase "in the person of a Son." This means God Himself speaks in the person of the Son. Formerly He spoke through the prophets; now He speaks in the Son. We must see that the Son is different from all the prophets. All of the prophets were men used by God to speak for Him, but the Son is God Himself speaking. Verse 2 says that God has spoken to us in the Son, and verse 8 tells us that the Son is God. This indicates that God speaks in Himself. In verse 2 it seems that God and the Son are two, for it says that God spoke in the Son. But in verse 8 it is evident that the Son and God are one, for the Son is addressed, "O God." To say that God has spoken in the Son means that God speaks in Himself.

In the four gospels the Son came. He came to speak God, not only with clear words, but also with what He was and what He did. He is altogether the Word of God and the speaking of God. Sometimes He spoke with words and other times He spoke with actions. All that He was and all that He did spoke God. "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18).

The Son is the Word, the speaking, the expression, and the definition of God. When the Son speaks, His word is the Spirit (John 6:63). Eventually, to the churches, He is the speaking Spirit. At the beginning of each of the seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3, the Son speaks, but at the end of each epistle, it is the Spirit speaking to the churches. God speaks in the Son, and when the Son speaks to the churches, He is the speaking Spirit. By His speaking the churches will become one with Him. At the end of Revelation the Spirit and the church speak as one (Rev. 22:17). God speaks in the Son, the Son becomes the speaking Spirit, and the speaking Spirit is one with the church speaking for God. This is the speaking history of our God, a history that is a speaking story.

This speaking story is recorded in the Bible. The entire Bible is a history of God. As we have seen, this history is a

speaking story. When God created all things, He did so by speaking. When He contacted humanity in the Old Testament times, He did it by speaking in the prophets. When He came to mankind in the New Testament age, He spoke in the Son, in the Person of the Son as His Word. How does He come into the churches today? By speaking as the speaking Spirit. By speaking as the Spirit, He makes Himself one with the churches. Eventually, this speaking story not only consists of Himself, but also of all the churches. Meeting after meeting, the church life is a speaking story. We are a speaking people. By this speaking God is transfused into people. By this speaking so many human beings are being infused and saturated with the divine element. This is the church life. This is God speaking.

The book of Hebrews is a book of God's speaking. The essence of the letter to the Hebrews is God speaking in the Son. God speaks in the Son, the Son speaks as the Spirit to the churches, and ultimately the Spirit speaks with the church. It is altogether by this speaking story that God is brought into man and man is brought into God. God and man, man and God, become one. This is the wonderful church life.

I. HIS PERSON

Now we are ready to see the Son. Hebrews chapter one reveals two main things concerning the Son--His person and His work.

A. The Effulgence of God's Glory

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews, being absolutely in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had the wisdom to say that the Son is the effulgence of God's glory (1:3). The effulgence of God's glory is like the shining or brightness of the rays of the sun. The Son is the shining, the brightness of God's glory. Can you separate the effulgence from the glory? This is like separating the shining of the sun from the rays of the sun. It cannot be done, for the shining and the rays are one. Consider the

example of electric lights. Can we say that light is one thing and electricity is another? Absolutely not. Light is simply the expression of electricity. Electricity is a mystery. Has anyone ever seen electricity? Although it is a mystery, it is nevertheless a reality. How can you tell that electricity is in a certain room? By looking at the lights. Light is the effulgence of the glory of electricity. Likewise, we should never consider the Son as separate from God. The Son is the expression of God Himself.

There are some so-called Christians who do not believe that Christ is God. That is the greatest blasphemy against the Lord Jesus. Our Lord is nothing less than God. He is God Himself. When I was in Manila in 1950, a group of so-called Christians who do not believe that Christ is God was very prevailing there. Some of their people turned to the Lord's recovery. One day four representatives from that group came to see me: two attorneys, one medical doctor, and a teacher. They came with their Bibles to try to defeat me. The first question they asked was, "Mr. Lee, how can you say that Christ is God?" I replied, "How can you say that Christ is not God? You answer me first and then I'll answer you. Tell me where it says in the Bible that Christ is not God." They answered, "We cannot show you a verse that says that Christ is not God. Nevertheless, you should not guess that Christ is God." I told them that I was not guessing and proceeded to quote John 1:1. Immediately they said, "This verse says that the Word was God, but it does not say that Christ is God." I said, "What kind of people are you? Do you have a sound mind? Tell me, who is the Word?" They answered, "The Word is the Word. The Word is not Christ." Then I said, "Don't you have verse 14 which says that the Word became flesh?" They replied, "That is the flesh. That is not Christ." I said, "I do not have time for this kind of twisting. What you speak is nonsense." Although they tried to be devilishly humble with me and asked me to be patient with them, I said, "I don't want to hear you. You speak nonsense. You don't have a sober mind. Every sober mind understands that in the beginning

was the Word, that the Word was God, that this Word became flesh, that this flesh was named Jesus, and that Jesus is God. But what you speak is absolute nonsense." They were exposed and defeated. Some of the members of that group came to see that they did not have the truth, that what they had was falsehood.

We all must realize that our Lord Jesus is God. Do not consider that He is anything other than our God. He is God. Thus, 1:3 says that He is the effulgence of the glory of God.

B. The Express Image of God's Substance

The Son is also the express image of the substance of God (1:3). The glory is the outward expression and the substance is the inward essence. God has His essence, His substance, as well as His appearance. God's essence is His substance. For example, a table is substantial. It has a substance, which is wood. Wood is the essence of the table. Likewise, our God is substantial. He has substance as well as glory. We do not have the adequate words to explain these things. We can only say that our God is glorious and substantial. As far as God's glory is concerned, the Son is the effulgence of this glory. As far as God's substance is concerned, the Son is the express image of this substance.

The express image of God's substance is like the impress of a seal. A seal has an image. When the seal is pressed upon the paper, the paper bears the same express image. Suppose a seal has the letters USA. When the seal is pressed upon a piece of paper, the paper bears the same image as the seal. The Son is not only the effulgence of God's glory, but He is also the impress of God's substance. This means that the Son is God coming to us. When I hold the seal in my hand, the seal is there. When I put the seal upon you, the seal comes to you. Wherever you go, you bear the impress of the seal. When God does not come to you, He is just God. When God comes to you, He is the Son as the impress of His substance.

Our Christ is God coming to us. He is our God reaching us. How can the sun reach us? By the shining of its rays. If you think that there is no sun, you should stand outside for fifteen minutes at noontime. The sun will burn you because the rays of the sun reach you. This means that the sun reaches you. Who is the Son? The Son is God reaching us, God coming to be one with us. Many times people say, "Let us bathe in the sunshine." After they take a sunbath, some element of the sun is transfused into them. This means that the sun reaches them. Likewise, Christ, the Son of God, is God Himself reaching us and coming into us. We do have a God who reaches us, a God who comes into us. This is our salvation, the great salvation revealed in chapter two. Our great salvation is God reaching us and coming to us. This is the Son of God.

C. God Himself

Hebrews 1:8 reveals that the Son who is the effulgence of God's glory and the express image of God's substance is God Himself. Verse 8 says concerning the Son, "Your throne, O God." This reveals that the Son is God Himself.

D. The Lord

Verse 10 reveals that the Son is the Lord, the Creator. "And, You in the beginning, Lord, have founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands." Christ, the Son of God, is God Himself, as well as the Lord, the Creator. Do not think that He is other than the Lord, the Creator. He is God and the Lord, the Creator.

II. HIS WORK

We come now to the work of the Son. In 1:2-3 two categories of the Son's work are revealed: creation and redemption.

A. In Creation

1. Creating the Universe in the Past

Hebrews chapter one reveals that the Son created the heavens and the earth (1:2, 10). All things came into existence through the Son (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; 1 Cor. 8:6). The Son is the Creator of the universe.

2. Upholding All Things in the Present

After creating all things, the Son became the Upholder (1:3). The earth is suspended in the air. There are no columns supporting it. After Christ created the earth, He began to uphold it. He upholds it by the word of His power. If you ask the scientists who holds the earth, they will say that something upholds it. The earth is one of many planets. The astronomers tell us that all the planets move according to their own track. If they were to move out of orbit, there would be a global accident. Who upholds the universe? The Son. He upholds the universe very easily. He does not do anything--He just speaks. He upholds all things by the word of His power.

Hebrews is a book on the word of God. In 11:3 we are told that the universe was framed according to the word of God, and in 1:3 we see that the universe is upheld by the word of power. The divine word is very meaningful. The Son is not only the Creator, but He is also the Upholder. He created and upholds the universe by His word.

3. Inheriting All Things in the Future

In the past, He was the Creator; in the present, He is the Upholder; and in the future, He will be the Heir to inherit all things (1:2). The sun, earth, solar system, stars, galaxies--all are His. All things are for Him. He will inherit all things. In God's creation He is the Creator, the Upholder, and the Heir. All things are of Him, through Him, and to Him (Rom. 11:36).

B. In Redemption

1. Having Purified Sins in the Past

In God's redemption there are also three time periods. Firstly, the Lord purified our sins in the past (1:3). He has not only atoned for our sins, but also made purification of them. Atoning means covering, but purification means that our sins have been washed away. In the type of the Old Testament, the atonement was only able to cover sins (Psa. 32:1), but unable to take them away. So the atoning priests stood daily, offering the same sacrifices, and could never sit down (Heb. 10:11). But the Son has taken away sin (John 1:29) and has accomplished the purification of sins once for all. Therefore, He sat down forever (Heb. 10:10, 12). In the eyes of God, sin is over. In the eyes of God, throughout the whole universe, sin has been washed away. Sin should not be in you, in the church, or in your home. Sin has been washed away, and the purification of sin has been accomplished. The Son completed this work in the past.

2. Sitting at the Right Hand of God in the Present

What is the Son doing now? He is sitting, resting. He is enjoying some excellent sightseeing. He is sitting on the right hand of God, watching His lovers and seekers experience His purification of sin. He is not doing anything there--He is just sitting. At least five times the book of Hebrews tells us that the Lord Jesus is sitting (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). He has no work to do. He does not need to wash you again, for He has thoroughly washed you already. Before you even made your confession, He already washed you. In fact, you were washed before you were born. Now the Lord has nothing more to do. This is much better than the work of the priests.

3. Waiting for the Subduing of the Enemies in the Future

The Lord is waiting for His enemies to be subdued. This will occur in the future. The Lord lacks nothing except a footstool. He has the throne and the crown, but He does not yet have the footstool. He is only waiting for this. Be assured that one day He will obtain this footstool.

The book of Hebrews stresses the fact that Christ has accomplished everything for God and us, leaving nothing for us to do. His sitting at the right hand of God signifies that His work has been accomplished and that He is resting there, waiting only for one thing--that God will make His enemies a footstool for His feet. He is sitting there in the heavens waiting for a footstool that He may have complete rest.

In the Old Testament God spoke in the prophets, in men moved by His Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). In the New Testament He speaks in the Son, in the person of the Son. The Son is God Himself (1:8), God expressed. God the Father is hidden, God the Son is expressed. No one has ever seen God; the Son as the Word of God (John 1:1; Rev. 19:13) and the speaking of God has declared Him and has been His full expression, explanation, and definition (John 1:18). The Son is the center, the focus, of the book of Hebrews. In the Godhead He is the effulgence of God's glory and the express image of God's substance. In creation He is the means through whom the universe was made, the power that upholds all things, and the Heir appointed to inherit all things. In redemption He has accomplished the purification of sins and is now sitting on the right hand of God in the heavens waiting for the subduing of His enemies.

The book of Hebrews reveals the contrast between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was of the law in letters and forms; of man, earthly, temporary; and by sight, issuing in a religion

called Judaism. The New Testament is of life, spiritual, heavenly, permanent, and by faith, focused in a person who is the Son of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FOUR

CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD--AS GOD SUPERIOR TO THE ANGELS

The book of Hebrews is a book of comparisons. It compares God's economy in Christ with the Old Testament things. A good number of the Hebrew believers, to whom this book was written, appreciated faith in Christ and the salvation in Christ, but they also appreciated their old religious background, which was established by God according to the Old Testament. It was not heathen or pagan. It was not an invention of human imagination; it was established according to God's oracles. God had told their forefathers to set up the temple rites and rituals and the Levitical service. Thus, it was commanded, established, and even blessed by God. The Hebrew believers came out of such a background. But since they had also seen something in Christ, they were troubled. We would feel the same way if we were in their situation. The Hebrew believers were bothered by these two ends--Christ and their old background. Both were of God and now they had to make a choice between them. The Hebrew believers were hesitating on the bridge. They had not left the other side, but rather were on the edge of the border. They were being called to go on, to cross the river, to pass over. They were not involved in idolatry, for the holy temple had been erected for the purpose of worshipping the God of their forefathers. In the Levitical service, the priests offered the sacrifices ordained by God and burned the incense as He had required. It was difficult for the Hebrew believers to completely give this up. They held these two ends with their two hands, holding Christ in the one hand and their

forefathers' religion in the other. This was the background of their situation.

In addition to this, they faced problems in their environment. A persecution was raised up against them. Although they loved their old religion, the high priest in that religion took the lead to persecute them, making their situation very clear. Perhaps he said to them, "If you want to be an Israelite, stay with us. Forget about Christ and the Christians. If you want to be with the Christians, you must leave us. Get out! We will not even allow you to have your living among us." That was the situation of the Hebrew believers when the book of Hebrews was written to them.

In this letter we see the wisdom of the Lord's Spirit. He did not rebuke them. There is no rebuking spirit, no rebuking word, and no rebuking tone. Rebuking does not work very well. The Lord the Spirit chose the best way to help them--the way of making a comparison. The best way to help our children is to give them a comparison. Let them compare white with black, Christ with religion, the church with the world, heaven with hell, and then let them make their choice. This was the way taken by the writer of this book. In a full way, he presents what is in God's economy, showing the superiority of Christ as compared with their old religion. That religion served as a black background. Without a black background, the white will not appear to be so white. In order to show the whiteness of white you need a black background. Remember this principle: in the book of Hebrews there is always a comparison.

What are the main items in Judaism, the things that the Jewish forefathers held as treasures? In Judaism, the typical and genuine religion formed and established according to the Old Testament, the major item is God. God is their boast (Rom. 2:17). In no other religion do people have such a God. Buddhism, for example, is nonsense and should not even be called a religion. Religion helps people to worship God, to serve God, and to behave in a manner pleasing to God. There is no God in Buddhism, only a dumb Buddha. According to Buddhism,

everyone can

become a Buddha. Buddhism teaches that if you behave yourself, eventually you will become a Buddha. This is absolutely devilish.

Likewise, the teachings of Confucius should not be considered as a religion. Confucius never taught religion. His teachings are altogether ethical. In his teachings on ethics and morality, Confucius only mentioned God a few times. He simply advised people not to offend God, for, if they did, there was no way to be forgiven.

We may now consider Islam. The Koran, the sacred book of Islam, is a counterfeit of the Old Testament. It is subtle. It mentions God and contains the history of Genesis. But it is altogether a counterfeit.

The genuine and true God is with the Jewish religion, for it is the genuine and typical religion. In a sense, they have the real God. This God is their boast. Even today Judaism still boasts in its God.

Secondly, Judaism has angels. The heathen religions all have demons. There is no comparison between the angels and the demons. The Bible indicates that the angels are very close to God. When the Lord appeared to Abraham, He appeared with two angels (Gen. 18:1-2). They looked very much alike. By this we can see how high the angels are. Even the law was given through the mediation of angels (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19). So the Jewish religion boasts in them.

Thirdly, the Jewish religion boasted in Moses through whom God's law was given. In nearly every race, especially in ancient times, there were outstanding leaders. But he was the foremost leader among all human leaders. No one's writings can compare with his writings. There is no need to consider all of the books of the Pentateuch written by Moses; it is sufficient to present only one, Deuteronomy. This book is incomparable; it is in the third heavens. All other books outside the Bible are either on the surface of the earth or are in the lowest hell. The writings of Moses are high. I truly love all the books that he wrote, especially Deuteronomy which is so sweet and tender. What depths

there are in the five books written by Moses! These books are gold mines. The more you dig in them, the more treasures you find. They are fathomless. So all Jewish people boast in Moses.

The fourth item is the priesthood with Aaron, the elder brother of Moses, as the head. Moses was not a priest; he was an Old Testament apostle. Aaron was a high priest. Moses was sent from God to the people, and Aaron went from the people back to God. Moses typified Christ coming from God to the people, and Aaron typified Christ going from the people to God. The Jews have such a priesthood which serves God and takes care of the peoples' needs in the presence of God.

In a sense, the priests were not only ministers, but also attorneys of law in the heavenly court. How good it is to have an attorney to take care of your case continually. The Jewish people had their priestly attorneys. Today, if people do not have an attorney, they have no protection, but if they are under the care of a good attorney, they can be at peace. The heathen had no attorney before God to take care of them, but the Jews had priests before God as their attorneys. Those priests served God and took care of the cases of the children of Israel. Therefore, the Jews could boast in their priests.

The fifth and last main item of which Judaism could boast was the old covenant made by God with the Jewish people. The Jews are God's people according to God's covenant made according to God's law. They are God's covenanted people. No other people on the earth has such a divine covenant that they may be God's people according to God's desires and requirements. Only the Jews have such a divine covenant that makes them a particular people to God. So they hold it as a treasure and boast in it.

The intention of the book of Hebrews is to show the Hebrew believers the superiority of God's economy over Judaism. In Judaism the boast was God, angels, Moses, Aaron the high priest, and the old covenant with its services. The writer uses these five items as the basis for

making a comparison. He firstly points out that in God's economy the first superior thing is not only God, but God expressed, that is, God the Son (1:2, 3, 5, 8-12). Then he goes on to unfold that Christ is superior to the angels (1:4-2:18), to Moses (3:1-6), to Aaron (4:14-7:28), and that the new covenant of life made by Him is superior to the old covenant of letters (8:1-10:18).

The first comparison that this book presents is the comparison between the God in His salvation and the God in the Jewish religion. The Jewish religion has the true God, but in Judaism He is the hidden God. In God's salvation, on the contrary, God is expressed. This expressed God is God the Son. God the Son is the expression of God. When the Apostle John was in the Jewish religion before he was saved, he could never say, "We beheld His glory." But when he wrote his gospel, he said that in the beginning was the Word, the Word was God, the Word which was God became flesh, and we all have seen His glory. In John 1:18 John went on to say that no one has seen God, but "the only begotten Son has declared Him." In his first epistle John said that we have heard, seen, and touched this One who expresses God as our life (1 John 1:1). This is the God in His salvation. The God in Judaism is true but hidden. The God in His salvation is expressed.

In the Old Testament God spoke through the prophets but never had Himself expressed. In the New Testament, that is, in God's salvation, God speaks in the Son who is God's Word, God's speaking, and even God Himself. He speaks God, declares God, and expresses God. In the old time God spoke through the prophets indirectly, but now He speaks in the Son directly.

When Peter was on the mount of transfiguration with the Lord and saw Moses and Elijah he still held the old concept and ranked Moses and Elijah with the Son of God (Matt. 17:1-8). He had to learn that the old way of God's speaking was over. There is no more Moses and no more Elijah--only the Son of God. Peter needed to cross the river and hear the Son. The Son now is God's unique Word,

God's unique speaking. He is God's declaration and expression. He not only speaks for God--He speaks God. He is the effulgence of God's glory and the impress of God's substance. He is God expressed. The God in His salvation is much better than the God in the Jewish religion. There God is hidden; here God is expressed.

The Son in whom God speaks is the very One who created the heavens and the earth (1:10). He is nothing less than God the Creator. He is also the One who upholds the whole universe. He upholds all things by the word of His power (1:3). He is also the anointed One, the One who is appointed to inherit the entire created universe (1:2). This appointed Heir is God Himself (1:8). This God is nothing less than the Jewish God, but He is more than the Jewish God. No one has ever seen the Jewish God, but to us, the proper Hebrews, God is revealed, expressed, touched, received, possessed, and experienced day by day.

In the Lord's recovery we have many Jewish brothers who have become Hebrews. Before they came into the Lord's recovery they all knew about God, but they did not enjoy Him. In their religion, they only had God in terminology; they did not have God in their experience. Now they have Him in experience.

In opening his epistle, the writer of Hebrews indicated that the God of the real Hebrews is much better than the God in the old Jewish religion. He is not only God the Father, but also God the Son. Both of these concepts are found in Isaiah 9:6. "Unto us a son is given...and his name shall be called...The everlasting Father." A Son is given to us, yet His name is called the everlasting Father. The Father is now the Son given to us. The Father is for His being, and the Son is for His being given. In His being the very God, He is the Father, and in being given to us He is the Son. As Isaiah 9:6 clearly reveals, in being given He is the Son, yet He is called the everlasting Father. The Father is for His being, and the Son is for His being given to reach us, to be gained by us in our experience. If He were only the Father, we could never receive Him or enjoy

Him. Praise Him that He is the Son given to us. God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son to us (John 3:16). The Son is a divine gift from the Father, and this divine gift is God Himself. God gave Himself to us as a divine gift in the Son.

Our God is the expressed God, the God who reaches us, who is received by us, who is experienced by us, and who becomes our enjoyment day by day. This is our God. Surely this God is better than the God of Judaism. This God is Jesus, the Son of God, God Himself. He is God's expression, God reaching us, God being received, experienced, enjoyed, and possessed by us.

Now we need to see that the Son as the expressed God is much higher than the angels. He is superior to the angels. Not only is the God in salvation superior to the angels, but even the God in Judaism was much superior to them, for the angels were His servants. The angels are winds and flames of fire (1:7). Do not think so highly of the angels. Perhaps many of you desire to be an angel. We shall see that the angels are not only inferior to Christ; they are also inferior to us. Even in the Old Testament times, God was far superior to the angels. They simply served His purpose. Thus, it goes without saying that our Christ, the Son of God, is even more superior to the angels than was the God of Judaism. The angels, which are like winds and flames of fire, are simply the creatures, while the Son is the Creator. As creatures, the angels are much inferior to the Son, and as the Creator, the Son is much superior to the angels.

I. THE SON--A MORE EXCELLENT NAME

The Son has a more excellent name than the angels. Verse 1:4 says, "Having become, by so much, better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they." This more excellent name is the Son, which is fully defined in the following verses of this chapter. "For to which of the angels has He ever said, You are My Son; this day I have begotten You? And again, I will be to Him a

Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?" (1:5). Romans 1:4 says that Christ "was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead." His coming out of death was the designation that He is the Son of God. Christ has been designated as and declared to be the Son of God. He has received such an excellent name.

II. IN RESURRECTION

It is in resurrection that Christ is declared to be the Son of God who is superior to the angels. Resurrection means a new beginning; it denotes germination. Verse 3 refers to His death by saying, "having made purification of sins." Verse 5 indicates His resurrection by which He was begotten to be the Firstborn Son of God (Acts 13:33) as a beginning of a new age, the age of the church which is composed of His many brothers born of God through His resurrection.

III. IN ASCENSION

Hebrews 1 also speaks of Christ's ascension, which follows His resurrection. Verse 13 says, "But to which of the angels has He said at any time, Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet?" This clearly refers to the ascension. In His ascension Christ, as the ascended Son of God, is much superior to the angels. He is no longer in the tomb or on the earth; He is at "the right hand of the Majesty on high" (1:3). This is His ascension in which He was inaugurated into His office to carry out God's eternal purpose, that is, to build up the church and to bring His many brothers into glory.

IV. IN THE SECOND COMING

Christ, after being seated on the throne in His ascension, is waiting for His enemies to be subdued as His footstool. Then He will come back. As the Son of God, He is also superior to the angels in His second coming. Verse 6

alludes to this. "And, when He brings again the Firstborn into the inhabited earth, He says, And let all the angels of God worship Him." How do we know that this verse refers to the second coming? Because it speaks of Christ as the Firstborn. In His first coming, He was God's only begotten Son (John 1:14). Through the process of resurrection, the only begotten Son became "the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8:29). By this mention of the Firstborn we know that this verse refers to His coming back. In His second coming He will be the Firstborn. When God brought Him to earth the first time, He was the only begotten Son, but when God brings Him to the inhabited earth the second time, He will be the Firstborn. At that time all the angels will worship Him.

V. IN THE KINGDOM

Following the coming back of Christ is His kingdom. He, as the coming Firstborn Son of God, will be superior to the angels in His kingdom. Verse 8 says, "But as to the Son, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom." Here the Son is addressed, "O God." This is a strong proof that the Son is God. Surely God is superior to the angels. This verse also indicates that the throne of the Son is the everlasting throne of God. Thus, His kingdom must also be the kingdom of God. These are the wonderful things in which, in the kingdom, Christ is superior to all the angels.

VI. IN ETERNITY

After the kingdom is eternity. Verses 10 through 12 reveal that Christ will be superior to the angels in eternity. Verse 10 says, "You in the beginning, Lord, have founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands." This refers to His creation. "They shall perish, but You remain; and they all shall become old as a garment" (v. 11). This means that the old creation will be terminated and

that the new heaven and new earth will be ushered in. "But You are the same, and Your years shall not fail" (v. 12). This means that He will be the everlasting One in eternity. As the Creator and the everlasting One He is superior to the angels, His creatures.

What a portion of the Word is Hebrews chapter one! This chapter gives us an account of Christ from eternity past to eternity future. He was the very God in eternity past (v. 8); He was the Creator of the earth and the heavens (vv. 10, 2); He is the Upholder of all things (v. 3); He is the Heir of all things (v. 2); He was incarnated for redemption by crucifixion (v. 3); He was begotten as the Son of God in resurrection for imparting life to the many sons of God (v. 5); He is the Firstborn Son of God who will come again (v. 6); He will be the King on the throne with the scepter in the kingdom (vv. 8-9); and He will remain forever and ever in eternity future (v. 12). This short chapter covers such a wide span of what Christ is from eternity past to eternity future. This is our Christ. How much superior He is to the angels!

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIVE

HEIRS OF SALVATION

Hebrews is a special book. In the New Testament there is only one other book in the same category as Hebrews--the book of Revelation. I myself strongly believe that Hebrews was written by the Apostle Paul because at the end of the letter he mentions Timothy (13:23). Paul wrote at least thirteen epistles. Among all the epistles in the New Testament, Hebrews stands out in a very peculiar way. It is not common; it is quite unusual. Among all the other books of the Bible, Revelation also stands out. Both Hebrews and Revelation are revelations of Christ, revealing Christ in special and particular ways. Many aspects of Christ can only be seen in Hebrews, and other particular aspects of Him can only be found in Revelation. These two books are high, deep, and profound in their revelation of Christ. Because of this, they are closed to most Christians. Although many Christians can talk about the stories in the four gospels, justification by faith, and things such as head covering, the Lord's table, and the manifestation of the gifts, they cannot touch the depth of Hebrews and Revelation. Some deal with the book of Revelation in the way of talking about horns, beasts, horses, scorpions, locusts, and frogs. Others discuss it in a higher way, talking about the length of the tribulation or the time of the rapture. But I have never heard people talk about it in the way of Christ being revealed so particularly in God's administration, or in the way of the local churches being the testimony of Jesus. Since my youth, I have heard many messages on Revelation, but I have never heard anyone say that Revelation begins with seven golden lampstands and concludes with a unique lampstand, a

golden mountain, holding Christ as the lamp shining with God's light for eternity. We praise the Lord that in His mercy He has opened up these books to us in these last days. He has opened up the depths of His Christ in these books. I do not call your attention to Hebrews and Revelation because these books are deep in doctrine, but because they are profound in the unveiling of Christ. In no other books can we see Christ in such a way. Christ, our dear Lord, is a wonderful person. He is marvelous, far beyond our understanding and utterance. We simply cannot utter His profoundness. Therefore, Hebrews and Revelation use various expressions to describe, portray, and unveil this wonderful person. I ask you to take full note of the particulars revealed in these two books.

It may seem that this message on the heirs of salvation has nothing to do with Christ. Believe me, if you are going to know Christ, you must know this message, for it contains a particular aspect concerning Christ. Christ is wonderful, profound, unlimited, rich, and marvelous. As such a One, He certainly needs all of us to be heirs of salvation. Salvation is nothing less than the wonderful person of Christ Himself. Christ Himself, as the most profound, marvelous, unlimited, and immeasurable One, is our salvation. To say that we are heirs of salvation means that we inherit this profound, marvelous, immeasurable, and unlimited Christ. Christ's profoundness requires our partnership. Our partnership with Christ unveils the profoundness of Christ.

I. THE FIRSTBORN SON BEING THE APPOINTED HEIR

In His economy God not only has a great operation, but He also has tremendous riches. In His operation He has accomplished and is going to accomplish many things. He has also created and brought forth many things. For this, He has appointed the Son to be not only the Operator but also the Heir. He also has given the Son the authority to do

everything in His purpose and the right to inherit all things in His operation. Hebrews 1:2 says that God made the universe through the Son and that He appointed the Son to be the Heir of all things. Colossians 1:16 says that all things were created by and for the Son. John 13:3 tells us that the Father has given all things to the Son. Thus, the Son is the Lord of all (Acts 10:36).

Firstly, the Son was appointed by God the Father (1:2); then He was anointed by the Father with the Spirit (1:9); and eventually, after the Son had been designated to be the Son of God (Rom. 1:4), being begotten of God in His resurrection to be the Firstborn Son of God (1:5; Acts 13:33), He was inaugurated as the Lord of all into His office at the time of His ascension into the heavens (Acts 2:36). He was not only appointed and anointed by God, but, in His exaltation, was inaugurated as both the Lord and Christ to administrate God's operation and was designated as the legal Heir to inherit all things in God's economy. He, as Isaac, the Son of Abraham, is going to inherit the earth (Psa. 2:8), the kingdom (Dan. 7:13-14), the throne (Luke 1:32), and all things (Matt. 11:27). Since He is not only the Son of God, but also the Heir of God, even the legal Heir of God, all that God the Father is and has is for His possession (John 16:15). This is our Savior, the One who is the salvation of which we are heirs.

II. THE MANY SONS BEING SAVED TO BE THE JOINT-HEIRS

In order to realize that we are the heirs of salvation, we must be aware that, in God's economy, God has the Firstborn Son and the many sons. How many sons did God have before Christ was incarnated? He had only one, unique Son. In the Bible, this Son is called the only begotten (John 1:14, 18). John 3:16, a verse familiar to every Christian, says that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. God's only begotten Son was Christ. Before His death and resurrection, Christ was the

unique Son of God. The New Testament reveals that through Christ's death and resurrection the many sons of God were born (1 Peter 1:3). Early in the morning of the day of His resurrection, the Lord Jesus said to Mary, "Go to My brothers and say to them, "I ascend to My Father and your Father and My God and your God'" (John 20:17). He never called His disciples brothers before that morning. Even in John 15 He said, "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his lord is doing; but I have called you friends" (v. 15). The most intimate term He used regarding His disciples before His resurrection was "friend." But after His resurrection, He met one of His female disciples and told her to go to His brothers. This was prophesied in Psalm 22. The first words of this psalm, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" were spoken by the Lord when He was on the cross (Matt. 27:46). The first twenty-one verses of this psalm speak of the Lord's crucifixion. Suddenly, verse 22 says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." This proves that He passed through death and entered into resurrection. After He passed through death and resurrection, the many brothers were produced. He was that one grain of wheat which through death and resurrection became many grains (John 12:24). Now God has many sons. He not only has the one Son, but the many sons with the Firstborn. Before His resurrection Christ was the only begotten Son of God. After His resurrection, since many sons of God have been produced, He became God's Firstborn Son with many brothers.

What is a son? A son is the expression of his father. Many times when I see a son I can recognize the father's face, for the sons express their fathers. Often when I see a little boy I know whose son he is, for when I look at his face I see his father's face. The father is never the expression of the son; rather the son is the expression of the father. How many sons does God have? Before Christ's resurrection, God had only one Son. This means that He had one, unique expression. How many expressions does God have today?

He has many because He has many sons. All His sons are His expression. An understanding of this is basic to knowing the matter of the heirs of salvation.

In God's salvation we are not only born of God to be His sons (John 1:12-13), but also made "heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ" (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7; Titus 3:7). To be born sons of God is one thing; to be made heirs of God is another. Do you know the difference between a son and an heir? You may be a son without being an heir. To be a son requires the birth; to be an heir requires the maturity in growth. Before a boy can become an heir, he must be matured. However, even after being matured he is not yet fully qualified to be an heir. In addition to reaching maturity, an heir must be legalized. You may be mature according to age and yet not be legalized to be the heir. Thus, in order to be an heir you need to be both mature and legalized. In order for a person to become God's heir he needs three things: to be reborn as a child of God, to grow into maturity, and to be legalized.

Suppose a certain king has five sons. Will they all inherit the throne? No. Only the firstborn will inherit the throne of the kingdom. Nevertheless, the firstborn needs to mature and to be designated as the crown prince. Then he will be the legal successor to the throne and will inherit the kingdom. Perhaps when you hear this you might say, "Since Christ is the Firstborn, we have no right to touch the throne of the kingdom." But I am here to tell you that although the throne of the United Kingdom is just for one person, the throne of the heavenly kingdom is for the Firstborn and His many brothers. We all are His brothers and we are also His co-heirs. When He is on the throne, we shall be there with Him (Rev. 3:21). We shall be His co-kings (Rev. 20:4, 6).

Our Father is a great Father, much greater than Abraham. We, the many sons of God the Father, have so much to inherit with Christ, the Firstborn Son of God. But we need to grow and mature in life that we may be made legal heirs.

What is the destiny of a saved person? What is God's purpose in saving the many sons? His purpose is that we be joint-heirs of His Son. The Firstborn Son of God is God's appointed Heir, and we, the many sons, have been saved to be His joint-heirs. The destiny of our salvation is to be the joint-heirs of Christ. We are heirs with Christ! Christ is the appointed Heir and we are His joint-heirs.

What are we going to inherit? Hebrews 2 says that we, the joint-heirs of Christ, will inherit the earth. Of course, we shall inherit something far more than the earth. Inheriting the earth during the millennium is just a prize similar to the prize awarded to a student who receives straight A's in school. We will certainly inherit a great deal more than this. First Corinthians 3:22 tells us that all things are ours.

III. THE JOINT-HEIRS BEING THE PARTNERS OF THE APPOINTED HEIR

The joint-heirs are the partners of the appointed Heir (1:9). Since Christ as the Firstborn Son of God is God's appointed Heir and we as the many sons of God are His joint-heirs, we are His partners. He and we, we and He, are in one partnership sharing the same interests in the divine corporation. Have you ever heard that we are Christ's partners? Hallelujah, we are His partners! Suppose you become the partner of a billionaire. You would certainly be assured of having great riches, for whatever the billionaire has is yours. You are one with him in a great corporation. God has the biggest corporation in the universe. The name of this corporation is "Christ and the Church." We are the partners in this corporation. We have not been hired by this corporation; we are the partners. In the entire universe God has only one corporation--"Christ and the Church,"--and this corporation has millions of angels to be the serving ones. The Jews should no longer boast in the angels; the angels are our servants (1:14).

IV. THE MANY SONS COMPOSING THE HOUSE OF GOD--BETHEL

The many sons, who are the joint-heirs of Christ and His partners, compose the house of God, Bethel. The house of God is composed of all His sons. We are the joint-heirs and the partners of Christ. We are also the sons and the house of God. Hebrews 2:10 tells us that we are the sons of God. Then Hebrews 3:6 says that we are the house of God. This house of God is living because it is built with us, the living sons of the living God. It is altogether a matter of God being the Spirit and indwelling our spirit. The living God as the Spirit dwells in our regenerated spirit. Here is the house of God on earth. Hence, it is the habitation of God in our spirit (Eph. 2:22, Gk.).

V. THE FIRSTBORN SON BEING THE HEAVENLY LADDER AT BETHEL

The first mention of God's house in the Bible is in Genesis 28. Remember, the first mention of anything in the Scriptures establishes the principle of that thing. In the mention of the house of God in Genesis 28 many spiritual principles are established: that where the house of God is, there is the heavenly ladder; that the house of God with the heavenly ladder is the gate of heaven; and that where there is the house of God with the heavenly ladder as the gate of heaven, there are the ministering angels ascending and descending upon the ladder. Wherever the house of God is on earth, there is the heavenly ladder. This ladder joins earth to heaven and brings heaven down to earth. The place with the heavenly ladder is the gate of heaven. Here the angels ascend and descend as they do their service, which is to take care of the house of God as the gate of heaven. This is the picture of God's house on earth.

We must remember that in Hebrews we are told that we are joint-heirs of Christ, His partners, and the house of God, today's Bethel on earth. Since we are the house of

God, the real Bethel, the heavenly ladder, which is Christ, is here. Since the heavenly ladder is here, the angels ascend and descend upon this ladder as they do their service. The church today is the house of God composed of God's many sons with Christ, the Firstborn Son of God, as the heavenly ladder. Therefore, the church is the gate of heaven with Christ as the heavenly ladder joining earth to heaven and bringing heaven to earth. Upon this ladder the angels are ministering as they ascend and descend.

What was revealed in Genesis 28 was confirmed by the Lord Jesus in John 1:51. "And He said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Here the Lord Jesus tells us clearly that He Himself, as the Son of Man who was born in His resurrection to be God's Firstborn Son, is the heavenly ladder and that upon Him the ministering angels are ascending and descending as they render their service to the house of God composed of God's many sons.

VI. THE HOUSE OF GOD BEING THE GATE OF HEAVEN

The church as the house of God, the habitation of the living God on earth, is the gate of heaven. Wherever the house of God is, there is the heavenly ladder, which is Christ. Where is Christ? He is both in the heavens and on the earth in the church. Hence, He becomes the ladder in the church that joins earth to heaven and brings heaven to earth. Here is the place for us to stay. We as God's saved ones, the many sons of God, the joint-heirs and partners of Christ, should live and have our being in the church while we are on earth. It is here that we enjoy the open heaven of God. It is here that we participate in Christ as the heavenly ladder. It is here that we have so many angels ministering all kinds of services to us. Above all, it is here that we express God in His glory.

VII. THE ANGELS MINISTERING TO THE HEIRS OF SALVATION

At the end of such a glorious chapter, chapter one of Hebrews, concerning the unlimited Son of God, we are told that the angels are our servants. "Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth for service for the sake of those who are about to inherit salvation?" Christ is God's Heir and we are the joint-heirs of Christ. Even more, we are His partners in the divine interest. What a high position is this! It is much higher than that of the angels. The angels in God's economy are only the ministering spirits rendering service to us, the joint-heirs of Christ and the partners of God's appointed Heir. In God's universe we are the owners and the angels are our servants. They serve us, the many sons of God, the heirs of salvation.

Let me share with you some real examples of the ministry of angels. When Peter was put into prison, an angel came, opened the door, and led him out of the prison (Acts 12:5-16). Peter then went and knocked on the door of the house of Mary. When Rhoda, a maidservant, opened the door and told the people in the house that it was Peter, they said that it must have been his angel. We all have at least one angel. Matthew 18:10 proves this. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." We should not wrong our brothers because their angels are in the presence of the Father. The angels of God are ascending and descending on the heavenly ladder ministering to the heirs of salvation. We could also cite the example of Cornelius who was visited by an angel when he was praying (Acts 10:1-4). Furthermore, Psalm 34:7 says, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." If you love God and seek Him, He will send angels to camp round about you.

Who are we? We are the heirs of salvation. Who are the angels? They are our servants that minister to us

continually. How have we become such heirs? Because of Christ. He is the Firstborn Son of God, and we are the many sons of God. He is the appointed Heir, and we have been saved to be His joint-heirs. We are partners in the heavenly corporation of "Christ and the Church," and have millions of angels ministering to us. May the Lord open our eyes to see this.

Now we may summarize the main points of this message. Christ, the Firstborn Son of God is God's appointed Heir of all things. We, the many sons of God, are His "joint-heirs," inheriting not only salvation but also all things with Him. Hence, we are the partners, joint-owners with Him of the universe, while the angels are merely our servants, not only inferior to Him but also to us. The Son has been appointed to be the Heir, and we have been saved to be His joint-heirs, sharing in His inheritance. The "so great a salvation" referred to in 2:3 is able to save us to such an extent that it brings us into the partnership of His appointment. Thus, we share in whatever He inherits. We, as partners of the Son, are the house of God, the real Bethel, the gate of heaven, where the Son is the heavenly ladder, joining earth to heaven and bringing heaven to earth. Upon this ladder the angels of God are ascending and descending as ministering spirits for service to us who inherit so great a salvation. What is covered in the book of Hebrews is like the gate of heaven. Here we enjoy Christ as the heavenly One who joins us to heaven and brings heaven to us that we may be a heavenly people living a heavenly life on earth and inheriting all the heavenly things. How could the Hebrew believers withdraw from this and return to their old religion and boast in the angels? The angels are simply our ministering servants, whereas we are the glorious heirs of God's marvelous salvation.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIX

SO GREAT A SALVATION

The subject of this message is "so great a salvation" (2:3). Many people have preached on this subject about going to heaven. According to their opinion, going to heaven is the "so great a salvation." This concept is too low. The "so great a salvation" is not that low. Why do people use such a high subject to preach the gospel with such a low concept? Because their experience of salvation is low. Although they have the term "so great a salvation," they do not realize the depth of this term in Hebrews. In order to get into the depth of "so great a salvation" we need to cross the river from the traditional understanding of God's salvation to a deeper realization of God's great salvation.

The basic concept of the book of Hebrews is crossing the river, passing over from one side to the other. It is firstly to pass over from the side of Judaism to the side of "so great a salvation." The old Jewish religion had become the old country, the other side of the river which we all must leave. Although we are not Jewish believers, in a very real sense we might be in that region called "the other side." It might be the other side of old Christianity. I am concerned that some of you reading this message are still in the region of old Christianity or are still clinging to the old concepts of Christianity. Perhaps you have come into the church where you have heard something better, but you still think that you have many good things from the past and find yourself unable to forget them. Perhaps even now, at this very moment, you are staggering, asking yourself, "Shall I go forward, or shall I stay here?" You may not be going

backwards, but you are considering whether or not to stay where you are. You need the book of Hebrews. You need to be encouraged to cross the river, to cross over from the other side.

We need to cross rivers every day. At the least we must cross a small river. You may need to cross a river after having offended your wife. After you offended her, you found yourself in an old region. You must cross the river. If you are unwilling to pay the price, you will stagger back and forth. You need to cross that small river. Although that river is small, it separates you from the holy of holies, from the enjoyment of "so great a salvation." Every river you cross becomes a salvation to you, but every river that you do not cross becomes a veil. As long as you are on the other side of the river, you are outside of the veil. You are not in the holy of holies, participating in "so great a salvation." If you cross the river, you will enter within the veil and share in the great salvation.

In studying the book of Hebrews in the past, I used two slogans. The first, "outside the camp," is found in 13:13, which says, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." Although the King James Version says "without the camp," the Greek is better translated "outside the camp." We all must go outside the camp. What is the camp? Originally, the camp was Judaism. Today the camp may be Christianity, Catholicism, or anything, religious or worldly, that separates you from the enjoyment of God's great salvation. Let us go forth therefore outside the camp. Then where shall we go? This brings us to the second slogan, "within the veil," that is, within the holy of holies, found in 6:19-20. Jesus, our Forerunner, has entered within the veil. He is there now in the holy of holies. He certainly is not in any camp.

Some Christians are fond of camping in their analytical mind. Their mind becomes their camp. In fact, it might even become their Chaldea, their Mesopotamia, where Abraham was before he entered into the good land. As long

as you are not in the good land, you need to cross the river. How much you need to cross the river into the good land! What is your Chaldea? Nearly every Christian has some kind of Chaldea. Some Christians cling to their Bible knowledge. They hold on to the matter of Bible study, thinking that they know the Bible. However, their Bible knowledge becomes their Chaldea. Some brothers among us have had to cross over the river from the side of traditional Bible knowledge, some from the side of their religious background, and some from the side of their past experiences. Oh, how we all must realize that Hebrews is a book of river crossing! Never hold on to anything that is not up to the standard of "so great a salvation."

Years ago I had a good number of co-workers. At first, they were fine because they were not stuck to anything. However, after a few years some of them got stuck to certain things. Although those things were good, they became their Chaldea. If they had been with Joshua when he led the Israelites across the river Jordan, some of them probably would have stopped him, saying, "Don't do this. When we came out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, no one ever told us that we would have to cross the Jordan." The old knowledge and experience that those co-workers had became their Chaldea, and they would not cross the river. Nevertheless, day by day the Lord is going on. He is not standing still. None of us should stay with what we have experienced in the past. You must go on. Keep going on. A Hebrew is one who goes on.

Now we need to see what is "so great a salvation." This salvation is not great in the matter of going to heaven or even in the matters of forgiveness and justification by faith. I treasure both forgiveness and justification by faith, but the book of Hebrews, the book that covers "so great a salvation," speaks of something higher. Forgiveness and justification by faith are salvation, but they are not "so great a salvation." The "so great a salvation" is not even great in the matter of regeneration. In what, then, is this salvation so great?

I. GREAT IN WHAT CHRIST IS

Firstly, it is great in what Christ is. The writer of Hebrews used the term "so great." This term is difficult to define. How great is "so great"? Although we cannot adequately describe "so great," this "so great a salvation" is great in what Christ is. Do you know what Christ is? Although you may know Christ according to the four gospels, do you know Christ according to Hebrews?

A. As the Son of God, as God

Do you know Christ as the Son of God? Probably you know Him as the Son of God in a fragmentary way. You may have the subconscious concept that the Father is one God and that the Son is another. You may not have this kind of terminology, but deep within you may hold this concept. This is the reason that I say that the "so great a salvation" is great in what Christ is as the Son of God, as God. When we say that Christ is the Son of God, we mean that He is God. He is none other than God.

This brings us, once again, to the matter of the Trinity. According to the Bible, we may deal with this matter of the Trinity in two ways--in the way of doctrine or in the way of experience. One day Philip, one of the Lord's disciples, said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father and it suffices us" (John 14:8). This is a doctrinal question. Doctrinally speaking, the Son is the Son and the Father is the Father. Perhaps Philip thought to himself, "The Son is now speaking to us, yet we have not seen the Father. So I will beg the Son to show us the Father." The Lord Jesus did not answer Philip in the way of doctrine but in the way of experience. "Jesus said to him, Am I so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father. How is it that you say, Show us the Father?" (John 14:9). As long as Philip had seen the Son, he had seen the Father. As far as doctrine is concerned, the Father and the Son are two, but as far as experience goes, when you see

the Son, you see the Father. Many Christians talk about the Trinity in a mental and doctrinal way, neglecting their experience. As I pointed out in a previous message, the Bible reveals that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all in us. Doctrinally speaking, we have the Father in us, the Son in us, and the Spirit in us. Experientially speaking, however, we realize that we have only one in us. Thus, to be doctrinal is one thing and to be experiential is another.

From my youth, because my family was so closely related to the American missionaries, I heard a great deal about the United States. I had a doctrinal understanding of America. I mentally figured out what San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Washington, D.C., and New York City were like. When I came to this country in 1958, I saw these cities experientially. What a difference! They were vastly different from my doctrine. My experience was altogether different from my doctrine. Do not trust in your doctrine. You need experience.

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* there is a place called Vanity Fair. Doctrine apart from experience is such a Vanity Fair; it is a vanity bazaar that sells nothing of value. The mental understanding of doctrine without experience is merely a vanity. I was in that kind of vanity bazaar for seven and a half years and obtained hardly anything but doctrines and terms. I gained very little that could be practiced. That vanity bazaar was my Chaldea. One day I crossed the river and entered the good land of the experience of Christ and of the church life.

What is true of the doctrines is also true of the gifts. At a certain time, a number of our co-workers and myself felt that we had to taste and see the so-called Pentecostal things. So I began to speak in tongues. Eventually I learned that that was not a bazaar of vanity but a bazaar of confusion, a market of confusion. If you want to know how confusing that situation is today, you should visit that bazaar. Everything there is confused. Real things and false things, good things and bad things, are all mixed together.

No corner of Christendom is as confused as the so-called Pentecostal movement. Thus, the others and I crossed the river once again.

Even those in the church life need to cross the river out of their oldness. What you had fifteen or twenty years ago was good then, but it has become old. At that time you crossed the Red Sea, but now you must cross the Jordan River. Recently I saw a brother who was under my training twenty years ago. When I saw him, I was concerned for him. It seemed that he was still in that old region. Do you not know the principle? Originally, everything established according to the divine oracles in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy was true. However, after a certain length of time it became an old system, Judaism. Those who were in that system had to cross the river. Likewise, what you received twenty years ago was good, but now you must cross the river out of that region. I urge you to cross the river out of your oldness.

Christ is the Son of God. He is also God Himself. If you try to figure out the Trinity according to your mentality, how will you explain verses 1:8 and 9? "But as to the *Son*, Your throne, O *God*, is forever and ever, and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, *Your God*, has anointed You with the oil of exultant joy above Your partners." Verse 8 says, "But as to the Son, Your throne, O God," and verse 9 says, "God, Your God, has anointed You." The words, "O God," and "Your God" both refer to the Son. What does this mean? It seems to mean God's God. "O God,...Your God." Since the Son is God Himself, He is God; therefore, verse 8 says, "O God." Since the Son is also man, God is His God; therefore, verse 9 says, "Your God." Christ is not simple; He has many aspects. He is the Son of God, even God Himself. He is also the Son of Man, a real man. For the unveiling of "so great a salvation," Hebrews firstly refers us to Christ as the Son of God, even as God Himself. The Son of God, even God Himself, is one of the elements of "so great a salvation."

What God is makes the salvation "so great." This salvation is great in all the fullness of the Godhead.

B. As the Son of Man, as Man

Firstly, before 2:3, where "so great a salvation" is mentioned, Hebrews reveals how Christ is the Son of God, even God Himself. Then after 2:3, in order to show us that the salvation we have in Christ is great, this book continues by showing us how He is also the Son of Man, a real man. The salvation we have in Christ is not merely some matters, such as forgiveness of sins, justification, reconciliation, redemption, regeneration, etc., but also a wonderful, unlimited Person who is both God in eternity and man in time. It is such a marvelous Person who makes His salvation "so great."

Christ is the very God and He is also a real man (2:6). Although I was saved for years, I was not clear that my Savior was both God and man. I only knew that He was the Son of God. I was not even clear that He was God, much less that He was also man. Our Lord Jesus is both God and man.

Some Christians, even some Christian workers, have argued that Christ died as a man, but that after He was resurrected and ascended to the heavens He was no longer a man. They claim that the Jesus in the heavens is no longer a man. According to this concept, when Jesus was resurrected, He stripped off His humanity. Because such arguments were directed against me, I purposely wrote the hymn that contains the lines,

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

In reply to these arguments, I asked, "If Jesus in the heavens is no longer the Son of Man, how could Stephen

have seen Him as the Son of Man?" (Acts 7:56). Furthermore, Matthew 26:64 shows us that He is the Son of Man now sitting in the heavens and coming back in the future. Moreover, Revelation tells us that He is the Son of Man among the local churches (1:13) and that He will return as the Son of Man (14:14). Hence, 1 Timothy 2:6, written after His ascension, still calls Him "the man Christ Jesus." Our Savior is a man. Although He is resurrected, Jesus is still a man, a resurrected man, an uplifted man, a man who, in ascension, is on the throne in the heavens. Jesus is qualified to be our Savior because He is both God and man. This is why His salvation is "so great"--great not only in the element of God but also in the element of man. All the divine attributes and all the human virtues are the ingredients of "so great a salvation." In this "so great a salvation" we enjoy the fullness of the Godhead and the uplifted humanity of the man Jesus. In this "so great a salvation" we possess both the divine nature and the human nature of Christ. With what wonderful elements is this "so great a salvation" composed! No human words can utter it adequately. No wonder that the writer says that it is "so great"!

C. The Captain of Salvation

Now we come to the Captain of salvation (2:10). In order to be saved from hell, we do not need a captain, but if we are to enter into glory, into the good land of rest, we need the Captain. God's salvation is not merely to rescue us from hell and to put us into heaven. His salvation is to save us from all negative things and to bring us into glory, into a glorious rest. As we shall see shortly, this kind of salvation is not an overnight matter; it is a lifelong process. We need to follow our Captain throughout our entire life.

The children of Israel came out of Egypt in one night. It was truly an overnight matter. However, in order for them to enter the good land of rest, they needed to follow their captain. At the beginning they followed Moses and later

they followed Joshua. They had a captain for their salvation. After they crossed the Red Sea, they surely were saved, but they were saved to a very small degree. They had gone only a small part of the way and needed to follow their captain all the rest of the way. They had such a captain of salvation.

A captain not only denotes a leader but also a fighter. A captain is a leader who not only cuts the way and paves the way but who also fights the way. If you read your Bible carefully, you will see that from the time when the children of Israel left Egypt until the time when they entered the good land, they were fighting all the way. This is the reason that they were called the hosts (armies) of the Lord (Exo. 12:41}. They fought their way into the good land. They needed a captain to lead them on by fighting on. Their going on was a matter of fighting on. Thus, they were formed and trained as a holy army. Wherever they went, they fought. Since there was no thoroughfare, they had to fight their way through.

Likewise, since the day we were saved, forgiven, justified, and reborn, a fight has been going on. In a sense, we in the Lord's recovery are an army that is fighting its way through. There is no way for us to take but the way of fighting. We all must fight the battle under the Captain. Jesus our Savior is a fighting Captain. He is fighting and we must follow Him, fighting every inch of the way. Christ is the Captain of salvation. If we did not have such a Captain included in our salvation, our salvation would not be so great. The "so great a salvation" not only includes Christ as the Son of God, as God, and as the Son of Man, as man, but also as the Captain of salvation who takes the lead and fights on that we might follow Him into glory. The Captain of salvation is a factor that makes our salvation "so great."

D. The High Priest

While Christ is fighting as our Captain, He is also ministering as our High Priest. Do not be troubled. On the

one hand, He is the fighting Captain; on the other hand, He is a ministering High Priest. He ministers whatever you need. Therefore, there is no reason to lack anything. Christ will minister to you.

After Abraham had fought against the enemy and released Lot, Melchisedec, the High Priest, came to him ministering the bread and wine (Gen. 14:14-20). As we continue on in Hebrews, we shall see that our Jesus is Melchisedec. In order to enjoy the ministry of Melchisedec, you must fight. Only when you fight will He come to you and minister to you. If you do not fight, do not expect Christ to come to you as Melchisedec ministering the bread and wine. However, if you are willing to fight, I can assure you that after every bit of fighting Christ will come to you as the ministering Melchisedec and you will enjoy His supply of bread and wine. This is wonderful. It is another factor that makes our salvation so great.

The "so great a salvation" not only has a Redeemer and a Savior but also a Captain fighting for us and a High Priest ministering to us. Be encouraged. If you do not fight, you will be defeated and have no bread and wine to feed on. However, if you fight, you will not only gain the victory but will also receive the bread and wine. Hallelujah for so great a salvation! It is great in what Christ is.

II. GREAT IN WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE, IS DOING, AND WILL DO

A. Having Made Purification of Sins

What has Christ done? He has made purification of sins (1:3). Be at peace. Your sin has been purified. Although you must hate your sins, you need not be bothered by them. Christ has purified our sins once for all (7:27).

B. Having Tasted Death For Us

Christ has tasted death for us (2:9). Since He has tasted death, death has been abolished (2 Tim. 1:10). Death has

been terminated. Do not believe in death. Deny it. Do you have death in your church? Deny it. Do you have an illness in your physical body indicating the presence of death? Do not believe it, and do not accept it. It is a lie.

C. Having Destroyed Satan by Partaking of Our Nature to Release Us from Slavery

Christ has destroyed Satan. He partook of our nature in order to destroy the devil who has the might of death (2:14-15). He has done this on the cross. Satan is finished. Whenever Satan comes, you should say, "Satan, you have come to the wrong place. Don't you know that you have been destroyed? Who released you? Go back to your place." The best way to defeat Satan is to shame him. Say, "Satan, don't you know that you have been defeated? You have been destroyed. Go back, and keep your position." Satan will go. By partaking of our nature and destroying Satan, Christ has released us from slavery. Death has been abolished, Satan, who holds the power of death, has been destroyed, and we have been released from slavery.

D. Sanctifying Us

Christ is now sanctifying us (2:11). He is the sanctifier and we are the sanctified. He is sanctifying us day by day (1 Thes. 5:23-24). We shall be under His sanctifying work continually until we are fully transformed to His image (2 Cor. 3:18).

E. Being Able to Help Us

Christ is able to help us (2:18). He is able to help us to the uttermost. Do not listen to the lies. Do not listen to your environment, weakness, situation, or your husband or wife. Your wife or husband may be a little liar. Your sickness, weakness, and environment may also be lies. Do not believe the lie. The leading brothers should never listen to lies. Often the brothers and sisters are used by the

enemy to lie to the leading brothers. For example, someone may say, "The church meeting is getting very low." When someone says this, there is no need to argue with him. Just close your eyes and say, "This is a lie. Get away. I believe that the church is living and set on high." This is faith. Try it and see. Sisters, if you say that your husband is no good, I can assure you that he will be no good simply because you have prophesied in such a way. You must cross the river. Do not believe that your husband is no good, but rather say, "My husband is the best one among all men." If you say this, the Lord will come in to honor your prophecy and make your husband the best one. He is able to help us in all things. He is able to succor us in any kind of situation.

What Christ has done in the past, is doing in the present, and will do in the future are all included in the "so great a salvation" and all are factors that make His salvation "so great."

III. GREAT IN ITS EXTENT

A. To Make Us Partners of God's Appointed Heir

This "so great a salvation" is so great in its extent that it even makes us partners of God's appointed heir (1:2, 9). Since we have covered this adequately in message five, we do not need to repeat it here.

B. To Bring Us into Glory

This great salvation will bring us into glory (2:10). As we have pointed out in other occasions, glory is God manifested. We, the sons of God, will be brought into that manifestation of glory (Rom. 8:19-21). That will be the climax of the salvation which we share in Christ. So it certainly is a main factor that makes our salvation "so great."

C. To Make Us to Possess the Coming Inhabited Earth with Christ

This great salvation will make us to possess the coming inhabited earth with Christ (2:5). We do not need to run in

an election to be mayor, senator, governor, or president. We shall inherit the coming inhabited earth. This is not a dream. The Bible tells us so. You can declare, "I am going to inherit the earth. This I know, for the Bible tells me so."

D. To Save Us to the Uttermost

In this great salvation we shall be saved to the uttermost (7:25). This salvation is unlimited, saving us completely, entirely, perfectly for all time and to the end. This is the extent of our "so great a salvation."

"So great a salvation" is great in what Christ is, in what Christ does, and in its extent. Its most precious part is enjoying Christ as our saving life and rest in this age, and its most glorious part is inheriting Christ's Kingdom with glory in the coming age.

IV. WARNING

A. Give Heed to It More Abundantly

Verse 2:1 says that "we ought to give heed more abundantly to the things which were heard." You have heard much in these messages and you must give heed to what you have heard. You cannot be discharged of your responsibility and say that you have not heard or seen.

B. Do Not Drift Away from It

Why must we give heed more abundantly to that which we have heard? Because "lest at any time we drift away." Give heed that you do not drift away from what you have heard. Do not be a piece of driftwood that has no goal or direction and that merely drifts with the current. In order for there to be a drifting away, there must be a current. There was a current in Judaism for the Hebrew believers. There is now a current in the world and even in Christianity. There are many negative currents today. Be careful or else you will drift away from "so great a salvation." Do not drift away--cross the river.

C. Do Not Neglect It

Furthermore, we should not neglect "so great a salvation" (2:3). If we neglect it, we will receive a just recompense regarding it (2:2). We will suffer a loss (1 Cor. 3:15). This does not mean, however, that we will be lost. Nevertheless, we may receive a just recompense due to our negligence. That would be a great loss. I hope that none of us will fall into this category. Let us all cross the river and go on with our Captain of salvation into glory.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SEVEN

JESUS AS THE SON OF MAN-- AS MAN SUPERIOR TO THE ANGELS

In message four we saw that Christ as the Son of God, as God, is superior to the angels. This is revealed in Hebrews 1. Now we come to the second part of this comparison--that Jesus as the Son of Man, as man, is superior to the angels. This is unveiled in Hebrews 2. Firstly we saw Christ as the Son of God, as God; now we must see Jesus as the Son of Man, as man. As both God and man, He is superior to the angels.

Our wonderful Jesus has two natures, the divine and the human. He has divinity and humanity. He is God and He is man. Since He is God, He is the Son of God. Since He is man, He is the Son of Man. According to biblical usage, "man" and "Son of Man" are interchangeable terms. This is proved by Psalm 8:4 which says, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Hence, the Son of Man simply means man. In the same principle, the Son of God means God. According to John 5:17-18, for Jesus to be the Son of God means that He is God. When the Pharisees heard that the Lord Jesus called Himself the Son of God, they accused Him of blasphemy because, in their understanding, He made Himself equal with God. Thus, to say that Jesus is the Son of God means that He is God. Christ is both God and man. Hebrews chapter one covers His divinity and chapter two covers His humanity. With respect to both His divinity and humanity, He is superior to the angels. Even as the Son of Man, He is superior to the angels.

Although it is easy to realize that God is absolutely

superior to the angels, it is difficult for us to realize that man is also superior to them. Do you still hold the concept that you are inferior to angels? I am afraid that if an angel appeared to you, you would worship him. At the least, you would look up to him, subconsciously thinking that he is superior to you. This thought is wrong. If you think that angels are superior to you, you are short of vision. You need to see Hebrews chapter two. Even at the end of chapter one (v. 14), we saw that, as the heirs of salvation, we are much superior to the angels, for the angels are our servants and we are their masters. We are the partners of Christ, and the angels are the servants, ministering to the heirs of salvation. We are the house of God, in which is the heavenly ladder joining us to God and bringing God to us, while the angels are ministering spirits ascending and descending upon this ladder as they render their service to us. Hence, they are much inferior to us. As we pointed out in message four, Matthew 18:10 reveals that everyone of us has an angel. Psalm 34:7 says, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." An angel appeared to Cornelius (Acts 10:3), telling him where to contact the one who preached the gospel. Moreover, Acts 12:7-11 tells us how an angel opened the door that Peter might escape from prison. Although you may not know the name of your ministering angel, I am quite sure that he knows your name. We all have at least one angel that ministers to us continually. This is not superstition; this is reality. According to my experience, I can testify that as I have been traveling during the past forty years I have realized that my angel was with me and that, on many occasions, he protected me.

Christ, the Son of Man, as man, is superior to the angels. Hebrews 2 does not speak of Him as a great man but as a little man. However, even as a little man He is superior to the angels. Before we consider the superiority of Jesus as a man to the angels, we need to see a basic factor in His being a man, that is, that God has ordained man to rule over the earth as revealed in Genesis 1:26-28.

I. THE COMING INHABITED EARTH

Hebrews 2:5 says, "For He did not subject to angels the coming inhabited earth, concerning which we speak." The word "for" connects verse 5 with the preceding verses in the same chapter. Verses 1 through 4 give us a warning, telling us that there will be a "just recompense" for neglecting "so great a salvation." The Lord's wonderful Person plus His splendid work are "so great a salvation," a salvation which none of us should neglect. The word "escape" in verse 3 means, in principle, to escape the recompense alluded to in verse 2. If we neglect "so great a salvation," it is right and just that we receive a certain recompense. What will be this "just recompense"? Although we shall say more about this in coming messages, if we pay attention to the little word "for" in verse 5, we can understand something about it now. The word "for" refers back to the negligence mentioned in verse 3. If we neglect "so great a salvation," we shall receive a certain kind of "just recompense," "for He did not subject to angels the coming inhabited earth, concerning which we speak." Thus, the "just recompense" is related to the "coming inhabited earth."

If we neglect so great a salvation, "how shall we escape?" This does not mean that we shall lose our salvation and be lost. Once we have been saved, we are saved forever. John 10:28 assures us of this: "And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (Recovery Version). When we believe in the Lord Jesus, He gives us eternal life and we shall never perish. The Lord's word will remain forever, and His word tells us that we have been eternally saved. We do have eternal security. However, this does not mean that a saved person can have no problems. According to this portion of Hebrews, a saved person, whose salvation is eternally secure, might miss the "coming inhabited earth." Now we need to find out what is the "coming inhabited earth."

A. In the Corning Age of the Kingdom

If you know the Bible as a whole, you will realize that the "coming inhabited earth" will be this earth in the coming age with God's Kingdom. Psalm 2:8 says that God has given to Christ the nations to be His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Revelation 11:15 says, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." The day is coming--perhaps it will be soon--when the nations, the kingdoms, of the earth will become the Kingdom of Christ. According to Daniel 2:35, at the time of the coming back of the Lord Jesus there will be on the earth nations represented by an image of iron, clay, brass, silver, and gold. All of these elements represent the earthly kingdoms. Suddenly a stone "cut out without hands" (Dan. 2:34) will descend out of heaven and will break in pieces the iron, clay, brass, silver, and gold. Daniel 2:35 reveals that "the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." This stone which becomes a mountain is the Kingdom of God.

The stone "cut out without hands" that breaks in pieces the earthly kingdoms is Christ. Christ is not only the foundation stone (Isa. 28:16), cornerstone (Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11), topstone (Zech. 4:7), and living stone (1 Pet. 2:4) for God's building; He is also the stumbling stone (Matt. 21:44; 1 Pet. 2:8) to the unbelieving Jews and the smiting stone to the nations (Matt. 21:44). Firstly, for the believers, He is a stone for God's building. As the stone for God's building, He is the foundation stone, cornerstone, topstone, and living stone to produce us as stones for God's building (1 Pet. 2:5). Secondly, in relation to the unbelieving Jews, He is a stumbling stone. The unbelieving Jews have stumbled over Him. Do not think that the Lord Jesus is always kind to everyone. To the unbelieving Jews, at least, He will be the stumbling stone. Thirdly, to the Gentiles, the nations, the Lord will be the smiting stone that descends out of heaven to smite all the kingdoms of the earth into pieces (Dan. 2:34-35, 44). This

smiting stone will become a great mountain, meaning that the Lord Jesus will become the Kingdom filling the whole earth. This Kingdom, the great mountain that fills the whole earth, is Christ Himself. At that time, the earth will be the Lord's Kingdom. This is what Hebrews 2:5 refers to as the "coming inhabited earth." The "coming inhabited earth" denotes the earth having become the Lord's Kingdom in the next age. This may happen soon.

This "coming inhabited earth" in the coming age is not subjected to angels. In other words, God never ordained the angels to rule over that earth. He has ordained man to rule over the earth in the coming age. Based upon this fact, the writer of Hebrews shows us that man is superior to the angels. In this aspect, that of ruling over the earth in the coming age, man is superior to the angels.

In His economy, God intended from the very beginning that man should rule over the earth. From eternity past, God determined to have man ruling over the earth. According to the Bible, at the time of creation, God determined that man should exercise His authority over the earth. This is clearly mentioned in Genesis 1:26-28.

There are three chapters in the Bible that belong together--Genesis 1, Psalm 8, and Hebrews 2. All of these chapters share one main point--that God has ordained man to rule over His created earth. Why has God ordained man to rule over the earth? Because God needs a realm, a sphere, a dominion, in which He can exercise His authority. Without such a dominion in which He can exercise His authority, it would be difficult for God to express His glory. The expression of His glory needs a dominion. Suppose God had no authority on earth. How could He come to express His glory? Do you remember the conclusion of the Lord's prayer? It is, "For thine is the kingdom, and the authority, and the glory" (Gk.). Once there is the Kingdom, there is the authority. Then God is able to express His glory. The Kingdom is for the authority, and the authority is for the glory. If God has no Kingdom, then there can be no exercise of His authority and no

expression of His glory. The Lord's prayer was for the Kingdom. In that Kingdom there would be the exercise of authority and the expression of glory.

God's purpose is constant and eternal. God's purpose is from eternity to eternity. God has never changed His purpose of having man exercise His authority on earth that He might have a dominion as a sphere in which He can express His glory.

The church life today is a dominion. Every local church is a dominion where God's glory is expressed. This is why today's church life is the Kingdom (Rom. 14:17) on a small scale. Although it is not the Kingdom in full scale, it is at least the Kingdom in small scale, signifying the same things in the same principle. The proper church life is God's Kingdom where He exercises His authority that He might express His glory. This was His purpose in creating man.

B. For Christ to Take Possession of the Earth

The "coming inhabited earth" in the coming age of the Kingdom will be for Christ's possession. Christ will take possession of the "coming inhabited earth" (Psa. 2:8) for His Kingdom. God's purpose is to recover the earth from the usurping hand of Satan and to establish His Kingdom on the earth for the expression of His glory. God has given such an earth to Christ as His inheritance. When we, the saved ones, as His partners shall share in His inheritance of the "coming inhabited earth," we shall have a share in such a glorious earth with God's Kingdom established on it for the expression of God's glory. To miss the sharing of this earth will be a "just recompense" to those who neglect "so great a salvation." If we neglect "so great a salvation" today, we shall not escape this "just recompense" of missing the sharing of the coming Kingdom earth.

II. THE MAN JESUS

God's purpose for man is in three stages: the stage of creation, the stage of prophecy, and the stage of fulfillment.

The man in God's purpose is both Adam and Christ. Adam was the first man, and Christ was and still is the second man (1 Cor. 15:45, 47). With respect to both men there are these three stages. Let us firstly consider the man in creation.

A. The Man in Creation

1. To Express God with His Image

In creation, God ordained man to express Him with His image (Gen. 1:26-28). Man was made in God's image that he might be able to express Him.

2. To Represent God with His Dominion

God also intended that man represent Him with His dominion. After creating man, God committed His authority to man, thereby authorizing him to be His representative. Thus, at the time of creation, man was ordained to do two things: to express God and to represent Him.

3. Having Failed God in His Purpose

The man in creation, however, failed God. Man became poisoned by Satan and fell. Thus, the man in creation was damaged and failed God in His purpose.

If we only had the book of Genesis, we would be very disappointed. Regardless of the many excellent records in the book of Genesis, at the end of that book we are told that Joseph died and was put into a coffin in Egypt (Gen. 50:26). How pitiful it is that the book of Genesis closes in this way! Joseph, the one who represented God, died, was put into a coffin, and was left in Egypt.

Before we go on, I would like to say a word about Jacob and Joseph. Jacob, who became Israel, the prince of God, and Joseph were actually one complete man. Joseph was a part of Israel, although he was not a part of Jacob. Jacob was a supplanter, a stealer, but he was transformed into Israel, the prince of God (Gen. 32:28; 35:10). When he was experienced and matured, he certainly expressed God with

His image. When Jacob was young, he was a supplanter and deceived everyone: his brother, his father, his uncle, and his brothers-in-law. But God is marvelous. He is able to transform such a supplanter and deceiver into a prince of God. When Jacob became an old man, he did not know how to deceive, fight, or supplant. He only knew to stretch forth his hands and bless people. Jacob blessed whomever came to him. Even Pharaoh, the greatest king on earth at the time, was blessed by Israel when Joseph brought his father to see him (Gen. 47:7). Israel was greater than Pharaoh. By that time Israel was mature and expressed God as the very God who blesses. Our God is a blessing God. Thus, Israel, who was fully in God's image, bestowed blessings wherever he went. When he was brought in before Pharaoh, he stretched forth his hands and blessed him. That was truly the expression of God.

The name Israel contains the name of God, for the last two letters of Israel, "el," mean God. Nevertheless, Israel needed Joseph as one of his parts, as the reigning part, the representing part. At that time, the entire earth was not actually under Pharaoh's rule; it was under Joseph's rule. Israel with Joseph expressed God with His image on the one hand and represented God with His authority on the other. Nevertheless, the book of Genesis ends by saying that Joseph died, was put into a coffin, and was left in Egypt. The conclusion of the book of Genesis is so poor.

B. The Man in Prophecy

Although the situation at the end of the book of Genesis was very pitiful, it is most promising by the time we come to Psalm 8. The psalmist surely was inspired when he said, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (vv. 3-4). Under the inspiration of God, the psalmist prophesied the recovery of what had been lost in Adam. He repeated the words of Genesis 1, prophesying that man's lost ordination was to be recovered.

Hence, Psalm 8 is a recovery of man's lost ordination which was given in Genesis 1. The divine ordination bestowed upon the created man in Genesis 1 was lost at the time of man's fall. The psalmist prophesied that this ordination would be recovered. As we shall see shortly, the man prophesied in Psalm 8 is the Lord Jesus. This is revealed in Hebrews 2.

1. A Little Inferior to the Angels

In the prophecy regarding the recovery of man's lost ordination in Psalm 8 it says that God has made man "a little lower than the angels." In Hebrews 2:7, it is quoted as "a little inferior to the angels." This is according to the physical, not the positional, situation. Physically speaking, man is lower than or inferior to the angels.

2. Having Been Crowned with Glory and Honor

However, the prophecy in Psalm 8 says that God "has crowned" man, who is lower than the angels, "with glory and honor." This was not fulfilled in any man until the man Jesus ascended to the heavens. Hence, this prophecy is concerning the Lord as a man and it is fulfilled in Him.

3. Being Set over the Works of God

The prophecy in Psalm 8 also says that God has made man to have dominion over the works of His hands and that He has put all things under his feet. In the quotation in Hebrews 2 it says that God has set man over the works of His hands and has subjected all things under His feet. Clearly this is a repetition of what is mentioned in Genesis 1:26-28. It may be called the recovery of what was given to man in Genesis 1 and was lost due to the fall of man in Genesis 3.

C. The Man in Fulfillment

Hebrews 2:6-9 is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 8. It tells us that the man in this fulfillment is Jesus. Jesus is the second man (1 Cor. 15:47). Although the first man failed God in His purpose, the second man

succeeded. In Genesis 1 is the man in God's creation with God's eternal purpose. That man failed God. Then Psalm 8, speaking about the recovery of man's lost ordination, prophesied of another man. Without this second man, we and the ordination given to man are lost. But we have the second man who has recovered man's lost ordination and has fulfilled God's original purpose. This second man is presented to us in Hebrews 2.

1. Made a Little Inferior to the Angels Because of the Suffering of Death

The man Jesus, in the fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 8, was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death (2:9). According to our physical make-up, we are inferior to the angels. The make-up of the angels is somewhat superior to ours. When Jesus came as a man, His physical make-up was also inferior to that of the angels. He became a man, taking on man's flesh, blood, and nature. Why did He take on a physical make-up that was inferior to that of the angels? For the purpose of suffering death for us. In order to suffer death, He needed a physical body. Without such a physical body there would have been no way for Him to die for our sins. This was the reason that He was made a little inferior to the angels.

2. Crowned with Glory and Honor

After He accomplished redemption by suffering death, Jesus was glorified in His resurrection (Luke 24:26) and in His ascension to the heavens was crowned with glory and honor (2:9). Although the Lord Jesus is both the Son of God and Son of Man, when we come to the matter of His being crowned with glory and honor, we must pay special attention to His humanity, to His being the Son of Man. In Hebrews 1, He is God; in Hebrews 2, He is man. When we are reading Hebrews 1, we must pay our full attention to the Lord's divinity. However, when we come to Hebrews 2, we must pay our full attention to His humanity. It is in His humanity that He is crowned with glory and honor. As a

man in His ascension to the heavens, He was crowned in this way.

Where is Jesus crowned with glory and honor? In the third heavens. The little Jesus who was born in the manger, who was raised in a poor home in Nazareth, and who had no beauty or comeliness, in His ascension to the heavens has been crowned with glory and honor. What is glory and honor? Glory is the splendor related to Jesus' Person; honor is the preciousness related to Jesus' worth, value {1 Pet. 2:7 "precious" in Greek is the same word as "honor" here), and dignity which is related to His position (2 Pet. 1:17; Rom. 13:7).

a. Being Made Both Lord and Christ

Jesus was crowned with glory and honor to be the Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36; 10:36b). Before His incarnation, He was the Lord. However, as a man, He was not the Lord. Now, in His ascension, He, as a man, has been crowned to be the Lord. This is a great matter. On the one hand, He already was the Lord because He was God; on the other hand, in His humanity, He was crowned to be the Lord of all. He is also the Christ, that is, the anointed One. The Lord means that He is the Lord ruling over all, and Christ means that He is the anointed One who has been appointed to accomplish everything for God's plan. The anointed One is the appointed One, and the appointed One is the One who runs God's universal corporation, Christ and the church.

b. Being Exalted to Be a Leader and a Savior

Christ has been exalted to be a Leader and a Savior (Acts 5:31). The Greek word for Leader, translated "Prince" in the King James Version, is the same Greek word that is rendered as "Captain" in Hebrews 2:10. The Greek word may also be rendered as author, originator, inaugurator, or pioneer. There is no one equivalent of this word in English. Christ has been crowned with glory and honor so that He might be our Captain. As the Greek word indicates, He is

also our Leader, Prince, Pioneer, and Forerunner. Jesus is the One who fights, takes the lead, moves ahead, being the first to reach His destination. He has cut the way into glory and we are now taking the way He has cut. Hence, He is not only the Savior who saved us from our fallen estate and from all the negative things, but He is also the Captain who, as the Pioneer, has entered into glory that we might be brought into the same estate. The Lord Jesus today is the Lord, the Christ, the Captain, and the Savior.

Chapter one of Hebrews reveals that Christ is the Son of God coming to speak, declare, and express God. As such a One He is superior to the angels. Here, in chapter two of Hebrews, He is the Son of Man going to be the Lord, the Christ, the Captain, and the Savior. His being our Lord, Christ, Captain, and Savior is not mainly based upon His divinity but upon His humanity. This is a very practical matter. Why is Jesus our Lord? Because He is a man. Why is He the Christ, Captain, and Savior? All because He is a man. Angels, who do not have humanity, can never be our Lord, Christ, Captain, and Savior. Only Christ in His humanity can be such a One to us. Furthermore, this humanity is not a natural humanity; it is a resurrected, uplifted, and ascended humanity, a humanity that is crowned with God's glory and honor. Because these concepts are not natural, but are new and fresh to us, we need to spend considerable time on them in order that we might see more.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE EIGHT

JESUS IN INCARNATION, CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION, GLORIFICATION, AND EXALTATION

In this message we come to the matter of Jesus in incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, glorification, and exaltation. These are very significant terms and probably we are all familiar with them. My burden in this message is to show you how Hebrews chapter two puts all of these five items together. No other chapter or other portion of the Holy Word does this. In some chapters we see Christ's crucifixion. In other chapters we see His resurrection, glorification, and exaltation. But in no portion as short as Hebrews 2 do we see incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, glorification, and exaltation put together. These five major points concerning what Christ has passed through and attained are presented in this chapter in a very particular way, not in the way as they are presented in the Gospels, the Acts, or in the other epistles. Throughout so many years, the Lord has been showing me all of the items in this one chapter. We have already seen in message four how Hebrews 1 reveals Christ in so many stages: in eternity past, in creation, in incarnation for redemption by crucifixion, in resurrection for imparting life, in exaltation, in His second coming, in the kingdom, and in eternity future. No other chapter affords us such a revelation of Christ as the Son of God from eternity past to eternity future. The sequence in this chapter is more than wonderful. Chapter two of Hebrews is the same in principle. No other chapter gives us all of these five major aspects of Christ. But in Hebrews 2 these items are

particularly and even peculiarly revealed. We all must be impressed with these major points of our Christ.

I. IN INCARNATION

A. Sharing in the Children's Blood and Flesh

From my youth, I heard from the pastors that Christ was incarnated simply because God loved us and sent His Son to this evil earth to die for our sins on the cross that we might be saved from hell. That was all I saw concerning the incarnation of Christ. Although this is correct, it is rather shallow. Some of the learned, high-class people will not accept this kind of preaching. They will say that it is low and that it has no purpose or goal. Only low-class people will accept such a low preaching of the gospel. Although the gospel is not low, it has been preached on a low level. I have never heard a preacher who said that Christ became a man in order to partake of our blood and flesh. This thought is much higher. The purpose of Christ's incarnation was that He might share in the children's blood and flesh (2:14). Using human words, we may say that this is very philosophical. This type of high preaching will convince the people who have philosophical minds. They will think that such preaching is very thoughtful.

In the 1920's, in answer to the prayers of so many dear missionaries, the Lord did a marvelous work in the colleges and universities throughout China. Many thoughtful young college students were saved. I also was saved during that time. After we were saved, we began to preach Christ in a higher way. We, the Chinese young people of that time, knew the Chinese philosophical thought. As a result, we knew how to convince people. We preached the higher gospel not according to our human thought but according to the "divine philosophy." God is more than philosophical. What does it mean to say "philosophical"? It simply means thoughtful. God is not simple, superficial, or low. He is deep, thoughtful, purposeful, and meaningful. Our God is a

God of purpose. Who could be more philosophical than He? As a result of that higher preaching of the gospel, many doctors, nurses, professors, and learned people were brought to the Lord.

The book of Hebrews is not shallow. It is both deep and high. It is in the highest bracket. This book does not say that because we were fallen and sinful Christ came to save us. It says that all the children are partakers of blood and flesh and that Christ came to share in our nature. This thought is deeper and higher. One day, the Son of God, our Savior and our God, became exactly the same in nature as we are. He became a human being, sharing in our blood and flesh. This is wonderful. We do not have a Savior who is different in nature from us. No, our God and Savior became exactly the same as we are. I can testify to you that a good number of scholars in China were convinced just by this one thought. They began to think about it, finding it most thoughtful. They saw that God came in the flesh not to command us to do something, but to be one with us. He did not come as God to rescue us, for that would have terrified us. He did not come as an angel to embrace us, for we could not have accepted that. He came, in reality, just as we are. He partook of our nature, of our blood and flesh. This thought will certainly convince the learned people. They will admire it, saying, "This truly is a high thought. The very God became the same in nature as we are, partaking of blood and flesh." This is the incarnation, and this is the deepest thought and the highest "philosophy."

The incarnation should not be associated with Christmas. You need to burn everything related to Christmas. If you would go to China and preach the gospel to the learned people and mention Christmas, they would not listen to you. They would say that things such as Christmas trees, stockings full of candies, and Santa Claus are too low, shallow, and childish. That is not the gospel from the Word of God. That is the paganism, the leaven mentioned by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 13:33, brought into Catholicism by the "woman" as the Lord prophesied.

How could the learned people be convinced with this kind of preaching? You may convince the poor children in the street, but you will not convince the thoughtful people.

Christianity has preached the Lord's highest salvation in a low way. We need those who have experienced the high salvation to go to the thoughtful people. Immediately they will be convinced. They also are seeking after truth, for they too were made by God. In their nature there is a seeking after God. But Christianity has superficially and inaccurately presented the gospel to them. The incarnation is not a matter of Christmas. Incarnation means that the very God, the Almighty God, has become flesh. As John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh." Who is the Word? The God who created everything. This Word, God the Creator, has become flesh. This is thoughtful and meaningful. Why did He become flesh? Simply that He might be the same as we are. We are men of blood and flesh, and Christ partook of the same. Through incarnation He came as a man to our level. Although Christ is God, He came to our level and shared in our nature. This is the kind of gospel preaching that university students need to hear. They will listen to this. You can hold them night after night with this kind of gospel. The learned people and students do not want to hear the low preaching of the gospel. They regard that as low and selfish. It lacks purpose. We must tell them of God's purpose--that God came as man in order to establish His corporation of Christ and the church.

I am not speaking about a gospel preaching that I myself have not experienced. In China we did preach the gospel in this way. When we preached about God's purpose regarding Christ and the church, some of the professors and students said, "We must get into this. For years we have been seeking the answers to the questions of what is the meaning of man, what is the real meaning of human life, and what the universe was created for." So we gave them a message telling them of God's purpose. This is the higher preaching of the highest gospel.

B. Being Made Like His Brothers in All Things

It is also a matter of sympathy that Christ shared in our nature, partaking of blood and flesh. He is the Firstborn Son of God and we are His many brothers. Yet, we all are weak and fragile in the flesh. So He became a man in the flesh, the same as we are. Because we are weak and fragile, we need Him to sympathize with us. If you want to sympathize with another person, you need to be the same as he is. If I am not on the same level and in the same situation as you are, I could never sympathize with you. However, if I become the same as you are, I shall be able to sympathize with you. The Lord's sympathizing with us is also an aspect of His incarnation. Hebrews 2:17 indicates this. The Lord was made like His brothers in all things in order that He might sympathize with them.

II. IN CRUCIFIXION

A. Tasting Death on Behalf of Everything

Although, as a youth, I was told again and again that Christ died on the cross for our sins, I was never told that He tasted death on behalf of everything (2:9). Christ tasted death not only for human beings but for everything, every creature. Have you ever heard this? Have you ever heard that Christ tasted death for the animals? Although this may sound quite harsh to your reasoning, if you consult the Greek text of Hebrews 2:9, you will see that the word "everything" is there. If Christ did not taste death for everything, how could God have reconciled everything to Himself? Colossians 1:20 says that God has reconciled everything to Himself through the death of Christ. Noah's ark is a clear type of this, for in the ark there were not only people but also living creatures. The ark not only saved the people in it; it also saved the creatures. The ark was a picture, a type, of Christ in this respect. The meaning of this is exceedingly deep and it would take us much time to cover it adequately. This is a profound revelation. Be impressed that Christ not only tasted death for man but

also for all other things. This is the reason that we say that Christ's death was an all-inclusive death.

B. Making Propitiation for the Sins of God's People

In His death Christ made propitiation for the sins of God's people (2:17). The Greek word for propitiation here is hilaskomai which means to appease, to reconcile one by satisfying the other's demand, that is, to propitiate. The Lord Jesus made propitiation for our sins to reconcile us to God by satisfying God's righteous demands on us. Thus, He has appeased God for us.

Christ died on the cross to taste death for us and to appease God for us. By His tasting of death, death has been abolished (2 Tim. 1:10). By His propitiation, He has fully appeased God for us. Now we are neither under death nor sin. Although there are death and sin in the universe, because of Christ's death, His all-inclusive crucifixion, we are through with death and sin. Do not care for your feelings. Do not say that you lack the feeling that death and sin are over. Your feelings are a lie. God says that it is so. Are you going to trust your feelings or God's Word? I do not care about how I feel. I only care for God's Word. The Bible says that death has been abolished and that Christ has made propitiation for our sins.

C. Destroying the Devil

Beside death and sin, we have another problem--the devil. In His crucifixion Christ also destroyed the devil (2:14).

The Greek word translated destroy may also be rendered as bring to nought, make of none effect, do away with, abolish, annul, discard. After the devil, the serpent, seduced man into the fall, God promised that the seed of woman would come to bruise the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). In the fullness of time, the Son of God came to become flesh (John 1:14; Rom. 8:3), by being born of a virgin (Gal. 4:4), that He might destroy the devil in man's

flesh through His death in the flesh on the cross. This was to abolish Satan, to bring him to nought. Hallelujah, Satan has been abolished and done away with!

Perhaps you will say, "How could the devil have been destroyed when he is still so prevailing?" It is a lie to say that the devil is prevailing. The Bible never says this. Do not believe in this lie. The Bible says that the devil has been bruised, destroyed. His head has been crushed. Are you going to believe your feelings or God's Word? God's Word tells us that through His death on the cross Christ has destroyed the devil. This is an accomplished fact, a fact that is included in the Holy Word as the testament bequeathed to us. We need to take this bequest by faith according to the Holy Word.

D. Releasing Us from the Slavery Under the Fear of Death

Christ's death has also released us from the slavery under the fear of death (2:15). Since through His death Christ has tasted death for us and has destroyed the devil who has the might of death, His death has released us from the slavery in which we were held through the fear of death. We have been released from this slavery. Because of the all-inclusive crucifixion of Christ, there is no more death, no more sin, no more devil, no more fear of death, and no more slavery. By His mercy, the Lord has opened our eyes and has shown us the all-inclusiveness of His death. And through experience we do realize that death, sin, the devil, the fear of death, and slavery were all truly crossed out in Christ's crucifixion.

III. IN RESURRECTION

Following His death, Christ was resurrected. This is the most meaningful matter in life. But it has never been adequately realized, even by genuine regenerated Christians. Because the thoughtful people were not given the adequate teaching regarding Christ's resurrection,

Satan filled their minds with the modernistic thought that resurrection is superstitious In 1936 I was invited to preach to the students in the leading university in China. One night, in a professor's home, an intelligent student who had been born in a Christian family asked me a question. He said that, according to the scientific view, he could not believe in resurrection in a superstitious way and he asked me to explain it to him. The Lord was with me and I pointed out that this matter of resurrection is commonly found in nature. That professor's residence had many windows through which we could see wheat fields. I said to that student, "Look at the fields. Do you see the wheat that is growing there? Can't you see resurrection in that wheat field? The seed is sown into the soil, dies, and eventually the wheat comes forth. This is resurrection. Every day and everywhere you can see resurrection. A hen sits upon a chicken egg, the shell breaks, and a baby chicken comes out. Does not this point to death and resurrection? Do not consider that this is my philosophical mind, for my mind is not that intelligent. This is the teaching of the Bible." When he asked me where, I said that in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul tells us that the seed which dies and grows again is a picture of resurrection. That night this young man was saved and today he is a leading co-worker on the island of Taiwan. The low preaching of the gospel would have been unable to convince such a thoughtful university student.

A. To Bring Forth Many Brothers

Hebrews 2:11-12 indicates that in resurrection Christ has brought forth many brothers. Through His resurrection we were regenerated (1 Pet. 1:3). His death released the divine life from within Him and His resurrection imparted the life of God into us in order that we might become the many sons of God and His many brothers. He was the one grain of wheat falling into the ground, dying, and growing up to bring forth many grains, which are we (John 12:24). He was the one grain and we are now the many grains, His many brothers, brought

forth by Him in His resurrection. So immediately after His resurrection He called us His brothers (John 20:17).

B. To Declare the Father's Name to His Brothers

In His resurrection Christ not only brought forth many brothers, but He came to His brothers and declared to them the Father's name (2:12). What is the Father's name? This is a great matter. The Father's name is simply the Father. The Father is His name.

The Father means the source of life and the source of being. From where did you receive your life? You received it from your father. From where did you receive your being? Also from your father. The Father is the source. We are all out of Him. The Sanctifier, the Firstborn Son, and all the sanctified ones, the many sons, are all out of the one Father. On the day of His resurrection, the Lord declared the Father's name to the disciples. From that day on Peter came to realize that he had the divine nature. So, in his second epistle, Peter said that we are "partakers of the divine nature," having received "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:4, 3). How is it that we have received the divine nature and that all things pertaining to life have been given to us? Because we were all born of the Father. The name Father means a great deal to us.

C. To Praise the Father in the Church

In resurrection, Christ not only declared the Father's name to His brothers, but also praised the Father in the church (2:11-12). When the Lord declared the Father's name to His brothers, He praised the Father's name in the church. The brothers are the church. Individually speaking, they are His brothers and collectively speaking, they are the church brought forth in His resurrection. In the evening of the day of His resurrection His brothers gathered together, and He came to meet with them. That was the first church meeting. The first church meeting was

not on the day of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost the church was enlarged, but the first church meeting was in the evening of the day of the Lord's resurrection. In the church meeting the Lord not only declared the Father's name to His brothers, but also praised the Father in the midst of the church.

IV. IN GLORIFICATION

A. Entering into Glory

After resurrection, Christ was glorified, not only in the manifestation of His divine nature but also in the ascension into God's glory. As the Captain of our salvation, Christ, in His ascension, has entered into the glory in which God is. God's desire is to bring His many sons into glory (2:10). Christ took the lead to enter into this glory as the Pioneer (6:20). The Jesus who was despised by man on earth is glorified by God in heaven. We all must look unto Him in glory.

B. Crowned with Glory and Honor

Christ has not only entered into glory but has also been crowned with glory and honor (2:9). Glory is His divine splendor, and honor is the worth of His preciousness in His virtues and His dignity in His position. Man crowned Him with thorns to shame Him (John 19:2), but God crowned Him with glory and honor to glorify Him. We saw Him on the cross on earth with the crown of thorns, but now we see Him on the throne in heaven crowned with glory and honor. This is the Jesus revealed in the book of Hebrews.

V. IN EXALTATION

Christ's ascension, which followed His resurrection, was an exaltation. From the earthly viewpoint, it was an ascension from man, but from the heavenly viewpoint, it was an exaltation by God.

A. To Have Dominion Over All Creatures

After Christ had been crowned with glory and honor in His ascension, God gave Him the dominion over all things in His exaltation (2:7). This is similar to what God did with Adam. Adam lost the dominion that God gave to him, but, according to the prophecy of Psalm 8, Christ has recovered what Adam lost. Now the same dominion has been given to the second man. Are you in the first man or the second? We all must reply, "We were born in the first man, but we were reborn in the second man." We were born in the first man and lost everything with him. But since we have been reborn in the second man, we have regained everything. The second man has been glorified, crowned with glory and honor, and entrusted with the divine dominion that was lost by the first man.

B. To Be Over All Things

In His exaltation, Christ was made Head over all things (2:8). God has subjected all things under His feet. Now He is only waiting for one thing--for the subtle Satan and all His enemies to be made His footstool.

We see Jesus in these aspects of incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, glorification, and exaltation. We do not see Him in the low way of tradition, but in the high way of Hebrews 2.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE NINE

THE CAPTAIN OF SALVATION

(1)

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

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

The New Testament tells us that we have been called into glory and that this glory was designed according to God's wisdom in eternity past. First Corinthians 2:7 says that in eternity past God ordained that we should be brought into this glory. Both 1 Thessalonians 2:12 and 1 Peter 5:10 tell us that we have been called into this glory.

And, according to Colossians 3:4, when Christ appears, we shall appear with Him in His glory. What is this glory? Probably most Christians think that glory is merely a kind of shining or brightness. I would not say that glory is not such a shining or brightness, because I have not entered into it and dare not say that this understanding of glory is wrong. However, I would say that such an understanding is too objective and that it is absolutely according to objective considerations. To say that the glory into which we shall enter is merely a kind of radiant shining or brightness may be correct, but it is altogether an objective concept.

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

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

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

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

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

When the children of Israel entered into the land of Canaan, they began to blossom. That was their glory. That blossoming stage was also a fighting stage, for they began to fight almost immediately after entering into the good land. The first battle they fought was at Jericho. After Jericho, they fought continually until David defeated all the enemies and the temple was built. Then the glory of God filled the temple (1 Kings 8:10). Apparently, the glory

that filled the temple came down from above; actually, the glory was with the children of Israel. Since the day they crossed the Red Sea, the glory was with them. The glory was in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire (Exo. 14:19, 24). When they built the temple, the temple was filled with glory. Again I say that the glory did not come from above. It was present already, waiting for the people's growth and development. When the children of Israel were fully developed, the glory filled the temple.

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

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

Do not think that the Lord entered into glory when He ascended to the heavens. No, before His ascension, while He was still on earth, He entered into glory on the day of His resurrection. Luke 24:26 indicates that Christ entered into glory not by ascending but by resurrecting. His resurrection was His entrance into glory. His whole life, from the time He was born until the day He was resurrected from the dead, was a fighting process. The Lord did not only fight for victory but for glory. He fought

for His glorification. His fighting paved the way into glory. In this matter of fighting for glory, He was the Pioneer. He pioneered the way into glory. Therefore, He spontaneously has become qualified to be the leader of those entering into glory. So He is the Captain of our salvation. Today we are following this Pioneer who has paved the way and entered into glory. That glory is now the good land. We must cross the river and enter into this land. In a sense, Christ has crossed the river and is now on the other side, in the land of glory. Although He is in the glory, we are not yet in it. We are on the way, following Him as our Captain.

I. GOD LEADING MANY SONS INTO GLORY

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

A. All Things For God

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

B. All Things Through God

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

C. Many Sons Among All Things

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

D. Into Glory

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

II. MAKING JESUS PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS

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

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

III. THE PIONEER, THE LEADER, AND THE CAPTAIN

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

IV. SALVATION

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

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

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TEN

THE CAPTAIN OF SALVATION

(2)

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

GLORY--GOD EXPRESSED

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

THE CORPORATE EXPRESSION OF GOD

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

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

Where is the glory in the New Jerusalem? It is in the center, in the heart, of the city. God, the source of glory, is on the throne in the center of the New Jerusalem. God on

the throne is the substance, essence, and element of glory. In Revelation 21 that glory is called the light (Rev. 21:23). That light is not a natural light, such as the sun, moon, and stars, nor a man-made light, such as a lamp. No, it is the divine light, God Himself. This is the source of glory. God as the light shines in and through the Lamb as the lamp, eventually shining through the entire city, causing the city to bear the appearance of God Himself. When we look at the New Jerusalem, we see the expression of God's appearance, the light in the lamp shining through the jasper. This is glory. Glory is God expressed through His redeemed people. Oh, how we all need to see what this glory really is!

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

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

this corporate man and through this corporate man. God's glory will be there, and all the members of this corporate man will be brought into that glory.

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

THE NEED TO CROSS THE RIVER

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

THE GOAL IN CROSSING THE RIVER

God's expression was symbolized by His temple, His habitation on earth. God's intention in calling Abraham was to obtain such a habitation. Abraham's being called was eventually for the producing, the building up, of God's habitation. This is not a small thing. We must look at the Bible and the people in it as a whole, and not just consider a few individuals, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and

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

THE MEANING OF CROSSING THE RIVER

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

no laver, no sea of glass, in front of the New Jerusalem. But there will be the lake of fire, and everything that has been washed away will go there. Now we understand what it means to cross the river; it is to wash ourselves from anything old, anything ruined, and anything that does not match God's glory.

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

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

THE LORD JESUS AS THE TYPICAL EXAMPLE

For this, we not only have the clear type of Abraham and his descendants consummating in the building of the temple, but we have a typical example--the Lord Jesus. The Lord as the Pioneer and Forerunner is the example, the

model, of a person who has crossed the river and entered into God's glory. He has crossed the river Jordan and has fully entered into the divine glory. He suffered and entered into glory (Luke 24:26; 1 Pet. 1:11).

What is this glory into which Christ has entered? It is the full expression of God. When the Lord was in the flesh, God was concealed within Him. Within Him was the seed of the divine glory. In Jesus, the Nazarene with blood and flesh, was the seed of God's divine glory. But this glory was concealed within Him just like the glory of a carnation is concealed within the carnation seed. When the carnation seed falls into the earth, dies, and grows again until it reaches the stage of blossoming, the carnation seed will be brought into glory. Jesus was such a seed. He fell into the earth, died, and grew up (John 12:23-24). By His growing up, His whole being, including His humanity and His human nature, was brought into the glorious expression of God. That was His glory. The Lord suffered death, crossing the river of death, and entered into the glory, into the full expression of the Divine Being. What was typified by Abraham and by his descendants at the time of the building of the temple, was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. After living on earth for thirty-three and a half years, the Lord fulfilled the type. Jesus crossed the river. He firstly crossed the river at the time of His baptism. For three and a half years after His baptism, He was continually crossing rivers. Eventually, on the cross, He crossed the death river. By crossing that ultimate river He entered into glory. The glory into which He entered is the reality of the expression of God's divine being. After His resurrection, He was God's glorious expression. That was the glory into which He entered. He is the example, the model, because He was the first One who pioneered into glory, the One who paved the way.

WITHIN THE VEIL

This Pioneer, this Forerunner, entered within the veil (Hebrews 6:19-20). What is the veil? The veil is that which separates us from God's expression. Every river is a veil

separating us from God's expression. By passing through the Jordan, the river of death, Jesus entered within the veil. There within the veil is nothing but the expression of God. He is there now in glory. There is a man in the glory. This means that there is a man in God's expression. Even more, there is a man who is God's expression, a man who is God's glory.

CHRIST AS THE GLORY IN US

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

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

On the one hand, this wonderful One is within the veil, dwelling there in the expression of God and as the expression of God. On the other hand, He has come into us. We should not try to understand this with our little mind,

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

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

At this very moment, He is ministering from there to here. As He ministers to us in this way, He is not only the

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

THE ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY

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

our sufferings are just the lightness, the present lightness of the affliction that works for us the eternal weight of glory.

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

CHRIST'S COMING FROM WITHOUT AND FROM WITHIN

Romans 8:30 says that those "whom he justified, these he also glorified." This does not mean to put us into glory. To put us into glory is one thing and to glorify us is another. Then 2 Thessalonians 1:10 says, "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints." One day, at the right time, Christ will come to be glorified in us. This means that He will come out of us. If you know the Bible, you will realize that, on the one hand, Christ is coming from without, and that, on the other hand, He is coming from within us. He has been sown into us as the seed of glory. This seed will grow until it reaches the stage of blossoming. Then the glory will come out. I do believe in the literal second coming of the Lord. But in the Bible the concept of His coming is not that shallow. Why has the Lord not yet come? It is very easy for Him to come down from above. He can do it at any time. But it is not easy for Him to come out of us. Although He can come down from above at any time, where is the people out of whom He can come? It is very easy for Him to shine upon us, but it is difficult for Him to be glorified in us. It is easy for Him to put us into glory, but it is not so easy to glorify us. For example, if a person has a pale complexion, it is easy to color it by adding some outward coloring. But for his paleness to be inwardly

transformed to pinkness needs time for growth. The Bible does say that God is leading many sons into glory, but it also says that He will glorify us. To glorify us means to have the glory that has been sown into us saturate our whole being. When our whole being has been permeated and saturated with the element of glory, that glory will come out of us. This is what it means to glorify us. When we experience this glorification, we shall be in the expression of God. At that time we shall be fully on the other shore, fully in the expression of God. This is our glory.

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE ELEVEN

THE SANCTIFIER AND THE SANCTIFIED

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

We cannot say who was the first person used by God to recover sanctification. But we do know that, according to the history of the recovery, in the eighteenth century God used a group of university students at Oxford--John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield. These young men began to have a meeting. John Wesley was

raised up by God through the help of the Moravian brothers under the leadership of Zinzendorf. The Moravian brothers helped John Wesley to be clear about salvation. Wesley had been invited to speak in the United States. Even then, he was not clear about his salvation. It was on the boat on the way to the United States that he received help regarding this from the Moravian brothers. After spending some time in the United States, Wesley returned to Europe and visited Bohemia, the place where Zinzendorf and others had begun to practice the church life. John Wesley received the greatest help from them while he was there. In one of his writings he says that if he had not had the burden for England, he would have remained in Bohemia for the rest of his life. As far as he was concerned, that was the place where God dwelled. Wesley, however, was burdened to return to England. We know from history that the revival under John Wesley saved England from revolution. I mention this to point out to you the extent of the influence of John Wesley's preaching.

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

Then in the early part of the nineteenth century, the Brethren under the leadership of John Nelson Darby were raised up. The Brethren showed from the Bible that holiness is not sinless perfection. Using Matthew 23:17, they showed how the temple sanctified the gold. It was the temple that made the gold holy. These Brethren teachers pointed out that the gold in the market place, although

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

This teaching of the Brethren is altogether correct. When we studied the various schools of sanctification many years ago, we agreed with the teaching of the Brethren. We saw that sinless perfection was not genuine holiness.

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

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

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

all out of one source, one Father. The Father is the source of the Sanctifier and He is the source of all the sanctified. This is not a matter of position but of disposition.

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

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

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

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

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

I. THE SANCTIFIER

A. The Son of God Incarnated

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

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

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

C. The Firstborn Son of God Produced

In order to be the Sanctifier, Christ had to be produced as the Firstborn Son of God (1:6). Before Jesus Christ was

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

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

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

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

II. THE SANCTIFIED

A. The Sinners with God Propitiated

Undoubtedly, we are those who are being sanctified. The sanctified are sinners for whom Christ propitiated God

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

B. The Death-victims Released

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

C. The Many Sons of God Brought Forth

In order to be the sanctified ones, we need another thing--to be produced as the sons of God. The many sons of God had to be brought forth. On the negative side, we have the propitiation for our sins and we have been released from the slavery of death; on the positive side, we have been produced, brought forth, as the many sons of God. The meaning of God's sanctifying work is that the Firstborn Son of God is working on the many sons of God. This

means that the Sanctifier is the Firstborn Son of God and that the sanctified are the many sons of God. The Firstborn is now working on His many brothers. He is qualified to be the Sanctifier because He is the Firstborn Son of God, and we are qualified to be the sanctified because we are the many sons of God. He was qualified through His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, glorification, and exaltation. After passing through this process, He became the Firstborn Son of God. Our qualifications to be the sanctified are that we have the propitiation for our sins, that we have been released from the slavery of death, and that we have been brought forth to be the many sons of God. Now both He and we are qualified. He is the qualified Sanctifier and we are the qualified sanctified. Do you realize that you are qualified to be the sanctified? The people on the street are not qualified, but we are fully qualified through the propitiation and resurrection of Christ.

III. SANCTIFICATION

A. To Separate the Many Sons unto God

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

B. To Transform Them in Their Being

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

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

As a result of transformation, we shall eventually be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29). Transformation is to

change our Adamic nature into the nature of Christ. Conformation is to conform us, the many sons of God, to the image of the Firstborn Son of God. This is also a part of the process of sanctification.

D. To Glorify Them with God's Glory

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

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

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

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWELVE

THE MANY SONS, THE MANY BROTHERS, THE CHURCH

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

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

crucially as it is found here. Do not consider 2:12 as a small verse. It is a great verse. It contains a marvelous revelation. In this message, I hope that we all shall not only have a revelation, but that we all shall see a vision of what the church is and of what the Lord is doing today in the church.

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

The church is both human and divine. This is the nature of the church. The church is a composition of the many sons of God. The church is a corporation of the many brothers of the Firstborn Son of God. This is the church. I never saw the church this clearly years ago. More than forty years ago I saw that the church was a group of real believers in Christ meeting together. This definition of the

church is not wrong. Approximately one hundred fifty years ago it was revealed to some of the brothers that the church is not a building of brick and stone. They declared strongly to all of Christendom that the church is not a physical building. It is not a cathedral, chapel, or sanctuary. They declared that the church is a gathering of God's called ones. When true believers in Christ come together, they are the church. We have received much help from this revelation and more than fifty years ago we also began to say that the church is a gathering of God's called saints. We were thankful for the help that we received from those brothers in the last century. Later on, we began to see that the church is not only a gathering of real believers; it is a body, the Body of Christ. If you gather many chairs together, the chairs cannot become a body. If you gather sheep together, they likewise cannot be a body. As everybody knows, a body is an organism with life. It has life tissues, life cells, life nature, life shape, life ability, and life function. The church is deeper, higher, and more profound than just a gathering.

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

Quite often bad news comes to me about a church in a

certain place. Someone may say, "The church there is not good. It has problems." I do not like to hear things like this, because my concept of the church is based upon my faith. I believe that every church is wonderful. There is not a church that is not good. Although you may think that a certain church is not good, after a period of time that church becomes very different. Why? Because the church is organic. It grows. Your body may be quite tired, but after a while it is invigorated. It changes by life because it is an organism. The churches in the Lord's recovery are organic. Never believe that the church in a certain locality is not good. The church is wonderful because it is an organism that grows. Never forget that the church is a living corporation of all the brothers of the Firstborn Son of God. The church is neither physical nor organizational; it is altogether of life--the divine life and the uplifted, resurrected human life. Nothing is richer than life. The best life in the universe is the divine life, and the second best life is the human life. The human life that we have today for the church is not the natural human life but the uplifted, resurrected human life. We have such a life! This human life plus the divine life is the life of the church. It is in such a profound way that the church is revealed in this book. The church is a living composition of all the sons of God, a living corporation of all the brothers of the Firstborn Son of God.

I. THE MANY SONS

A. Predestinated unto Sonship

The many sons of God of whom the church is composed have all been predestinated unto sonship (Eph. 1:5). We have not become sons of God because of an accident; we were predestinated to be the sons of God before the foundation of the world. In eternity past God decided that we would be His sons. Firstly, God foreknew us (Rom. 8:29). After this, He selected us. Regardless of how you feel about yourself, God selected you before the foundation of the world. After foreknowing and selecting us, God

predestinated us. The word predestinate includes the thought of being marked out. In eternity past, before creation, God put a mark upon us. He marked us out beforehand. For what did God predestinate us? For sonship. We have been predestinated unto sonship.

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

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

B. Born of God

As the chosen ones of God, we have been born of God to be His many sons. At the time when we received the Lord

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

C. Born of the Spirit

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

D. Having Received the spirit of Sonship

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

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

As yet, we do not have the full sonship, which is the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23). We are waiting for full sonship, the redemption or the transfiguration of our physical body. In other words, although we have been born

of God in our spirit, we have not yet been born of Him in our body. The day is coming when our body will be transfigured. Then we shall have the full sonship. We are waiting for this.

II. THE MANY BROTHERS

A. Brought Forth in Resurrection

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

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

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

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

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

III. THE CHURCH

A. Composed of the Many Brothers in Resurrection

As we have seen, the church is composed of the many brothers of the Firstborn Son of God in resurrection (2:12).

Because of this, the church is a corporate partnership with Christ. When we come to 3:14, we shall have much to say about this partnership. For the present, it is sufficient that we keep in mind that the church is a corporate partnership.

B. The Firstborn Son of God Declaring the Father's Name To His Brothers

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

The Bible only mentions this very briefly, but this brief mention is like a little show window through which we can see a great deal. According to John 20, Jesus visited His disciples in the evening on the day of His resurrection. But John does not say that He declared the Father to the disciples. This is mentioned prophetically in Psalm 22:22. According to that prophecy, after His resurrection Christ came mainly to His disciples to make the Father known to them. The Father's life and nature have become theirs. The Father's being has been transferred into their being. This is what it means to declare the Father's name to the disciples. If we had been there when the Lord did this, we would have realized that that declaration was not just a matter of mentioning the name. No, it was an impartation

of all that the Father is--the Father's life, nature, and being--into the disciples. It was from this that Peter came to realize that he was a partaker of the divine nature. He mentions this in his second Epistle (1:4). We, the sons of God, have all become partakers of the divine nature. To us, God is no longer merely the creating God but also the begetting Father. He has begotten us. He has imparted His life, His nature, and even His being into our being. This is what it means to declare the Father's name.

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

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

this is so. In some of the church meetings we did much singing to the Father. That was the time when we enjoyed Christ so much. We even had the sensation that He was singing in our singing.

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

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THIRTEEN

A MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST

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

I. AS THE SON OF GOD WITH THE DIVINE NATURE

Why does the writer of Hebrews use the words merciful and faithful to describe this High Priest? Why does he not use just one word or more than two? The answer is that in the first two chapters of this book the writer has mainly covered two points--that Christ is the Son of God, God Himself, and the Son of Man, man Himself. Merciful corresponds with His being a man, and faithful corresponds with His being God. In order to be faithful we not only need virtue but also ability. Suppose I have spoken a word to you as a promise. Although my virtue may be good, I may not have the ability to keep my word. I have the heart to be faithful in keeping my word, but I lack the ability. I do not have the means to fulfill my word. Eventually I am forced into not being faithful. But this High Priest is not merely an honest man; He is the faithful God. God is faithful (10:23). He is able to fulfill whatever He says. God never

lies (6:18). Whatever He has spoken He is able to fulfill. He has every means to fulfill what He has spoken. Only God can be fully faithful. None of us can be completely faithful. A good number of times I had a sincere heart to keep my word but found myself unable to do it. I could not do it because I am not the Almighty God. What can frustrate God from fulfilling His word? Nothing. Jesus can be a faithful High Priest because He is the very Almighty God. Since He, as the Son of God, is God Himself, He is able to be faithful. Although, as the many sons of God and as the many brothers of the Firstborn, we are divine as well as human, we are not almighty. We are human in our human nature and divine in His divine nature, but we are not almighty in His deity. Since He is the Almighty God, He can be faithful to us.

II. AS THE SON OF MAN WITH THE HUMAN NATURE

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

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

III. BEING INCARNATED TO BE LIKE US

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

to be qualified to be a merciful High Priest, He became like us, sympathizing with all of our weaknesses.

IV. BEING TRIED

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

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

V. HAVING SUFFERED DEATH

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

VI. HAVING MADE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS

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

VII. HAVING DESTROYED THE DEVIL

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

VIII. HAVING RELEASED US FROM THE SLAVERY OF DEATH

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

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

A further qualification of Christ's being the High Priest is that in resurrection He has brought forth many brothers

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

X. IN EXALTATION BEING CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOR

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

XI. BEING THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION

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

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

What is a priest? We have already said that the priest is one who serves God. Although it is correct to say this, it is not adequate. A priest is not only one who serves God but also one who ministers God into man. All Christians think that a priest is one who serves God, but not many Christians know that, ultimately, a priest is one who ministers God to man. In a sense, serving God is secondary, while ministering God to man is primary. The basic significance of the priesthood is not to serve God but

to minister God to man. If, as priests, we only know how to render service to God without knowing how to minister God to man, we shall be quite poor.

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

The main point with respect to Christ as the High Priest is not that He serves God but that He ministers God to us. We must go deeper than the superficial concept that a priest is one who serves God. Everyone, including the unbelievers on the street, knows that a Catholic priest is one who serves God, burns incense, and fulfills his "holy" duty. Even the heathen religions have priests. We need to cross the river out of this low concept into a higher one. God does not need your service, but He does want you to minister Himself to people. As the High Priest, Christ's major job is to minister God to us. Mainly what Christ does within you is to minister God into you. This is our High Priest. He is continually doing one thing--ministering God into us. Some may say that Melchisedec did not minister God. But what about the bread and the wine--what do they signify? The bread and the wine signify God as our

enjoyment, God being ministered to us to refresh, sustain, support, strengthen, and nourish us that we may grow with all the riches of God. This is the primary task of a priest. In principle, we who serve God today are His priests. As priests, our main responsibility is to minister Him to people.

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

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

Now we can see Christ in three aspects. In the first aspect, He is the Captain of salvation; in the second aspect, He is the seed of glory; and in the third aspect, He is the ministering One, the High Priest. As the High Priest, Christ ministers God to us. This is His priestly work and this also is the job that the Captain of salvation is doing. Although He is the Captain of salvation, He fulfills His

office by being the High Priest. In 2:10 we are told that Christ is the Captain of our salvation, and in 2:17 we see that this Christ who is the Captain of our salvation is also our High Priest. How can He function as the Captain of our salvation? Only by being the High Priest. According to our human concept, a captain is a leader, a leading fighter. This concept is not wrong, but if Christ were just a Captain in this sense, He could not fulfill His office.

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

I may use my physical body as an illustration. I praise God that He has given me a strong, healthy body. After ministering, however, I become quite exhausted. Then I go home and enjoy a good meal. This revives me. After such a meal, I am able to come and minister again for another hour and a half. Then I go home and enjoy another good meal. Recently, after speaking in an evening meeting, I went home still very much alive. I awoke the next morning before six o'clock full of energy. I did many things that morning. Where did the energy come from? It came from the nourishment. Likewise, I have a real High Priest ministering bread and wine to me. This enables me to do

my job without being tired out. The more I enjoy the nourishment, the more energy I have.

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

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

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

Now we can understand the way in which the Lord Jesus as the Captain of our salvation brings us into glory by being the High Priest ministering God to us all the time. As Christ ministers God into us, a chain reaction begins. We are transfused with God until we also become priests. As priests, we do not mainly serve God but minister God to

others, bringing them into God's expression. The ones who receive our ministry will in turn be infused with God. This will cause them to go to God for more infusing. Then God will tell them to minister Himself to others. This is the way that the Captain of our salvation is leading us into glory. I regret that I do not have the adequate words to express this. This is not merely a kind of Christian edification. It is the way that the Father is leading many sons into glory. I repeat, the Lord leads us into glory by being our Captain and our Captain fulfills His duty by being our High Priest.

XII. RENDERING HELP TO SUCCOR US

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

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

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

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FOURTEEN

HOLY BROTHERS AND PARTAKERS OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING

I. HOLY BROTHERS

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

In 1:9 we see our relationship with God's anointed One. That verse, which is addressed to Christ, says, "Your God has anointed You with the oil of exultant joy above Your partners." The King James Version renders the Greek word for partners as companions. But a partner is better than a companion. We may be companions without being

partners, but if we are partners, we certainly are companions. In God's economy, Christ is the One whom God has appointed to accomplish His plan, and we are Christ's partners in the divine interest. He was anointed by God, and we share His anointing for the fulfillment of God's purpose. Christ is the Heir appointed by God, and in 1:9 we see that this appointed Heir has been anointed. The anointing confirms the appointment. Firstly, God appointed the Son and then He anointed Him. As Christ's partners we all partake of His anointing. We are partners of God's anointed One and we share His anointing. This is a part of the gospel. It is included in the full gospel. Many people talk about the full gospel. The full gospel includes our partnership with Christ. This wonderful item is included in the full gospel. We all need to see that we are partners of Christ and that we share in His anointing. Because of this, by the time we reach 3:1, we have all that we need to be holy brothers. We have the standing, the qualifications, the reality, the life, the nature, the source, and all that we need. We are now the holy brothers.

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

that if the Lord would open your eyes and impress you with this marvelous item in the full gospel, you would be another person. You would be more than open for our High Priest to minister Himself into you. This would change your taste. Never again would cigarettes be tasteful to you.

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

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

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

I am burdened because I have seen something higher. I want to see people get something better. We should not preach the gospel in a low way. What is the center, the high point of the gospel? Is it to take a poor sinner, sprinkle some drops of blood on him, and send him to heaven? Do you think that God's gospel only does this

much? No, it is much higher than this. God's gospel is to make people holy brothers. This is not my concept; it is the concept revealed in the book of Hebrews. In His resurrection, Christ has made all of us His brothers and He has come into us to declare the Father to us. Now, as the Sanctifier, He is qualified to perform the sanctifying work that makes us holy. We are His holy brothers and His partners, sharing His anointing for the fulfilling of God's plan. Is this not in the Bible? Is it not the good news? The world needs to hear these glad tidings. Many thoughtful people in the leading universities throughout the country are wondering about the meaning of human life. So many are asking themselves, "What is the purpose of life? What will happen after my graduation?" No one in the universities can tell them. We must go and tell them the real meaning of life. Go and tell them that they can be the holy brothers of the Firstborn Son of God. If the Lord delays His coming back, I hope that after a few years this kind of preaching will be prevailing in all the universities in the United States.

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

Before we go on, I would like to have some fellowship with the young people. I have been fully captured by the Lord and I know what I am doing here. I have seen the vision. In the whole universe there is nothing higher than this. I am doing the most glorious work among the humankind, and you all must do the same thing. This is

why I do not care for the department stores--they are too low. I would never trade what I have in my hands for anything in the world. What I have is too high and too glorious. Today's world needs a crusade with the preaching of the highest and fullest gospel.

A. Heirs of Salvation

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

B. Partners of the Appointed Heir

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

C. Followers of the Captain

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

D. Brothers of the Firstborn Son of God

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

E. The Church in Resurrection

Ultimately, the holy brothers are the church in resurrection (2:12). Individually they are the brothers of

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

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

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

G. Partakers of the Divine Holiness

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

H. Pursuing Holiness

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

I. On the Way to Glory

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

II. PARTAKERS OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING

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

The concept of the book of Hebrews is focused on the heavenly nature of the positive things. First of all, it points out to us that Christ today is sitting in the heavens (1:3). He has entered into the heavens (9:24). He has passed

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

A. To the Heavenly Christ

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

B. With the Heavenly Enrollment

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

C. To Taste the Heavenly Gift

We, the partakers of the heavenly calling, have been called to taste the heavenly gift (6:4). The heavenly gift should be the heavenly things given to us by God at the time of our salvation, such as forgiveness, righteousness,

divine life, peace, and joy. As partakers of the heavenly calling, we all have tasted these heavenly things.

D. To Have the Heavenly Worship

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

E. To Come to the Heavenly Jerusalem

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

F. To Go to the Heavenly Country

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

G. Partakers of the Holy Spirit

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

partakers of the Holy Spirit, we partake of God as our enjoyment. It is also by God's Holy Spirit that we can have the heavenly worship.

H. Partakers of the Divine Discipline

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIFTEEN

CHRIST AS THE APOSTLE SUPERIOR TO MOSES

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

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

Although you might have known that Jesus is our High Priest, I doubt whether many of you reading this message

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

I. MOSES

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

A. A Part of God's House

There is, however, a difference in degree between Moses and Christ. Regardless of how much Moses prefigured

Christ, he was still only a part of the house, whereas Christ is the Builder of God's house (3:3).

B. Faithful in God's House

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

C. For a Testimony of the Coming Things

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

II. CHRIST

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

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

same thing. But Christ is not only a part of the building; He is also the Builder. This is the difference between Christ and Moses.

B. Over Us, the House of God

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

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

In what way is God's house living? It is living in the Father's name and in the Father's life. When we say that it is living in the Father's name, this means that it is living in the Father's reality. This house is a living composition of the many children of God in the Father's life and reality.

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

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

great, kind, and more than merciful, and He will do many things for you. But as far as the church as the house of the Father is concerned, you will not be able to enjoy Him as the Apostle.

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

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

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

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

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

letters of the pure Word, not according to tradition.

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

Let me give you a testimony of what happened to one of the opposers. In 1958, I was invited to visit a spiritual place in England. I went there neither to receive help nor to give help to others but to see the situation there. The leader honored me by putting me in a special house and assigning a person to take care of me. For a month's time the leader turned all of the meetings over to me, not only the meetings of the conference but even the regular meetings. During my stay there I discovered that that place was not for the church; it was absolutely for its ministry. During the twenty or thirty years prior to 1958, the ministry in that place was prevailing. Many admitted that it was a spiritual ministry. After I stayed there for a month, the leader brought me to his retreat in Scotland. I stayed with him there for a week with the purpose of sitting down with him face to face to have a talk about the Lord's economy, about what the Lord is doing today. His opinion was that the Lord would use his ministry to establish ministry centers throughout the earth. I told him that the Lord's economy is to establish local churches in

city after city. Although we were good friends, we could not get along. He found that I was more than stubborn in this matter, and I learned that he could not be changed one bit. We did not fight with each other, but within we realized that there was a great discrepancy between our understandings of the Lord's economy. We returned from his retreat house in Scotland to England. Before I left, he asked me to speak again in one of the regular meetings. I did not know what to speak until I got on the platform. Then the message came. In that message I told the people that the ministry is not for the ministry, but that every ministry must be for the local churches. I was very strong, saying, "Look at the ministry of the Apostle John. Although it was the most spiritual ministry, it was not the lampstand. Look at all the local churches in Revelation--most of them were a mess. But the local churches are the lampstands." In that message I emphasized strongly that the local churches should not be for the ministry but that the ministry must be for the local churches.

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

The dear one who invited me to England had firstly been invited by us to come to Taiwan. He came in 1955 and again in 1957. During his first visit he did not touch the church matter, but in his second visit he purposely touched it. This set off a strong debate between him and us. The debate was between this brother and the leading ones on the island of Taiwan. During the first two of these meetings I was doing the interpretation and did not speak in the debate. However, in the third meeting I joined in. Although we were friends with this dear brother, even intimate friends, we held different concepts regarding the

Lord's economy. This brother left Taiwan in April of 1957. When I visited him in England sixteen months later, in August, 1958, he told me that when the plane took off from Taipei for Hong Kong, the flow within him was cut off and that it had not been recovered. On the very day he told me this, he said that he had cried to the Lord early in the morning, asking Him why the flow had been cut off.

C. Faithful to God Who Constituted Him

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

D. Counted Worthy of More Glory and Honor than Moses

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIXTEEN

PARTNERS OF CHRIST

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

While I am speaking, I have a glorious vision in front of

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

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

enjoying Christ but also partners following Him. As His partners, we are working together and cooperating with Him.

I. CHRIST, GOD'S APPOINTED

A. To Accomplish God's Plan

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

B. Anointed by God

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

As the partners of Christ, we are partners in His anointing. He was appointed in eternity past and anointed in time. His anointing includes us. I would refer you to Psalm 133 where we see that the ointment poured out upon the head of Aaron, the high priest, flows down upon the whole body to the skirts of his robe. This signifies that all the members of the body of the high priest share his anointing. We, the partakers, share the anointing of the unique Heir. As I have already mentioned, the anointing was the initial inauguration. Therefore, we all share in His inauguration. In this heavenly, divine, and eternal inauguration, we are His partners. He has obtained the anointing, and we share it with Him because we are His partners. This means that we all have been anointed. We

all have been put into office. We are not only the partakers of Christ who enjoy Him but also the partners of Christ who share in His operation. I have the full assurance that in giving this message I am sharing in His operation. He is going to accomplish a full expression of God in glory, and we are now cooperating with Him in this operation. I have heard many testimonies concerning being a partaker of Christ and enjoying Him, but I have not heard one concerning being a partner of Christ. From now on, in the churches we need to hear more testimonies concerning being partners of Christ and sharing in His operation. Recently, many of us have been touched to go to the campuses and preach the high gospel. That kind of preaching should be the sharing in the operation of the anointed Heir. We are Christ's joint-heirs and partners, cooperating with Him and sharing in His operation. His office must also be our office.

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

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

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

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

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

When I was young, I was under the Brethren teachers who taught the truth according to their knowledge of the Bible. They taught us not to pray to the Son but to the Father in the name of the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. We were told not to pray to the Spirit. They said that under certain circumstances we might pray to the Lord Jesus but that it should not be often. We must pray to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Later the Lord led me to stay with Brother

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

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

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

The original Chinese, which is much clearer than the English, says "Once You were the Father; now You are the Spirit." Now you know from where I derived the truth that Christ is the Spirit. This truth has been practiced,

testified, and fully proved by my own experience. I say once again that we don't care for doctrine; we care for experience.

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

II. THE CAPTAIN OF SALVATION

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

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

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

In His foresight, God decided that this unique Heir needed a group of joint-heirs. God decided that it was not good enough for Christ to enter into the good land alone. God wanted this unique Heir to enter into the good land of the glorious expression of the Divine Being with a group of joint-heirs. The more joint-heirs there are, the more glory there is. Consider Joshua's entering into the good land with the children of Israel. Certainly God was able to bring Joshua alone into the good land. Suppose Joshua, a single person, marched into the good land, saying, "I have come here by the Almighty God to take over the land." Although that would have been possible, it would not have been glorious. When Joshua took the lead to enter into the good land, at least two million people marched after him. That

frightened all the Canaanites to death. It was not a single heir who entered into the good land but an army of joint-heirs. We all know what happened at Jericho. God could have performed the same miracle with just Joshua, but if He had done this, there would have been no glory. An army marched around Jericho, and all the demons were terrified. That was the glorious taking of the good land. The entrance into the good land was a glorious entrance. We are going to march into the good land. We have a Captain, the real Joshua. We all must be His partners in taking the good land.

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

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

We are Christ's partakers and partners. When we enjoy Him, we are His partakers. When we follow Him, we are His partners. Are you a partaker of Christ? This means that even in troublesome times we enjoy Him, partaking of His riches and nourishment. After we have enjoyed Him in

such a way, He becomes the Captain who takes the lead, and we follow Him as His partners. When He marches, we march with Him. He is the Captain and we are the army. By this, we shall enter into His rest (4:8-9) and be brought into His glory (2:10).

III. TODAY'S JOSHUA AND CALEB

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

Christ is the Operator, and we are His partners. We are His partners in this enterprise. We have been inaugurated with Christ for this purpose. We have been inaugurated with Christ to share His office that, with Him, we might take the land, possess it, and build the house of God. Eventually, this will be the land of glory. Praise the Lord that we are His partners. Being a partaker is for the purpose of being a partner. We are not only partakers of Christ but also His partners!

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SEVENTEEN

THE GOOD LAND FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE

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

THE PROPER PEOPLE OF GOD

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

A FIGURE OF CHRIST

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

A TYPE OF THE CHOSEN ONES OF GOD

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

THE LAND, CHRIST, AND HUMANITY

God took some dust from the land that was resurrected out of the death water and used it to make man (Gen. 2:7). Thus man was made out of the land and was destined to express God. Man's body was made with the dust of the resurrected land, but man himself was made in the image of God for the purpose of expressing God (Gen. 2:7; 1:26-28). Not only was the dusty man made in God's image to express God, but he was also committed with God's authority to exercise God's dominion and to form God's

kingdom on earth. So God's expression and kingdom are fully related to the earth. Man came from the resurrected land, the resurrected earth, and lived on this earth to express God and to represent Him, to form an expression of God and a kingdom of God. This expression with the kingdom is God's goal, and we must enter into it.

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

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

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

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

Satan, God's enemy, intervened and damaged God's creation, especially the earth. So the earth was judged with water by God (Gen. 1:2). The whole earth was under the

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

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND THE EARTH

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

After the flood, the ark landed on Mt. Ararat on exactly

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

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

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

AN ELEVATED LAND

At the time of Babel, man became one with the land of Chaldea. God came in and called Abraham out of that corrupted Chaldea, meaning that He called him out of the

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

THE ULTIMATE CONSUMMATION OF ENTERING INTO THE GOOD LAND

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

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

flowing through it. The New Jerusalem will be there. That will be God's eternal habitation, expression, and administration. There God will be fully expressed and His authority will be completely exercised. That will be the fulfillment of the good land. Where is our good land? It is there on the new earth.

A FORETASTE OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

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

Many of us were in the region of old religion. Some were in Catholicism and others were in Judaism. When you were in that old region, in your Chaldea, did you have the sensation that you were in the New Jerusalem? Did you have the feeling that you were tasting the New Jerusalem? The taste in the New Jerusalem is mainly the living water and the tree of life. In the New Jerusalem our taste will mainly be that of the living water for us to drink and that of the tree of life for us to feed upon. What drinking we have enjoyed since coming into the church life! The water we drink in the church life is much better than any earthly beverage. No drink on earth can compare with what we are drinking in the church life. Moreover, day by day we are enjoying the Lord Jesus as our tree of life. Who can be as pleasant and joyful as we are? We are truly in the foretaste of the New Jerusalem. Did you enjoy

this taste when you

were in Judaism? Did you have the taste of the New Jerusalem when you were in Catholicism burning candles and making confession to the priests? Did you have it when you were sitting in the pews in the so-called Protestant denominations? Did you have it when you were in the free groups where you found it so easy to be dissenting? Where can you have the taste of the New Jerusalem? Only in the proper church life. To us, the church life is the good land. In this good land we have God's dwelling place, rest, expression, authority, kingdom, and dominion. The church life is where we all can rest. Day by day I am resting, not working. While I am working, I am enjoying the rest. This is why it is difficult for me to be worn out, to be tired out, because I am resting, not working. Every cell in my body and every drop of my blood is resting. Oh, what an enjoyment this is!

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE EIGHTEEN

THE REMAINING SABBATH REST

(1)

In this message we come to the Sabbath rest (4:9). What is the Sabbath rest? As I have already pointed out, throughout the centuries it has been difficult for Christians to understand the matter of the good land of Canaan. Likewise, Christians have been unable to understand properly the Sabbath rest revealed in Hebrews 4. Some say that the Sabbath rest in this chapter is the millennium. They say that the millennial kingdom, a period of a thousand years (Rev. 20:4), will be the seventh period of a thousand years, the first six thousand years being the period from the time of Adam's creation until the time of the Lord's coming back. This concept is based upon the fact that in the eyes of the Lord a thousand years are the same as a day (2 Pet. 3:8). According to those who hold this concept, six days mean six thousand years, and the seventh day will be the seventh thousand, the Sabbath rest during the millennium. This interpretation has never satisfied me. To say that the Sabbath rest in 4:9 is simply the millennial kingdom is not altogether accurate; it is only partially correct.

I. THE FIRST MENTION OF THE SABBATH REST

In order to have the proper understanding of the Sabbath rest, we need to consider the first mention of it in the Bible. The first time that the Bible mentions the Sabbath is after the creation of man (Gen. 2:2-3). Many Christians, looking at this matter superficially, only see that the Sabbath was the seventh day, the day on which God rested after completing His work of creation.

Although it is correct to say this, we need to look into the contents. Why did God not rest on the fifth day? You may say that He did not rest on the fifth day because He had not finished His work. That is correct. What, then, did God lack? It is very meaningful to see what He lacked.

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

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

Our study of the Bible has been greatly influenced by our religious background. Even before we ever read the Bible, we already had certain concepts about it. These concepts are damaging. Before we could look at the colors in the Bible, we had already put on colored eye glasses. As a result, we could not see the real colors in the Scriptures.

We must take off our glasses and look at the Bible in a pure way. This is why I say again and again that we must return to the pure Word and reread and restudy it. We need to forget what we have heard about Genesis 1 in the past. If you reread Genesis 1 and 2, you will see that God rested on the seventh day not mainly because His work was finished but because He had attained what He desired. What God desired was not a finished work. Rather, He wanted mankind to be on the earth expressing and representing Him. This is His heart's desire. As long as God can have this, He is satisfied. God's heart is satisfied by having man on the earth expressing and representing Him. When God had this, He rested on the seventh day.

II. THE LOSS OF THE SABBATH REST

When man was damaged by the fall, this rest was lost. At this point, we need to consider John chapter five, the case of the enlivening of the impotent man. John 5:9 says, "And immediately the man became well, and picked up his bed and walked. Now it was the Sabbath on that day" (Recovery Version). In enlivening the impotent man, the Lord did something which, according to the Jewish regulations, was not permitted on the Sabbath day. As a result, the Jews persecuted the Lord Jesus. Verse 16 says, "And for this the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill Him, because He did these things on the Sabbath" (Recovery Version). On the Sabbath day, they sought to kill Jesus. Do you believe that anyone who is seeking to kill a person could be at rest? Do you think that all those persecuting Jews had rest in their hearts? I do not believe it. In verse 17 we see the Lord's answer to the Jews: "My Father is working until now, and I am working" (Recovery Version). The Lord seemed to be saying, "You are keeping the Sabbath, but My Father is working. The Sabbath that He had on the seventh day has been lost because man has been damaged. As long as man has not been recovered, My Father is still working. Look at this poor man. He has been lost, spoiled, ruined, and corrupted by the enemy of God.

How can My Father rest? You may rest according to your tradition, but you don't have the real rest. While you say you keep the Sabbath, you don't know what the Sabbath really means. You do not have rest, do you? Neither does My Father have rest. So, My Father is still working, and I am working too. This is why I am here. I have come here to do My work. Don't you know that the Sabbath has been lost, that the Sabbath on which God was satisfied has been lost, destroyed by the enemy of God? Don't you know that God lost what He had gained? My Father is working until now. Since Genesis 3, My Father has never stopped working because the man who satisfied Him has been damaged." How we need to be impressed with the real significance of the Sabbath! The significance of the Sabbath is that God is satisfied with man when man expresses and represents Him. When there is a situation in which man expresses God and represents Him, that day is the Sabbath to God.

III. THE GOOD LAND AS THE SABBATH REST

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

IV. CHRIST AS THE SABBATH REST IN THREE STAGES

The Sabbath rest in 4:9, as typified by the good land of Canaan (Deut. 12:9; Heb. 4:8), is Christ as our rest. Christ is rest to us in three stages. In the church age, He, as the

heavenly Christ, the One who has expressed, represented, and satisfied God and who rests from His work and sits on the right hand of God in the heavens, is the rest to us in our spirit (Matt. 11:28-29). In the millennial kingdom, after Satan has been removed from the earth (Rev. 20:1-3), God will be expressed, represented, and satisfied by Christ and the overcoming saints. Then Christ with the kingdom will be the rest in a fuller way to the overcoming saints who will be co-kings with Him (Rev. 20:4, 6) and share and enjoy His rest. In the new heaven and new earth, after all the enemies, including death, the last enemy, are subdued to Him (1 Cor. 15:24-27), God will be fully expressed, represented, and satisfied by all His redeemed ones in Christ. At that time Christ, as the all-conquering One, with that glorious situation, will be the rest in the fullest way to all God's redeemed for eternity. Thus, the Sabbath rest mentioned in 4:9 and typified by the rest of the good land of Canaan should only cover the first two stages of Christ as rest to us and should not include the third stage. The rest in the first two stages is a prize to His diligent seekers who are not only redeemed but have also enjoyed Him in a full way so that they have become the overcomers; whereas the rest in the third stage is not a prize but the full portion to all the redeemed ones. Therefore, Christ as rest to us in the first two stages, especially in the second stage, is the Sabbath rest mentioned here, the rest that remains for us to seek after and enter into diligently. It is in the second stage of Christ as rest to us that Christ will take possession of the whole earth as His inheritance (Psa. 2:8; Heb. 2:5-6) for His kingdom in the millennium (Rev. 11:15). All His overcoming followers, who seek and enjoy Him as their rest in the first stage, will participate in His reign at that time (Rev. 20:4, 6; 2 Tim. 2:12). It is then that they will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5; Psa. 37:11). Some will have authority over ten cities, some over five (Luke 19:17, 19). It is then that they will also partake of the joy of their Lord (Matt. 25:21, 23). That will be the kingdom rest, which is typified by the rest of entering into the good land

of Canaan. The rest of the good land was the goal to all the children of Israel who were redeemed and delivered from Egypt; likewise, the rest of the coming kingdom is the goal to the New Testament believers who have been redeemed and saved from the world. We are all on the way now towards this goal.

V. A MUTUAL REST FOR GOD AND MAN

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

VI. A PROPHECY OF THE REMAINING SABBATH REST

In type, this Sabbath rest was the good land. In actuality, however, this rest was not realized by the

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

VII. THE CHURCH LIFE AS GOD'S SABBATH

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

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

In Matthew 11:28-29 the Lord said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your

souls."

Many Christians understand this verse in a very superficial way, thinking that it means they will find comfort whenever they are heavy laden and come to the Lord Jesus. Although this may work for you the first time, it may not work after that. If you just take the Lord as your rest according to your natural, selfish concept, the Lord will eventually turn His face away from you. Many Christians experienced this kind of comfort at the beginning of their Christian life only to find that it did not work well later on. Why? Because Christ is not our life and rest for our individual enjoyment but for the building up of God's house. If you want to enjoy Christ as your rest, you must come to Him. But where is He? Where do we go to meet Him? We must come to the church. The rest, which is Christ Himself, is in the church. Why is this rest in the church? Because in the church God is expressed and represented, and where God is expressed and represented, there is the Sabbath. If you do not believe this, try to take your own way and pray to Christ for comfort. If you stay away from the church, you will probably find yourself unable to pray.

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

Although many Christians are truly saved, they are not in the church life. Likewise, many of the children of Israel were saved at the time of the Passover. They struck the blood, ate the lamb, came out of Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and were saved. But how many of them came into the

rest? Very few. In like manner, although there are so many real Christians, those who have been truly saved, very few are in the church life. Do you believe that all Christians are in the good land? No, many are wandering, and others still remain in Egypt, doing such worldly things as going to the movies. Since they have believed in the Lord Jesus, we cannot say that they have not been saved. However, they are in Egypt or in the wilderness, not in the good land. We need to be diligent to press on to enter into the rest. Where is our rest today? It is in the church life.

VIII. THE CHURCH LIFE AS THE HIGH GOSPEL

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

When I was preaching the gospel years ago, my favorite messages were on the meaning of life, vanity, and drinking at the fountain of life. On New Year's Day in 1932, I preached on the subject of vanity. After preaching for only twenty minutes, so many people stood up even before I had finished my call because I had touched their inward feeling, the feeling of vanity in their life, the vanity in their

being. Although I did not preach very much on sin, eventually everyone repented of his sin. Oh, we must go to the thirsty people, to the hungry people, and preach the high gospel of the church life that can satisfy the hunger and thirst in their lives. The church life must be today's Sabbath rest, the good land flowing with milk and honey.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE NINETEEN

THE REMAINING SABBATH REST

(2)

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

When we come to the end of the Bible, after centuries of God's work of creation, redemption, transformation, and glorification, we see a city with God's appearance. God sitting upon the throne has the appearance of jasper (Rev. 4:2-3), and the entire city of New Jerusalem also has the appearance of jasper (Rev. 21:11, 18a), signifying that God will be fully expressed in and through that city. When you

look at that city, you will see God. There, in the New Jerusalem, God will be fully expressed. Moreover, in the center of the city is the throne of God (Rev. 22:1, 3), showing that God's dominion also is there. In the New Jerusalem God's image will be expressed and His authority will be exercised. Therefore, in eternity future on the new earth, the New Jerusalem will be God's complete expression and dominion. That will be the true Sabbath rest to God. At that time, God will be fully at rest because His heart's desire will have been completely satisfied. He will have obtained what He desired to have. This is the real meaning of the Sabbath rest.

IX. THE SABBATH REST IN VARIOUS AGES

A. Israel as God's Sabbath Rest

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

Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" (Num. 24:5).

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

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

B. Jesus as God's Sabbath Rest

In His economy, God always acts in a gradual way. Firstly, God had Adam and then, gradually, He had Abel, Enosh, Enoch, Noah, Abraham with his descendants, and then the children of Israel. But that was not the end. After this gradual development, Jesus, the second man, came. When the Lord Jesus was baptized, God was happy and

satisfied, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). When God said that He was pleased with His Son, it meant that He was satisfied. At that time, the Lord Jesus was the Sabbath rest to God. Not only did God rest in Him, but so many of those who followed Him also rested in the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was the Sabbath rest to God and His followers. Both God and His followers rested in Him.

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

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

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

In this age, the age of the church, Christ is our rest. But do you not realize that the church is the enlargement of Christ? If Christ is our rest, then what about the church as the enlargement of Christ? If the individual Christ is our rest, then what about the corporate Christ? How can we forget the enlarged Christ or neglect the corporate Christ? Not only is the individual Christ our rest but also the corporate Christ. Not only the Head but also the Body is our Sabbath rest. Recently the Lord burdened me, saying, "You must go and tell My people that the church is their

rest today!" Never have I seen so clearly as in these days that the church is today's Sabbath rest.

1. Because the Church Is the New Man

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

2. Because God Rests in the Church

Secondly, in Deuteronomy 12:9 we are told clearly that the land of Canaan was a rest to Israel because it was a rest to God. The land was God's rest because there He could have His habitation and there He could put His name (Deut. 12:5, 11). The name is just the person himself. When God said that He would put His name there, it meant that He would put Himself there. When God said that His name would be there, it seemed that He was saying, "My name is just Myself. For My name to dwell there means that I shall dwell there. I shall set Myself there and make My habitation there. That place will be My dwelling place, and My dwelling place is My rest." Is not the church God's

habitation today? Is it not God's house? Ephesians 2:22 says that God's habitation is in our spirit. Ephesians 2:15 mentions the new man and Ephesians 2:22 speaks of God's habitation. For both the new man and the habitation there should be the Sabbath rest. Is not the church the new man? As long as the church is the new man, we have the Sabbath. Is not the church God's habitation? As long as the church is the habitation of God, we also have God's rest.

3. Because the Church Is the Kingdom of God Today

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

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

have the divine life, how can we say that we are not in the kingdom of God?

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

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

The book of Ephesians also shows us that the church is the kingdom of God today. Ephesians 2:15 speaks of the new man, Ephesians 2:22 speaks of the habitation of God in our spirit, and Ephesians 3:21 speaks of the church. The

church as the kingdom of God is found in Ephesians 5:5. Thus, the new man is the habitation, the habitation is the church, and the church is the kingdom. Hence, the church today is the kingdom of God. Hebrews 12:28 says that we are receiving this unshakable kingdom. We are not just waiting for it; we have already begun to receive it.

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

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

At this point we need to read Hebrews 3:6-7: "But Christ, as a Son over His house, Whose house we are, if we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end. Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit says, Today if you hear His voice." Verse 6 says that we are the house of God and that the Son of God is now over the house taking care of it. If we would enjoy Christ, we need to be in the house and be a part of the house. Verse 7 begins with the word "wherefore," indicating that it is the continuation of the foregoing verse. The use of the word wherefore to connect verses 6 and 7 means that we must take care of the house of God or else we shall miss the Sabbath and not enter into rest. Hebrews 4:7, being a continuation of 3:7, says, "He again designates a certain day, Today, saying in David

after so long a time, as He has said before, Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." Verses 8 and 9 continue, saying, "For if Joshua had brought them into rest, He would not have spoken concerning another day after these things. There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God." If we put all of these verses together, we shall see that today the Sabbath rest is the house of God. If we do not remain in the house of God, we shall miss the Sabbath rest. The writer seemed to be saying to the Hebrew believers, "Your fathers in the wilderness did not listen to the word of God. So, after that, in the Psalms, the Spirit set up another day for you to enter into rest. What is the rest that you need to enter today? It is the house of God under Christ, the Son of God." The "wherefore" in 3:7 is very important. If we did not have this word here, we would be unable to see that the Sabbath rest today is the house of God under the care of the Son of God.

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

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

In Matthew 11:28-30 the Lord Jesus said that if we were heavy laden and would come to Him, He would be our rest, and in Matthew 12:8 He said that He was the Lord of the Sabbath. Where is this Christ who is our rest and who is the Lord of the Sabbath? He is in the church. If we would

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

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

In Hebrews 2 we have the church wherein the Son of God praises the Father, and in chapter three we have the house of God of which the Son of God takes excellent care. This church, this house, is the Sabbath rest. After

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

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

Barnabas is an illustration of a person who gave up the Sabbath rest. Barnabas brought the Apostle Paul into his ministry and for quite a while was an apostle working along with Paul (Acts 9:26-27; 11:25-26; 13:2; 14:14). Eventually, however, Barnabas dissented with Paul and separated from him, taking Mark with him and going on his own way while Paul went with Silas to establish the churches (Acts 15:36-41). From this point onward, there is no further record concerning Barnabas in the book of Acts, for he was through with the Sabbath rest of the church life. Barnabas came into the Sabbath rest and stayed for a time, but then he left it because he was dissenting. After that, he was out of the Sabbath rest and was no longer in the divine economy.

In Romans 16:17-20 we have a warning about the matter of dissenting. Verse 17 says, "Now I beg you, brothers, keep a watchful eye on those who make divisions and causes of falling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them" (Recovery Version). The causes of falling here refer to a falling away from the church life. Such divisions and causes of falling will keep us away from the Sabbath rest. This kind of thing is not only happening today but also happened during

Paul's days. If you would check with those who are opposing the church life or dissenting with it today, you will find that none of them has rest. They have no joy or peace, only jealousy, because they are not in the Sabbath, not in the good land. Whoever becomes dissenting against the church life and opposes it will miss the Sabbath rest. In Romans 16:18 Paul continues, "For such men do not serve as slaves our Lord Christ, but their own appetites; and by smooth and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple" (Recovery Version). These dissenting ones have a taste, desire, and appetite for their own little kingdom and empire. Do not listen to their arguments or excuses. Their basic factor is their appetite. They are hungry for something, for there is a gap deep within them. They are seeking for something to satisfy their desire. That is the meaning of the word appetite in this verse. These dissenting ones employed smooth and flattering speech, deceiving the hearts of the simple. Then verse 20 certainly refers to the Sabbath rest: "Now the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you" (Recovery Version). When the God of peace is present and Satan is crushed, that surely is the Sabbath rest. The grace of the Lord also points to the rest. We should not be distracted by the dissenting ones but stay with the church to enjoy the Sabbath rest. The church is God's desire today. Therefore, it is God's Sabbath rest.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWENTY

THE REMAINING SABBATH REST

(3)

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

XII. THE PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SABBATH REST

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

This was God's second Sabbath with man on earth. Thus, in the Old Testament we have two outstanding stories concerning God's Sabbath: the first in Genesis 2 and the second in 1 Kings 8.

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

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

God's way is a progressive way. We can see this in His creation in Genesis 1. Why did not God create everything in a single day? He could have completed everything in just a few minutes. On the first day God simply called for the light, and on the second day He created the expanse. If we had been there, we probably would not have been very patient, saying to God, "God, the light is here, but we need air." Sometimes we are faster than God. God's way is often contrary to ours; He always does things in a progressive

way. One day, God became a man, sowed Himself into mankind, and after the death and resurrection of that man, the church was produced. But God did not accomplish everything once for all. Although God has sown Himself into us as the seed, the harvest has not yet come. Whatever we have received, secured, and gained today is the seed, not the harvest. God is patient. Although the seed was sown nearly two thousand years ago, God did not accomplish all the work once for all at that time. When God sowed Himself into mankind, a wonderful age, the New Testament age, began. Before the Lord Jesus came God had never sown Himself into mankind. Adam and the children of Israel were types. God never sowed Himself into the soil of Adam or into the soil of the children of Israel because they were types. Only in the church is the real soil into which God has sown Himself.

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

XIII. THE GROWING SABBATH AND THE SABBATH OF MATURITY

God has sown Himself into a part of mankind which became the church and which includes everyone who has received the Lord Jesus. But after receiving the Lord Jesus there is a problem: How are we going to allow the Lord to grow in us? In the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, we

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

We all can be in the growing Sabbath, but whether or not we are in the harvest Sabbath depends completely on our maturity. Look at the situation: millions of Christians have been saved, but only a small minority have come into the church life to enjoy the riches of Christ. This Sabbath is for all Christians, but not all of them have come into it. This is the very reason why the book of Hebrews was written. It was written with the purpose of encouraging the saved ones not to forsake the church life but to endeavor, strive, and be diligent to enter into it because it is today's Sabbath rest. The Sabbath rest today cannot be found in

any religion, organization, or free group. Today's growing Sabbath is the real church life with the riches of Christ, and all true Christians should be encouraged to be diligent to enter into this Sabbath. If they are not diligent, they will miss the mark, as did the majority of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt. At least two million of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt at the time of the exodus died in the wilderness, and only a very small number came into the rest. That was a type. Today, in the church age, we have the fulfillment of that type. Although millions of Christians have been saved, where are they? They are either still in Egypt or wandering in the wilderness. When the book of Hebrews was written, the Hebrew believers were in danger of becoming another people wandering in the wilderness and eventually falling away in death. Therefore, Hebrews was written to encourage them to be diligent to enter into the present Sabbath rest. How much Christians need this kind of encouragement today!

XIV. A REWARD FOR PROPER GROWTH

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

At this point we need to consider Paul's words in 1

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

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

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

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

of righteousness according to His righteousness in that day. What is the day referred to here? It is the Sabbath in the coming age, the Sabbath of maturity. Paul said that this crown would be given not only to him but to all those also who love the Lord's appearing.

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

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

children to grow up. There are many verses in the New Testament related to this and we shall cover them in the following messages.

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWENTY-ONE

THE REMAINING SABBATH REST

(4)

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

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

Why is God able to be satisfied in this age? Because in this age He is expressed and represented through the church.

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

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

If we know the Bible and God's economy, we shall realize that everyone who has been regenerated and has received salvation needs to come into the church life. This is God's economy. If you do not come into the church life, you will miss the mark. God's economy is not only that you be saved and regenerated; His economy is that you come

into the proper church life, which is today's Sabbath. God's economy is to have a corporate expression and representation of Himself. God is very patient; He is fulfilling His economy progressively. Firstly, He has sown Himself into His chosen people and now He is giving them time to grow.

XV. THE ULTIMATE SABBATH

We are now in the church life, the growing Sabbath that is leading us into the harvest Sabbath of the millennial kingdom. But not even the harvest Sabbath will be the ultimate Sabbath. The ultimate Sabbath rest will be the New Jerusalem. At the time of the New Jerusalem, there will be no more sea, satanic work, or corrupted and polluted world. All of that will be in the lake of fire. There will be a new earth, and upon that new earth there will be a city built up with transformed people as the living materials. That living composition, the New Jerusalem, will be God's complete expression in eternity future. There, in the New Jerusalem, we shall see God's expression and dominion. In the New Jerusalem will be God's throne and authority for His kingdom. The New Jerusalem will be the ultimate and eternal Sabbath because there God will be fully expressed and represented. That will be the ultimate consummation of God's work of grace, and we all shall be there.

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

grace today, making it difficult for our Father to deal with us, we may miss the coming harvest Sabbath. However, our Father is much wiser than we are and has a way to bring us to maturity. Eventually we all shall be in the New Jerusalem, the ultimate Sabbath.

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

XVI. OUR NEED TO MATURE

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

He still has a way to cause us to grow. However, if we do not cooperate with Him, we shall suffer the loss of the enjoyment of the church life in this age and the prize in the coming age. Our wise Father deals with us so that we may mature. Do not think that you can escape His dealing. God even has a way to deal with all the Christians who have been saved but are now wandering. We cannot see this today, but one day we shall see it.

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

Some say that as long as we have been regenerated and are children of God, we shall be in the millennial kingdom. But the Bible does not say this. Rather, it tells us that we must enjoy Christ, grow, mature, suffer, and overcome for Christ. Then in the coming age we shall receive the prize. This prize is not the eternal portion of the saints but a reward to the overcomers during the millennium. If you behave yourself in the Father's house, the church, the

Father will say, "Since you have satisfied Me in My house, I will give you a prize in My kingdom." But if we do not satisfy Him today in His house, we shall miss the prize and suffer loss during the next age in His kingdom. The choice is up to us. How gracious, righteous, and wise our Father is! He has prepared a feast and He encourages us all to eat well. The better we eat, the happier He will be. It is foolish not to eat well in the feast. Oh, how we all need to enjoy the church life!

XVII. THE TWO MAJOR SCHOOLS OF DOCTRINE

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

The Arminians believe that a saved person can be lost again. Using portions of the word such as Hebrews chapter six, the Arminians insist that people who have tasted the heavenly gift and who have been partakers of the Holy Spirit may fall away, may have no opportunity to repent, and may be like the land that is burned, meaning that they are lost. The book of Hebrews contains five warnings such

as this. The Arminians misuse these portions of the Word concerning God's punishment or chastisement of His children, considering it as perdition, as being lost once again. They use these portions to support their teaching that a saved person can perish again.

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

XVIII. THE MATTER OF PRIZE OR PUNISHMENT

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

What an enjoyment will be there in the coming kingdom! The harvest Sabbath! It will be better than the present growing Sabbath. The growing Sabbath of the church life today is the means by which we may be ushered into the harvest Sabbath in the coming kingdom. If we neglect today's Sabbath in the church life, we shall miss

the next Sabbath in the coming kingdom. If we are careless and commit sins, we shall suffer God's punishment. But this does not mean that we shall be lost again.

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

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

'by fire' but 'as by fire' or 'as through fire.'" At this point another elderly brother injected, "Even if it is 'as by fire,' it can still cause you to suffer." Whatever this fire is, I know that it is not good and that I do not want to experience it. Since we have this word in 1 Corinthians 3, we should not say that as long as we are saved everything is all right. Everything may not be all right. Our work may be burned and we may be "saved as through fire."

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

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

In addition to God's gracious salvation, there is the matter of receiving a prize or suffering a loss. Only those who receive the prize will participate in the coming Sabbath, the harvest Sabbath. Those who gain the prize will enjoy the better Sabbath in the millennial kingdom,

and those who suffer loss but who are saved as through fire will miss that Sabbath. How we need to press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and go on positively. In addition to salvation, there will be the prize of this high calling, which will be the harvest Sabbath in the coming kingdom. This is our mark, our goal. If we would reach this goal, we must pass through the church life. The church life is the way for us to reach the goal.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWENTY-TWO

THE REMAINING SABBATH REST

(5)

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

When we go to the end of the Bible, we see the consummation: the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem. In the new heaven and new earth, the earth will be more useful than heaven because the New Jerusalem will be on the earth. If we read Revelation carefully, we shall see that the New Jerusalem is not a physical building, but a living composition composed of

living persons, such as the twelve Apostles of the Lamb and the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12, 14). The city of New Jerusalem will bear the appearance of God and express Him in a full way. Moreover, God's throne will be in that city, and God's authority will be fully exercised there. This is the eternal kingdom of God. Therefore, in the New Jerusalem God will have complete rest and obtain His eternal Sabbath. This matter is the governing principle of the whole Bible.

XIX. THE THREE PERIODS OF THE UNIVERSE

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

The first period of the universe was the period of the fall. God created, Satan damaged, and God came in to judge the universe. In Genesis 1:2 we have the start of God's re-creation. Strictly speaking, only verse 1 of Genesis refers to God's creation, for verse 2 is the beginning of God's re-creation. Within God's re-creation there was further creation. Man, for instance, was not a re-creation but a creation. From the time of God's re-creation until the

full completion of His purpose will be a period of approximately seven thousand years. Since it is during this span of time that God accomplishes His eternal purpose, we may call this the period of accomplishment.

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

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

XX. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE

Let us now see how God accomplishes His purpose. Firstly, He created man. In his natural make-up, man is not the genuine fulfillment of God's purpose, but only a photograph, a prefigure. But even in this photograph we can see the features of God's satisfaction. The Old Testament mainly reveals two things: God's creation of man and His calling of man. God made Adam and called Abraham. Abraham, including Isaac, Jacob, and all Jacob's children, was the corporate called one. All the children of Israel were called in Abraham. Thus, Abraham was a

corporate man, a prefigure once again of God's satisfaction. In this corporate man we can see much more than we can with Adam, for Adam was only a single man as a photograph of God's satisfaction, while Abraham, including his descendants, was a complete, corporate figure of God's satisfaction. The Old Testament reveals these two prefigures of God's satisfaction, one individual and the other corporate. However, in principle both are the same, revealing what God's satisfaction is. We need to have such an overview if we are to understand the Bible.

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

But there is the need of another stage. The first stage was with the Lord's first coming, and the second stage will begin with His second coming. In order for Him to accomplish His purpose in a genuine way, He needs to come twice. In His first coming, He sowed Himself into mankind, and in His second coming He will reap what He sowed in His first coming. Something was accomplished with His first coming--the church was produced, and there was a Sabbath--but this is not the full completion of His purpose. His second coming will accomplish more, bringing in a fuller Sabbath. His first coming brought in the first

real Sabbath, but this Sabbath is not the full Sabbath, because the accomplishment of God's purpose has not yet been completed. Thus, there is a need of His coming again to complete His accomplishment of God's eternal purpose. This means that God's eternal purpose could never be accomplished before the Lord's second coming. In other words, God's eternal purpose cannot be fully completed without the millennium.

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

Do you still hold on to the concept that everything will be all right at the time of Christ's second coming? Not everything will be all right at that time. Although Satan will be bound, he will not be fully dealt with during the millennium. At the end of the millennium, he will be loosed from his prison, will deceive the nations, and will lead

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

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

Today we are enjoying the Sabbath rest in the church

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

XXI. CHASTISEMENT IN THE COMING AGE

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

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

Second Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all appear

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

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

XXII. REWARD IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The Gospel of Matthew also speaks about reward. Do not accept the dispensational concept that Matthew is not for us today. If the Gospel of Matthew is not for us, then

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

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

Matthew 25 gives us a serious warning that when the Lord comes back He will punish some of His servants (vv. 24-30). Some say that the servants who are punished by the Lord are false Christians, but this is not logical. How could false Christians ever be the Lord's servants? How could the Lord assign a work to a false servant? It is wrong to interpret the matter this way. Those who claim that these servants are false servants are forced to say this because they do not believe that the Lord will punish any of His servants after He comes back. They would argue, "How can any saved ones be punished by the Lord when He comes back? This means that the Lord's redemption is not perfect." Nevertheless, these same people teach that if Christians do not behave themselves in this life the Lord will punish them. We would turn their argument against them and ask, "Would not this chastisement also prove that the Lord's redemption is not perfect?" The difference is a matter of time. Where is the verse telling us that the Lord will chastise His people only in this age and not in the coming age? There is no such verse. But there are many verses which tell us that when the Lord comes back He will chastise some of His servants (Luke 12:35-48, especially 46-47; 19:11-26). When the Lord comes back, He will punish His slothful servants.

To those who say that there will be no such punishment, I ask this question: If there will be no problem after the Lord comes back, why does He need to judge us at all? Why must we all stand before His judgment seat? Do you believe everyone who stands before the judgment seat will receive a prize, a good reward? What kind of reward would a slothful servant receive--a crown? Even if the Lord gave him a crown, he would be ashamed to accept it. If you lived in sin after being saved and the Lord offered you a crown at the judgment seat, would you receive it? How ridiculous it is to say that the Lord would give a crown to a Christian who spent his time gambling, taking drugs, and attending nightclubs. Perhaps the Lord will say to such a believer, "You are a slothful servant. You need

chastisement." Do not think that simply by being resurrected everything is solved. The strongest proof that not everything is solved by resurrection is the fact that after the resurrection all the unbelieving dead will still stand before the white throne to be judged concerning their eternal destiny.

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

A. The Secret Rapture of the Mature Ones

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

With these two principles in mind, let us come to Matthew 24 and 25. Matthew 24 reveals that, in a sense, the Lord will come in a secret way, for we are told that He will come as a thief (Matt. 24:42-43). No thief comes in a

noticeable way. Matthew 24:44 says that we should be ready, "for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." When we think the thief will come, he does not come, but when we are at peace, thinking that no thief will come, he comes. The Lord gave the same warning to Sardis in Revelation 3:3, saying, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

Matthew 24:40-41 says, "The one shall be taken and the other left." This undoubtedly refers to the secret rapture, to the rapture of the ready ones, the matured ones. A thief only comes to steal treasures, things that are precious; he does not steal junk. We need to be a treasure in the eyes of the Lord. We need to be precious by being mature so that He will come and take us secretly. This will happen one day. Perhaps a young person will say, "I don't know what happened to my friend who loved the Lord so much. She has disappeared. Where did she go?" Such a one has been raptured. Do not believe the teaching that there is only one rapture and that all the saints will be raptured at the same time before the tribulation. That concept is not accurate. Yes, the majority of the saints will be raptured according to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, but the mature ones will be taken secretly according to Matthew 24:40-44. There are two aspects of the Lord's coming: the secret presence, which is first, and the public appearing, which follows later. First Thessalonians 4:15-17 speaks of those "which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." Here we see two categories of living saints: those who are living and have already been taken, and those who are alive and remain. Likewise, in Matthew 24 one living one is taken and the other is left.

B. The Parable of the Ten Virgins

In Matthew 25:1-13 we have the parable of the ten virgins. The two saints mentioned in Matthew 24 are the living ones, for they are working in the field and grinding

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

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

We all need to pay the price to have our soul transformed by the Lord, the Spirit. Second Corinthians

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

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

Many Christians hold the concept that everything concerning God's purpose will be completely accomplished when the Lord comes back, and that the millennium will not be an age for the Lord to deal with His believers. According to their concept, the Lord's dealing with His believers is only in this age, leaving nothing for Him to deal with in the coming age. In this sense, the millennium should be in the new heaven and new earth, without the need for the Lord to accomplish anything more for God's eternal purpose. But, as we have seen, the millennium will be the last part of the period of time in which God accomplishes His eternal purpose. The Scriptures unveil clearly that both this age and the coming age are the time for the Lord to work on and deal with His believers so that they may mature and be fully perfected for God's eternal purpose. If He cannot complete this work with us in this age, He will complete it in the coming age. It all depends upon our response to His work of grace. If we would

cooperate with Him, He would surely prefer to perfect us and make us mature in this age; otherwise, He will be forced by our foolishness to postpone His dealing with us to the next age. In His wisdom, God has ordained the next age with the millennial kingdom to be an age of reward as an incentive for us to seek Him and respond to His work of grace in this age. If we are willing to take this incentive, we shall enjoy Him with the church life as today's Sabbath rest, and we shall be rewarded by Him with the millennial kingdom as the Sabbath rest in the coming age. But if we neglect this incentive, we shall miss the enjoyment of Him with the church life as today's Sabbath rest, and we shall be disciplined, chastised, and punished in the coming age, to say nothing of the loss of the enjoyment of Him with the millennial kingdom as the better Sabbath rest. Of course, this present age of the church is very crucial for the Lord to work on His believers for their maturity and perfection. However, the coming age of the kingdom is also needed for the Lord's dealing with those of His believers who are unwilling to cooperate with His grace in this age. This is why the book of Hebrews encourages us to endeavor to enter the Sabbath rest that remains for us.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWENTY-THREE

THE REMAINING SABBATH REST

(6)

XXIV. THE JUDGMENT AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

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

XXV. GROWING IN LIFE FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE

God's intention is not to have a universe filled with neat, clean, righteous, sinless people. As we have seen, God's purpose is to sow Himself into His chosen people, making them His children. Once we have become God's children through regeneration, having God's life as our seed and content, we need to grow with and into God and be fully transformed by being permeated with all His divine elements. God's intention is not to gain a group of pure, righteous people; it is to gain a people who have been saturated with Him and built up in Him. Satan came in to

frustrate God's work mainly through sin, the world, and the self. Thus, if we are to grow in God's life, we must hate sin, forsake the world, and deny the self. The object of dealing with sin is not merely to deal with the sin itself, but to eliminate the satanic frustration to the growth in life. Having our sins forgiven is a minor thing; being delivered from the sinful frustration so that we may grow in God's life is the major thing. If you have committed a sin but repent and desire to go on with the Lord, God will surely forgive your sin because of Christ's redemption. Do not worry about it. God's intention is not simply to forgive your sins but to bring you onward that you may grow in His life. We all are human and easily fall into sin. But as long as we desire to grow in life, God will spontaneously take care of our sins and cleanse us with the blood of Jesus. However, if we are not willing to grow and yet ask God to forgive our sins, He will be faithful to do it, but we shall not be in the fulfillment of God's purpose. Simply having our sins forgiven on the negative side does not fulfill God's purpose. We also need to grow and enter into the Sabbath rest.

XXVI. THE LIFE AND WORK NEEDED FOR ENTERING INTO THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

I like the picture we have in Matthew 24 and 25. As we pointed out in the last message, in Matthew 24:40-41 we see the two living ones, and in Matthew 25:1-4 we see the ten dead ones. Of the two living ones, one is taken and the other is left. Of the ten dead ones, five are accepted and five are temporarily rejected. The saved ones can never be rejected by God eternally, but they may be rejected dispensationally, like a child who does not do well in school and who, after graduation, is not allowed to share in the special dinner planned by his parents as a prize for his brothers and sisters who did well. Such a child will never be rejected permanently by his parents, but he may be rejected temporarily. If we believe Matthew 1, then we must also believe Matthew 24 and 25. We should not select the verses that we like and ignore the verses that we do

not like. Both Matthew 24 and 25 are crucial to our Christian life and work.

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

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

A. Talents Given According to Ability

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

hand.

In the Lord's work, only the resurrected ability, not the natural, can match the talent which the Lord gives.

B. A Warning About Being Slothful

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

C. Grace and Responsibility

Calvinists stress the matter of absolute grace, and Arminians stress human responsibility. But according to

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

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

D. Maturity and Kingship

Our growth in life will determine the time of our maturity. If we grow in life and, like the wise virgins, have the extra portion of oil in our vessel and have been transformed, we shall mature earlier. While our growth in life determines whether or not we mature early, our work, our exercise, and our use of the talent determines whether or not we share in the Lord's kingship. The Lord said to the servant with the five talents, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things,

will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21). This is to be a co-king with the Lord Jesus and to enjoy the real rest, the Sabbath during the millennial kingdom. According to Luke 19:17, the Lord said, "Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." In the millennial kingdom, some will rule over ten cities and others over five cities (Luke 19:19). You may not only be a mayor of one city but a governor of ten cities. Although we may not be clear about all the details, no one can argue with the principle here.

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

The word talent in Matthew 25 is the equivalent of the word gift in the Epistles. Paul told Timothy to "stir up the gift of God which is in thee" (2 Tim. 1:6). In life we need to grow, and in work we need to exercise our gift. The parable of the ten virgins reveals our need of transformation by the life-giving Spirit, and the parable of the talents reveals our need to have the proper exercise of the spiritual gifts. We all need to be transformed by the extra portion of oil in our vessel, and we all need to exercise our gift to gain some

profit for the Lord. We need to grow on the one hand and make profit in God's economy on the other. Our growth will determine the time of our maturity, and the exercise of our gifts will determine the position we will share with Christ in the millennial kingdom. If we do not mature and exercise our gifts, we shall miss the early rapture and the enjoyment of reigning with Christ. Matthew 25 speaks of "the joy of thy lord" (vv. 21, 23). Undoubtedly, this joy is the rest in the Sabbath during the coming kingdom.

E. The Punishment of the Slothful Servant-- the Discipline in the Coming Kingdom Age

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

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

F. The Need to Pay the Price

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FOUR

THE REMAINING SABBATH REST

(7)

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

XXVII. THE FIVE WARNINGS IN HEBREWS

In the book of Hebrews there are five warnings, all of which are the same in nature. In the seven epistles in

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

XXVIII. A WARNING ABOUT SINNING WILLFULLY

Let us now consider the fourth warning. Hebrews 10:26 says, "For when we sin willfully after receiving the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." What does it mean to "sin willfully"? To understand this we must go back to verse 25 as the word "for" at the beginning of verse 26 indicates. Verse 25 says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another, and so

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

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

Verses 28 and 29 continue, "And any one who has set at naught Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony

two or three witnesses: by how much do you think he shall be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" What does it mean to trample underfoot the Son of God? It means that if the Hebrew believers would return to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin, trusting in that sacrifice, they would in effect be trampling under foot the Son of God. They would be despising Him. The sacrifice for sin was a type of Christ. Since Christ had come to fulfill and replace the sacrifice for sin, the Hebrew believers had to stay with Him and not return to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin. If they were to do that, they would have been regarding the blood of the covenant a common thing, making it the same as the blood of sheep and oxen. The Hebrew Christians were warned not to return to Judaism to offer again the sacrifice for sin. For them to do this would have been to despise the Son of God in whom they believed and whose blood had sanctified them and to make His blood as common as that of the animal sacrifices. To do such a thing is also to insult the Spirit of grace. The Spirit of grace was working, moving, and anointing in them, and they had to listen to Him. Then the writer warned them by saying, "For we know Him Who said, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay. And again, the Lord will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (vv. 30-31). This is not the Lord's judgment on the unsaved ones; it is His judgment on "His people," His believers, the saved ones.

XXIX. THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE

We come now to the fifth warning in chapter twelve of Hebrews. Verse 5 says, "And you have completely forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with sons, My son, do not make light of the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when reproved by Him." The word discipline in this verse points to some kind of punishment. Verse 6 continues, "For whom the Lord loves He disciplines and scourges every son whom He receives." To

means to whip. Most of us received some kind of scourging from our parents when we were children. In like manner, our Father scourges His children. Verse 7 says, "It is for discipline that you are enduring; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom the father does not discipline?" A father will scourge his own children, not the children on the street. For God to scourge us does not mean that we lose our eternal security. The more a child is disciplined by his parents, the more secure he is. Verse 8 says that "if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are bastards and not sons." I am afraid that if God the Father would not discipline me, it would mean that I am a bastard, not a son. Verse 9 says that "we have had the fathers of our flesh as discipliners and we respected them; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?" Being in subjection to the Father of spirits gives us more life. Verse 10 says, "For they indeed disciplined us for a few days as it seemed good to them, but He for our profit that we might partake of His holiness." To partake of His holiness means to partake of His holy nature. This implies the growth in life. The discipline that we receive of our Father helps us to grow.

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

Do you believe that our Father only deals with us in this present age, not in the coming age? Since so many of us have been influenced by inaccurate teachings, I must point out once again that if we do not behave ourselves, our Father will punish us either in this age or in the age to come. Do not think that after the Lord comes back and you are resurrected, everything will automatically be all right and there will be no further discipline or chastisement.

This is an inaccurate teaching. As we saw in the last message, both Matthew and Luke tell us definitely that when the Lord comes back, He will punish some of His slothful servants in the next age. This is clearly revealed in the pure Word. Which do you prefer--to be disciplined now or punished later? I do not like to have any punishment. By the Lord's mercy and grace I would rather behave myself. But if I must be punished, I would rather undergo it in this age, not in the next.

XXX. A WARNING ABOUT GIVING UP THE BIRTHRIGHT

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

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

Verses 28 and 29 say, "Wherefore, receiving an

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

XXXI. RESTING IN THE PROPER CHURCH LIFE

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

This Sabbath will usher us into the kingdom. The church life will feed us, edify us, build us up, and qualify us for the next Sabbath, which will be the kingdom age. The kingdom requires people who have matured. Although we have the seed of life within us and are growing, we need to mature. Where can we mature? In the church. The church is the proper field, the proper farm, where we can grow into

maturity. In the church we enjoy the benefits of today's growing Sabbath. In the church we shall also be brought into the harvest Sabbath. Thus, the writer told the wandering Hebrew Christians to stop wandering, come into the church life, and enter into today's Sabbath which would bring them into the better Sabbath of the millennial kingdom. If they missed the church life, they would be like their fathers who wandered in the wilderness, fell there, and died. How we need to be diligent to enter into the Sabbath rest and be in the proper church life today! Hebrews 4:9 has never been as clear to me as it is in these days. By the Lord's mercy, may we all avoid the punishment and gain the prize in the coming age.

XXXII. THE CHURCH LIFE AS OUR REFUGE

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FIVE

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

AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF DESERTING THE LIVING GOD

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

I. THE LIVING GOD

Our God is the living God. Unbelief is so evil because it insults the living, faithful, and almighty God. If we do not believe in God, in His work and in His ways, we insult Him. This is why we must beware of unbelief. Verse 10 says, "Wherefore I was disgusted with this generation, and I said, They always go astray in heart; and they have not known My ways." God's ways are different from His acts. His acts are His activities; His ways are the principles by

which He acts. The children of Israel only knew His acts, but Moses knew His ways (Psa. 103:7). In the wilderness the children of Israel saw a miracle nearly every morning--the manna. If such a miracle would occur today, it would be publicized in newspapers throughout the world. Although the children of Israel witnessed such a miracle, they, unlike Moses, saw only the acts of God; they did not know God's faithful, divine ways. We should not be like the children of Israel; we must learn the ways, the principles, of our God. When the children of Israel lacked food and water, they complained and murmured. When God acted on their behalf, they were happy temporarily, but not long afterward they offended God again. If we look at ourselves, we would not criticize them, because we would see that we are the same. We may shout, "Praise the Lord!" one night in a meeting and murmur against the Lord the next morning. How we need to know the ways of God! Our God is living and has His principles in doing things. He will never deny Himself. He is able, almighty, and faithful, always keeping His promises and fulfilling His word.

II. THE EVIL HEART

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

III. UNBELIEF

An evil heart produces unbelief. Unbelief reasons according to the natural concept, not according to God's

principle. Consider the reasoning of the children of Israel in Numbers 13:31-33. Their reasonings included some lies, for they said that "the land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." That was a lie. Joshua and Caleb said, "Rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not" (Num. 14:9). Joshua and Caleb spoke the truth. However, the children of Israel did not reason according to the truth but according to the lie, not counting on the ways of God. In the beginning, God had promised Moses that He would bring the Israelites into the good land. That one word should have been sufficient for them. Suppose a millionaire would give you a check for $10,000 with his signature on it. If you did not believe it, it would be an insult to that millionaire. You should not say, "I don't believe I have $10,000. I don't even have enough money to buy a pair of shoes." This kind of reasoning is an insult to the millionaire. God had spoken to Moses, saying, "Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt into the land of the Canaanites...unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exo. 3:16-17). This one word was more reliable than a check signed by a millionaire. The children of Israel should have believed this word and known God's ways, saying, "God, You should not let us die here in the wilderness. If You do this, how can Your word stand? We don't care how many giants are in the good land, or even if the good land is filled with evil angels. We will eat them up because You have promised to bring us into the land." This is proper reasoning, the reasoning that is according to God's ways, principles, faithfulness, and power. But the Israelites did not reason in this way. Instead, the Israelites said, "There are giants in the land, and we are like grasshoppers in their sight. They will eat us up." This is the logic of

unbelief, the logic of reasoning according to the natural concept and not counting on the ways of God or trusting in the faithfulness of God. Joshua and Caleb stood against that kind of reasoning, declaring that the people were well able to take the land. Joshua and Caleb honored God, and God, in turn, honored them for honoring Him. Nothing honors God more than our belief, and nothing dishonors and insults Him more than our unbelief.

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

IV. WHILE TODAY

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

through the psalmist, telling His people to hear His voice and not to harden their hearts, and prophesying of that day when the heavenly window would be reopened. That day arrived when the church came into being. The blessing of the Sabbath which was withheld due to the hardening of their hearts was opened again on the day the church came into being. Hebrews 4:7 says, "He again designates a certain day, Today, saying in David after so long a time, as He has said before, Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." This was written to the Hebrew believers, the descendants of those who had provoked God in the wilderness by hardening their heart. The writer seemed to be saying to them, "Brothers, do not harden your hearts as your fathers did. We are living in another day, a day which in Psalm 95 is called 'Today.' Take today as the opportunity to soften your heart and listen to His voice. His voice is saying that Christ is better than the angels, Moses, and Aaron, and that Christ's new covenant is much better than the old covenant given through Moses. Be diligent to enter into this promised day, the Sabbath in the church life." If in the day of the church, we hear His voice and do not harden our heart, we shall never provoke and desert the living God. We shall trust in Him and enter into the rest.

THE LIVING WORD OF GOD

After speaking so much about Psalm 95, the writer of Hebrews suddenly says in 4:12, "For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, both of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." The word "for" at the beginning of this verse connects it with the preceding verse. Why does the writer here suddenly speak of the word of God? Because the promise in Psalm 95 is the word of God. Whenever we read the Bible, it must be living, energizing, and sharp enough to divide and discern all the things within us. If it is not, we have not touched the word of God but only the black and white letters. The printed matter in

black and white letters is neither living nor energizing. Every word in the Bible must be the living and operative word of God. How do we know that we have touched the word of God and not just the printed matter? We know it when the word we have touched is living, energizing, and dividing our soul from our spirit. This is an important principle.

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

Many of us have had this experience. Before we came into the church life, we were wandering. Then we were attracted by the church and deep within our spirit something said, "This is it." But then our mind began to wonder, asking, "Is this right? If it is, then why haven't the spiritual giants practiced it?" Under the influence of our background, we began wandering in the wilderness. However, in the calm of the night, something deeper than our mind stirred within us, saying, "The church life is right." During such a time, it was difficult to sleep or work

well. We only found rest when one day the living word of God came in to divide our being, revealing what was our spirit and what was our soul.

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

I. THE OUTFLOW OF THE LIVING GOD

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

II. LIVING

Since the word of God is His outflow, being spirit and life (John 6:63), it is living. In our experience the whole

Bible must not be dead letters but rather living as spirit and life.

III. OPERATIVE

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

IV. SHARPER THAN THE TWO-EDGED SWORD

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

THE PARTS OF MAN

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

I. BODY

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

II. SOUL

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

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

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

the original it means, "Do not deliver me to the soul of the enemy." This proves clearly that the will must be a part of the soul.

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

III. SPIRIT

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

That the conscience is a part of the spirit is proved by comparing Romans 9:1 with Romans 8:16. On the one

hand, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit. On the other hand, our conscience bears witness with the Holy Spirit. This proves that the conscience must be a function of our spirit. Psalm 51:10 speaks of "a right spirit within me"--that is, a spirit which is right. Since knowing right from wrong is related to the conscience, this verse also proves that the conscience is in the spirit.

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

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

Our spirit is the deepest part of our being, a spiritual organ by which we contact God. It is in our spirit that we are regenerated (John 3:6). It is in our spirit that the Holy Spirit dwells and works (Rom. 8:16). It is in our spirit that we enjoy Christ in His grace (2 Tim. 4:22; Gal. 6:18).

Hence, the writer of the book of Hebrews advised the Hebrew believers not to stagger in the wandering of their soul, but to press on into their spirit to partake of and to enjoy the heavenly Christ.

IV. HEART

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

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

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

might have a pure heart. First John 3:20, which speaks of our heart condemning us, also proves this. Since to condemn is a function of the conscience, this verse proves that the conscience is undoubtedly a part of the heart. Thus we have adequate scriptural ground to prove that the three parts of the soul and the first part of the spirit compose the heart.

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

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

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

Now we can understand why the writer of Hebrews spoke in 4:12 of the living word of God piercing into us, dividing our spirit from our soul, and discerning the thoughts and intents of our heart. He realized that the staggering Hebrew Christians were wandering in their soul and had neglected their spirit. But the new testament is absolutely a matter in our spirit, not in our soul. The new testament is altogether heavenly, not at all earthly. The earthly things belong to the physical body and to the mind. Judaism is earthly. As an earthly religion, it suits the thinking of our natural mind. The new testament, on the contrary, is heavenly and belongs to the spirit. In order

to touch the heavenly things, we must be in our spirit. Ephesians 2:6 says that we are sitting with Christ in the heavenlies. But if we are in our mind, we can never experience being in the heavenlies. In our mind we may mentally visit various places on earth, but we cannot touch the heavenlies. To touch the heavenlies, we must be in our spirit.

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

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

It is very difficult for any of us to be unaffected by the contagious germs in today's world. But we have a place of refuge from the germs of the world--our spirit. In a sense, our spirit is our refuge today; it is a high tower. As we pointed out in the last message, the church life is our refuge because the church is God's habitation in our spirit. As we are on the stormy sea, many thoughts may come.

How can we escape the storm and come into the refuge? Only by turning to the spirit. How can we withstand the rumors and the negative talk? Only by getting into our spirit, where the church, the house of God, and the heavenly ladder are. The church is a hospital. In a hospital all the germs are killed and everything is cleansed. Likewise, in the church, all the demonic germs are killed. The churches in the Lord's recovery are very healthy. In order to remain healthy, we must continually exercise our spirit. If you are infected with some negative thoughts and remain in your mind, you will be sick. But if you turn to your spirit, the germs will be killed and you will be healthy and strong in the church life. The writer of Hebrews seemed to be saying, "My dear Hebrew brothers, you must turn from your soul to your spirit through the living word of God. If you will turn to the spirit by the living word, you will be healthy and have no problems. Brothers, you are staggering in your soul and must get into the spirit. Once you get into the spirit you will be in the house of God and will enjoy all the riches of the gate of heaven."

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

Everyone in the church life has had some problems with the church. We may not like a particular elder or a certain brother or sister, thinking that they are unqualified, too strong, or too loud. What can deliver us from such thoughts? The living word which pierces into the depths of our being and divides our spirit from our mind. When our devilish mind is exposed, we shall declare that we love all

the brothers and sisters because they are all so lovely in the spirit. When we are in our mind thinking about the brothers and sisters, none of them is lovely. We think that we are the only ones who are any good. How we need the living word to divide our soul from our spirit that we may be in the church life! This is the way to enter into today's Sabbath rest. And this is also the way to remain in the Sabbath and not to break it. To break the Sabbath is to leave the church life. Those that have forsaken the church life, having left today's Sabbath, can testify that there is no rest outside the church. It is in the spirit that we enjoy the rest of the church Sabbath. This is why 4:12 is placed where it is in the book of Hebrews.

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SIX

THE THREE STAGES OF SALVATION

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

I. WITH THE ISRAELITES

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

A. Salvation from Egypt

In Egypt, the Israelites participated in the first stage of God's salvation. At the time of the Passover, they experienced the redeeming blood of the lamb (Exo. 12:7) and the nourishing meat of the lamb (Exo. 12:8) and were saved from God's righteous judgment. When they made their exodus out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, they were saved from Egyptian slavery and tyranny. After crossing the Red Sea, they were a released and liberated people. In this sense, they all were saved. No one can deny that they had been saved from God's judgment and from Egyptian bondage, tyranny, and slavery. However, they had only shared in one-third of God's full salvation. Although they had been saved from God's judgment and from Pharaoh's slavery, what about God's eternal purpose?

What about God's expression and dominion? With the children of Israel at that time, there was not yet the divine expression nor the divine dominion. The tabernacle had not yet been erected, and God's divine government had not been established on earth. Although the children of Israel had been saved from Egypt, they had to experience two further stages of God's salvation for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

B. Salvation through the Wilderness

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

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

C. Salvation into Canaan

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

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

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

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

II. WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS

A. Salvation from the World

According to the type of the salvation of the children of Israel, the salvation of the new testament believers is also in three stages. Firstly, we experience salvation from the world. We are justified through the blood of Jesus (Rom. 3:22-25) and separated from the world (Gal. 1:4; 6:14). If anyone has not made his exodus from the world, he has not

completed the first stage of his salvation. The salvation offered in Christianity is mainly a salvation with justification by faith through the blood of Christ, but without an exodus. Today there are millions of real Christians who have been justified by faith through the blood of Christ but who are still in the world. They need an exodus. We praise the Lord that we are out of the world, which includes religion. We are out of Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

B. Salvation through the Soul

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

Leviticus 2:4, speaking of the meal offering, says that fine flour is to be mingled with oil. The word mingled, a biblical term, is much better than the term woven.

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

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

The real church life is filled with transformation. I am more than encouraged with the transformation taking

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

C. Salvation into the spirit

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

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

A. Experiences in the Outer Court

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

B. Experiences in the Holy Place

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

C. Experiences in the Holy of Holies

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

IV. THE SITUATION OF THE HEBREW BELIEVERS

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

In 4:11 the writer said, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience." As the rest covered in this portion of the Word is the all-inclusive Christ, so to fall from it is to fall from Christ (Gal. 5:4, Gk. "you are severed from Christ"). In Galatians, the danger was that the Galatian believers would drift into the bondage of law from the liberty of grace (Gal. 5:1-4). Paul advised them to stand

fast in the liberty of grace, that is, not to be severed from Christ. Here in Hebrews, the danger was that the Hebrew believers would not forsake their old religion which was according to the law and press on into the enjoyment of Christ as their rest. If they still staggered in their old religion, that is, in Judaism, they would come short of Christ, who is their rest. The writer of this book earnestly encouraged them to press on with Christ as His partners into the rest so that they, as His partakers, might enjoy Christ as their rest.

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

sword into their wondering and divide their soul from their spirit.

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SEVEN

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST AND THE THRONE OF GRACE

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST

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

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

Christians realize that Christ is our High Priest, not many know what this truly means. If we would know what it means for Christ to be our High Priest, we must thoroughly cover the whole book of Hebrews.

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

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

forward to this Christ who is now in the presence of God.

The Christ who is in the Holy of Holies is not merely our Savior, Redeemer, Apostle, or Captain of salvation; He is our High Priest. What is He doing there in the Holy of Holies? He is ministering God into us. As we have seen in a previous message, the major function of the High Priest is to minister God into God's chosen people. Oh, how we need our High Priest in the Holy of Holies to minister God into us! We should forget our environment, weaknesses, troubles, and even ourselves and only remember that today Jesus Christ is our High Priest in the Holy of Holies. As long as we have such a High Priest, we have everything we need.

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

As Christ bears us before God in the Holy of Holies, He ministers God into our being. When the Apostle Paul prayed to the Lord, asking Him to remove the thorn (2 Cor. 12:7-8), the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for

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

This experience of Christ as our High Priest undoubtedly is in the heavens. However, it is also in our spirit and in the church because the church today is God's habitation in our spirit. Christ, the heavenly ladder which joins earth to heaven and brings heaven down to earth, is in our spirit. By the habitation of God and the heavenly ladder, the Holy of Holies in the heavens is joined to our spirit. Consider the illustration of electricity. By the flow of the current of electricity, our homes are joined to the power plant. Electricity is both in the generator in the power plant and in our homes. Without this flow of electricity, the power plant is far off from our homes. But by the flow of electricity, these two are made one. Likewise, heaven is certainly far away from our spirit. But the wonderful

Christ is both in the heavens and also in our spirit. Romans 8:34 says that Christ is at the right hand of God interceding for us, and Romans 8:10 says that Christ is also within us. There are not two Christs, one in the heavens and one within us; neither is it a matter of one Christ at two different times. Just as the electricity in the power plant is joined to our homes, so the Christ in the third heaven is joined to our spirit. He is much more wonderful than the flow of electricity. If by the flow of electricity two places can be made one, how much more can our wonderful Christ be both in the heavens as well as in our spirit.

I. GREAT

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

A. In His Person

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

B. In His Work

Secondly, our High Priest, Christ, is great in His work. He has made purification of and propitiation for our sins

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

C. In His Attainment

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

II. HAVING PASSED THROUGH THE HEAVENS

Our High Priest, Christ, who is great in His Person, qualification, work, accomplishment, and attainment, has passed through the heavens (4:14). After He was crucified

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

III. HAVING BEEN TRIED IN ALL RESPECTS

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

IV. SYMPATHIZING WITH OUR WEAKNESSES

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

THE THRONE OF GRACE

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

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

II. THE THRONE OF GOD AND THE LAMB

The throne of grace in Hebrews 4 is the throne of authority in Revelation 4 which becomes in Revelation 22:1 and 2 the throne of God and of the Lamb, out of which proceeds the crystal clear river of water of life. This river flows through the whole city of New Jerusalem. Within this river grows the tree of life, revealing that the rich Christ with the living Spirit flows out of the throne of grace. What

is grace? It is the flowing river in which the tree of life grows. To the unbelievers and to the demons, the throne of God and of the Lamb is a throne of authority; to us, it is the throne of grace. Whenever we come to this throne, we have the sense that something is flowing to water and supply us. This is grace. We can surely drink and eat of this supply.

III. GOD'S HABITATION IN OUR SPIRIT

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

heaven. Now it is easy for us to come forward to the throne of grace, for it is right within the gate. While the throne of grace is in the heavens, by and through Christ it has been joined to our spirit.

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

IV. RECEIVING MERCY AND FINDING GRACE

When we come forward to the throne of grace, we "receive mercy and find grace for timely help." Both God's mercy and His grace are the expression of His love. When we are in a pitiful condition, firstly His mercy reaches us and brings us into a state where God is able to favor us with His grace. Luke 15:20-24 says that when the father saw the prodigal son returning, he had compassion on him. This is mercy, expressing the father's love. Then the father clothed him with the best robe and fed him with the fatted calf. This is grace, which also manifests the father's love. God's mercy reaches farther than His grace, bridging the gap between us and God's grace. Often, because of our

pitiful condition, we must receive mercy before we can find grace. We come to the throne of grace like beggars, in somewhat the same way as the prodigal son came to his father. A beggar, like the prodigal, needs mercy. When we are in a poor condition and someone gives us something, that is mercy. But when we are in a qualified condition and someone gives us something, that is grace. Many times when we have come to the throne of grace we have had the sense that we were pitiful and said, "Father, I am not worthy of anything." But the Father said, "That doesn't matter. You are unworthy, but I am merciful. My mercy reaches you, qualifies you, and adorns you. It clothes you with the best robe." After receiving the Father's mercy, we soon feel like a very important person. Then we are qualified to sit down and enjoy the fatted calf. This is grace. This is not merely a doctrine but something which has been confirmed by our experience.

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

God's mercy and grace are always available to us. However, we need to receive and find them by exercising our spirit to come forward to the throne of grace and touch our High Priest who sympathizes with us in all our

weaknesses. By this word, the writer of Hebrews encouraged the wearied Hebrew believers to receive mercy and find grace for timely help that they might be set upright (12:12).

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWENTY-EIGHT

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

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

THE HIGH PRIEST ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEC

I. SUPERIOR TO AARON

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

In 5:2 we are told that a high priest was "able to exercise forbearance toward the ignorant and straying, since he also is encompassed with weakness." The Greek implies a feeling toward the ignorant and straying which is neither too severe nor too tolerant. It is to be moderate or tender in judgment toward their situation. The thought

in this verse is a continuation of the thought in 4:15. Christ as our High Priest, though not encompassed with weakness as the high priests taken from among men, has been tried in all respects like us. Hence, sympathizing with our weaknesses, He is able to exercise forbearance toward us, the ignorant and straying ones.

II. GLORIFIED BY GOD

A. Through Resurrection

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

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

B. In Ascension

Verse 6, a quotation from Psalm 110, says, "You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec." This

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

C. According to the Order of Melchisedec

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

D. Forever

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

III. A PRIEST LIKE MELCHISEDEC

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

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

Melchisedec. Melchisedec met Abraham with bread and wine, and Abraham gave him tithes (Gen. 14:18-20). Melchisedec did not come to Abraham to receive tithes from him, but to minister to him the bread and wine.

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

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

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

and the wine at the Lord's table. The One who brought in righteousness and peace is the One who ministers the bread and wine to us. He is our High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec.

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

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

sins" (Matt. 26:27-28). Melchisedec's coming to minister the bread and wine to Abraham, the father of the called race, signified Christ's coming to minister Himself as the processed God into us. He was processed on the cross that He might be our life supply with the redeeming wine to quench our thirst under God's condemnation. He is the redeeming God imparting Himself into us for our supply and satisfaction.

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

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

Most Christians today dwell on Christ as their Redeemer and Savior, the One who shed His blood for

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

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

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

bread and wine for us to eat and drink. He has redeemed us and now He feeds us.

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

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

wine. This is the best breakfast. Whenever I enjoy such a breakfast, my whole day is a success. Just as we need a physical breakfast every day, so every morning we should enjoy Christ as our breakfast. The best breakfast table is the throne of grace where we enjoy Christ in such a positive way. Christ is our Melchisedec today. How we need to come forward to the throne of grace to Him, the One who ministers the bread and wine!

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

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

THE CAUSE OF ETERNAL SALVATION

I. THE ETERNAL SALVATION

The eternal salvation we have in Christ (5:9) is based upon the eternal redemption He has accomplished for us (9:12), which is much better than the temporary atonement carried out by the priests according to the order of Aaron. That temporary atonement covered sin but never put it away; whereas Christ's eternal redemption has put away sin, solving the problem of sin forever. Furthermore, Christ's eternal salvation is not merely an objective redemption to solve our problem of sin on the negative side,

but also a subjective salvation to save us into His perfection and glorification on the positive side. Such an eternal salvation is not limited by time and space, but is all-embracing with the divine element and nature. The divine element and nature of Christ are the basic constituents of His eternal salvation, which not only saves us from the most negative things but also saves us into the most positive things, even into God Himself. Such a saving is all-embracing, not limited by time and space.

II. THE CAUSE

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

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

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

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

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE TWENTY-NINE

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

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

I. THE WORD OF GOD BEING OUR NOURISHMENT

If we would understand this matter of the word of righteousness, we must firstly be deeply impressed that

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

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

with the solid food (1 Cor. 3:2). Therefore, according to the basic principles of the Bible, the word of God is for nourishment rather than for knowledge.

II. MILK

The Bible itself classifies God's word into two categories--milk for babes and solid food for the mature (5:12-13). Paul told the Corinthians that because they were babes he could only feed them with milk (1 Cor. 3:1-2), and Peter, holding the same concept, said, "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2). In Hebrews 5:12, milk refers to "the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God." The Greek word translated "rudiments," which also may be rendered as "primary elements," denotes elementary things. For example, learning the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and the numbers from one to ten are the rudiments. If you were to talk with children in a philosophical way, they would be unable to understand. Recently, one of my grandchildren was pleased to show me how he could write the letters L E E. He was very happy with his elementary "candies."

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

The "rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God" in 5:12 are "the word of the beginning of the Christ" in 6:1. These are special terms found in the book of Hebrews. Even Christ, like your education, has a beginning. Some little children only know the ten numbers, being unable to do even the simplest addition. Likewise, in our spiritual education we have the word of the beginning of Christ. Many Christians can only say, "Christ died for me. I am a sinner and I should go to hell, but God loves me and sent

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

There is only one Bible. However, nearly every Christian has his or her own version of the Bible. It is not the Bible printed with black and white letters as God revealed; it is the "Bible" printed with their kind of mentality. They have their own mental version of the Scriptures. Very few Christians care for the solid word of

God. They only take the rudiments, the word of the beginning of Christ. Perhaps some would argue with me, saying that the word of the beginning is not wrong. Of course it is not wrong, but it is simply the A B C's. We need to go on!

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

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

III. SOLID FOOD

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

throughout the book of Hebrews. All five warnings in this book are based upon the fact that in Hebrews God is not the God of love but the God of righteousness, a consuming fire in His governmental dealings with His people. The book of Hebrews is not constructed with God's love; it is constructed basically with God's righteous government. It is a revelation of God's dispensational and governmental dealings with His people.

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

Christians do not understand the word of righteousness concerning God's governmental dealings. Such words are like hard bones, and many, unable to understand them, throw them away. But whether we understand these words or not, we are still under God's governmental dealings. In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy we see God's righteous governmental dealings. The word regarding God's governmental dealings is the word of

righteousness, not the word of grace nor the word of life.

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

Very few Christians today care for this kind of word. When we began to teach people about Matthew 25 more than forty years ago, telling them that the slothful servant would be cast into outer darkness, many rumors were spread about us. Some would not take the word of righteousness which unveils the truth that a saved person can be cast into outer darkness. Matthew 25 is not a word of grace, nor a word of life; it is a word of righteousness. The same is true of 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. In that portion of the Word we are told to take heed how we build in the church life. If we build according to the human, fleshly, and earthly way, we shall be building with wood, hay, and stubble. Everything built with these materials will be burned, and those who build with them will suffer loss. This does not mean that a saved person can be lost; it means that all he does may be burned and that "he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). This certainly is the word of righteousness. Few Christians care for such a word. They only want "candies," messages that comfort and soothe them. If anyone would stand up and declare to them that if they do not heed the Lord's word of righteousness they might be cast into outer darkness (Matt. 25:30) or be "saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor.

3:15), they would not listen to him, but rather would oppose and condemn him as heretical. While most Christians only want "candies," in this Life-Study of Hebrews we are burdened to care for the solid food, the word of righteousness. We all must be careful about this, for someday the Lord will meet us.

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

must cross the river and go on. Do not fool around with the Lord.

IV. THE DISCRIMINATING OF THE SENSES

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

THE WORD OF THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST

I. THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

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

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

II. THE FIRST PAIR

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

III. THE SECOND PAIR

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

IV. THE THIRD PAIR

The third pair consists of "the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment." Resurrection of the dead (Matt. 22:31; Acts 23:6; 24:21) is the coming out of death, Hades,

and the tomb on the negative side. Eternal judgment (Rom. 2:5; Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:11-12) is the entry into eternity and the eternal destiny on the positive side. Whether we are saved or not, judgment will bring us into eternity. The situation with the dead unbelievers has not yet been settled. Only when they all have been resurrected will they be judged, and through that judgment they will be brought into eternity.

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THIRTY

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

TO BE BROUGHT ON TO MATURITY

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

What does it mean to be mature? Throughout the years, we have learned that if we are in ourselves or are individualistic, we are immature. If we are trying to be holy, spiritual, or victorious, that also is immaturity. Real maturity is not only in our spirit, but also in the church life. The church life is the sign of our having become mature. As a result of my watching and observing for almost fifty years, I can testify that there is no real maturity in life outside the church. Real maturity can only be found in the church life.

The Hebrew believers to whom this book was written were staggering in their Christian life. They were wondering in their mind whether to go on or to go back. At that very point, this book was written to encourage them to go on.

The best way to go on is to forget everything. Once we forget everything, we shall go on. We may spend much time to consider our environment, our past, our future, and all the things related to it, yet we would not spend one hour in

going on. Many times dear saints have come to me asking about the past, present, future, and many other things. I became famous for never answering their questions. I only gave them one word of advice: "Go on. Don't talk and don't remember your past. You should even forget the present and not care for the future. If you really want to go on, then just go on." Those who are going on the best are those who do not remember anything. Consider the runners in a race. While they are running, they have no time to think of anything else. They only know one thing--running the race.

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

According to Hebrews 6, to go on does not need the laying of another foundation. Suppose the brothers who are building a new meeting hall have laid the foundation, but have become frustrated and have stopped working. After they are stirred up to continue working on the meeting hall, should they start over from the beginning and lay another foundation? No, that would be foolish. If they did that a few times, the whole building site would be filled with foundations. There would be no walls, roof, or building, only many foundations. Although doing such a thing would be foolish, many Christians, including myself, have done this very thing in their Christian life. In the early years of my Christian life, I laid many foundations.

After I had been revived, I would gradually go down again. Then, after being stirred up again, I would purposely and thoroughly go back to the beginning to repent and make confession all over again. This is what it means "to renew again to repentance," which is to lay again "a foundation of repentance." After a while, I would be distracted again and then go back to confess and make confession still another time. Finally, I became tired of this, but I did not know what to do. One day, as I was reading Hebrews chapter six, I realized how foolish I had been. I did not need to repent again of what I had repented already or go back to the beginning to make another thorough confession. I simply needed to go on.

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

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

I. LEAVING THE WORD OF THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST

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

II. NOT LAYING AGAIN THE FOUNDATION

A. The Foundation Being Laid Already and There Being No Need to Lay it Again

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

needs to press on from the very place where he has fallen. Our Christian life is a building project and a race. If we fall away after we have begun, we do not need to go back to the beginning and start again; we only need to go on from where we fell.

B. Being Impossible to Renew Again to Repentance

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

The heavenly gift mentioned in verse 4 refers to God's giving of the heavenly things, such as His forgiveness, righteousness, divine life, peace, and joy at the time of our conversion. The Greek word translated "word" in verse 5 is

rhema, meaning the instant word of God. The "good word of God" here refers to the word of the beginning of Christ mentioned in verse 1, which is the milk the Hebrew believers tasted when they believed in the Lord. Now they must go on to the deeper word, the word of righteousness (5:13), which is not mainly concerned with God's redemption but with the way of His economy, and which is the solid food for them to reach maturity (v. 1).

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

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

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

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

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

D. Being Not Right to Lay the Foundation Again

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

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

An unbelieving sinner is a real curse, but Christians who bear thorns and thistles are near a curse. Strictly

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

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

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

III. BEING BROUGHT ON TO MATURITY

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

A. Sharing with Christ in His Attainments

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

B. Being Diligent to Enter into the Remaining Sabbath Rest

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

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

We also need to come forward to the throne of grace to

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

D. Feeding on the Solid Food to Enjoy Christ as our High Priest According to the Order of Melchisedec

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

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

FLEEING INTO THE REFUGE WITH THE ANCHOR AND THE FORERUNNER

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

I. THE REFUGE

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

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

Where is this safeguard, this safety, into which we must flee? It is in the spirit, in the church, and in the heavenlies.

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

II. THE ANCHOR

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

We must flee whatever situation we are in. Every situation is a stormy sea. Are you rich? Your riches are a stormy sea. Are you poor? Your poverty is a stormy sea. To say that every situation is a stormy sea simply means that it can hold you back, keeping you from entering into today's rest. This is the danger. Consider the type of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt. Although maybe two

million came out of Egypt, only two of them entered into the rest. All the others were distracted. Do we not face the same possibility today? There is not one thing which cannot hold us back. Even the eldership in the church can hold you back. Elders, you must flee the eldership. We are the fleers. We even must flee our own country and locality. The writer included himself in this matter of fleeing, for he used the word "we" in verse 18. After saying so many good things in the foregoing chapters, he concluded with the word "flee. "

III. THE FORERUNNER

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

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

am concerned that many of those reading this message will not flee and cross the river. Let us flee into our spirit and into the church life. Let us flee into the veil, into the Holy of Holies.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THIRTY-ONE

THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY OF THE HEAVENLY CHRIST

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

I. A TURN IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

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

We may say that the forgiveness of sin is on the ground

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

As I have already mentioned, Christ's cross delivers us out of Egypt and His throne brings us into Canaan. Where are you--in Egypt or in Canaan? How do you know that you are in Canaan? It is easy to tell. I know that I am in Canaan because I am no longer around the cross but around the throne. The sermons, messages, conversations, and fellowship of most Christians is around the cross. I hardly ever heard of a group of Christians fellowshipping around the throne. Is your Christ today on the cross or on the throne? I can testify to you that my Christ today is on

the throne. I am not seeking Him at the cross; I am enjoying Him on the throne. This is marvelous. Today our Christ is no longer on the cross but on the throne. The Passover in Egypt signified Christ on the cross. But today our Christ is on the throne, and where the throne is, there is Canaan. We are in Canaan. We are in the Sabbath rest because our Christ is on the throne. Although we have participated in Christ's work on the cross, we must now press on to enter into the enjoyment of His ministry on the throne. The Christ who is with me in the present ministry is the Christ on the throne. Oh, may the fact that Christ is now on the throne be experienced by us! We need to see all the details concerning this enthroned Christ. When we enjoy such a Christ, we are on the second floor, in Canaan, and around the throne.

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

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

This turn is from the outer court on earth to the Holy of Holies in heaven (8:2; 9:11-12, 24). This reminds us of the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle. Firstly, there was the outer court. Then there was the tabernacle, which was divided into two parts--the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies where God's presence was. Thus, there were

three parts: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. According to the type, both the outer court and the Holy Place are for the Holy of Holies. The purpose in entering the outer court is to come through the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies. Both the outer court and the Holy Place are for the people to come into the Holy of Holies. The outer court is for people to enter the Holy of Holies, and the Holy Place is the threshold of the Holy of Holies. If you come to the outer court without entering into the Holy of Holies, you are aimless. If you remain around the altar and the laver for a long time, you have no aim or destination. Neither the altar nor the laver in the outer court is the goal. The goal is the Holy of Holies. Whenever you are at the altar or at the laver you must aim for the Holy of Holies. Even when you are in the Holy Place you should say, "Lord, I am not for this place. I am passing through this place to the Holy of Holies. My aim, my goal, is Your Holy of Holies." The book of Hebrews firstly presents us the things in the outer court. Then, beginning at 7:1, it turns us to the Holy of Holies. This is the turn from the outer court through the Holy Place to the Holy of Holies.

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

This turn is also from the altar for sin in the outer court to the propitiation-cover for grace (the throne of grace) in the Holy of Holies (13:10, 12; 10:12; 4:16). Here we see two things--the altar and the propitiation-cover. The propitiation-cover is the throne of grace where God meets with us, speaks with us, and communes with us, and where we are one with God in His economy. The throne of grace is the very place where God and we, we and God, are one. The altar is in the outer court, and the propitiation-cover is in the Holy of Holies. The altar symbolizes the cross, which is dear and precious. The altar is dear and precious because it

deals with our sins. But it is in the outer court. The cross, on which the problem of sin was solved is still on the earth, on the ground floor. While many Christians are occupied continually with the cross in the outer court, I doubt if many Christians properly touch the propitiation-cover hourly or even daily. We all need to learn to touch the throne of grace, the propitiation-cover, moment by moment. We need to pray, "Lord, I need to touch Your throne of grace every minute." The throne of grace is the place where we must be. The cross is good, but it is not our goal or destination. It is not the place where we should remain forever. The place where we should remain forever is the propitiation-cover, the throne of grace. Where are you right now? We are around the propitiation-cover, around the throne of grace.

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

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

grace. Hallelujah for grace! Are you now around the cross or around the throne of grace? We need to be brothers and sisters around the throne of grace.

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

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

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

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

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

II. THE TWO ASPECTS OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

A. Typified by Aaron on Earth

Not many Christians know the two aspects of Christ's priesthood. Although many know that Christ is our High

Priest, very few realize that with Christ's priesthood there are two aspects. The first aspect is the priesthood of Christ typified by Aaron on earth. This is fully revealed in 5:1-5.

B. According to the Order of Melchisedec in Heaven

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

III. THE TWO SECTIONS OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

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

A. The Section on Earth

1. Having Offered Himself to God for Our Sins

Christ offered Himself to God for our sins (7:27; 9:14, 26; 10:10, 12). The first thing that our Lord did in His priestly ministry was to offer Himself to God for our sins. He was the real sin offering, the unique sin offering. From the foundation of the world, Christ was the unique sin offering (Rev. 13:8). As such an offering, He offered Himself to God for our sins. If you read the book of Hebrews carefully, you will discover that it presents Christ

only as the sin offering, not as any other kind of offering. In the book of Hebrews the unique offering is the offering for sin. Christ offered Himself to God for our sins once for all and He does not need to do it again. It was accomplished once for all for eternity.

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

2. Having Made Propitiation for Our Sins

In His ministry on earth Christ also made propitiation for our sins (2:17). Sin, which has been taken away, caused

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

3. Having Made Purification for Our Sins

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

4. Having Sanctified Us through His Offering with His Blood

Christ has also sanctified us through His offering with His blood (10:10, 14, 29; 13:12). He not only purified our sins but also sanctified us, separated us, set us apart, unto God. I do not care how you feel about yourself. According to Christ's figuration, you have been separated, sanctified. You do not belong to the city where you live; you belong to God. We have all been sanctified, separated unto God by Christ through His offering with His blood. When Christ died on the cross, offering Himself for us, He separated us to God. When you hear this, you may say, "It is not like that according to my experience." Be patient. Wait for a few years, the next age, or, at the latest, for eternity, and

you will see that you have been sanctified unto God. In the New Jerusalem we all shall be set apart unto God. I not only believe this for myself but for all the children of God. Do not believe your present situation, for it is altogether a lie. Sometimes I am told by the brothers that a church in a particular place is not very good. I do not like to be told that. Whenever I hear such a report, deep within me I say, "You are wrong. Every church is wonderful." If we do not believe this today, we shall believe it some day. One day we shall see that every church is wonderful and that every church is separated, sanctified, unto God. But do not wait until eternity to believe it. Believe it today. If you wait for eternity to believe this, you will miss a great deal of enjoyment. If you believe it today, you will enjoy it. What glad tidings it is to hear that we have been separated to God through the offering of Christ with His blood!

5. Having Perfected Us through His Offering

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

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

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

7. Having Bequeathed to us the New Testament

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

8. Having Suffered Death for Everything

On the cross Christ suffered death for everything (2:9). We should not only be concerned about sin, for, due to the fall of Adam, everything of the old creation is out of order. Everything is wrong. Therefore, Christ suffered death not only for us but for everything. Colossians 1:20 says that through His death Christ reconciled all things to God. Because of Christ's death, everything must be in its proper order. We need to believe this.

9. Having Destroyed the Devil on the Cross

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

10. Having Released us from the Slavery under Fear of Death

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

11. Having Cut the Pathway of the Cross

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

B. The Section in Heaven

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

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

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

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

and all things pertaining to it were sprinkled and purified by the blood of the sacrifice.

3. Having Confirmed the New Covenant and Found Eternal Redemption

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

4. Having Obtained a More Excellent Ministry

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christ is the High Priest who intercedes for us and saves us to the uttermost (7:25-26). This is not according to

the order of Aaron on earth but according to the order of Melchisedec in heaven.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THIRTY-TWO

A KINGLY HIGH PRIEST, PERPETUAL AND GREAT

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

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

tells us to "come forward with boldness to the throne of grace." Our great High Priest is on the throne in heaven. How can we touch Him? How can we experience Him?

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

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

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

If you were to ask many Christians where the Holy of Holies and the throne of grace are, they would say that they are in heaven. There is a strong ground in the Bible

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

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

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

All of this, however, is still doctrinal. Where is the house of God on earth today? After studying the Bible for many years, I eventually found out that today Bethel, the house of God, is in our spirit. Ephesians 2:22 (Gk.) says that we "are being builded together into an habitation of God in spirit." The church today is the habitation of God,

the house of God, and this is in our spirit. When we, the church people, all meet together in our spirit, the house of God, Bethel, is here. Immediately, that very place is joined to heaven, for there is a ladder joining earth to heaven and bringing heaven down to earth. Spontaneously, we have traffic between earth and heaven. However, whenever we get out of our spirit and into our mind or emotions, Bethel disappears. Where is Bethel today? It is in our spirit. Since Bethel, God's house, is in our spirit, our spirit is the very place where Christ, the heavenly ladder, joins us to heaven and brings heaven to us. According to this revelation and according to our experience, we may boldly say that the Holy of Holies and the throne of grace are joined to our spirit.

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

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

day, I experience the very Christ who is in heaven. Though He is objective, in my experience He is subjective.

Where is Christ today? This question cannot be answered in such a simple way. We must say that, in fact, Christ is objectively in the heavens, but, in our experience, He is subjectively in our spirit. In this way, the objective Christ in heaven becomes our subjective experience in our spirit. In the last message we saw that we need to be on the second floor of the experience of Christ. Where is this second floor? It is joined to our spirit. Because this second floor is joined to our spirit, we must turn to our spirit to experience the very Christ who is in heaven.

I. A KINGLY HIGH PRIEST

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

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

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

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

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

How happy we would be if, before we went to bed at night, Melchisedec would come ministering to us the bread

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

A. The King of Righteousness

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

B. The King of Peace

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

C. From a Kingly Tribe

Neither Aaron nor any of his descendants has ever been a king. They were just priests. They were not of the kingly

tribe but of the priestly tribe. The kingly tribe was the tribe of Judah, and the priestly tribe was the tribe of Levi. Christ came out of the tribe of Judah (7:13-14). So we should not rank Him with Aaron, for He does not belong to Aaron's tribe. Christ is a kingly Priest.

D. Combining the Kingship Together with the Priesthood

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

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

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

When Abraham lifted up his hand to God, the situation

was without righteousness and peace. There was no righteousness because Lot and all of his things had been captured by the enemies. There was no peace because the enemies had not been defeated. But as Abraham went out to fight the battle, he trusted in God. After Abraham had slaughtered the enemies and Melchisedec had come to meet him, there was righteousness and peace. Who brought in this righteousness and peace? Melchisedec, the priest of the Most High God. While Abraham was slaughtering Chedorlaomer and the other kings, Melchisedec must have been praying. It must have been through his intercession that righteousness and peace were brought in.

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

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

of my face, you know something about the back of my head. The ministering Melchisedec must also have been the interceding high priest. This is the kind of High Priest that we have today in Christ.

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

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

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

Melchisedec was the king of righteousness and the king

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

II. PERPETUAL

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

III. GREAT

A. Having Tithed Abraham

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

B. Having Blessed Abraham

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

C. Being Ancient Before Abraham

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THIRTY-THREE

A DIVINE HIGH PRIEST, LIVING AND ABLE TO SAVE

I. A DIVINE HIGH PRIEST

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

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

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

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

Why does Christ's presence mean the absence of death? Because He is divine. Divinity is the constituent of His priesthood. His priesthood is constituted, composed, with His divinity. As wood is the element of a table, so divinity is the element of Christ's being the High Priest. When His

ministry comes in, it means the absence of death. On the one hand, the priesthood of Christ is the absence of death; on the other hand, it is the presence of life. Thus, the priesthood of Christ is the absence of death and the presence of life. As the kingly High Priest, Christ ministers the processed God to us, and as the divine High Priest, wherever He is, life is present. His priesthood is the presence of life.

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

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

The Son of God is not simple, for He has two aspects.

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

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

How was Christ constituted to be such a High Priest? In the way of having His divinity incarnated into humanity, living on the earth, going into death, and coming out of death in resurrection. Who is He now? He is the Son of God in two aspects, the aspects of the Only Begotten Son and of the Firstborn Son. Now He is human as well as

divine. Having passed through incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection, He is fully equipped and qualified for the divine priesthood. In this High Priest there is not only no worldliness or sin, but there is absolutely no death. Death has been completely swallowed up by His divine life.

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

Christ's kingly priesthood is for ministry and His divine priesthood is for saving. Verse 25 says, "Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, seeing He is always living to intercede for them." Why is He able to save to the uttermost? Because He is living and because He is the indestructible life. Nothing can destroy Him. Although I may have the heart to save you all, I can easily be

destroyed and

terminated. But Christ can save us to the uttermost because His priesthood is composed with an indestructible life. Regardless of our situation or the condition in which we may find ourselves, we can tell Satan, "Satan, do your best. Send all of your armies against me. I am not afraid of them, because I have the divine priesthood to take care of me!" What is this divine priesthood? It is the saving power of the indestructible life. While the ministry of the kingly High Priest is to minister the processed God to us for our enjoyment, not to offer sacrifices to God for our sins, the work of the divine High Priest is mainly to save us.

A. A Transfer of Priesthood

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

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

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

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

3. From Men to the Son of God

Verse 28 indicates that the priesthood has also been transferred from men to the Son of God. All the men who

were priests in the Old Testament were fragile, subject to death, but the Son of God is eternal, living forever. He is the Only Begotten Son and the Firstborn Son of God as the very life that constitutes the priesthood of the new covenant. The priesthood has been transferred from men to such a One, to the Only Begotten Son and the Firstborn Son of God. In such a One we have divinity incarnated and humanity uplifted. In such a One we have human living, the all-inclusive death, and the resurrection. In such a One we have the divine birth of the Firstborn Son of God, the birth that produced the many sons of God. In the new covenant, the priesthood has been transferred to such a One.

4. A Transfer of Law Needed

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

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

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

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

Verses 18 and 19 say, "For there is indeed a disannulling of the preceding commandment because of its

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

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

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

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

Christ's being the Only Begotten Son as well as the Firstborn Son of God are both qualifications for Him to be

the High Priest (v. 28). He became our High Priest with these two qualifications. Christ's becoming our High Priest depends upon both His being the Only Begotten Son and the Firstborn Son of God.

1. Constituted According to the Power of an Indestructible Life

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

2. With the Taking of an Oath by God

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

3. Perfected Forever

In verse 28 we see that Christ has been perfected forever. We have already mentioned that, as the Only Begotten Son of God, Christ did not need perfection. However, in order to be the Firstborn Son of God, He needed perfection. After His resurrection, He was perfected forever. Now He is completed, equipped, and

qualified to be our High Priest for eternity. We may trust in Him with our full confidence because He has been so perfected.

4. Becoming the Surety of a Better Covenant

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

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

This thought is deep and is absolutely a matter of life. Do you not realize that your physical life has pledged itself

to you? Whether or not your physical life wants to do things for you, it has to do them because it has pledged itself to do them. So your physical life is itself the surety that it will do everything for you. It has made a bond to do this.

In like manner, a bond has been signed by Christ. In what way was it signed? By the way that Christ has pledged Himself to the new covenant and to us. There is no possibility for Him to change His mind. It is too late. Whether we understand this or not and whether He is willing to do it or not, He must do it because He has pledged Himself. Thus, He is the Surety of the new covenant. This pledge depends completely on His divine priesthood.

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

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

II. LIVING

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

A. Continuing Forever Without the Preventing of Death

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

B. Unalterable

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

III. ABLE TO SAVE

A. To the Uttermost

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

B. By Interceding for Us

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

intercession. We have a perpetual, constant, and eternal Intercessor.

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

C. Befitting Us

1. Holy, Guileless, Undefiled, Separated from Sinners

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

2. Higher than the Heavens

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

3. Having Offered up Himself for Our Sins Once for All

Verse 27 says that our High Priest "does not have daily need as the high priests, to offer up sacrifices first for his

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FOUR

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE

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

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

While the Aaronic priesthood solves the problem of sin, the kingly priesthood ministers God to us, not as the object of our worship but as our enjoyment for our daily supply.

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

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

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

Because of the issues of death, we need the divine priesthood, which is the presence of life and the absence of death. When you visit the homes of some of the dear saints in the church, you see nothing but vanity, corruption, groaning, and decay. If this is the situation in your home, it

means that there is a lack of the divine priesthood in your home. When your home is filled with the divine priesthood of Christ, there is the absence of death and the presence of life. There will be no more vanity, corruption, groaning, and decay. Contrary to the concept of many Christians, Hebrews 7:25 does not mean that Christ will save us from such things as gambling; it mainly means He will save us from all of our corruption, vanity, groaning, and decay. Oh, we need to be saved to the uttermost! When you come to my home, there should be praising, reality, building up, and growth, not groaning, vanity, corruption, and decay. To be saved from these issues of death is what it means to be saved to the uttermost. This is not the saving of the Savior but the saving of the divine priesthood.

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

While Christ was on earth, He solved the problems of sin and death. As we saw in message thirty-one, the work of Christ typified by the Aaronic priesthood was only on the first floor, and the ministry of His kingly priesthood is on

the second floor. Now we are on the second floor enjoying His kingly priesthood. The kingly priesthood does not solve the problem of sin. Sin is over, and there is no longer an offering for sin. This is what 10:26 means when it says that there "no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." Here, on the second floor, we are enjoying Christ's kingly priesthood in which He ministers God as our enjoyment for our daily supply.

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

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

According to Romans 8, the last step of God's work on

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

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

The kingly priesthood is for God's building. According to Zechariah 6:12-13, Christ, as the King Priest, combines the kingship and the priesthood together for the purpose of building the Lord's temple. Hence, the kingly priesthood is for the building of the church, for it is the kingly priesthood that maintains the order of righteousness and peace. Such an order of righteousness and peace gives the opportunity

for God's building work to go on. While this ministry of the kingly priesthood is taking place, the divine priesthood, being constituted with the element of the indestructible life, comes in to reduce all the by-products of death. Now we need to see what is this indestructible life, the element of the divine priesthood.

I. THE LIFE OF GOD

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

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

Nothing is better than life. In the whole universe the best item is life. If you were to take life away from the

earth, this planet would be a desolation. The loveliness, pleasantness, and beauty of the earth all come out of one thing--life. If there were no life on earth, this planet would be meaningless. Today we have the highest life, not the vegetable life, the animal life, the angelic life, or even just the human life--we have the divine life! If we saw this, we would be beside ourselves with joy and praise.

II. THE ETERNAL LIFE

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

III. THE UNCREATED LIFE

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

IV. THE LIFE WHICH IS CHRIST HIMSELF

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

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

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

VI. THE LIFE WHICH HAS PASSED THROUGH DEATH

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

VII. THE LIFE WHICH DEATH CANNOT HOLD

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

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

VIII. THE RESURRECTION LIFE

The indestructible life is the resurrection life (John 11:25). What is the difference between life and resurrection life? Life has not been tested by death; it has never passed through death. Resurrection life is life that has been tested

by and has passed through death, proving that death is unable to do anything with it. Our life today is the resurrection life, the life that has passed through death and has proved that death cannot hold it down.

IX. THE LIFE OF WHICH THE SPIRIT IS

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

X. THE SAVING LIFE OF CHRIST

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

XI. THE REIGNING LIFE

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

XII. THE LIFE OF THE TREE OF LIFE

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

XIII. THE LIFE WHICH IS WITH INCORRUPTION

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

XIV. THE LIFE WHICH IS INDISSOLUBLE, INDESTRUCTIBLE

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FIVE

A HEAVENLY MINISTER WITH A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY

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

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

In Romans 3 through 8 we can see three steps of God's economical salvation: justification, sanctification, and glorification. Justification is related to God's righteousness, sanctification to God's holiness, and glorification to God's glory. God's righteousness, holiness, and glory all have

requirements upon us. In order for us to be thoroughly and ultimately saved, we need to meet all of these requirements. God's justification meets the requirements of His righteousness, God's sanctification meets the requirements of His holiness, and God's glorification meets the requirements of His glory.

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

Romans 8:30 says, "And whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Recovery Version). We see from this verse that glorification is salvation to the uttermost. This glorification is the definition of Hebrews 7:25, which says that Christ is able to save us to the uttermost. This uttermost salvation is glorification, and glorification means to deliver us from the by-products of death. At the time of glorification, there will

be no more groaning, slavery, bondage, vanity, corruption, or decay. Who is doing this work of saving us to the uttermost? Our Melchisedec, the kingly and divine High Priest.

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

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

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

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

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

Consider once again the case of Abraham's defeating the kings. Suppose you had been Abraham hearing the news that Lot had been captured. If that had happened to us, we would have been frightened to death and would have gone into the inner part of our tent and prayed, "O Lord, have mercy on us and protect us. Don't allow the kings to come here." But when Abraham heard the news, he seemed to say, "They have captured my brother Lot! I don't care how many men they have--I have the Most High God, and I am going to fight against the kings and rescue Lot."

Abraham and his three hundred eighteen men were bold because they were energized by the intercession of Melchisedec. They were empowered by a heavenly, universal motor. When Melchisedec came to bless Abraham, he blessed the Most High God for delivering Abraham's enemies into his hands (Gen. 14:20). In other words, Melchisedec was telling Abraham that his victory was the result of his intercession to the Most High God on his behalf.

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

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

This glorious freedom must firstly be brought into our being. This is accomplished through our interceding Melchisedec. The motor in the third heavens energizes the machine on the earth: it makes a lot of "pum, pum, pums" in our spirit. Sometimes the Lord's transmission of energy from the motor in the heavens is so strong that I can hardly contain myself. Whenever I kneel down to pray in

my bedroom, I sense the "pum, pum, pum," the empowering, the energizing from the Lord's intercession. Let the religious people wait and see the result of the energizing of the heavenly motor. Do not think that the Lord's recovery is merely another type of Christian work. No, it is the work accomplished by the "pum, pum, pum" with the energy transmitted into us by the heavenly dynamo. Whenever we pray for the Lord's recovery, we have the deep sense that the Lord's intercession is empowering us from within. This is why we, the partners of the Lord in His recovery, are the most aggressive Christians on earth today. Christ's heavenly ministry is not a ministry that takes care of pitiful sinners; it is the more excellent ministry operating God's economy.

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

I. A HEAVENLY MINISTER

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

Hebrews 8:1 says that we have a "High Priest, Who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." This is the heavenly Christ, the kingly and

divine High Priest, our today's Melchisedec. Our High Priest today is not standing on earth to accomplish the work of redemption; He is sitting on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. His sitting there indicates that the work of redemption has been accomplished by Him, that He is now in glory in the majesty of the Godhead in the heavens, and that He is interceding restfully for the perfecting of His redeemed ones. This is not the work of the Aaronic priesthood but the ministry of the kingly and divine priesthood. He is not our Aaron standing on earth but our Melchisedec sitting in the heavens, even on the throne of God with the divine majesty.

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

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

Hebrews 8:2 says that Christ is a "Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." Christ ministers in the true tabernacle in heaven which is joined to our spirit. As our High Priest in the heavens, Christ brings us into heaven, from the earthly court into the heavenly Holy of Holies, which is joined to our spirit by Him as the heavenly ladder (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51). The priests on earth served the shadow (Heb. 8:5), but this Minister in heaven serves the reality. Whatever was done by the priests on earth in the Old Testament was

a shadow of the real things to come. Their work on earth did not accomplish anything. What they did on earth only served a shadow of the reality, but whatever this Minister ministers in heaven in the New Testament is the reality. His more excellent ministry in heaven serves the reality of the heavenly things in the divine dispensation.

II. A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY

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

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

1. The Mediator

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

2. A Better Covenant

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

3. Better Promises

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

B. To Carry Out the Better Covenant

1. Making the Facts in the New Covenant Effective

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

2. Executing the Bequests in the New Testament

Christ, the heavenly Minister, executes the bequests in the New Testament. Whatever is a fact in the covenant is a bequest in the testament. What is the difference between facts and bequests? Facts refer to certain things that have been accomplished but which are not yet designated until they are bequeathed. After the accomplished facts have been bequeathed, they immediately become bequests designated for us. This is the difference between a covenant and a testament: whatever is in a covenant is a fact, but whatever is in a testament is a bequest. What were facts in the covenant have now become legally designated for us as bequests in the will, in the testament. There are four facts of the new covenant which have all

become bequests in the new testament: the propitiation for unrighteousnesses and forgiveness of sins; the imparting of the law of life; the blessing of having God and of being His people; and the inward ability of knowing the Lord. We shall see all of these items more clearly in the following messages.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SIX

THE NEW COVENANT

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

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

Before God accomplished this purpose, Satan caused the fall of man and of many of the angelic creatures. In one sense, this caused God a great deal of trouble, but, in another sense, it afforded Him a good opportunity to manifest His wisdom. Firstly, on the negative side, because sin had come in as a frustration to the fulfillment of God's purpose, God had to solve all the problems related to sin and to put sin away. Secondly, on the positive side, God has put Himself into us as our life. This life must now be developed into the regulating laws imparted into every inward part of our being. God has put Himself as life into our spirit, and from our spirit He is developing this divine life into laws that are spreading into all of our inward parts. Thirdly, according to this life law, God is our God and we are His people. Fourthly, when this life comes into us and is developed into laws that are imparted into our whole being, this life with its laws gives us a spontaneous and automatic inward ability to know God in the way of

life. This is not to know God by knowledge, by being taught; it is to know Him by the inward ability of life. In order for God to accomplish His eternal purpose He had to do four things: take away sin; put Himself as life into our spirit and develop this life into the laws that are imparted into all of our inward being; make Himself our God and make us His people according to the life law; and grant us the inward ability to know Him in life in an automatic way.

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

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

according to the law of letters and that they were going to be His

people also according to that law of letters. Today, in the new covenant, God is our God not according to the law of letters but according to the law of life, and we are His people also according to the law of life. Moreover, in the old covenant the people were taught to know God by the knowledge of the law, but in the new covenant we are enabled to know God by the inward ability of life. All of the four items of the new covenant were found in the old covenant in the way of shadows, not in the way of reality. Now in the new covenant we have the real thing to replace the shadows.

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

As we consider the matters of the old and new covenant, we must know the difference between a promise, an oath, a covenant, and a testament. A promise is an ordinary word spoken by God promising you that He will do something for you. An oath is a confirmation of an ordinary word. God confirmed His ordinary word of promise by means of His oath (6:13, 17). When the promise has been confirmed by an oath, it immediately becomes a covenant. What we have received from God is not just an ordinary word as a promise but a covenant, a contract, confirmed by God's oath and sealed with His divine being. A covenant always binds people more than a promise does. In this binding covenant there are four things which are no longer promises but accomplished facts. All of these facts are clearly itemized in the covenant. The One who made the covenant died so that the covenant might become a bequeathed will, that is, a testament. Now the covenant is no longer merely a covenant but a testament bequeathed by the One who enacted the covenant. In this bequeathed testament, the four accomplished items have all become bequests. Thus, we do not need to wait for the accomplishment of these things or to pray that God will be

faithful to remember His promise and keep His word. We do not need to pray because everything has been accomplished. Each of the four items is an accomplished fact that has been bequeathed to us. These four items are not only promises and facts but also bequests that we may inherit, participate in, and enjoy. What we have today is not a promise or even merely a covenant, but a testament, a will, which is an advanced covenant. An advanced covenant is one that is bequeathed with the accomplished facts, which are the fulfilled promises. When the promise has been fulfilled, it becomes the covenant, and when the covenant has been bequeathed, it becomes the testament. In the promise we have the promised matters, in the covenant we have the accomplished facts, and in the testament we have the accomplished facts bequeathed as bequests. Do not pray that God will fulfill His promises or that He will give you the facts. All of the promises have become accomplished facts, and all of the accomplished facts have been bequeathed to us. We should simply take them and enjoy them.

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

actually it is a foolish prayer.

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

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

The fourth bequest is the inner ability to know God. Do you believe that we have the inner ability to know God? How could you prove to me that we have such an inner ability? It cannot be proved by doctrine, but it can be proved by our experience. Suppose a sister goes shopping and sees many items on sale. As she is about to purchase a particular item, something within her says, "Don't touch it. God doesn't like that." When she goes on to choose another

item, something within says, "God doesn't like this either." I believe that nearly every sister has had this kind of experience, showing that the sisters have the inner ability to know God. You cannot deny that you have this ability.

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

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

I. THE OLD COVENANT

A. Having Fault

In order to see the new covenant we must first see the old covenant. Hebrews 8:7 says, "For if that first covenant was faultless, no place would have been sought for a second." The old covenant had fault because it was weak and unprofitable (7:18). Why was it unprofitable? Because it was only a photograph of the reality and not the reality itself. Moreover, the old covenant perfected nothing (7:19).

The old covenant could not perfect anything because it was merely a shadow. Suppose I sent you my photograph and you believed in it and said to it, "Brother Lee, talk to me. Don't you know that I love you? Why don't you love me? What's the matter with you, Brother Lee? I have talked so much to you, but you won't say a word to me." How foolish it would be for us to address a photograph in this way. But many of the Judaizers were just this foolish, dealing with the picture, the old covenant, and expecting much from it in return. The prophet Jeremiah, however, prophesied that there would be a better covenant (Jer. 31:33-34). The prophecy of Jeremiah came about because fault, weakness, and unprofitableness were found in the old covenant.

B. Becoming Old and Growing Decrepit

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

II. THE NEW COVENANT

A. A Better Covenant

Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant (8:6). The new covenant is better than the old covenant, just as the

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

B. Enacted Upon Better Promises

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

C. Replacing the Old Covenant

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

D. The Contents

1. Imparting of the Law of Life

a. One Law Becoming Many Laws

What are the contents of the new covenant? The contents include four things, the first of which is the

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

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

b. Imparted into Our Inward Parts

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

c. Inscribed on Our Hearts

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

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

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

It is very difficult, for example, to find a verse in the New Testament which tells us what time God wants us to get up in the morning. How then shall we know what time to get up? We shall not know it by any regulation of letters outwardly but according to the inner life. When tomorrow morning comes, the inner life will tell us what time God wants us to get up. If we do not rise up at that time, we

shall miss God's presence. Another example is the matter of getting a haircut. All of the young people should realize that we are God's people. As God's people, how should we cut our hair? Since the term haircut is not found in the Bible, how can we know how short or how long to cut our hair? We know it by the law of life. If we go according to the inner law of life, we shall know how short or how long our hair should be.

3. Inward Ability of Knowing the Lord

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

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

4. Propitiation for Our Unrighteousnesses and Forgiveness of Our Sins

The last of the contents of the new covenant is propitiation for our unrighteousnesses and forgiveness of our sins. Hebrews 8:12 says, "I will be propitious to their unrighteousnesses, and their sins I will by no means remember anymore." To be propitious is to make propitiation for our sins. Christ made propitiation for our sins to appease God's righteousness, to reconcile us by

satisfying the demand of God's righteousness (2:17). God is propitious to us because Christ has made propitiation for our sins. Based upon this propitiation, God forgives our sins. In 8:12 we are told by the Lord that "their sins I will by no means remember anymore." Here we see that God will forget our sins. To forgive means to forget, for the forgetting of sins is the real forgiveness of sins. If you forgive me, it means that you must forget my faults. Without forgetting, forgiveness is not real. God not only forgives us our sins but also forgets our sins.

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

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SEVEN

THE LAW OF LIFE

In this message we come to a very crucial matter in Hebrews 8--the law of life. The crucial matter in Hebrews 7 was the indestructible life, and the crucial matter here in Hebrews 8 is the law of life. The focus of Hebrews 8 is the law of life. Although the words, "the law of life," are not found in this chapter, what is revealed in this chapter essentially is the law of life. How do we know that the law mentioned in Hebrews 8 is the law of life? Because we are told in verse 10 that God will impart His laws into our mind and inscribe them on our hearts. Anything that can be imparted into our inward being must be life. Anything that is not life could never be wrought into our inward being. Therefore, according to the context of Hebrews 8, what is indicated by the word law must be the law of life. Please keep in mind that the law of life is the focus, the heart, of this whole chapter.

In this chapter we also have another five wonderful things: the heavenly Minister, the heavenly tabernacle, the more excellent ministry, the better covenant, and the better promises. The better promises produce the better covenant, and within the better covenant is the heavenly Minister who has a more excellent ministry in the heavenly tabernacle. Hence, we have five things--promises, covenant, Minister, ministry, and tabernacle.

In the Old Testament, the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the old covenant, that is, the law, were combined to fulfill God's economy in the way of shadows. These three things give us a clear picture of the heavenly Minister with a more excellent ministry in the heavenly tabernacle and of the better covenant consummated upon better promises for

the fulfillment of God's economy, not in the way of shadows but in the way of reality. The heavenly tabernacle, the heavenly Minister, and the new covenant are combined for the fulfillment of God's economy in the way of reality. This is the matter on which we are dwelling in this message. The heavenly tabernacle, as we have seen, is joined to our spirit. Since the heavenly tabernacle is joined to our spirit, the heavenly Minister of the better covenant is also joined to our spirit. Right now the heavenly Minister is doing His duty of ministering under the better covenant. This is the central thought here: the heavenly Minister doing His ministry in the heavenly tabernacle under the new covenant. This new covenant, which is called the better covenant, has been consummated upon the better promises, the promises found in Jeremiah 31.

The contents of the better covenant include four items: the imparting of the law of life into our being; having God as our God and being His people; the inward ability to know the Lord; and the propitiation for unrighteousnesses and the forgiveness of sins. All of these four items are focused on the law of life. In this message we need to see what the law of life is.

Before we can see what the law of life is, we must consider some other things that are the necessary background for our seeing this. Throughout the years we have repeatedly mentioned one central point: that God's eternal purpose is to dispense Himself into us in order to make us His living expression. God has done this. Although certain negative things, such as Satan and sin, have come in, these have all become past history because of the all-inclusive crucifixion of Christ. The all-inclusive Christ has terminated all the negative things by His all-inclusive crucifixion. Thus, Satan and sin are a history. Very few Christians today realize that these things are histories. They think that these things are still entangling and bothering them. But that is a lie--these negative things are a history. When we all get into the New Jerusalem, we shall laugh at Satan and say, "Satan, now I know that you

are just a history. As far as I am concerned, you are nothing. I am in a new region, in the new realm of the new heaven and new earth. Satan, I am in the New Jerusalem, and you are a history." What has made all of these things a history? The all-inclusive crucifixion of Christ.

Our new birth, our regeneration, is also a history. We were regenerated nineteen and a half centuries ago when Christ was raised from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3). According to your feeling, you were reborn some years ago, but according to God's divine point of view, you were reborn nineteen and a half centuries ago. Since we were reborn when Christ was resurrected from the dead, our rebirth is a history. When we were regenerated, the inward ability to know God was imparted into us. This also occurred nineteen and a half centuries ago. All of these items have become accomplished facts that have been bequeathed to us as our bequests. If our eyes have been opened, we shall not need to pray but simply say, "Lord, thank You for Your bequests. Thank You for Your will. I just take it, receive it, and enjoy it."

If we see that the New Testament is actually a testament, a will, we shall preach the gospel in the highest way. We would speak to people in this way, saying, "Friends, here is a testament, a will. It is Jesus Christ's will. This will says that many bequests are yours. One bequest is that all of your sins have been taken away by Him. Before you even committed your sins, they were already forgiven by God and put away. Another bequest is that before you were born of your parents, nineteen and a half centuries ago you were reborn, and the divine life was imparted into you. It does not matter whether you understand this or not. All you need to do is receive the will and thank the Lord. Say, 'Thank You, Lord, for the will and for all the bequests. Thank You, Lord, for the forgiveness of sins and for regeneration.'" The more the newly saved ones thank the Lord for His testament, for the forgiveness of sins, for their regeneration, and for all the other bequests, the more anointing they will have and the more riches of

life they will possess. This is the highest preaching of the gospel. In order to preach the gospel in this way, we need to have a clear view of the testament and we need the power of the Spirit with the anointing. When we preach the gospel in such a high way, people will not reject it. They will be happy to receive it and say, "Praise the Lord! Thank You, Lord for all these bequests." If a poor sinner would do this, he would immediately become a millionaire. I expect that one day we shall see this kind of high preaching of the gospel.

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE LAW OF LIFE

Now we come to the law of life. The focus of the heavenly tabernacle, the heavenly Minister, the more excellent ministry, the better covenant, and the better promises is on the law of life. What is the origin of the law of life? The origin of the law of life is life. Then what is life? Life is just God Himself. When God is expressed, He is the Son (1:3a, 8a). When the Son, who is God Himself, is realized as the Spirit, He is life to us (2 Cor. 3:17a; 1 Cor. 15:45b). Life is God in Christ as the Spirit coming into our being. Thus, the Spirit is called the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2), which is the eternal and divine life. Out of this life, the law of life comes through the regeneration of the Spirit of life (John 3:5-6). When we were regenerated by the Spirit of life, the eternal and divine life was imparted into us, out of which the law of life comes to exist in our inward being.

II. THE DEFINITION OF THE LAW OF LIFE

What is the law of life? A law is a natural regulation, a constant and unchanging rule. A law of life is the natural characteristic, the innate, automatic function of a certain kind of life, and the higher a life is, the higher is its law. The law of the divine life is then the natural characteristic, the innate, automatic function of the life of God, and since the life of God is the highest, its law is the highest. This highest law of life is the function, the working, of the divine

life. This function and working are innate, spontaneous, natural, and automatic.

With any kind of life, whether it be vegetable, animal, human, or divine, there is a function. Anything that does not have a function must not be life. Consider the example of a peach tree: its function is to blossom and to bring forth peaches. Likewise, a dog has the function of barking, and a cat has the function of catching mice. Every life has an automatic and innate function, and this innate function is the law of that life. As long as a peach tree is functioning, it will bring forth peaches; it will never bring forth anything else. Bringing forth peaches is the law of the peach tree. There is no need for a farmer to teach a peach tree, saying, "Little peach tree, you must know my desire is that you produce peaches. I don't want anything else." If that peach tree could talk, it would say, "Sir, go home and rest. You don't need to teach me. Don't you know that in my peach-tree life there is the peach-bearing law? There is a law in my peach-tree life that keeps me from bringing forth any other kind of fruit. It causes me to bring forth peaches, just the fruit that you desire." In like manner, a cat catches mice because in its life is the mouse-catching law, and a dog barks because in its life is the barking law. What is the law of life? It is the innate, automatic function of the divine life. The divine life is living, active, and aggressive. This life is always acting, and whenever it acts it functions according to the automatic law of life.

God's intention is to dispense Himself into us as our life. He has done this and right now He is in us as our life. This life, the life on the highest plane, is the most active life. When this life functions, it regulates. In a good and positive sense, His working is His regulating, for the working of the divine life within us is its regulating. This is the law of life.

III. THE LOCATION OF THE LAW OF LIFE

According to verse 10 of this chapter, the law of life has been imparted into our inward being. Jeremiah 31:33, from

which this verse is quoted, says that the law of life is put into our inward parts and written in our hearts. Hebrews 8:10 says that the law of life is put into our mind, proving that the mind is one of our inward parts. Our inward parts include not only the mind but also the emotions and the will, which, along with the conscience, are the composition of our heart mentioned in the following clause in this verse. Hence, the law of life is located in our inward parts, the parts of our heart--conscience, mind, will, and emotion--that is, in our heart, the composition and the totality of our inward parts.

The life of God has been imparted into our spirit. Based upon this fact, the law of this life must firstly be in our spirit as one law. Then from our spirit it spreads into the inward parts of our heart and becomes many laws. It is one law in being in our spirit and it becomes many laws in function in the many parts of our heart. This is why in Jeremiah 31:33 it is "law" and in verse 10 here it becomes "laws."

IV. THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW OF LIFE

The function of the law of life is to take away, to kill, the old element of Adam and to add in, to supply, the new element of Christ. While the law of the divine life works and regulates in our inward parts, it kills and takes away the old things of our natural being. It does have the power to reduce all the negative things in our natural man. At the same time, it adds in and supplies the divine element of the new creation, bringing the riches of Christ into our being. While it reduces the old element of Adam from us, it adds in the new element of Christ to us. While it takes away the old, it replaces it with the new. It performs a kind of metabolism in the Christian life and accomplishes the transformation of life for us.

V. THE POWER OF THE LAW OF LIFE

The law of letters is of impossibility, perfecting nothing (Rom. 8:3, Heb. 7:19), but the law of life is of "the power of

an indestructible life," perfecting everything for us in fulfilling God's purpose (Heb. 7:16). In the old covenant, the law of letters was weak and could not possibly perfect anything. It was merely a type of the law of life. Like a lifeless photograph of a lively person, it had the form but not the life. It showed people something, but it could do nothing for them. But in the new covenant, the law of life is powerful; it is of the power of an indestructible life that is able to perfect everything for us in God's economy. It is no longer merely a form; it has the divine life as its essence for reality. It not only shows us the things but also accomplishes them for us. Whatever it requires it can fulfill.

VI. THE ISSUE OF THE LAW OF LIFE

As the function of the law of life accomplishes metabolically the transformation of life for us, so the issue of the law of life is that we are transformed and conformed to the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29) and that Christ is formed in us. The transformation in life and the conformation to Christ depend upon the function of the law of life and are the issue of the work of the law of life. Christ can only be formed in us by the regulating of the law of life. The regulating of the law of the divine life brings the riches of Christ into our life and forms Christ in our being.

VII. GOD'S DESIRE IN THE LAW OF LIFE

God is not only our God but also our Father. Hence, He desires to be our God in the law of life. We are not only God's creatures but also His children. Hence, He desires us to be His people in the law of life. God does not desire only to be our God according to the outward law of letter; He desires to be our Father according to the inward law of life. Nothing of the keeping of the outward law of letter can satisfy God's desire. He can only be pleased by our living according to the inward law of life. And He does not desire

to have us only as His creatures without His life but also as His children with His life. Hence, He wants us to be His people in the law of life, living not according to the outward law of letter but according to the inward law of life. Both His relationship to us and ours to Him should be a relationship maintained in the law of life. With the law of letter there was nothing but death. With the law of life there is no death but life. Only life can satisfy the divine desire.

We have seen that the divine priesthood is the presence of life and the absence of death and that it saves us from all of the by-products of death and brings us into glory. The divine priesthood saves us to the uttermost, meaning that it brings us into complete perfection, into glorification. But this saving, this working, is not objective; it is absolutely subjective. Yes, Christ is the divine High Priest on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high. But we must remember that when He was resurrected from the dead nineteen and a half centuries ago, being born as the Firstborn Son of God, He imparted His life into all of God's chosen and marked-out people. Although at that time we had not yet decided to believe in the Lord, we had already been marked out by God in eternity past before the foundation of the world. If you do not believe this word now, you will believe it when you come into the New Jerusalem. God marked us out, and Christ imparted His life into us. God and Christ can never be wrong; they can never make a mistake. To say that God made a mistake in selecting us is an insult to God. How could God make a mistake? Although we are unworthy and do not deserve anything, God selected us and premarked us, and Christ, the Firstborn Son, imparted Himself into us as life. We must have this vision to see God's economy so clearly. Forget about your feelings, understanding, and realization and come back to the pure Word and receive the clear vision. Whatever God does is eternal and has no element of time or space. God's choosing of us was eternal; there is no time element involved here. None of us is here by accident.

It was prearranged by our Father. He made that decision before the earth was made.

After Christ imparted Himself into us, He went to sit on the throne in the heavens. In some of our past ministry we said that after Christ went into the heavens, He came down into us. Although this is right in a sense, it is only right according to our point of view. Looking at this matter from a higher point of view, we can see that Christ did not first ascend into the heavens and then come down to get into us but that before He ascended to the heavens, at the time of His resurrection, He imparted Himself into us as life already. Once He entered into the heavens, He had nothing left to do because He had already accomplished everything. Everything was finished. He had made purification of sins and had imparted Himself into all of God's marked-out people.

What is Christ doing as He sits in the heavens? He is interceding. Perhaps Christ would say of a certain premarked one, "Father, look at that one. He has been marked out by You and I have imparted My life into him, but he is still wandering. Father, bring him home." Soon afterward, some Christian friends invite him to a meeting of the church and he is captured. After that, the interceding Christ on the throne might say, "It is good that this dear one has come home, but, Father, You must do something further in him. The life in him has not been developed. It needs to develop, function, and work." Then in the next meeting this dear one stands up and says, "Lord Jesus, I love You. I consecrate myself to You." The life functions because of Christ's invisible intercession. As Romans 8:34 makes clear, after ascending to the heavens, Christ is there interceding for us. Such a perfected, qualified, equipped, and Almighty One is interceding for us. After a few days, the interceding Christ may say of this dear one, "Father, he is functioning now, but he is not mature. He is still so young." Suddenly in a meeting this brother stands up and prays, "Lord, You know that I am still so young. I am not yet mature. Lord, I want to

mature." His prayer corresponds to the heavenly intercession. It seems that the prayer originated with him, but actually it was a quotation of the heavenly intercession. Many times our utterances in prayer or praise are quotations of the heavenly intercession. Such utterances are not originated or initiated by us but by Christ's intercession. Perhaps this same brother is touched one morning concerning his selfishness, having the deep conviction that he is full of self. He may think that this is the reaction to a certain message, not realizing that this also is a reaction to the heavenly intercession. Whatever happens to us in our spiritual life is either a quotation of the heavenly intercession or a reaction to it.

Christ is in heaven interceding for us all. The purpose of His intercession is that the divine life within us, which is just Himself, may develop in our whole being and that its law of life may spread into our inward parts and become many laws regulating us in every aspect. One of these laws must get into our mind to regulate it and to renew it completely. You may think that the renewing of the mind is due to the teachings and messages that you hear in the church life. Actually this is not so; the renewing of the mind does not come from without but from one of the many laws of the divine life within you. When your mind is renewed by the law of life, it will be revolutionized, and you will never think the way you did before. All of your considerations will be fully renewed by the regulating law of the working life within you. This simply means that the divine life has grown from your spirit into your mind.

Another of these many laws will get into our emotion and saturate it. Whether our emotion is cold or hot, one of the laws will penetrate our emotion and regulate it with the nature of Christ's emotion, bringing the element of the emotion of Christ into our emotion. In a sense, our emotion will be remade, having been saturated with the element of Christ's emotion. We shall never love or hate as we did before. Everything that we do out of our emotion will be absolutely revolutionized. In particular, our love will be

regulated, permeated, transformed, and remade. This is the growth of the life of Christ into our emotion.

In the same principle, one of these working laws will permeate our will. Whether our will is naturally stubborn or submissive makes no difference, for neither is useful for the life of Christ. In the past I have seen some very stubborn wills and some submissive wills. While most of the elders in the churches love the submissive wills, I am just as bothered by the submissive wills as by the stubborn wills. According to our human feeling, we all love a submissive will, but as long as a submissive will is a natural will, it is not adequate. It does not matter whether our will is stubborn, submissive, or neutral. As long as it is our will, it is useless for the life of Christ. The working of the law of the divine life must permeate our will. Although I have heard many people say, "I hate my stubborn will," I have never heard anyone say, "I hate my submissive will." We all must learn to say, "I hate my stubborn will, my submissive will, and my neutral will. I just hate my will. I don't care whether my will is stubborn, submissive, or neutral. As long as it is my will, I hate it because it is natural." As the law of the divine life works in us, one of its functions will saturate our will with the will of Christ, making His will ours. In this way our will is remade with the very element of Christ's will. This means that Christ's life will grow into our will. Eventually, in our mind, emotion, and will there will be the growth of the life of Christ.

This permeation, this saturation, is what it means to be saved into perfection. Christ's saving us to the uttermost does not mean that we are on earth, having nothing of Him, and that He is far away in the heavens unrelated to us, interceding for us until we pray and He answers our prayer by stretching out His hand to save us. That is a religious concept. We need to see that on the cross Christ put away our sins, that in His resurrection He imparted Himself as life into all of us, and that now He is sitting on the throne of God in the heavens interceding for us. On the

one hand, He is in our spirit as our life growing; on the other hand, He is on the throne in the heavens interceding for the growth and development of the seed that He has sown within us. This is the subjectively objective Christ for our experience. It is in this way that His divine life functions within us. Every bit of the function of His life is a regulation of its law. Some of these life functions will spread into our mind and others will permeate our emotion and will. This is the work of the law of life.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THIRTY-EIGHT

THE WORKING OF THE LAW OF LIFE

I. THE STANDARD MODEL-- THE FIRSTBORN SON OF GOD

God's eternal purpose is to work Himself into us and make us the same as His Firstborn Son. The Firstborn Son of God is the standard model for God's economy. This standard model has both divinity and humanity. Originally, He was the Only Begotten Son of God. As the Only Begotten Son of God, He was the embodiment of God, for all that is in the Godhead was embodied in Him (Col. 2:9). He was also the expression of God (Heb. 1:3). As the embodiment and expression of God, He became incarnated, bringing divinity into humanity and joining humanity to divinity. But before the incarnation, divinity had never been joined to humanity. Since the day of His incarnation, there was in this universe a wonderful Person who was both human and divine.

The Lord Jesus lived on earth for thirty three and a half years. On some occasions He exercised His divinity, but most of the time He lived out His humanity. People mostly saw Him as a man, as a proper, perfect, and extraordinary man. His extraordinary quality was His divinity. One day, He went to the cross to put away sin. At the same time, He destroyed Satan, the source of sin. As the Lord destroyed sin and Satan, He tasted death (Heb. 2:9), and by tasting death He swallowed it. Through the Lord's all-inclusive death, every negative thing in the whole universe, including sin, Satan, and death, was terminated and made a history. After His crucifixion, the Lord rested for three days. According to the Bible, while He was resting in the grave, He took a tour of Hades, offering it the opportunity

to do everything to Him and proving that it could do nothing with Him. After His rest and His tour, He walked out of Hades and arose from the tomb, coming forth in His resurrection. By His resurrection, He was born with His humanity into the divine sonship and became the Firstborn Son of God. The most striking thing about Christ as the Firstborn Son of God is that with Him all the negative things, including sin, Satan, and death, have become a history. He is a person who has divinity mingled with an uplifted humanity and who has humanity that is one with divinity. Ultimately, He entered into glory, even into glorification. Being in glorification is superior to being in glory, because being in glory does not require a process, whereas being in glorification does. The Lord Jesus, as the Firstborn Son of God, has passed through a process to enter into glory. That was His glorification.

As the Only Begotten Son, Christ was already in glory. That did not require glorification. However, once He was on earth in His humanity, He needed to be glorified. Therefore, as John 17:1 reveals, during the last night of His life on earth, He prayed, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You" (Recovery Version). Since He was already in glory, why did He still need to be glorified? Although He was in glory as the Only Begotten Son, since He had put on humanity, the human part of His being had to be glorified, to be processed into glory. In His resurrection Christ entered into His glorification (Luke 24:26).

Few Christians realize that ultimately in the New Testament the word perfection means glorification. Regardless how perfect you may be, if you have not been glorified, you are still not adequate. The book of Romans reveals that in the economy of God we have firstly justification, then sanctification, and finally glorification. Romans does not mention perfection. Both glorification and perfection, however, are found in Hebrews. Hebrews 2:9-10, which says that Christ, the Captain of our salvation, has been crowned with glory, refers to both perfection and

glorification. His perfection was His glorification, the very glorification revealed in Romans 8. According to Romans 8, the last step of God's salvation is to glorify us, and according to Hebrews 2, it is through the Captain of our salvation that we are being brought into glory.

On the throne, as well as in our spirit, there is a glorified Man, a Man who has been fully perfected. Some saints, such as John Wesley and those with him, practiced what is called sinless perfection. According to the concept of sinless perfection, if you do not lie or lose your temper but love others and are humble, you have attained perfection. But this is a very low concept of perfection. I would ask you to compare this with the perfection of the glorified Jesus. The perfection of the glorified Jesus is that of divinity mingled with a humanity that has been tested, resurrected, uplifted, and glorified.

At this point I want to introduce a new word--sonized. After passing through all the tests and after being resurrected and uplifted, the humanity of Jesus was "sonized." This means that it was brought into the divine sonship. Although Christ was the Son of God, before His resurrection He was clothed with humanity, which was unrelated to that sonship. One day, He brought this humanity into, through, and out of death, and it was resurrected by the power of the divine life according to the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4). Through this process, His humanity was sonized into God's divine sonship. Thus, with His resurrected and uplifted humanity He was born in resurrection as the Firstborn Son of God. This is the meaning of Acts 13:33: "God...hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

Such a sonized One is now the standard model. This standard model has attained perfection--a perfection with divinity, with an uplifted humanity, and with all negative things having become a history. We need to lift up our eyes and gaze at this standard model. As we look at Him, we

behold His divinity and His sonized humanity. All the negative things are now on the other side of the river and have become a history. But the standard model is in glorification and exaltation on the golden side of the river, where there is no sin, death, Satan, or any other negative thing. Now there is a Man in the glory, a Man in perfection. What kind of perfection can compare with this? The so-called sinless perfection is in the basement, while this glorious perfection is in the Holy of Holies.

What is perfection? Perfection is glorification. In this perfection is the Man who has divinity, who has a humanity that has been sonized as the Firstborn Son of God, and who is now in His glorification. With Him, all the negative things are a history, having been left on the other side of the river. This is perfection and this is glorification. In the New Testament, glorification is the equivalent of perfection. Christ, the standard model, is now in such a perfection, and we are on the way.

II. THE PRODUCTION OF THE MANY SONS OF GOD

When this standard model was resurrected, being born in His humanity to be the Firstborn Son of God, He included us (1 Pet. 1:3). When He was sonized in His humanity, in His resurrection, we were born as sons of God. We need to forget time. There is no clock in heaven, and there will be no watches in eternity. Although we may not be able to understand this, we should simply accept it. According to the pure word of the Holy Bible, when Christ was resurrected, He imparted Himself into us as life, and we were reborn. After imparting Himself into us as life, Christ entered into perfection, into glory, where He is now interceding for our glorification.

Christ is interceding for us to be saved to the uttermost. Although I have heard many messages saying that Christ is interceding for us, I have not heard one message which said that Christ is interceding for us to be brought into perfection. Many pastors use Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25 concerning Christ's interceding to comfort those who

are in difficulty. But Christ is not interceding merely for us to have comfort. Such a concept of His intercession is too low. Christ is interceding for us to be glorified and to be saved into His perfection.

What does it mean to be brought into Christ's perfection? It is to eliminate all the by-products of death, to swallow up all vanity, corruption, groaning, and decay. Christ is interceding that this work may be accomplished. His intercession on the throne motivates the life seed that He sowed into us at the time of His resurrection.

Suppose you have overcome every sin. You are peaceful, comfortable, and have no trouble with anyone or anything. If you would have attained such a height, do you suppose that you would be happy, content, and satisfied? I certainly would not be. What is the good of only overcoming sin and having no difficulties? If we only have this, we are, at most, just like a piece of blank white paper. Is this the meaning and goal of our life? This kind of perfection is meaningless. The perfection revealed in the New Testament, however, is to have our whole being processed into Christ's glorification, to have our entire being permeated and saturated with His uplifted and glorified being. Overcoming sin, having patience, loving others--all this is in a different category of perfection from that revealed in the New Testament. Christ is interceding that the life which He has sown into our spirit may be motivated to grow, develop, and saturate all our inward parts, until we are completely permeated with His glorified and uplifted being. When this is completed, that will be the day of the redemption of our body, of the manifestation of the sons of God, and of the freedom of glory for the whole universe. In that day there will be no more groaning, vanity, bondage or corruption. This is glorification.

III. THE WORKING OF THE LAW OF LIFE

Now we come again to the law of life. The law of life is working Christ, the standard model, into every part of our being, saturating our inward parts with all that He is. This

is what the New Testament calls transformation. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, that you may prove by testing what the will of God is, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect" (Recovery Version). How can our mind be renewed? Only by the working of the law of life which saturates us with what the standard model is and makes us a reproduction, a reprint, of Him. Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding and reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit" (Gk.). This is the issue of the working of the law of life within us. Eventually, as Romans 8:29 says, the working of the law of life will conform us to the image of God's Firstborn Son. All the brothers of the Firstborn will be conformed to Him. The Firstborn Son of God, the standard model, is today in perfection and in glorification, but we are not yet there. We are on the way and under the process. As the Firstborn Son intercedes for us, His interceding will motivate our inner life seed to develop, grow, and permeate our being so that we may be transformed and conformed to His image and ultimately be brought into His perfection and glorification. This comes from the working of the law of life.

IV. THE INNER SENSE OF LIFE

While the law of life is working within us, we have a deeper consciousness of life. His intercession very effectively motivates our inner seed. How do we know that our inner seed has been motivated? By our inner sense, our inner consciousness. Although you may feel too tired to attend a particular church meeting, the seed within will not let you sleep. By the inward "pum, pum, pum," the energizing of the heavenly intercession, you realize that you must go to that meeting. Sometimes, when we are attracted to the worldly things, the inward "pum, pum, pum" gives us no rest, and we find ourselves doing what the Lord desires. What a mercy this is! I have the full

assurance that in the coming years the heavenly "pum, pum, pum" will accomplish a great deal in the Lord's recovery. We will never be satisfied with what we have seen in the past. This ministry will be higher and richer. The Lord will use the churches and the messages to gather together His true seekers to be His testimony to the whole earth. Everything in the Bible concerning the church will be fulfilled before the Lord comes back. Deep within, we all have the sense that nothing but this standard model can satisfy us. We cannot be happy unless we are saturated with Him. This is a strong proof that He is interceding for us to be glorified, to be brought into His perfection.

V. THE CORPORATE REPRODUCTION OF THE STANDARD MODEL

God's eternal purpose is to have a group of sons as His corporate expression. Firstly, His Only Begotten Son passed through the process and entered into glory, having been fully perfected to be the standard model, the Firstborn Son of God, for God's expression. Since the time of Christ's ascension, God has been working to have a mass reproduction of that standard model, His Firstborn Son. During the centuries, few Christians have seen this and, as a result, the Lord has been delayed. Although there are millions of Christians on earth today, there are not many reproductions of the standard model. In His recovery, the Lord is reproducing the standard model, working desperately among us to make every one of us the same as the Firstborn Son. This is what it means to be perfected. For perfection, we need divinity, an uplifted, resurrected humanity, and the terminating crucifixion. Our perfection must include the terminating crucifixion of Christ, for His all-inclusive death puts all the negative things on the other side of the river as a history. We also need to have every inward part of our being permeated with all that He is. Even the smallest part of our being must be saturated with Him. All these are the elements of our perfection. When all this has been wrought into us, we shall have a thorough

transformation and be completely conformed to His image. This is glorification, perfection, and the reproduction, the reprint, of the model Son.

The crucial point in all this is the law of life, the working of the divine life within us. The law of life, which is the innate, automatic working of the divine life, is doing a perfecting work within us, gradually infusing us with divinity, eliminating all the negative things, and imparting all that Christ is into our being. In other words, by the law of life the Lord is renewing us, transforming us, and conforming us to His image. When this process has been completed, He will come to redeem our body, transfiguring our vile body into a glorious one (Phil. 3:21). We are now under the process of the working of the law of the divine life.

The law of life is now working to renew us from within. Ephesians 4:22-24 tells us to be renewed in the spirit of our mind that we may put off the old man and put on the new man. According to Ephesians 2:15, the new man is the church. To put on the new man is to put on the church. The new man is the practical church life, the corporate reproduction of the standard model. We are now in the process of being renewed in the spirit of our mind, and gradually we are putting on the new man. This renewing of the mind and putting on of the new man, the church, is the issue of the working of the law of life.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE THIRTY-NINE

THE TYPE OF THE OLD COVENANT AND THE REALITY OF THE NEW COVENANT

In this message we come to Hebrews 9:1-15, a passage of Scripture which is very difficult to understand. In 9:1-3 we see that there were two tabernacles. Hebrews 9:1 says, "Then indeed the first covenant has ordinances of service, and its sanctuary, a sanctuary of this world." The sanctuary here is the entire tabernacle (Exo. 25:8-9), including the first tabernacle which is called the Holy Place (v. 2) and the second tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies (v. 3). Verse 2 says, "For a tabernacle was prepared, the first, in which were both the lampstand and the table and the loaves set forth, which is called the Holy Place." When I read this verse in the past, I was bothered. According to the knowledge that I had of Exodus, there was only one tabernacle. If there was only one tabernacle, how then could this verse speak of "the first"? By the term "Holy Place" in this verse we can understand that the first tabernacle was that part of the unique tabernacle which was called the Holy Place. Verse 3 says, "And after the second veil, a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies." The Holy of Holies was the second tabernacle. Hence, we have the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, and the second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies.

These two tabernacles are symbols of two covenants. The Holy Place is a symbol of the old covenant and the Holy of Holies a symbol of the new covenant. Although it is difficult to realize the true significance of these covenants, it is easy to understand them if we consider the tabernacle. According to 9:2, in the Holy Place, the symbol of the old covenant, there were the lampstand and the table. These two things were good, but they were far off from God's presence. Although a person could find nourishment at the

table and enlightenment at the lampstand, he had no way to contact God. In the Holy Place there was neither God's presence nor the way to come into His presence. Moreover, in the Holy Place there was no oracle, no place for the divine speaking of God. Where there is the oracle, there is God's speaking. But in the Holy Place there was no divine speaking. Furthermore, there was no meeting with God in the Holy Place. The highest blessing is to meet with God. However, no one in the Holy Place could say that there he was meeting with God, for there was no way to meet Him in the Holy Place. Therefore, with respect to the Holy Place, there were four no's: no presence of God, no way to contact God, no oracle for the speaking of God, and no meeting with God.

This is a true picture of today's religion. When you were in the denominations, did you have either the presence of God or the way to come into His presence? Did you have the oracle where there was the divine speaking? Although there was a pulpit and the speaking of a theologian, there was no oracle with the divine speaking. Then how about meeting with God? Although the Holy Place is good and in it we may have nourishment and enlightenment, there is no presence of God, no way to come into His presence, no divine speaking, and no meeting with God. How pitiful!

We need to remember that the book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrew Christians who were staggering in the Holy Place. They were uncertain whether to come forward to the Holy of Holies or to shrink back from the Holy Place to the outer court. This means that they were on the border between the old covenant and the new covenant. The writer of Hebrews was marvelous and full of patience; he did not write superficially but in a very deep way. His writing was so deep that during the past nineteen centuries most of his readers have not fully realized what he said.

We have seen that the Holy of Holies signified the new covenant. What was in the Holy of Holies? Hebrews 9:4 speaks of the Holy of Holies as "having a golden altar." The golden altar, which was the incense altar, was not in

the

Holy of Holies, but it belonged to the Holy of Holies. Notice that it does not say that the incense altar was in the Holy of Holies, but that the Holy of Holies had the incense altar. What is the function of the incense altar? It provides the way to come into God's presence. The incense altar signifies the proper prayer with Christ in resurrection as the incense for our acceptance. Hence, it is the entrance into God's presence. When I was in religion as a youth, I was taught to pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." Although we prayed a great deal in that way, we never entered into the Holy of Holies. Actually, the more we prayed in that way, the more we remained in the outer court, or even outside the outer court. That is not the experience of the incense altar. When we pray in the Lord's name with Him as the fragrant resurrection frankincense, we immediately enter into the Holy of Holies.

In 9:4 we see that in the Holy of Holies was also "the ark of the covenant covered round in every part with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant." Above the ark were "cherubim of glory overshadowing the propitiation-cover" (v. 5). Here in the Holy of Holies we not only have the entrance into God's presence but God's presence itself. Over the ark was the lid called the propitiation-cover, which was the place of the divine oracle of God's speaking. It is here that we have God's speaking. It is here that we meet with God and have fellowship and communion with Him. This is the new covenant symbolized by the Holy of Holies.

We all need to consider where we are. Are we Christians in a place where there is some amount of nourishment and enlightenment but no entrance into God's presence, no presence of God, no speaking of God, and no way to meet with God? Are we in that place or in the place where it is so easy to come into God's presence, have His speaking, and meet and have fellowship with Him? If you are in this place, then you are in the Holy of Holies.

The two tabernacles are not only symbols of two covenants but also types of two ages, two dispensations--

the old testament dispensation and the new testament dispensation. If you are in the Holy Place, it means that you are in the old age, in the old dispensation. If you are in the Holy of Holies, then you are in the new age, in the new dispensation. At this point we need to read verses 8 and 9. "The Holy Spirit showing by this, that the way of the Holy of Holies has not yet been manifested while the first tabernacle still has its standing; which is a figure for the present time, according to which both gifts and sacrifices are offered, which, as to the conscience, are unable to perfect him who serves." The word "which" at the beginning of verse 9 refers to the tabernacle mentioned in verse 8. This tabernacle was a "figure for the present time," a type of an age, a dispensation. The "present time" means the new testament age, not the old testament age then present as indicated by the words "then present" in the King James translation. There are different translations of verse 9. Some render "the time then present" for "the present time," considering that this refers to the old testament age. But according to the Greek, the tabernacle is "a figure of the present time," which is the new testament age. By this one verse we are certain that the Holy Place was a type of an age. In this principle, the Holy of Holies must also be a symbol of an age.

The Holy Place was a symbol of the old covenant, which covered the entire old testament age. Eventually, the old covenant and the old testament age are one and the same. When a person was under the old covenant, he was in the old testament age. When he came into the new covenant, he came into the new testament age. The covenant and the age are one; they are inseparable. Without the age, there is no practical application of the covenant. The Holy Place, symbolizing the old covenant, symbolizes the old testament age. The Holy of Holies, symbolizing the new covenant, symbolizes the new testament age. Now the difficult point to understand is this: what is realized today in the new testament age was altogether a symbol in the old testament age. In the old testament age there were the shadows, but in the new testament age there are the

realities. In the old testament age there was the covering of sins, which was a figure of the forgiveness of sins. In the old testament age there was the law of letters, which was a figure of the law of life in the new testament age. In the old testament age God was God to His people and His people were a people to Him according to the written law. That was a symbol that today in the new testament age God is God to us and we are a people to Him according to the law of life. Moreover, in the old testament age the priests taught the people to know God according to the law of letters. That was a shadow of the inward ability to know God in life according to the law of life. Therefore, everything in the new testament age was symbolized by the items in the old testament age. The Holy Place was a symbol of the old covenant and, at the same time, it was also a type of the new testament age. But the Bible does not say that the Holy of Holies was a type of the new testament age. In principle, the two tabernacles are both symbols of the two ages. In actuality, however, the Holy of Holies was not a type but a reality. Only the Holy Place was a type of the present age. Hence, this message is entitled, "The Type of the Old Covenant and the Reality of the New Covenant."

I. THE FIRST TABERNACLE--THE HOLY PLACE, SIGNIFYING THE OLD COVENANT AS A TYPE

As we have seen, the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, signified that the old covenant was a type (9:1-2, 6, 8-10). Since the Holy Place was a symbol of the old covenant, it signified that the old covenant was a type of the new. Hence, the entire Holy Place was a type, a figure, not the reality.

A. Of This World

The first tabernacle was of this world, of this creation (9:1). It was altogether material, not spiritual. and it was on earth, not in heaven. It was a temporary type, not the permanent reality.

B. With Ordinances of Flesh

The first tabernacle had ordinances of flesh (9:10). None of these ordinances was in the spirit or according to the spirit. Every one of them was related to the flesh. Because they were of letters outwardly, not of life inwardly, they could only give the worshippers a form, not the slightest amount of life.

C. Unable to Perfect the Worshippers

The first tabernacle as a type of the old covenant was unable to perfect the worshippers (9:9). Because it was not spiritual and had no life, it was unable to perfect those who served God through it. It exposed the shortcomings of God's worshippers, but it could not perfect them with real things of life in spirit.

D. A Parable, a Type of the New Covenant

The first tabernacle was a parable, a type, of the new covenant. It was not the reality but only a type, a figure, of the reality. Nevertheless, the Jews hold the type as the real thing. We must tell them of this. They are very thoughtful and need this kind of help. The Hebrew believers likewise were not clear concerning this at their time and also needed help in this matter.

E. The Way of the Holy of Holies, of the New Covenant, Not Yet Manifested Until the Time of Reformation

Verse 8 says that at that time "the way of the Holy of Holies" had "not yet been manifested while the first tabernacle still has its standing." At that time, the way of the Holy of Holies, that is, the way of the new covenant, had not yet been manifested. To say that the way into the Holy of Holies was not manifested while the first tabernacle still had its standing means that the way to enter into the new covenant had not yet been opened. When we come to 10:19-20, we shall see that a new and living way has been freshly cut. This is the way to enter into the Holy of Holies, into the new covenant. As we have

seen, the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, signifies the old covenant, and the second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, signifies the new covenant. Now the veil that closed the Holy of Holies has been riven by the death of Christ (Matt. 27:51) since it has crucified the flesh (Heb. 10:20; Gal. 5:24), and the way of the Holy of Holies has been manifested. Hence, we do not need to remain in the Holy Place, the old covenant, in the soul; we must enter the Holy of Holies, the new covenant, in the spirit. This is the goal of this book. The writer seemed to be saying to his readers, "Hebrew brothers, you should no longer remain in the old covenant. You now have a new way to come out of the old covenant and enter into the new covenant." The writer's concept in the book of Hebrews is that the Holy of Holies and the new covenant are one; the Holy of Holies is the new covenant. When we come into the Holy of Holies, it means that we come into the new covenant, and when we come into the new covenant, we enter into the Holy of Holies.

Very few Christians have seen this or have found this key. Regardless of the number of times they have read this chapter, they do not understand what it is talking about. But we have found the key, which is that the Holy of Holies is the new covenant and that the new covenant is the Holy of Holies. When we come into the Holy of Holies, we are in the new covenant. In the new covenant we have the imparting of the law of life. In the new covenant God is our God and we are His people according to the law of life. In the new covenant we have the inward ability to know God and the forgiveness of our sins. If we put all these together, we find that we are in God's presence, at His oracle, and are meeting with God and having fellowship with Him. This is the new covenant with the law of life.

II. THE SECOND TABERNACLE--THE HOLY OF HOLIES, SIGNIFYING THE NEW COVENANT AS A REALITY

The second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, signifies that the new covenant is a reality, not a type (vv. 3-5, 7-8, 10-12). Even during the old testament age, the Holy of Holies was not a type. It was a reality because God's shekinah

glory, presence, and speaking were there. It was there that God met with people. However, in the old testament age, not all the people could come into the Holy of Holies, because the way of entering into it had not been manifested yet. The Holy Place was a type. Were the lampstand and the table in the Holy Place real? No, they both were pictures. But what about the shekinah glory and God's speaking in the Holy of Holies? They were realities. Although the way into the Holy of Holies was not manifested in the old covenant age, it has been manifested today. Therefore, we should no longer remain in the Holy Place; we must come forward into the Holy of Holies. When we enter into the Holy of Holies, we are in the new covenant enjoying all the bequests of the new covenant, which has become a testament. These bequests include God's presence, God's speaking, and God's meeting and having fellowship with us. While we have fellowship with God, He infuses and transfuses Himself into us. This is the reality of the new covenant. Do you realize that today we are here in the Holy of Holies? Have you seen that we are now in the oracle enjoying God's presence? Hallelujah, we have crossed the river! We have left the Holy Place on the other side and we are now on the golden side in the Holy of Holies. This is the book of Hebrews.

A. The Greater and More Perfect Tabernacle-- the Better Covenant

Verse 11 says that Christ has come a "High Priest of the good things that have come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle." The greater and more perfect tabernacle is the better covenant. The Holy of Holies and the new covenant, which is the better covenant, are one.

B. Not of This Creation, not Made by Man's Hand

The second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, is "not made by hand, that is, not of this creation" (v. 11). It is made by God and is heavenly and eternal.

C. A Reformation, the Reality of the Old Covenant, Setting Things Right

Verse 10 speaks of "the time of setting things right." This phrase may also be rendered as "reformation." In the old testament age nothing was set right; nearly everything was upset. The time of setting things right occurred when Christ came the first time to fulfill all the shadows of the old testament so that a new covenant might replace the old one. Christ has set everything in its right position. The reality of the old covenant has set things right. This means that there has been a right arrangement, a right ordering. Hence, it is a reformation. This is different from the "restitution" in Acts 3:21, which will occur at Christ's second coming.

1. Christ Having Come a High Priest of the Good Things that Have Come

The reformation depends upon Christ's first coming. He has "come a High Priest of the good things that have come" (v. 11). His first coming is mainly for Him to be the High Priest. It is through His priesthood, the kingly and divine priesthood which He is now exercising in "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" as a more excellent ministry, that all things are set right with life in the spirit. The "good things that have come" are the things ministered by the kingly and divine priesthood of Christ.

2. Christ Having Entered Once for All into the Holy of Holies and Found an Eternal Redemption, Consummating the New Covenant

Verse 12 says, "nor through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, having found an eternal redemption." In the old covenant, the blood of goats and calves only made atonement for people's sins (Lev. 16:15-18); it never accomplished redemption for their sins, "for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). In Hebrew, the root of the word for atonement means

"cover." Thus, "atonement" means to cover, not to take away sins. Since Christ as the Lamb of God took away the sin of the world (John 1:29) by offering Himself on the cross as the sacrifice for sins once for all (Heb. 9:14; 10:12), His blood, which He sprinkled in the heavenly tabernacle (12:24), has accomplished an eternal redemption for us, even the redemption of the transgressions under the first, the old, covenant (9:15), which transgressions were only covered by animal blood. Thus, we have been "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

a. Christ Having Offered Himself to God through the Eternal Spirit

Verse 14 says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." On the cross, Christ offered Himself to God in the human body (10:5, 10), which body is a matter of time. But He did it through the eternal Spirit, who is of eternity, without any limit of time. Hence, in the eyes of God, Christ as the Lamb of God was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). His offering of Himself was "once for all" (Heb. 7:27), and the redemption consummated through His death is eternal (9:12), having an eternal effect. The span of His redemption fully covers the span of sin.

b. His Blood Purifying Our Conscience from Dead Works to Serve the Living God

The blood of Christ purifies our conscience to serve the living God. To serve the living God requires a blood-purified conscience. To worship in dead religion or to serve any dead thing other than God does not require our conscience to be purified. The conscience is the leading part of our spirit. The living God whom we desire to serve always comes to our spirit (John 4:24) by touching our conscience. He is righteous, holy, and living. Our defiled conscience needs to he purified so that we may serve Him

in a living way. To worship God in our mind religiously does not require this.

Verse 14 speaks of "dead works" and "the living God." Since we were dead (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13), whatever we did, bad or good, was dead works before the living God. Hebrews is not a book which teaches religion, but a book which reveals the living God (3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22). To touch this living God we need to exercise our spirit (4:12) and have a blood-purified conscience. The blood of Christ was shed for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28). The new covenant was consummated with it (Heb. 10:29; Luke 22:20). It has accomplished eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19), and has purchased the church for God (Acts 20:28). It washes us from our sins (Rev. 1:5; 1 John 1:7), purifies our conscience (Heb. 9:14), sanctifies us (13:12), and speaks better things for us (12:24). By this blood we enter the Holy of Holies (10:19) and overcome Satan the accuser (Rev. 12:10-11). Therefore, it is precious and better than the blood of goats and bulls (9:12-13). We must highly value it and should not regard it common as animal blood. If we do, we shall suffer punishment by God (10:29-31).

3. Christ Being the Mediator of the New Covenant, the Executor of the New Testament

Verse 15 says, "And because of this He is Mediator of a new covenant, so that, death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant and the Executor of the new testament. By His death Christ has consummated the new covenant. In His death He has left this new covenant with us as a bequeathed testament, a designated will. Now in His resurrection, as the Mediator of the new covenant, He is the Executor of the new testament, executing what has been accomplished in the new covenant and bequeathed in the new testament.

a. To Enforce the New Covenant and Execute the New Testament

We have seen that all the promises of God have become accomplished facts in the new covenant through Christ's redemptive work, and that all these accomplished facts have become bequests in the new testament. As the Mediator of the new covenant, Christ today in resurrection is enforcing the new covenant, and as the Executor of the new testament He is executing the new testament that all the bequests of the accomplished facts may become effective for us and that we may have the full enjoyment of them.

b. That the Called Saints Might Receive the Promise of the Eternal Inheritance

Today in His more excellent ministry with His kingly and divine priesthood, Christ as the Mediator is enforcing the new covenant, and as the Executor is executing the new testament so that the called saints might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (v. 15). What is the eternal inheritance? It is God Himself with all that He is, has, has done, and will do. All this is our eternal inheritance for our enjoyment. The way through which we inherit this is the new covenant. The promise of the eternal inheritance is based on Christ's eternal redemption, not on our work. It is different from the promise in 10:36, which is conditioned on our endurance and doing the will of God. The eternal inheritance in the promise here is by the eternal redemption of Christ, whereas the great reward (10:35) in the promise in 10:36 is for our endurance and doing the will of God. Through His redemptive work, Christ has secured for us this promised eternal inheritance. Now with His resurrection life He is bringing us, the called and redeemed ones, into participation in all the riches of this eternal inheritance, according to the new testament in the new covenant way, that is, in the way of the Holy of Holies.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FORTY

THE EXPERIENCES OF CHRIST PORTRAYED BY THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE

In this message we need to see the experiences of Christ as portrayed by the arrangement of the furniture of the tabernacle. Many Christians think that we can only experience Christ as our Savior and Protector. According to those who have had Pentecostal experiences, Christ is a Healer and a Worker of miracles. To them, experiencing Christ is a matter of witnessing miracles. But Christ is altogether mysterious, and our experiences of Him are also mysterious and very difficult to define. Thank God that this is clearly portrayed in His Holy Word by the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle, His dwelling place. This arrangement is of three sections: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. In each section there was furniture. Many Bible teachers agree that the entire tabernacle with its contents is a detailed picture of Christ. When I studied the typology of the tabernacle as a youth, I was told that it was a picture of Christ, but I was never taught that it was also a portrait of our experiences of Christ. Gradually in my experience throughout the years, I came to realize that the arrangement of the furniture of the tabernacle presents a full definition of our experiences of Christ. In this message we are not concerned with learning typology which was emphasized by the Brethren teachers more than a century ago. The recovery today is not a recovery of the teachings of typology but a recovery of the experiences of Christ as portrayed in the types. We need to enter into the experiences of Christ as shown in the arrangement of the furniture in God's dwelling place.

I. IN THE OUTER COURT--IN AN OUTWARD WAY

In the outer court are the brass altar and the brass laver. Both of these signify the experiences of Christ in an outward way.

A. At the Brass Altar

At the brass altar, which signifies the cross (Exo. 40:29), we participate in Christ mainly as our sin offering and also as all the other offerings (Heb. 13:10, 12; 10:12). In principle, the offerings solve our problems with God, fully reconciling us to Him and making our situation with God righteous and peaceful. Through the cross of Christ, we are right with God and with one another. Christ as our sin offering has solved the problem of sin, and as our peace offering He has also made peace between us and God and with one another. Thus, through the offerings offered by Christ on the cross, our condition is one of righteousness and peace. This is the first experience that we enjoy in Christ outwardly.

B. At the Brass Laver

After the altar is the laver, which signifies the washing of the Spirit. Both the altar and the laver were made of brass. In typology, brass signifies God's righteous judgment. The washing of the Spirit is based upon the judgment Christ has borne for us. At the brass laver (Exo. 40:30-32) we partake of the washing of the Spirit, which is based upon the redemption of Christ (Titus 3:5). Although we have experienced Christ as the offerings, before we can come into God's presence we also need to be washed, cleansed by the Spirit. This also is somewhat outward.

II. IN THE HOLY PLACE--IN AN INNER WAY

After having the two kinds of experiences in the outer court, we are qualified to come into the tabernacle. Firstly, we enter into the Holy Place, where our experiences of

Christ turn from the outward to the inward. Here, in the Holy Place, we experience Christ in an inner way.

A. At the Showbread Table

When we enter into the Holy Place, the first item of furniture is the showbread table (Exo. 40:22-23), which signifies Christ as our life supply (John 6:35, 57). On the showbread table twelve loaves of bread were displayed. The number twelve signifies eternal completion and perfection. Christ is our eternal bread. Our inward enjoyment of Him at the showbread table is eternal.

B. At the Lampstand

After the showbread table is the lampstand (Exo. 40:24-25), where we experience Christ as the shining light of life (John 1:4; 8:12). That the experience of the lampstand follows the experience of the showbread table indicates that the light comes out of our enjoyment of Christ as our life supply. When we enjoy Christ as our food, we have light because the "life is the light of men" (John 1:4). This light does not come from knowledge but from the life we enjoy.

While the showbread table has twelve loaves of bread, the lampstand has seven lamps. Seven is also a number of completion, but it is not the number of eternal completion. It is the number of completion in God's dispensational move, denoting a completion in God's movement. For eternity we shall have the life supply, but the purpose of the lampstand is to enable God's people to move and act in the dark age. It is for God's dispensational move. In His economy and dispensation, God has His movement and action, which need the shining of the divine light. This shining is complete. Without the shining of the light we cannot move or do anything in God's economy. As we enjoy Christ as our life, this life becomes the light by which we move and act in God's economy. Our experience proves this. Firstly, we enjoy Christ as life and as the life supply.

Then this life shines within us, and we know how to move and act. This is the experience of Christ as light inwardly.

C. At the Incense Altar

The last item of furniture in the Holy Place is the golden altar, which is the incense altar. The incense altar, lampstand, and showbread table form a triangle. The showbread table was on the north, the lampstand on the south, and the incense altar between them on the west, very close to the separating veil. At the incense altar we share in Christ as the sweet incense toward God for our acceptance by God (Eph. 1:6). God accepts us because of Christ, not because of what we are. This is why we must pray to God in the name of Christ. If we pray in, by, and with ourselves, our prayer will never be accepted. Christ as the acceptable, sweet incense must be added to our prayer. Our prayer is like a censer, and Christ is like the fragrant incense that is put into the censer. When we pray in and with Christ, Christ as incense is mingled with our prayer as it ascends to God. This incense becomes the element that makes our being and our prayer acceptable to God. This experience is more inward, leading to the most inward experiences in the Holy of Holies.

Although the incense altar is not in the Holy of Holies, it directs and leads us into the Holy of Holies. It is in the Holy Place, but its function is for the Holy of Holies. Hence, it is more inward than both the showbread table and the lampstand.

Regarding the standing place of the incense altar, there is apparently a discrepancy between the mentioning of it in the Old Testament and its mention in the New Testament. Exodus 30:6 says that the incense altar is put "before the veil," that is, outside the veil. This indicates clearly that the incense altar is put in the Holy Place, which is outside the veil, not in the Holy of Holies, which is within the veil. But Hebrews 9:4 says that the Holy of Holies has the incense altar. Therefore, most Christian teachers and Bible readers have thought that some error or misconstruction

should somehow have occurred. When I was expounding the book of Hebrews to a group of believers in 1937, I also was troubled by this matter and thought that a mistake or misconstruction had taken place. I consulted a number of books, including one which says that verse 4 does not refer to the incense altar but to the incense censer. It says that in the early days the incense censer was always put outside the veil but that it gradually slipped into the Holy of Holies. This book has some ground for its interpretation because the Greek word for altar in verse 4 may also be translated as censer. But here it must refer to the incense altar, not to the censer, because according to the record of the Old Testament, there was no incense censer in the Holy Place or in the Holy of Holies. Recently, as I was writing the notes for the Recovery Version of Hebrews, the Lord gave me a clear and complete revelation regarding this matter. There is no error or misconstruction in verse 4. The apparent discrepancy has a very spiritual significance according to the following points:

The Old Testament record of the incense altar's standing place implies the closest relation of the incense altar to the ark of testimony, over which is the propitiation-cover, where God meets His people. According to the Hebrew, Exodus 30:6 says, "Thou shalt put it [the incense altar] before the vail that is over the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee." We must be very careful in reading this verse. The incense altar was put before the veil that is "over the ark of the testimony." The King James Version says "by the ark," but the proper translation must be "over the ark." The preposition used here makes a great difference. The preposition "by" means that the veil is separating the ark from the incense altar, whereas the preposition "over" means that the veil is not separating but simply covering the ark. The veil did not separate the incense altar from the ark; it covered the ark. Therefore, putting the incense altar before the veil was the same as putting it before the ark. Exodus 40:5 even says

that the incense altar is set "before the ark of the testimony" without mentioning the separating veil that stands between them. Thus, the incense altar was before the ark. According to God's economy, the covering veil was not to exist for eternity; it was to be removed. When the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, this veil was taken away. According to God's eternal economy, the veil should no longer be there. In a sense, it was there not as a separating veil but as a covering veil. It was not counted, because it was destined to be taken away. When the veil is removed, the incense altar is in front of the ark. When the book of Hebrews was written, the veil was gone. There was no veil in the eyes of God. Moreover, in Revelation 8:3 we see that the golden altar is before the throne of God. There is no separating veil. Thus, even in Exodus 40:3 and 21 the veil was, in the eyes of God, a covering veil, not a separating veil. It simply covered the ark temporarily, not eternally.

First Kings 6:22 (A.S.V.) says that the incense "altar...belonged to the oracle." "Oracle" here means the "speaking place" of God, denoting the Holy of Holies, in which was the ark of testimony with the propitiation-cover, where God spoke to His people. Thus, the Old Testament indicated already that the incense altar belonged to the Holy of Holies. (Though it was in the Holy Place, its function was for the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies. On the day of atonement, both the incense altar and the propitiation-cover of the ark of testimony were sprinkled with the same blood for atonement--Exo. 30:10; Lev. 16:15-16.) Hence, in Exodus 26:35, only the showbread table and the lampstand are mentioned as being in the Holy Place, not the incense altar.

The incense altar is related to prayer (Luke 1:10-11), and in Hebrews we are shown that to pray is to enter the Holy of Holies (10:19) and to come to the throne of grace, which is signified by the propitiation-cover over the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies. Our prayer often begins with our mind, which is a part of our soul, signified by the

Holy Place. But our prayer always ushers us into our spirit, signified by the Holy of Holies.

Due to all these points, the writer of this book had to reckon that the incense altar belongs to the Holy of Holies. Verse 4 does not say that a golden altar is *in* the Holy of Holies, as the lampstand and the table are *in* the Holy Place, but that the Holy of Holies *has* a golden altar, since it belongs to the Holy of Holies. This concept fits the whole emphasis of the book of Hebrews which is that we should press on from the soul (signified by the Holy Place) to the spirit (signified by the Holy of Holies).

The incense altar belongs to the oracle--the speaking place of God, that is, the Holy of Holies. The incense altar typifies Christ in His resurrection as the sweet and fragrant incense in which God extends His well-pleasing acceptance to us. We pray with such a Christ to contact God that God may be pleased to speak to us. We speak to God in our prayer with Christ as the sweet incense, and God speaks to us in the sweet savor of this incense. This is the dialogue in the sweet fellowship between us and God through Christ as the sweet incense.

Now we can understand this apparent discrepancy. As we have seen, there is actually no discrepancy at all. According to the Old Testament, the incense altar belongs to the Holy of Holies. Although it is in the Holy Place, it does not belong to the Holy Place but to the Holy of Holies. Thus, Hebrews says that the Holy of Holies has the incense altar, not that the incense altar is in the Holy of Holies. As we experience the incense altar in our prayer, we often begin with our mind and are ushered into the spirit. Now it is easy for us to be ushered into the spirit because the veil has already been taken away.

III. IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES-- IN THE INNERMOST WAY

A. At the Ark of Testimony

After the Holy Place is the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies we experience Christ in the innermost way. Firstly,

at the ark of testimony (Exo. 40:20-21), we partake of Christ as the embodiment of God for God's testimony (Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3a). The word testimony here actually means the law of God, the ten commandments, which were put into the ark. Since the law was God's testimony, the ark into which it was put was called the ark of testimony. According to our natural concept, we think that the law is something which regulates us and makes demands and requirements of us. In the Bible, however, the law is not mainly for regulations but for a testimony of what God is. God is pure, God is love, God is holy, God is light, etc. Because the law is made according to what God is and expresses God, it is God's testimony. Any kind of law is the expression of the one who makes it, the legislator. The ark of testimony is a type of Christ, the true testimony of God, who is the embodiment and expression of all God is. In the Holy of Holies, in the innermost part of God's dwelling place, we experience Christ as the ark of God's testimony. It is here that we enjoy Christ as the embodiment and expression of all God is, not only as the Redeemer, the life supply, and the light of life, but as all God is. The riches and the fullness of the very Godhead are our enjoyment here in Christ. Nothing in our experience of Christ can be richer and higher than this. Here in Christ we participate in the divine element, the divine attributes, and even the divine expression of our God.

B. In the Ark of Testimony

1. Enjoying Christ as the Hidden Manna

In the ark of testimony we enjoy Christ in three aspects. Firstly, we enjoy Him as the hidden manna (Exo. 16:33-34). The hidden manna was in the golden pot, signifying our experience of Christ as our life supply in the innermost way, much more inward than that signified by the showbread table in the Holy Place. When the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, they ate the outward,

open manna, but now we eat the inward, hidden manna in the Holy of Holies, the manna hidden in the golden pot in the ark. This is the manna promised to the overcomer in Revelation 2:17. The open manna was food for all the people who were outside the dwelling place of God wandering in the wilderness, whereas the hidden manna is for the person who is remaining in the innermost part of God's dwelling place, no longer wandering in the soul but abiding in the presence of God in the spirit. For the enjoyment of Christ as such an innermost supply, we need to overcome all the outward frustrations, cross through all the worldly, fleshly, and soulish barriers, and enter into God's Holy of Holies.

2. Enjoying Christ as the Budding Rod

In the ark of testimony there is also the budding rod, signifying our experience of Christ as our acceptance by God in resurrection life for authority in the God-given ministry (Num. 17:3, 5, 8, 10). This is more inward than the experience of Christ as the incense for our acceptance by God. Aaron's budding rod signifies resurrection life. Where there is resurrection life, there is authority. Hence, the budding rod means authority in the resurrection life for our God-given ministry. The Israelites were debating about who had authority to represent God. When God caused Aaron's rod to bud, it signified that in resurrection he was authorized to represent God, to be God's deputy authority. It is the same today. The elders and ministers of the divine Word must have the authority which comes from resurrection life. The incense altar only signifies our acceptance in Christ by God, whereas the budding rod not only signifies Christ as our acceptance by God but also Christ as our authority given by God in His resurrection life. Within the ark, in the Holy of Holies, that is, within the very Christ who is the embodiment and expression of God, we enjoy Christ as our God-given authority in His

resurrection life. Here nothing is natural or within ourselves; everything is in resurrection, in the hidden Christ. It is here that the resurrected and hidden Christ becomes our God-given authority in His resurrection life, which is budding, even in the cold darkness, without any element of death. For the church life today, we need the experience of such a budding rod--the resurrected and hidden Christ.

3. Enjoying Christ as the Tables of the Covenant

In the ark of testimony, Christ is also experienced as the tables of the covenant, the tables of the testimony, the ten commandments, that is, as our inward law of life, testifying, enlightening, and regulating us according to God's divine nature (Heb. 8:10). We have seen the law of the ten commandments was the testimony of God. It was only a figure, a form, not the reality of all God is. But the inward law of life, which is Christ Himself as the testimony of God, is the real testimony of God. When this inward law of life testifies, enlightens, and regulates us according to God's divine nature, it infuses God's divine nature and divine attributes into our being, conforming us to the image of God that we may express Him and represent Him. The last point in our experiences of Christ is that God's divine nature is imparted into our being to make us the same as God in nature and expression. The function of the inward law of life is to permeate and saturate us by infusing into us the elements of the Firstborn Son of God, the standard model, making us a reprint of the standard model so that God might have a corporate expression of Himself to fulfill His eternal purpose. This is the ultimate consummation of the experiences of Christ. We should not linger at the altar, for that is simply the starting point of our experiences of Christ. We must come forward until we reach the ultimate experience, the inward law of life, the focus of all the experiences of Christ in God's economy.

Negatively, the inward law of life, which is the

automatic working of the divine life, kills the Adamic element within us, and, positively, it supplies us with all the elements of Christ. As the inward law of life works within us, the Adamic element is continually reduced and eliminated and the element of Christ, the divine element, is gradually added into our being. This discharging of the old element and adding of the new element is metabolic transformation. Eventually, we shall become exactly the same as Christ. Christ has passed through a process to enter into His perfection and glorification. Now He is repeating this process within us, bringing us into His perfection and glorification. This is the Christian life process and it must be our daily experience. When we open ourselves to the Lord and say, "Lord Jesus, I love You and I want You to occupy me, possess me, and make me one with You," the divine life, which was sown into our being at the time of Christ's resurrection, will work automatically. This working will bring about a thorough transformation, and we shall be conformed to the image of God's Firstborn Son. We shall be wholly "sonized" and brought into Christ's perfection and glorification. As this process transpires within us and the inward law of life works Christ into every part of our being, Christ is formed in us (Gal. 4:19). This is the most secret mystery in the whole universe. Eventually, God will be wrought into man and man will be mingled with God. God and man, man and God, will thus become one entity. This is today's church and tomorrow's New Jerusalem. This is the divine economy. How blessed we are to see this! We are truly a special people.

In the portrait of the tabernacle we see a number of threes. Firstly, there are the three sections: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. Secondly, there are the three items in the Holy Place: the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar. When we come into the Holy of Holies, we see within the ark of testimony another group of three: the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the table of testimony. In each group of three, the third item is the most important. Of the outer court, the Holy

Place, and the Holy of Holies, the Holy of Holies is the most important. Of the second three, the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar, the incense altar is the most important. Of the third three, the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the table of testimony, the table of testimony signifying the inward law of life is the most important.

The last and consummate experience of Christ as portrayed by the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle is the inward law of life. Romans 8:2 says that this is the law of the Spirit of life. The experience of Christ begins at the cross and consummates with the Spirit. Even the Triune God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, consummates with the Spirit. The Father is far from us, the Son is close to us, and the Spirit comes into us. Although the Son and the Father may be present, without the Spirit we can have no experience of Them. All the experiences of the Triune God depend upon the consummation of the Spirit. The inward law of life is just the working of the Spirit who is the Spirit of life. God is Spirit (John 4:24). Christ, as the last Adam, was made a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b); hence, He is now the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). The third of the Triune God is the Spirit. All our experiences of the Triune God must consummate with the Spirit. Moreover, the outer court corresponds to our body, the Holy Place to our soul, and the Holy of Holies to our spirit. Of these three parts, the spirit is the most important. Eventually, the consummate point of the experience of Christ is the Spirit of the Triune God in the human spirit of the tripartite man. The inward law of life signified by the table of testimony within the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies simply denotes the Spirit of the Triune God working in the human spirit of the tripartite man. It is like the witnessing of the Spirit with our spirit (Rom. 8:16).

All real Christians have been to the altar--the cross of Christ. We thank God for this. But many Christians insist on staying at the altar, desiring to remain at the cross for eternity. If you were to tell them that today Christ is the

Spirit, they would say you are a heretic. When we say that we must turn to and be in our spirit, we are accused of practicing mysticism. How terrible is such an accusation! Many people say, "Isn't the cross sufficient? Isn't the Lord's blood precious?" We appreciate the cross and the blood as much as, if not more than, all Christians do. But this is elementary; it is just the A B C's. If we look at the portrait of the furniture in the tabernacle, we shall see that we must come forward. We must tell all Christians to come forward. Do not merely come forward to the laver, where you may have some washings of the Spirit. Come forward to the experience of the rich supply of nourishment at the showbread table and to the enlightenment of the lampstand. But there is still more than this. We must come forward to the incense altar which ushers us into the Holy of Holies. Our incense altar today is our prayer with Christ. Many times we begin praying in our mind, but our prayer ushers us into the spirit, into the Holy of Holies.

In the Holy of Holies is the ark. The first of the three items in the ark is the hidden manna. With respect to the hidden manna, there are three layers of coverings: the tabernacle covering the ark, the ark covering the golden pot, and the golden pot covering and containing the hidden manna. Here in the golden pot we enjoy Christ in the most hidden way. It is not only in the Holy of Holies and in the ark but also in the golden pot. What is the golden pot? It is the divine nature of the Triune God which contains Christ, the standard model, as our life supply. How deep is this thought! When we enjoy Christ as our life supply in such a hidden and mysterious way, we shall experience the rod budding with authority in resurrection life. If we are to be a true minister of the Word or a genuine elder in the church, we need to have this kind of authority in the resurrection life of Christ. The budding rod brings us to the consummate item of God's economy--the inward law of life (signified by the table of testimony), the working of the Spirit of the Triune God within us. The inward law of life is working within us, infusing the element of God into our

being and making us a corporate reproduction of the standard model. In this way, God can have the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. This is what God desires today.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FORTY-ONE

THE NEW COVENANT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

In this message we shall cover two important matters--the new covenant and the new testament. In Greek the same word is used for both covenant and testament. Whether it is translated covenant or testament depends on whether the person who consummated the covenant is living or dead. If the consummator is still living, that covenant remains a covenant. But if the consummator has died, the covenant immediately becomes a testament. A covenant is an agreement containing some promises to accomplish certain things for the covenanted people, while a testament is a will containing certain accomplished things bequeathed to the inheritor. The new covenant consummated with the blood of Christ is not merely a covenant, but a testament with all the things which have been accomplished by the death of Christ bequeathed to us. The term testament is the equivalent of the modern term will. Many parents, when they know that they soon will die, make a will in which they leave various things to their children. A will only becomes effective after the death of the maker of the will. In a simple word, a covenant and a testament are the same, but when the maker of the covenant is living, it is a covenant, and when he has died, it is a testament, a will. The Bible is composed of two wills--the Old Testament, the old will, and the New Testament, the new will. The Bible is not mainly a book of teachings; it is a will.

I. THE NEW COVENANT

A. A Better Covenant

The new covenant, which the Lord Jesus enacted, is better than the old covenant made through Moses. In the

old covenant, all things were shadows, whereas in the new covenant everything is reality. Everything in the old covenant has been fulfilled and realized in the new covenant. Hence, the new covenant is a better covenant (7:22; 8:6).

B. Enacted Upon Better Promises

The new covenant is enacted upon better promises (8:6), which were given in Jeremiah 31:31-34. In these better promises, as we have seen in previous messages, four major things are covered--the inward law of life, the blessing of God being our God and us being God's people, the inward ability of knowing the Lord, and the forgiveness of sins. Among these four major things, the inward law of life is the focus. The old covenant was made with the outward law of letters, whereas the new covenant is enacted with this inward law of life. The old covenant was of letters; the new covenant is of life.

C. Consummated with Better Sacrifices and the Blood that Speaks Better Things

Hebrews 9:23 says, "It was necessary therefore for the examples of the things in the heavens to be purified by these, but the heavenly things themselves by better sacrifices than these." The tabernacle and all things pertaining to it were sprinkled and purified by the blood of goats and bulls (9:21-23). That was a figure showing that the heavenly things needed to be purified by the blood of better sacrifices, which are the sacrifices of Christ (7:27; 9:14, 28; 10:10, 12, 14). Heaven and all things in heaven

have been defiled by the rebellion of Satan and the fallen angels who followed him in his rebellion against God. Thus, all the heavenly things needed to be purified. Christ accomplished this purification with His own blood when He entered into heaven (9:12).

The new covenant was consummated with better sacrifices and with the blood that speaks better things. Christ offered Himself as one sacrifice (9:14; 10:12). This one sacrifice, viewed from its various aspects, may be considered as many sacrifices. As Christ is the eternal Son of the living God incarnated to be the Son of Man who offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit, so His sacrifices are better than those of animals. The animal sacrifices were shadows which could never take away sins (10:11), but His sacrifices are real and have put away sin once for all (9:26), thus finding an eternal redemption for us (9:12). Verse 22 says that "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Without forgiveness of sin there is no way to fulfill the requirement of God's righteousness that by it the covenant may be enacted. But Christ's blood has been shed for the forgiveness of sin, and the covenant has been enacted with His blood (Matt. 26:28). We are told in 12:24 that Christ's blood "speaks better than that of Abel." The blood of Christ is the speaking blood, speaking to God for forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, and redemption. As unveiled in Hebrews, this precious blood speaks to God for us that by it the new covenant may be enacted. Hence, it is called the blood of the eternal covenant (10:29; 13:20).

D. Having a High Priest with a More Excellent Ministry

In the old covenant the high priest was a mortal man, and his ministry was a shadow of the good things to come. But the new testament has a High Priest who is the eternal Son of God with a more excellent ministry (8:1-13).

With Him there is no preventing of death. His ministry is the ministry of the kingly and divine priesthood in heaven, ministering, by His intercession, the divine life with all its riches as our daily supply to bring us into His perfection and glorification.

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. God's Promise

God's promise is God's word which He speaks. God speaks many different kinds of words. He may command us to do a particular thing. That command is God's word, but it is not God's promise. When God speaks in such a way that He promises to give, do, or be something to us, that is a promise. As we have seen, God's promise of the new covenant is in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and includes four major things. The word of God's promise is insured by His faithfulness (Heb. 10:23; 11:11). God's faithfulness is the guarantee of what He speaks as a promise.

B. God's Covenant

God's covenant is enacted upon God's promise (8:6). A promise is a common, ordinary word without confirmation. In the Bible, after God made His promise, He sealed it with an oath. He swore by His Godhead that His promise was confirmed. Once His promise was confirmed by an oath, it immediately became the covenant sealed by God. Hebrews 6:16 says that in all disputes an oath is final for confirmation. If you read the Old Testament carefully, you will see that God's promises were all sealed by His oath. That the promises have become a covenant means that they cannot possibly be altered. Once the promises have been confirmed by God's oath, having been made unalterable, there is no possibility of repentance or change. The promise has been sealed; it is no longer a promise but a covenant confirmed by God's oath.

After God made His promises in the Old Testament, confirming them by His oath (Gen. 22:16-18; Psa. 110:4), the Lord Jesus came and accomplished all that God had promised. By the Lord's work on earth, every item of God's promise has become an accomplished fact. For example, in Jeremiah 31 God promised to forgive our sins. The Lord Jesus did this, making propitiation for our sins on the cross as the fulfillment of God's promise. Before the Lord Jesus died on the cross, it was a promise. After He died on the cross, that promised item became an accomplished fact. Hence, forgiveness of sins is no longer a promise but an accomplished fact of history. God's promised covenant was consummated as the new covenant by the Lord's death with His blood (9:18-23; Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20). By His death, all the promises have become accomplished facts.

After His death and resurrection, the Lord ascended into the heavens, leaving with us the covenant which He had accomplished by His death. When He left this covenant with us, it immediately became a testament, a new testament bequeathed to us (9:16-17). In this testament the accomplished facts are no longer merely facts; they have all become bequests. Firstly, we had the promises; secondly, the promises became the facts; and thirdly, the facts have become the bequests. Through the Lord's death and resurrection, all the promises were fulfilled and became accomplished facts. After the Lord had left this new covenant with us, it immediately became a testament, a will, containing all the accomplished facts as our bequests. Since the Lord had accomplished everything, He went to the heavenly throne where He is now restfully sitting. As our High Priest in the heavens, the Lord is the Surety of this better covenant (7:21-22).

Four stages were needed for the consummation of the new testament: firstly, God's word; secondly, God's promise; thirdly, the new covenant; and lastly, the new testament. No longer do we just have God's word, God's promise, and the new covenant; we also have the new testament, the will. The Bible is a will in which everything

has not only been mentioned, promised, and accomplished but also bequeathed. Furthermore, the Lord in resurrection is executing what He has bequeathed. We simply need to thank Him for all the bequests. If we would do this, opening wide to Him that He may execute all that He desires to execute, there will be a mass reproduction of the standard model, the Firstborn Son, for God's corporate expression. This is the heavenly vision that we all must see.

C. The Lord's New Testament

We have seen that after the Lord left the covenant with us, it became the new testament containing all the accomplished facts as our bequests. The Lord's new testament is executed by the resurrected Christ as the Mediator in the heavens (9:15; 12:24). While the Lord is resting on His throne in the heavens, He is concerned for all the heirs of this new testament. He is concerned whether the heirs are wise and diligent enough to take the bequests, or whether they are trusting in their own cleverness and trying to do something else. Because He is so concerned, He is interceding that we shall have the full realization of all the bequests contained in His bequeathed will. If our eyes are opened to see this matter of the Lord's testament, we shall be beside ourselves and say, "How poor the situation has been for over nineteen centuries. Very few Christians have realized these bequests." All Christians understand God's salvation in a low way according to the natural human concept, not in the way of bequests. Have you ever heard that the forgiveness of sins is a bequest? Were you ever taught that the imparting of the divine life, the rebirth, and our crucifixion with Christ are also bequests? We were crucified before we were born. It was accomplished by Christ on the cross and it is one of the many bequests itemized in the will. Our perfection and glorification also are bequests. In the new testament, the new will, everything is a bequest which has been

accomplished already. In the last portion of this new will, the book of Revelation, the Apostle John uses the past tense very often. For example, in Revelation 20:10 John said that "the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone," and in 21:2 he said, "I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Both of these are in the past tense because every item in the will is a bequest, not a promise.

In your preaching, have you ever told people of their bequests? Most preachers say, "If you believe, God will forgive your sins and you will be born again." We need to tell people, "I have a will for you, God's will. This will clearly says that all your sins were forgiven long before you even committed them. This will also declares that your rebirth, justification, sanctification, perfection and glorification have all been accomplished by Him. All these items are bequests presented to you in the will. Will you accept it? If you are willing to take it, just thank the Lord and receive it." If a person will accept the will in this way, he will immediately have forgiveness of sins, rebirth, justification, sanctification, perfection, glorification, and even the New Jerusalem! From now on, we must enjoy and partake of all the bequests itemized in the Lord's new will. If we have this view, we shall be radically revolutionized. If you have seen this matter of the new testament, you will no longer need to pray in a begging way.

Many Christians understand Ephesians 5:19 and 20 in this way: "Praying to God continually, begging earnestly and fasting to the Lord, making petitions to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." But these verses say, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." In these verses, there is no begging but praising and thanksgiving, because the Lord has accomplished

everything. The Father promised everything and the Lord Jesus accomplished everything. All the accomplished facts have been itemized in the new will as our bequests. We do not need to beg; we need to thank and praise the Lord for our bequests and enjoy them. If we know God's economy, we shall praise the Lord and thank Him for all He has accomplished and bequeathed to us. Suppose a relative has bequeathed a house to you in his will. There is no need for you to beg for that house. When you learn that the house has been given to you, all you need to do is say thank you and accept it. This is the proper Christian life. There is no need for us to beg; we simply need to take with thanks to the Lord what has already been given to us in such an extraordinary way--in the way of the new will.

Nothing is as binding and as strongly established as a will. No one can change it. Whatever is bequeathed in a will is final; it must go to whom it has been bequeathed. If our eyes could be opened to see that we have such a will, we would be beside ourselves with praise to the Lord. There is no need for people to wait for their rebirth, for that is an item in the will. They should simply accept regeneration as a bequest and say, "Thank You, Lord, for such a wonderful rebirth. Lord, thank You for the impartation of the divine life accomplished at the time of Your resurrection." God's selection is another bequest in the will, having been accomplished before the foundation of the world. Since this is clearly itemized as a bequest in Ephesians 1:4, there is no need to kneel down and pray, "O God, have mercy on me. I am a pitiful sinner, and hell is my destiny. O God, please grant me Your selection." How foolish it is to pray in this way! Simply say, "Father, thank You for Your selection which has already been accomplished and bequeathed to me." God's selection and predestination both are bequests of the new will which have already been accomplished. Romans 8:30 even tells us that we have already been glorified. Glorification, into which we shall enter in the future, is also a bequest in the new will. In God's reckoning, it has been accomplished already.

We need to have the heavenly vision to see that all God's blessings are bequests. Do you need peace? It is a bequest. It was promised by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and has been itemized in the new will as your bequest. Simply thank God for it and receive it. This is the new way to partake of God's blessings. Do not be a poor beggar--you are a glorious inheritor. An heir has no need to beg; he simply receives all the bequests with thanksgiving. When my eyes were opened to see this matter of the bequests in the new testament, my whole concept was changed. This is why I do not beg. Whenever I pray, I pray with the realization that everything was already given to me nineteen and a half centuries ago as a bequest in the divine will and that I can take all I need. I can boldly say, "Praise the Lord! This is mine and I take it."

The Lord's new testament is executed by the resurrected Christ as the Mediator, the Executor, in the heavens. Today the resurrected Christ is executing this will by restfully interceding for us. The testament, the will, has been confirmed and validated by Christ's death and is being executed and enforced by Christ in His resurrection. The promise of God's covenant is insured by God's faithfulness, God's covenant is guaranteed by God's righteousness, and the new testament is enforced by Christ's resurrection power. Christ is now on the throne interceding for us to realize this testament, this will. All the seeking Christians throughout the world are hungry and thirsty. If you tell them about this will and its bequests, they will gladly receive it. They will be willing to give themselves to it and be consumed by it. This will has been given to the Lord's people for over nineteen centuries, but few of them have realized it. By His mercy, the Lord has brought us into a full realization of His will. Now He is speeding up His recovery. The heavenly Intercessor is motivating and energizing us day by day with His heavenly "pum, pum, pum" that we may partake of all the riches of His will. This is the reason that the Christians in the Lord's recovery are so aggressive.

God's promises have all become accomplished facts in the new covenant, and the new covenant has been bequeathed to us as the new testament. Now, in resurrection as the ascended One sitting on the throne in the heavens, Christ is executing what He has bequeathed. The crucial point in this matter is the automatic and innate function of the law of the divine life. Praise the Lord!

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FORTY-TWO

THE TWO MANIFESTATIONS OF CHRIST

We Christians today need to get into the book of Hebrews. I thank God that, under His sovereignty, there was such a group of staggering Hebrew Christians in the first century. Without them, the book of Hebrews probably never would have come into existence. Do not think that the book of Hebrews was only for them. We need this book today much more than they needed it in their time. In the past eleven messages we have been on chapters seven, eight, and nine. If I were to ask you to write a conclusion to these chapters, you may find it quite difficult. But at the end of chapter nine the book of Hebrews itself gives us a summary, a conclusion, of these three chapters. This conclusion is the very matter which we shall cover in this message--Christ's two manifestations and the interval between them. These three things, Christ's two manifestations and the interval, compose God's economy.

It has been difficult for many Christians to understand the true significance of Christ's two manifestations. The two manifestations of Christ refer to His two comings. Christ has come once and He will come again. During the long period between the two manifestations of Christ to the world, He remains in the presence of God. Nearly two thousand years have passed since Christ's first manifestation. Although this is a long time as far as we are concerned, to Him it is less than two days (2 Pet. 3:8). We need to see the significance of the two manifestations of Christ and the interval between them.

Before Christ's first manifestation, there were God's plan, God's promise, and a type, a picture, of God's economy, but besides God's creation nothing had been accomplished. When we build a meeting hall, we also may have a plan and a model of the building. However, simply

having these things does not mean that there is an actual building. Before Christ's incarnation, men like Abraham, Moses, and David had come and gone, but nothing had been accomplished for God's economy. Although there was the model of the tabernacle with Moses and of the temple with Solomon, nothing real was accomplished until the first manifestation of Christ.

I. THE FIRST MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST

Christ took thirty-three and a half years to complete His first manifestation. During those thirty-three and a half years, everything necessary for the fulfillment of God's purpose was accomplished. He accomplished what God needed and what we needed.

A. For the Putting Away of Sin by Offering Himself to God as the Sacrifice for Sins

Christ's first manifestation was for the putting away of sin. Verse 26 says that "once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested for the putting away of sin by His sacrifice." The Greek words translated "consummation of the ages" may also be rendered the "completion of the ages" or "end of the ages." Here it means the end of the old testament age, whereas the consummation of the age in Matthew 28:20 (Gk.) indicates the close of the church age. Christ "was foreordained" for us "before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20), and He was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Actually, His being slain transpired once for all at the consummation of the ages, when He offered Himself to God in His first manifestation for the putting away of sin.

Christ put away sin about nineteen and a half centuries ago. Before He accomplished this, the priests offered the sin offering day after day. But that was not the actual putting away of sin; it was only a type, a picture. The real putting away of sin was accomplished once for all by Christ on the cross. Perhaps you were born just twenty or thirty years ago, and during your lifetime you have committed many sins, such as stealing and lying. But the putting

away of sin was accomplished nineteen and a half centuries ago, long before you committed any sins. Hence, the putting away of sin is a bequest. Firstly, it was a promise; secondly, it was foreshadowed by the covering of sins; eventually, the promise and the shadow were completely fulfilled by Christ on the cross when He offered Himself as the sacrifice for sins once for all. He was "once offered to bear the sins of many" (9:28, 14; 10:12). Therefore, in the eyes of God, sin has gone and has become a history. Do not believe Satan, your feelings, or your failures. They are lies. You must tell them, "Sin was put away by Christ in His first manifestation."

B. For the Accomplishment of an Eternal Redemption

Christ's first manifestation was also for the accomplishment of an eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12 says that "through His own blood" He "entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, having found an eternal redemption." Christ accomplished this at the time He put away sins. Thus, eternal redemption also is a bequest.

C. For the Consummation of the New Covenant

The first manifestation of Christ was also for the consummation of the new covenant (Matt. 26:28). By putting away sin and accomplishing eternal redemption, Christ consummated the new covenant. Hence, the new covenant is also a bequest.

D. For the Bequest of the New Testament

Eventually, the first manifestation of Christ was for the bequest of the new testament (9:16-17). We have seen that when the new covenant was bequeathed, it became the new testament. In His first manifestation, Christ accomplished everything, put all that He had accomplished into a will, and left His will with us. In this will we have, as our bequests, everything Christ has accomplished. Since everything has been accomplished, neither He nor we need to do anything more. If we have this vision, we shall see

that within the thirty-three and a half years of His first manifestation, Christ accomplished everything and put it into a will, into the new testament. Do not think that the New Testament is a book of promise or prophecy. No, the entire New Testament is a will. If your grandfather's will were full of promises and prophecies, it might take eighty years for it to be fulfilled. You might not live long enough for them all to be fulfilled. This is exactly the way many Christians take the New Testament. Today many Christians do not have a will; they have a book of promise and prophecy. They are waiting for the promises and prophecies to be fulfilled by and by. But remember, even Revelation, a book of prophecy, is included in the New Testament which is a will. As I pointed out in the previous message, even in a book of prophecy such as Revelation, many of the verbs are in the past tense, indicating that they have already been fulfilled and accomplished.

We need to have a clear vision and see that Christ has accomplished everything. If we see this, we will not strive for anything, but rest in all that Christ has done. I am happy because Christ has accomplished everything for me. Blessed is he who sees the vision that Christ has accomplished everything for us. Christ is sitting in the heavens because all the work has been done. He is not laboring or striving but restfully sitting there. In the Bible, to sit means that the work is finished. Everything needed for the completion of God's eternal plan has already been fulfilled by Christ in His first manifestation. All that He has accomplished has been bequeathed to us in the new testament as our bequests.

II. IN THE INTERVAL

A. Entering into the Holy of Holies in the Heavens

After He had accomplished the necessary things through His death and resurrection, Christ ascended to heaven and entered into the Holy of Holies in the heavens. Verse 24 says, "Christ did not enter into the holy places

made by hand, but into heaven itself." The tabernacle in the Old Testament was a figure of the true one in the heavens. The earth is the outer court of this true tabernacle. After He had finished His work in the outer court, Christ, as the High Priest, entered into the Holy of Holies of the true tabernacle.

B. Appearing Before God

Christ has entered into the Holy of Holies in the heavens so that He might appear before the face of God for us (9:24). Since He has accomplished everything on earth, He is now restfully sitting in heaven before God. The only time we are told that He stood up was when Stephen was being stoned (Acts 7:55-56).

C. Ministering in the True Tabernacle as the High Priest

In the true tabernacle, Christ is ministering as the High Priest (8:1-2). What is Christ doing as the High Priest? He is interceding for us that everything which He has accomplished might be wrought into our being. In some of the previous messages we have seen this matter of Christ's heavenly intercession. We may recall how Melchisedec came to minister the bread and wine to Abraham after he had interceded for him behind the scene. Likewise, Christ, our Melchisedec, is secretly interceding for all who love Him and seek Him. As He is interceding for us in the heavens, He is also the all-inclusive and all-pervading Spirit. The all-inclusive Spirit works in us according to Christ's heavenly intercession, motivating the law of life within us to function and causing the standard model, the Firstborn Son of God, to be wrought into our being. This is transpiring on earth today. To say this is not guesswork; it is the revelation of God's Holy Word which is shining over us as a heavenly vision. In these days, many of us have been under the shining of this vision. This vision will become a governing vision. Praise the Lord that Christ is ministering in the true tabernacle today!

D. Executing the New Testament

During the interval between His first and second manifestations, Christ is executing the new testament (8:6; 9:15; 12:24). To execute the new testament simply means to motivate the law of life within us and to make every bequest of the new will real in our being. Once we see what Christ is doing in us today, we shall never be the same. What Christ is doing in us is worthy of eternal remembrance. When we get into eternity, we may recall the day we saw the glorious vision of Christ's heavenly ministry. When this ministry has been completed, Christ will be manifested the second time.

III. THE SECOND MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST

A. Apart from Sin

Verse 28 says that Christ "shall appear to those who wait for Him a second time, apart from sin, unto salvation." The second manifestation of Christ has nothing to do with sin, because sin has already become a history. As man must die once and be judged after having died (v. 27), so Christ died once to bear man's sins (v. 28; 1 Pet. 2:24) and suffered the judgment for man on the cross (Isa. 53:5, 11). This book very much stresses the fact that sin has been put away by Christ's sacrifice in His first manifestation. Since Christ has put away sin in His first appearing (9:26; 1 John 3:5), His second appearing will be apart from sin, having nothing whatever to do with it.

B. Unto Salvation

Verse 28 says that Christ will appear a second time "unto salvation." "Salvation" here does not refer to the salvation from hell to heaven. It has a wider and higher meaning, covering the following aspects:

1. For the Redemption, the Transfiguration of Our Body

First of all, the very salvation which Christ will bring to us in His second manifestation is for the redemption, the

transfiguration, of our body. When we were saved, we were regenerated in our spirit (John 3:5-6). Now we are in the process of being transformed in our soul (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). Then at Christ's second coming for the completion of the salvation of our entire being, He will transfigure our vile body into a glorious one (Phil. 3:21). That will be the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23), the first aspect of Christ's appearing "unto salvation" in His second manifestation.

2. For the Deliverance from the Vanity and Slavery of Corruption of the Old Creation

The second aspect of the salvation by Christ's second coming is the deliverance from the vanity and slavery of corruption of the old creation into the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:18-23). The entire old creation has been subjected to vanity and is under the slavery of corruption. Even we who have been saved and who have the enjoyment of the Spirit are also under the vanity and the slavery of corruption of the old creation. At His second coming, Christ will free us from this vanity and slavery and deliver us into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

3. For Our Glorification

At His second coming, Christ will glorify us (Rom. 8:17), that is, He will bring us into His glory to fulfill the word in Hebrews 2:10. Our glorification is the final goal of God's salvation in Christ (Rom. 8:29-30). We have been chosen, predestinated, called, and justified. Now we are being sanctified through the process of transformation in life. Then in His second manifestation, we shall be glorified and reach the final goal of God's salvation in Christ. This is the third aspect of Christ's coming salvation.

4. For the Full Sonship

In regeneration we were born of God and became the sons of God (John 1:12-13). In this new birth we received the divine sonship in our spirit (Rom. 8:15). After this, we

began to enjoy this sonship through the transformation of our soul. The more we are transformed in our soul, the more we enjoy the sonship which has been given to us in our spirit. This sonship will become full when our body of the old creation is transfigured into a body of the new creation. This means that the redemption of our body is the full sonship of our new birth. This will be the fourth aspect of Christ's salvation in His second manifestation.

5. For the Full Taste of God

God's salvation in Christ is to work Himself into us as our enjoyment. He has given to us His Spirit in our spirit as the firstfruit for our enjoyment (Rom. 8:23). This firstfruit of the Spirit is the foretaste for our enjoyment of God. The full taste will be brought in for our enjoyment by Christ's second manifestation. When our body is transfigured and our entire being, spirit, soul, and body, is fully saturated with the divine element of the Triune God, we shall enjoy God in full. That will be our full taste of God, the last aspect of Christ's coming salvation.

The very salvation which Christ will bring us in His second coming will be such a wider and higher one and will fulfill the final and ultimate goal of God's all-inclusive salvation in Christ. Before His second manifestation, Christ is ministering to us with this goal in view. His more excellent ministry in the heavens today, the ministry of His kingly and divine priesthood with His heavenly intercession, is building up such a salvation. When He sees that the building up of this wonderful salvation has been accomplished, He will appear the second time. That will be His second manifestation in God's economy.--W. L.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FORTY-THREE

CHRIST'S SACRIFICES REPLACING AND TERMINATING THOSE OF THE OLD COVENANT

The book of Hebrews tells us many times that Christ has dealt with sin once for all (1:3; 2:17; 7:27; 9:26; 10:12). The repeated mention of the fact that Christ, through His sacrifice, has put away sin was necessary because of the strength of the Jewish tradition in the ancient times. The Jews only knew to go to the altar and offer the sacrifice for sin. Daily, the sacrifices for sin were offered; they were also offered yearly on the day of atonement. Thus, the mind of the ancient Jews was occupied with the sin offering. Because of the strength of the Jewish tradition regarding the sin offering, after dealing with the matter of the accomplishment of the sacrifice for sin in chapters seven, eight, and nine, the writer gives us a further conclusion in 10:1-18.

The main point of this supplementary conclusion is that the Hebrew Christians had to realize that none of the sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests could put away sin or perfect the worshippers. Even their Old Testament predicted in Isaiah 53:10 and 12 that Christ would come to be the sacrifice for sin, that is, to replace and terminate the Levitical sacrifices. Since Christ, the unique sacrifice, has done this, it would have been foolish for the Hebrew believers to go back to the temple and offer the sacrifice for sin again. Sin has been put away and has become a history. Therefore, 10:18, speaking of sins and lawlessnesses, says, "where forgiveness of these is, there is no longer an offering for sin." This is a logical conclusion.

In God's economy, Christ did two main things: He put

away sin, which had come in to frustrate God's eternal purpose, and He imparted Himself into us as the divine life which is working within us and spreading into all the inward parts of our being. The main thought in 10:1-18 is that Christ has put away sin, accomplishing what all the Levitical sacrifices were unable to do. Having put away sin once for all, Christ has now imparted Himself into us as the divine life, so that through the working of this divine life we may become the corporate reproduction of Himself.

I. THE LAW HAVING A SHADOW OF THE COMING GOOD THINGS

The law of the Old Testament was not the reality; it was a shadow of the coming good things (v. 1). These coming good things are what Christ is and does. What the law had could not accomplish anything. It is Christ, the reality of all the shadows in the Old Testament, who has accomplished everything for God's economy.

II. THE LAW, BY ITS CONTINUAL AND YEARLY SACRIFICES, NEVER BEING ABLE TO PERFECT THE WORSHIPPER

The law, by its continual and yearly sacrifices, was unable to perfect those who drew near to God (vv. 1-2). The sacrifices offered according to the law could not purify the offerers' conscience of sins. However often they offered the same sacrifice for sin, their conscience could never be at peace and they could never be perfected before God.

III. THE LAW'S SACRIFICES REMINDING OF SINS YEAR BY YEAR

The sacrifices offered according to the law could not put away sins; rather, they reminded the people of them. Every year on the day of atonement the Jews were reminded of their sins. God's intention in these sacrifices of shadow was to remind the Jews that they were sinful and that they needed Christ, the Messiah, to take away their sins. According to God's intention, whenever they offered the

sacrifice for sin, they should have looked unto Christ. The law's sacrifices were just a reminder of their sins, not a purifier of them.

IV. IT BEING IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANIMAL BLOOD TO TAKE AWAY SINS

As the law's sacrifices were a shadow, not the reality, it was impossible for their animal blood to take away sins (v. 4). It is the precious blood of Christ, the real sacrifice for sin, that takes away sins. Therefore, it would have been vain for the Hebrew believers to go back to Judaism to offer sacrifices for sin again.

V. CHRIST COMING WITH A BODY TO REPLACE THE SACRIFICES OF THE LAW

All the sacrifices offered according to the law were a shadow of Christ. At the fullness of time, Christ came with a body of blood and flesh to replace the sacrifices of the law. In the flesh, He offered Himself to God once for all to take away sins. Verses 7, 9, and 10 tell us that it is the will of God to take away the first, the animal sacrifices of the old testament, so that the second, the sacrifice of Christ of the new testament, might be established to replace the sacrifices of the old testament. Hence, it would have been foolish for the Hebrew believers to go back to offer the animal sacrifices which had already been replaced by Christ.

VI. CHRIST HAVING SANCTIFIED US THROUGH THE OFFERING OF HIS BODY ONCE FOR ALL

Christ, as the real sacrifice for sin which has taken away sins, has sanctified us through the offering of His body once for all (v. 10). Sin had separated us from God, but Christ, through His redemption, has separated us from sin and has brought us back to God. This is to sanctify us unto God. Christ has thus sanctified us once for all.

VII. THE PRIESTS OF THE LAW STANDING DAILY TO OFFER THE SAME SACRIFICES WHICH CAN NEVER TAKE AWAY SINS

Verse 11 says, "Every priest stands daily, ministering and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never

take away sins." The priests in the old covenant stood daily and offered the same sacrifices again and again, because what they offered could never take away sins. Their standing was a sign that the taking away of sins had not been accomplished. It was Christ's offering of Himself that has accomplished the taking away of sins.

VIII. CHRIST SITTING DOWN FOREVER ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, AFTER HAVING OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE FOR SIN

While the old covenant priests stood daily offering the same sacrifices again and again, Christ has put away sin (9:26) by offering Himself to God as the unique sacrifice for sin. Hence, as verse 12 says, He "sat down forever on the right hand of God." His sitting in heaven is a sign and proof that the taking away of sins has been accomplished. His sitting there is forever. He no longer needs to do anything for sin, for He has done it once for all. His sitting down forever after having offered one sacrifice for sin is in contrast with the priests' standing daily, offering the same sacrifices again and again.

IX. BY ONE OFFERING CHRIST HAVING PERFECTED FOREVER US WHO ARE BEING SANCTIFIED

Verse 14 says that by "one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified." Although the other sacrifices never perfected anyone, Christ's unique sacrifice has perfected us forever. Through His offering, Christ has not only sanctified us once for all but also perfected us forever. Through that one sacrifice of Christ, we have not

only been separated from sin and brought back to God but also have been perfected before God.

X. THE HOLY SPIRIT TESTIFYING THAT OUR SINS AND LAWLESSNESSES ARE FORGIVEN

At this point we need to read verses 15 through 17. "And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after having said, This is the covenant which I will covenant with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their hearts and upon their minds I will inscribe them; Then He says, And their sins and their lawlessnesses I will by no means remember anymore." In this section of the Word, the writer was trying his best to prove to the Hebrew believers that there was no longer any need of offering the sacrifice for sin, because Christ had accomplished the putting away of sins. The problem of sin has been solved. Now he stresses this fact by pointing out that in Jeremiah 31:33 and 34, which he had quoted in chapter eight for the inward law of life, the Holy Spirit also testifies to this effect. In Jeremiah 31:33 and 34, after the Holy Spirit said that God would put His laws upon our hearts, He then said that God would not remember our sins any more. This proves that the Holy Spirit testifies that our sins have been taken away and that the problem of sin has been solved. Not only in Isaiah 53:6, 11, and 12 was there the prediction that Christ would bear our sins, but also in Jeremiah 31 there was the testimony of the Holy Spirit that our sins would be taken away and that God would no longer have any remembrance of them.

According to our natural understanding of the new covenant, the forgiveness of sins is the first item. However, it is the last item, even a supplementary one. The new covenant is mainly concerned with three things: with the law of life which is written into our being; with God being God to us and us being a people to Him; and with the inner ability of knowing God. These three things are eternal. But some brothers and sisters, still remembering their sins, may ask, "What about our sins?" They need a supplement

telling them to be at peace about their sins, for God will not remember them any longer, because they all have been taken away by the sacrifice of Christ. Here, in chapter ten, after repeating the main item of the new covenant, the inward law of life, mentioned in chapter eight, the Spirit says that the Lord will by no means remember our sins and lawlessnesses. Since the Lord will by no means remember our sins any more, we should not remember them either. But it is difficult for us to forget our sins. Although God forgives and forgets our sins, and although we may realize that our sins have been forgiven, we cannot forget them. The remembrance of our sins is still subconsciously deep in our being.

What does it mean to forget our sins? It is to consider ourselves as never having sinned. Since believing in the Lord Jesus, have you ever considered yourself to be so sinless? God does. When we go to Him, saying, "Father, I wish to repent of my sins," He may say, "What are you talking about? Are you not one of My children? None of My children has ever sinned." To forgive sins means to forget them, to think of them as never having existed. Not only does God forgive our sins; He no longer remembers them. Not only in His administration are our sins put away, but they even have vanished from His memory. In eternity the Father will say, "I have many sons who have never sinned. In My divine memory there is no such thing as sin." Only God has this kind of forgetfulness. The more we try to forget our sins, the more we recall them. You may still remember the day you stole money from your father. While we still remember it, if we go to our Father about it, we shall discover that He has forgotten it. Hallelujah! Have you ever realized that we all have a share in such a wonderful forgiveness? How marvelous it is! Yet this is just a supplement to the three main items of the new covenant, the most important of which is the law of life. God is our God, and we, His people, have the inner ability to know Him. From now on, we should forget sin and not talk about it. Any local church which still talks about sin is not up-to-

date. We must not be a sin-talking church but a life-law-talking church. Sin is history and life is here. We now have the law of life within us.

XI. NO LONGER ANY OFFERING FOR SIN

Since Christ has accomplished the sacrifice for sin and has terminated it, there is no longer any offering for sin (v. 18). This does not mean, as some Christians misinterpret this verse, that if we sin after being saved, there is no longer any offering for our sin and that we will not be forgiven anymore. It means that since Christ has accomplished the offering for sin once for all and has terminated it, there is no longer the need to offer any sacrifice for sin. This was a strong word to the early Hebrew Christians who were considering going back to their old custom of offering the sacrifice for sin. They should have known that the offering for sin had been accomplished and terminated by Christ. Their need was not to go back to the shadow of the animal offerings, but to come forward to partake of the resurrected Christ and enjoy all He had accomplished for them through His offering of Himself to God.

Today we also need to see that our sins have been taken away by the death of Christ and that the problem of sin has been solved once for all. Since sin is over and has become a history, we no longer need to be bothered by it. Our attention must be turned from the Christ on the cross to the Christ in the heavens. We must enjoy the heavenly Christ as our life and all we need in following Him and running the heavenly race. When we enjoy the Christ who is in the heavens, we are truly under the new covenant participating in all the bequests of the new testament. This is the goal of this book.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FORTY-FOUR

COME FORWARD TO THE HOLY OF HOLIES AND DO NOT SHRINK BACK TO JUDAISM

In this message we come to a very sober and solemn portion of the book of Hebrews (10:19-39). Chapters seven, eight, nine, and the first eighteen verses of chapter ten are quite exciting. However, beginning with 10:19 the writer presents another warning. Many Christians do not understand what is covered in this warning. In this message we must see this matter clearly.

This warning, the fourth one in Hebrews, is a warning to come forward to the Holy of Holies and not to shrink back to Judaism. In chapter nine we saw the two tabernacles which symbolize two covenants and two ages. There is the danger of not coming forward to the second tabernacle but of shrinking back to the first. We must leave the first tabernacle, the first covenant, and the first age, and go on to enter into the second tabernacle, into the second age or dispensation. We must go on to the Holy of Holies, enter into the new covenant dispensation, and live in the new age. After presenting a complete picture of these things, the writer was very concerned that the Hebrew believers would not go on. Thus, he gave them a warning, telling them of the danger of shrinking back to Judaism and not coming forward to the new testament. He seemed to be saying, "Hebrew believers, come forward from where you are staggering. If you won't come forward, you will be in danger of shrinking back." Coming forward is in sharp contrast with shrinking back. It is a terrible thing to shrink back! Because shrinking back is such a dreadful thing, we must view this fourth warning in a very sober way.

Firstly, I would like to say a word about the phrase "come forward." This phrase is used four times in Hebrews regarding three things. In 4:16 we are told to come forward to the throne of grace; in 7:25 and 11:6 we are told to come forward to God; and in 10:22 we are told to come forward to the Holy of Holies. In 10:22, of course, the phrase "Holy of Holies" must be in italics, because it is not found in the original Greek text. However, if you consider the context beginning from verse nineteen, you will see that the meaning certainly is to come forward to the Holy of Holies. The King James Version of 10:22 says to "draw near," but it does not tell us what we are to draw near to. After much study, I have come to the conclusion that the best translation of the Greek word is not "come," "draw near," or "approach to" as some versions render it; it is "come forward." We must come forward to the Holy of Holies, to the throne of grace, and to God Himself.

God is on the throne of grace, and the throne of grace is in the Holy of Holies. This is the scene of the new covenant age. Wherever we may be, we must come forward to the Holy of Holies, the throne of grace, and to God. When we do this, we come forward to the new age, to the new economy, dispensation, and administration in and through which God fulfills His purpose. God's eternal purpose can only be fulfilled with God sitting on the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies in this new covenant age. Coming forward is not merely a matter of our salvation or even of our glorification; it is for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. For us to be saved or glorified is a small thing, but for God's eternal purpose to be accomplished is a tremendous matter. Thank God that He has included us in this. Our coming forward and enjoying the new testament is altogether for Him and His purpose. It is for Him to be expressed and for His eternal purpose to be accomplished. This requires four things: God on the throne, the throne of grace, the Holy of Holies, and the new covenant age. If any one of these four items is missing, it is impossible for God to accomplish His purpose. How serious this is!

Not only were the pagans and the heathen far away from these four things, but even the Judaizers who had the old covenant were far away from them. Moreover, many Christians today are also far off from these four items. Therefore, there is the call to come forward. We thank God that today the sky is crystal clear above us and we can understand that to come forward means to come forward to the Holy of Holies, to the throne of grace, and to God, and that this means we must come forward to the new covenant dispensation. Where are you? Are you still at the altar beholding the One crowned with thorns, or are you touching the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies gazing upon the One crowned with glory? How we need to come forward! Coming forward is the focal point of the book of Hebrews, and it is very crucial that we all see it. Once we see it, we should never depart from it.

I. THE FIRST TABERNACLE, THE HOLY PLACE, BEING A FIGURE

The first tabernacle, that is, the Holy Place, is only a figure, not the reality. As we have seen, all the things in the Holy Place, such as the showbread table and the lampstand, are the types of Christ, not the reality.

II. THE SECOND TABERNACLE, THE HOLY OF HOLIES, BEING REALIZED BY THE NEW COVENANT DISPENSATION

The second tabernacle, which is the Holy of Holies, is realized by the new testament dispensation (9:3, 8, 10). The Holy of Holies is a reality. It is realized by the new covenant dispensation in which we now are experiencing its reality. The presence of God, the shekinah glory of God, God's meeting with man, and God's speaking, which are in the Holy of Holies, are all real. They are not types but realities which are fully realized and experienced by us in the new testament dispensation.

III. THE OLD COVENANT AGE BEING TERMINATED AND THE NEW COVENANT DISPENSATION HAVING BEEN INAUGURATED

The old covenant age has been terminated by the death of Christ, and the new covenant dispensation has been inaugurated by His resurrection and ascension. In His ascension, He is the "High Priest of the good things that have come" (9:11). He is now ministering in "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" in the heavens to execute the new covenant for God's economy.

IV. THE WAY TO ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES HAVING BEEN CUT

Verse 19 says, "Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus." The Holy of Holies today is in heaven, where the Lord Jesus is (9:12, 24). Then, how can we enter it while we are still on earth? The secret is our spirit, referred to in 4:12. The very Christ who is in heaven is also now in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). He, as the heavenly ladder (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51), joins our spirit to heaven and brings heaven into our spirit. Whenever we turn to our spirit, we enter into the Holy of Holies. Here we meet with God who is on the throne of grace.

We enter the Holy of Holies by a "new and living way, which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh" (v. 20). The way into the Holy of Holies has been cut. According to the Greek, the word "new" in this verse means "freshly slain." Through Christ's death on the cross, the way has been "freshly slain" for us. What was slain? Not only the flesh but the entire old creation. In this verse, the veil, which is His flesh, signifies the old creation, including us. On the veil were cherubim (Exo. 26:31) which signify the creatures (Ezek. 10:15). When the veil was rent, the cherubim were also rent, signifying that when the flesh of Christ, which is typified by the veil, was crucified, all the creatures also were crucified with His flesh. This flesh has

been slain. According to Matthew 27:51, when the Lord Jesus died, the veil was rent from top to bottom, meaning that it was not rent by anyone on earth but by God in the heavens. The old creation has been slain and a new and living way to enter into the Holy of Holies has been cut. Now through the riven veil of the flesh and by the blood of Jesus we can enter into the Holy of Holies. His death and His blood are still available to us today.

The veil in verse 20 is the second veil (9:3) within the tabernacle which, as we have seen, typifies the flesh of Christ. When Christ's flesh was crucified, this veil was rent, thus opening the way for us who were excluded from God, who is signified by the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24), to enter into the Holy of Holies to contact Him and take Him as the tree of life for our enjoyment. This also implies that since our old man has been crucified with Christ, we have an open way to contact and enjoy God in our spirit as our life and life supply.

V. HAVING BOLDNESS TO ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES THROUGH THE BETTER SACRIFICES OF CHRIST

Through the better sacrifices of Christ, we have boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies (9:23; 10:19). It is not a small thing to enter the Holy of Holies, for there the very God is sitting on the throne of grace. In order to enter into such a place we must have boldness, and we have it by Christ's death and by His blood. By the Lord's death and His blood we have the boldness to enter the Holy of Holies at any time we want to, unlike the high priest in the Old Testament, who could only enter into it once a year.

VI. HAVING A GREAT PRIEST OVER THE HOUSE OF GOD

Verse 21 says that we have "a great Priest over the house of God." This is deep. We have seen that we are the house of God (3:6). But if we are in the outer court, we do not have the right position to be the house of God. In order

to be the house of God we must come forward to the Holy of Holies, because it is only there that Christ, our High Priest, takes care of the house of God. Since the Holy of Holies is joined to our spirit, we can only be the house of God when we are in our spirit. If we would turn from our spirit to our flesh, we would no longer be the house of God but a house of scorpions and snakes. When Christians fight and argue with one another, they are not the church, the house of God; they are scorpions and snakes. Although they may be saved, they do not live in the saved life but in the scorpion life. According to Ephesians 2:22, the house of God is in the spirit. If we live like scorpions, we could never enjoy Christ's presence. Only in the Holy of Holies in the spirit does Christ, our High Priest, take care of the house of God.

VII. COMING FORWARD TO THE HOLY OF HOLIES

Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies (v. 22), that is, to the new covenant dispensation. The Holy of Holies not only denotes a place, but also means a covenant, an age, and a dispensation. In chapter nine we saw clearly that the tabernacle was not merely a place but also the symbol of a covenant and an age. The call to come forward to the Holy of Holies includes coming forward to the new covenant and to the new covenant age. We must come to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our body washed with pure water. For us to come forward to the Holy of Holies, our heart must be true, our faith must be with full assurance, our conscience must be sprinkled, and our whole being must be washed. We should not consider this as a light thing. We must be very serious in this matter.

VIII. HOLDING FAST THE CONFESSION OF OUR HOPE UNWAVERING

"Our hope" (v. 23) refers to Christ and to all we shall partake of in Him. He is our hope of glory (Col. 1:27). The redemption of our body, which He will accomplish at the

time of His second appearing, is also our hope. Even now, He, as our indestructible life, is our hope, regardless of our situation. As our High Priest with the more excellent ministry of His kingly and divine priesthood, He is our hope in our daily life. By His intercession on our behalf He takes care of us and is able to save us to the uttermost. This is what we believe. This is our confession. We must hold fast this confession without any wavering of our faith so that we might come forward to enter into the Holy of Holies to enjoy the heavenly Christ.

IX. CONSIDERING ONE ANOTHER FOR INCITING TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS

For the proper church life, we need to consider one another (v. 24). To be isolated from others is to commit suicide in the church life. To consider one another is to increase life in inciting to love and good works. Good works here and in 13:21 are the good things which, in the eyes of God, are mainly related to the fulfillment of His purpose. If we consider one another in this way, we shall be kept in the church life.

X. NOT FORSAKING THE CHURCH TO SIN WILLFULLY

Now we come to a crucial point. The writer warns the Hebrew believers not to forsake the church to sin willfully, that is, to go back to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin which has been terminated (vv. 25-26, 18). Verses 25 and 26 say, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day drawing near. For when we sin willfully after receiving the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." For the Hebrew believers to shrink back to Judaism and offer again the sacrifice for sin would be to do something which God had terminated. For the Hebrew believers at their time and in their situation to forsake the

assembling of themselves together would have been to forsake the new covenant way of contacting God, to forsake the church, and to return to their old religion--Judaism. That would have broken God's administration of grace, thus constituting a serious sin before God. It would have been to "sin willfully after receiving the full knowledge of the truth." Truth here refers to the things disclosed in the foregoing chapters and verses, which affords the Hebrew believers the full knowledge that God has annulled the old covenant and has established the new. To sin willfully means to forsake the assembling of ourselves together with the church. The Hebrew believers had been instructed to abandon Judaism and remain under the new covenant. If they had returned to Judaism, they would have forsaken assembling themselves with the church. This constitutes a willful sin in the eyes of God after receiving the knowledge of the truth, after knowing that God had forsaken Judaism, which was formed according to the old covenant, and had established the new and living way of contacting God according to the new covenant.

Verse 26 says that "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" for those who sin willfully. If the Hebrew believers had forsaken the church and returned to Judaism, there would have remained no sacrifice for sin in the economy of God, for all the sacrifices of the old covenant have been altogether replaced by the one sacrifice of Christ. Since Christ has once for all offered Himself as the real sacrifice for our sins (7:27; 10:10, 12), the sacrifice for sin has ceased (10:2), having been taken away by Christ (10:9). Many Christian teachers misinterpret verse 26, saying that if we sin willfully after being saved our sins cannot be forgiven because there is no more sacrifice for sin. This interpretation is terrible! As we have seen, the willful sin mentioned here is forsaking the church and shrinking back to the old covenant after knowing that God had annulled it and established a new one. Forsaking the church to return to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin when there was no longer any such thing, was, in the eyes of God, a willful sin.

A. Trampling Under Foot the Son of God

Verse 29 says, "By how much do you think he shall be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled under foot the Son of God." In the new covenant the Son of God replaces all the sacrifices of the old covenant. If the Hebrew believers would still return to Judaism to offer any of the old sacrifices, they would in effect be trampling under foot the Son of God. They would be despising Him, disregarding Him, and putting Him under their feet.

B. Regarding the Sanctifying Blood of the Covenant a Common Thing

Verse 29 also speaks of regarding the blood of the covenant a common thing. If the Hebrew believers would have returned to Judaism to offer the old sacrifices and rely on the blood of the slain animals, they would in effect have regarded the precious blood of Christ a common thing. That would have been a serious disregard of the unique redemptive work of Christ. Since animal blood was common, it could be offered again and again. However, if, after receiving Christ, the Hebrew believers returned to Judaism to offer again the sacrifices for sin, they would have been making the blood of Christ the same as animal blood. This is an insult to Christ.

C. Insulting the Spirit of Grace

This verse also mentions insulting the Spirit of grace. Under the new covenant, through the redeeming blood of Christ, the Hebrew believers had become partakers of the Holy Spirit (6:4), the Spirit of grace. If they had returned to Judaism to offer the sacrifices for sin, this would have been against the work of the Spirit of grace who was indwelling them and working in them and who would have been insulted by their willful sin. The Spirit of grace would never have agreed with this and would have reacted within them. This is serious.

XI. DO NOT SHRINK BACK TO JUDAISM

In verses 38 and 39, the writer told the Hebrew believers to live by faith and not shrink back to ruin. For the Hebrew believers to shrink back to Judaism was to shrink back to ruin, which is not eternal perdition but punishment by the living God (vv. 29-31). The ruin mentioned here is the punishment, as mentioned in verses 27 through 31, of those who forsake the new covenant and return to Judaism, thus trampling underfoot the Son of God, regarding Christ's precious blood common as animal blood, and insulting the Spirit of grace.

By now, we all should be able to understand this fourth warning. The economy of God has been presented clearly. We have seen the old way and the new way, and we have been warned to come forward along the new way and not to shrink back to the old. To shrink back to the old way after having such a clear word is to commit a willful sin. At the time this epistle was written, to shrink back meant to forsake the new testament church and to give up the new testament dispensation and economy of God. This was not a small matter; it was a very serious willful sin. The writer warned them that if they did such a thing, they would suffer punishment.

According to God's economy, all the old sacrifices have been terminated and the old way has been closed. If the Hebrew believers would have shrunk back to the old way to offer sacrifices according to the law, it would have been in vain, for, in the eyes of God, such a thing had been terminated. This is the correct meaning of this warning. However, many Christians misinterpret it, saying that if you sin after you are saved, you are sinning willfully and there is no possibility of having your sins forgiven. Under the Lord's light, we have seen that to sin willfully is to give up God's economy and to go back to the old way of traditional religion. Here, at the end time, the Lord has presented us with His up-to-date economy. We know what is the old way and what is the new way. The old way has

been closed, and the new way has been freshly slain. For the sake of the Lord's recovery and God's economy, we must come forward to take the new way.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FORTY-FIVE

NOT ETERNAL PERDITION, BUT DISPENSATIONAL PUNISHMENT

This message, entitled "Not Eternal Perdition, But Dispensational Punishment," is necessary that we might have a basic foundation in the Lord's recovery. The term dispensational punishment is not likely to be found in other Christian books or messages, for it is a new term in the Lord's recovery. This term is necessary because many Christians have confused the matter of dispensational punishment with eternal perdition. According to the New Testament, these are clearly two separate things, having nothing to do with one another. Eternal perdition is for unbelievers, whereas dispensational punishment is for believers. A great deal of trouble has been caused by mixing together these two things.

In today's Christianity, there are two main schools of theology regarding salvation. One school says that salvation is eternal. According to this school, once we have been saved, we are saved eternally, regardless what we do after we are saved. Salvation can never be lost. The second school claims that if we are not careful after being saved, we might be lost again. Most of the so-called holiness churches belong to this school, believing that a person may be saved and lost again and again. Because their salvation goes up and down like an elevator, we may call this concept of salvation "elevator salvation." Once, when I was less than thirty years of age, a preacher came to our town saying that we could be saved in the morning and lost again that night, and then by repenting and confessing our sins we could be saved again the next morning. When I heard about this, I boldly told the saints in that town that

this was nonsense and that our God would never give us such a salvation.

Apparently those who preach and teach "elevator salvation" have some ground in the Bible; actually they do not. They are like those who see the letter C and, having poor eyesight, mistake it for a G. They make a big mistake in interpreting certain passages in the Bible. They use all the verses which speak of dispensational punishment to support their belief that a saved person can be lost again. Those who follow this school of theology never have any assurance. If, as far as salvation is concerned, they are up when they die, they will be saved forever. But if they are down, they will be lost eternally. What kind of gospel is this? It is terrible!

However, it is also wrong to teach that no matter what you do after you have been saved there will be no problem and you will continue to be saved. According to this teaching, as long as we have the assurance of being saved for eternity, it is all right. We need to be unloaded and drop the teaching of both these theological schools and see what the pure Word of God says concerning this matter.

I. THE SECURITY OF GOD'S ETERNAL SALVATION FOR THE BELIEVER

God's salvation is eternal. Once we have received it, it is secured eternally. This is proved by eleven things.

A. By the Will of God

God's eternal salvation is secured by the will of God. Ephesians 1:5 says that we have been predestinated according to God's will, and John 6:39 tells us that the Father's will is that none of those whom He has given the Son should be lost. This is the will of God concerning our salvation. God's will is more steady and stable than a rock. Although heaven and earth may be removed, God's will remains forever. It does not go up and down like an elevator.

B. By the Selection and Calling of God

God's salvation is secured by the selection and calling of God. He has chosen us, selected us, before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). It is not we who selected Him but He who selected us (John 15:16), and His selection is not of our works but of Himself who calls (Rom. 9:11). He has not only predestinated us but also called us (Rom. 8:30), not according to our works but according to His own purpose (2 Tim. 1:9). His calling is irrevocable. He will never repent of it nor regret having called us. His selection and calling have nothing to do with our works; our works can never affect them, for they are unchangeable. Both God's selection and calling, being initiated by Him, not by us, are the security of our salvation.

C. By the Love and Grace of God

The salvation we have received of God is also secured y His love and grace. It is not we who loved Him, but He who loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10). Nothing whatsoever shall be able to separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39). We are changeable, but the love of God is unchangeable. Furthermore, God has not saved us according to our works, but according to His grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9). Our works may often fail, but God's grace never fails. Our salvation is secured not by our works but by God's prevailing grace which comes out of His unchanging love.

D. By the Righteousness of God

God's eternal salvation is secured by the righteousness of God which is revealed to faith (Rom. 1:16-17). For the showing forth of His righteousness, God must justify us, and He has justified us who believe in the Lord Jesus (Rom. 3:26). It is the righteous God who has justified us (Rom. 8:33). His righteousness is the foundation of His throne (Psa. 89:14, Heb.). His throne is established forever

and nothing can shake it. Our salvation, being secured by God's righteousness, is as unshakable as God's throne.

E. By the Covenant of God

Our salvation is secured by the covenant of God. God has saved us by His new covenant (Heb. 8:8-13). It has definitely been covenanted that He has written the law of life within us and that He will never remember our sins. As the faithful God, He will never break His covenant (Psa. 89:34). Not only His righteousness but also His faithfulness binds Him. Hence, His covenant with His faithfulness is a security of our salvation.

F. By the Power of God

The security of God's eternal salvation is also by the power of God. The Lord Jesus said that His Father is greater than all, and that no one can snatch us out of the Father's hand (John 10:29). God the Father is more powerful than anything. He has a mighty arm, and strong is His hand (Psa. 89:13). No one can pluck us out of His hand.

G. By the Life of God

Our salvation is eternally secured by the life of God. The Lord said, "I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever" (John 10:28, Recovery Version). Do you believe that the eternal life can be recalled once it has been given to us? To say that once we are saved we can be lost again means that the eternal life which has been given to us would be called back. This is altogether illogical. Once we have the eternal life, we shall never perish.

H. By God Himself

Our salvation is secured by God Himself. God has chosen, predestinated, called, justified, cleansed, and saved us. With Him there is no shadow of change (James 1:17); He is unchangeable (Mal. 3:6). After doing so much for us

that we might be saved, do you think that God would change in this matter? Can our condition or situation affect God's nature? Can it change God's doing? No, it is impossible. Our salvation is secured by the unchangeable God Himself.

I. By the Redemption of Christ

Our salvation is secured by the redemption of Christ. Christ has died for us (Rom. 8:34), and the redemption accomplished by His death is an eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). By offering Himself once to God He has perfected us forever (Heb. 10:14), and His eternal redemption issues in our eternal salvation (5:9). Thus, He is able to save us to the uttermost, not only in extent but also in time (7:25).

J. By the Power of Christ

Our eternal salvation is also secured by the power of Christ. In John 10:28 and 29 the Lord assures us that not only the Father's hand but also His hand will keep us from perishing. The Father is strong, and He is powerful. No one can snatch us out of the Father's hand, nor out of His hand. We are secured by two divine hands, the Father's hand of love and the Son's hand of grace, both of which are powerful to keep.

K. By the Promise of Christ

Finally, our salvation is secured by the promise of Christ. The Lord Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37, Recovery Version). Here we see that the Lord promised that He would never reject or forsake anyone who came to Him. All these verses are very clear and unambiguous, giving a solid foundation for the security of our salvation. Nothing can annul these clear verses. Thus, all God's children may have the proper faith to believe that His salvation is eternal.

Those who believe that a saved person can lose his salvation appeal to such verses as Hebrews 10:29, which

says, "By how much do you think he shall be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" We must deal with this verse very carefully. It speaks of a saved person, for it mentions one who has been sanctified by the blood of Christ. Yet such a one may be worthy of worse punishment because he has trampled under foot the Son of God, regarded the precious blood of Christ as common, and insulted the Spirit of grace. Undoubtedly, the Spirit of grace was working graciously in him, but he did not listen to it.

In order to understand this verse, we must consider the context beginning with verse 25, which speaks of "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom with some is." As we have seen, for the Hebrew believers to forsake the assembling of themselves together meant that they were forsaking the church to return to Judaism to offer the animal sacrifices again. Then verse 26 speaks of sinning willfully "after receiving the full knowledge of the truth." As we pointed out in the last message, truth here refers to the things disclosed in the foregoing chapters and verses, which afforded the Hebrew believers the full knowledge that God had annulled the old covenant and established the new. If after receiving this knowledge, they still went back to offer the sacrifices for sin, they would have been sinning willfully. They knew that, according to God's economy, there no longer remained a sacrifice for sin because all the sacrifices had been terminated by the unique sacrifice of Christ. By considering verse 29 in its context, we see that it refers to a truly saved person. All the Hebrew Christians were saved, but they were in danger of forsaking the Christian assembly, that is, forsaking the church, and returning to Judaism. If they had done this, they would have been worthy of some punishment. Although this verse indicates that a saved person may be punished, it does not mean, as those who follow the second school misinterpret it, that a saved person can be lost. It certainly does not refer to

eternal perdition but to a type of punishment of believers.

II. THE ETERNAL PERDITION FOR THE UNBELIEVERS

The "worse punishment" in 10:29 is different from suffering the second death (Rev. 20:6, 14; 21:8). To suffer the second death is to perish in the lake of fire for eternity, that is, to suffer eternal perdition. This is most terrible. Some argue that there is no such thing as eternal perdition, saying that God is love and could not bear to have His creatures suffer in the lake of fire for eternity. But they seem to forget Revelation 14:10-11; 19:20; 20:10, 14-15; and 21:8. These verses tell us that the lost, the perished ones, will suffer in the lake of fire for eternity. God is God. When He loves, He truly loves. But when He is severe, He is surely severe. Since the unbelievers face such a terrible eternal perdition, they certainly need the gospel.

III. THE DISPENSATIONAL PUNISHMENT FOR THE FAILURES OF THE BELIEVERS

A. God's Discipline or Chastening

Although the believers cannot be lost, they may suffer some dispensational punishment for their failures (10:29). In these days we all have heard the call to come forward and not to shrink back. But suppose some would shrink back. They would not be lost, but they would be dealt with by God, undergoing some dispensational punishment. In the Bible dispensational punishment is called chastening, discipline, or chastisement. God's punishment is His discipline. When parents punish their children, it does not mean that they permanently cast them away. Rather, parents discipline their children with a good intention. I know of one Christian couple who warned their children about their schoolwork. They told their children that everything had been prepared for them and that it was their responsibility to do well in school. If at the end of the

school year they had earned A's, they would receive a great reward, but if they failed, they would be put into a dark room for a day. This Christian couple kept their word. At the end of the year, the child who earned the A's received a reward, while the one who failed received some punishment. One of the parents disciplined him, even shedding tears, saying, "Child, I love you, but I cannot help it. You must go to that room for the day and have nothing to eat." They did not cast him away. That dark room was not even a temporary prison--it was a closet of love. The child's parents displayed the best love for him, and the next semester he also received A's in school. This is an illustration of dispensational punishment.

Our heavenly Father is loving and wise. Do you think that He will always allow us to fail? Certainly not. What then will He do if we fail? He will give us a loving discipline and put us in a dark room of love for a time. There, in the darkness, His children will be disciplined for their own good.

B. Some in This Age

All sound fundamental Christian teachers of the Bible believe that God chastises His children. In Hebrews 12:5-11 we have a word of warning concerning us. Verses 5 and 6 say, "You have completely forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with sons, My son, do not make light of the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when reproved by Him; for whom the Lord loves He disciplines and scourges every son whom He receives." This word mainly refers to God's discipline in this age. Are you a son of God? If you are, then you may be scourged. Verse 7 says, "It is for discipline that you are enduring; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom the father does not discipline?" When this book was written, the Hebrew believers were suffering chastisement. God was dealing with them as with sons. Although I have disciplined my own children, I have never disciplined the children on the street, because they are not my children and I have nothing to do with them. Verse 8 continues,

"But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are bastards and not sons." If we are without the Father's discipline, then we must be bastards, not sons. I certainly would not want to be a bastard. "Furthermore, we have had the fathers of our flesh as discipliners and we respected them; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed disciplined us for a few days as it seemed good to them, but He for our profit that we might partake of His holiness" (vv. 9-10). Since holiness is God's nature, to partake of God's holiness is to partake of His nature. It was common, unholy, for the Hebrew believers to remain in Judaism. They needed to be separated to God's new covenant that they might partake of God's holy nature. For this purpose, persecution was aroused to discipline them that they might be separated from the common to the holy.

C. Some in the Nest Age

Although all the fundamental teachers of the Bible believe that God chastens His children, nearly all of them would say that His chastisement is only in this age, not in the coming age, claiming that God will never chastise us after we die. But I cannot find such a teaching in the Bible. Luke 12:45-48 reveals clearly that when the Lord Jesus returns, He will chastise His unfaithful servants. At the judgment seat of Christ, all the believers will be judged concerning how they have lived and what they have done after they were saved. Then the judgment will be made whether they will receive chastisement or not. This is similar to the end of the school year when the children present their parents a record of their grades, and the parents decide whether the children will receive a prize or a punishment. At the Lord's coming back, we all will present our record to Him, and He will decide what we shall receive. God's discipline is not only in this age but also in the coming age. As we have pointed out, the next age will still belong to the old heaven and the old earth.

Thus, even the coming age of the kingdom will be a time for the Father to deal with His children.

What is mentioned in 10:27-31 as a warning does not refer to eternal perdition for the unbelievers but to God's dispensational punishment of His children who do not obey His word. We must be assured that once we have God's salvation, we shall never lose it. However, if we do not care for God's word, we shall be punished. To be punished by God is not to be hated by Him. Rather, it is a sign that God the Father loves us. He disciplines whom He loves, not treating them as bastards but as dear sons. Surely the Father will discipline us.

How we must thank the Lord that He has opened His economy to us and that He has given us the warnings that we might go along with His economy! If we do not heed God's warnings, we shall be punished. The time of our punishment is altogether up to Him, not us. It is the parents who determine what is the best time to deal with their children. They decide whether to deal with them immediately or to wait. Likewise, our Father knows the right time to deal with us, whether it is in this age or in the coming age. Luke 12:45-48; 19:22-26; Matthew 24:48-51; and 25:26-30 reveal clearly and definitely that when the Lord Jesus comes back, He will deal with His unfaithful servants.

By now we should be clear that the salvation which we have received from God is eternally secure. Nevertheless, we must be careful regarding our way of going on with God after we have been saved, especially after receiving the full knowledge of the truth as it has been given to us in these messages on Hebrews. If these messages do not help you to go on, then they will be unprofitable as far as your welfare is concerned. If we know the Lord's will and yet do not do it, we shall be beaten more. But if we are ignorant of the Lord's will and do not do it, we shall be beaten less. Luke 12:48 says, "He that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much

required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." If you do not have the heart to go on with the Lord, you are better off to be left ignorant. But we are no longer ignorant. May we all heed the warning to come forward and not to shrink back. May our prayer be, "Lord Jesus, help me to come forward."

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FORTY-SIX

THE KINGDOM REWARD AND THE GAINING OF THE SOUL

In the fourth warning in the book of Hebrews (10:19-39), two important things are mentioned--the worse punishment (v. 29) and the great reward (v. 35). These two phrases are both heavy and meaningful; they are the keys to this fourth warning. The writer of this epistle was not concerned with our salvation, for according to what he has written, it is eternally secure. The writer has made it quite clear that Christ has offered Himself to put away sin once for all (7:27; 9:26, 28) and that He has obtained for us an eternal salvation (5:9). Having entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, He has found for us an eternal redemption (9:12). The writer knew that our salvation was fully, thoroughly, and completely secure and that we have been saved forever. However, he was very concerned whether his readers would receive a great reward or suffer punishment.

Throughout the centuries, most Christians have not seen the punishment as well as the reward. Many books deal with the matter of reward, saying that if we follow the Lord faithfully and do His will, we shall receive a crown as a reward. However, it is difficult to find a book which speaks about the other side--punishment. Most Christian writers do not want to touch this subject, because it will cause them difficulty. Nevertheless, "worse punishment" is mentioned in 10:29, and we cannot ignore it. We shall either suffer a worse punishment or receive a great reward.

Our God is fair, righteous, and wise. He knows how to handle everything and how to deal with His children. As our wise Father, He has a just way of dealing with us, His

children: He will reward the faithful and obedient ones and punish the unfaithful and disobedient ones. According to most of the teachings, it seems that God only rewards the faithful ones but does not punish the unfaithful. This is not logical. Our Father is much wiser than this. To say that He will reward the faithful ones and discipline the unfaithful ones is logical. Our God is logical and purposeful, never doing anything without a meaning. The clear word in His oracle says definitely that if we are faithful, He will reward us, but if we are not, He will punish us.

We need not be concerned about our salvation. We may be assured that it is eternally secured according to His holy word. The question, however, is this: how shall we follow the Lord after we have been saved? Will we conduct ourselves according to the law of life? Will we come forward to the Holy of Holies, or shrink back to the Holy Place and even to the outer court? This is up to us. If we come forward, we shall receive a reward. But if we shrink back, we shall suffer punishment because we break God's administration and disobey His will. We all must come forward to the second covenant and dive into the new covenant economy of God, forgetting our sins and devoting our full attention to the law of life that will make us His reproduction. If we care for this, He surely will reward us. But if we do not care for it, shrinking back instead, He will punish us according to His warning. It is a serious matter to break God's administration. If we do this, breaking the law of life, we shall suffer a worse punishment than those who broke the law of letters. We need to be deeply impressed with this matter of the "worse punishment" and the "great reward." Perhaps we even need to underline these words in our Bibles as a reminder of their significance. These words represent our future destiny. Which shall it be--a worse punishment or a great reward?

The Apostle Paul was not assured that he had the reward until he reached the end of his life. When he wrote the book of 1 Corinthians, he was very much concerned that he might be a castaway in the heavenly race (9:24-27).

Even when he wrote the book of Philippians, he was still pressing on toward the mark for the prize (Phil. 3:14). Only in 2 Timothy 4:7 and 8, written shortly before his martyrdom, did he have the assurance that the crown of righteousness was awaiting him. Do not be assured that you have already attained the reward. You have not yet finished your race.

We all must be clear about four words: salvation, perdition, reward, and punishment. The reward is not salvation; it is something in addition to it. Salvation is by grace through faith, whereas the reward is according to the life and work we have after being saved. As the reward is different from salvation, so is punishment different from perdition. As we have pointed out, perdition is for the unsaved while punishment is for believers. Thus, punishment here is something altogether different from perdition. We have been saved forever and we can never perish. The unbelievers face two choices--salvation or perdition. We, the saved ones, also must consider two possibilities--receiving a reward or suffering some punishment. All the saints in the Lord's recovery must be clear about this, for it is a matter of God's economy, God's way of dealing with His children.

I. THE ETERNAL SALVATION

A. By Grace Through Faith

Eternal salvation, as Ephesians 2:8 clearly reveals, is by grace through faith, having nothing to do with our works. Whatever we have done, whatever we are doing, and whatever we shall do cannot affect our salvation. It is absolutely a matter of God's grace through our faith in the Lord Jesus.

B. Not of Works

Salvation is not of our works (Eph. 2:9; Rom. 11:6). It does not depend on what we do, on what we are, nor on the way we behave ourselves. As it is by grace through our

faith, it is no longer of our works; otherwise, grace is no longer grace.

C. The Saved One Shall Never Perish

The saved one shall never perish. Do not pay any attention to the teaching which says that we can be saved and lost again and again. John 10:28 and 29 are a strong word of assurance that the saved one shall never perish. The Lord Jesus said, "I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father Who has given them to Me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand" (Recovery Version). The life we have received is the eternal life which nothing can terminate. And we have two hands holding us, the Lord's hand of power and the Father's hand of love, out of which nothing can snatch us. Our salvation is eternally secured by the eternal life and by the two divine hands.

D. The Saved One May Not Receive a Reward, But Suffer a Loss

First Corinthians 3:15 reveals that a saved one may not receive a reward but "suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire" (Gk.). We need to pay close attention to this verse and its context. Verse 8 says, "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." This verse indicates that here it is not a matter of salvation but of reward. In verse 12 we see two categories of materials with which we may build: gold, silver, and precious stones--the produce of the law of life; wood, hay, and stubble--the produce of the flesh. Verses 13 and 14 continue, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." Once again, it is not a matter of salvation but of reward. If a man's work is burned, he shall

suffer loss, but he shall not suffer perdition. "He himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire." Paul was very careful in writing this verse. He said that we may suffer loss but still be saved. Lest we think that since we shall still be saved there can be no problem, Paul said that we "shall be saved, yet so as through fire." There is no need for me to interpret this verse. Simply take it as it is. It certainly is not a good thing to be saved "as through fire." I do not know what kind of fire that will be, but I do not want to pass through it.

What we have been saying here is the pure word of God. It is not, as some have falsely said, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. That is devilish. What we are doing here is simply quoting the pure word of God. We should not pick and choose verses out of the Bible according to our taste. Everyone loves John 3:16 and many have it written on a scroll hanging on a wall in their home. But I have never seen a scroll with 1 Corinthians 3:15 on it. Chapter three of 1 Corinthians is on the building of the church. Today God has only one concern--the building of the church. If we are right with God in this matter, we shall receive a reward. If not, we shall suffer loss but be saved "yet so as through fire."

Hebrews 10:35 uses the word "reward," and 10:27 speaks of "fiery zeal." Moreover, 12:29 says, "Our God is also a consuming fire." This consuming fire deals not with the faithful ones, but with the unfaithful, and it is not for reward but for punishment. As we have seen, such punishment has nothing to do with eternal perdition. We must always discern between punishment and perdition, just as we discern between reward and salvation.

II. THE KINGDOM REWARD

The reward mentioned in verse 35 is the kingdom reward because it will be given to us for our enjoyment in the coming kingdom, not in this age. Today in the church life the kingdom is an exercise. If we are faithful in the kingdom exercise today, we shall be rewarded with the

kingdom as an enjoyment in the coming age. Then it will be the kingdom reward.

A. By Righteousness

Eternal salvation is by grace, but the kingdom reward is by righteousness. In 2 Timothy 4:8, Paul says that a crown of righteousness, the symbol of this reward, not a crown of grace, was laid up for him. So in verse 18 of the same chapter, he has the assurance that the Lord will save him into His heavenly kingdom. This was due to his faithfulness in following and serving the Lord. The Lord, the "righteous judge," will give him this reward of the kingdom according to His righteousness, not according to His grace.

B. According to Work

The kingdom reward will be according to our work. In Matthew 16:27 the Lord Jesus said that at His coming back He will reward us according to our works. In Revelation 22:12 He says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." As we have already seen, 1 Corinthians 3:8 says that we shall be rewarded according to our labor. Eternal salvation has nothing to do with our works, but the kingdom reward will be altogether according to our works which we have by the Lord's life after being saved.

C. Decided by the Judgment Seat of Christ

This reward will be decided by the judgment seat of Christ. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The judgment seat of Christ will be set up at His coming back. At the judgment seat the Lord Jesus will judge all His believers. None of the unsaved will be judged at that time, for all of them will be judged at the white throne a thousand years later (Rev. 20:11-15). There, at the judgment seat of Christ,

the decision will be made regarding what reward we shall receive--the enjoyment in the kingdom or some punishment.

D. Given to Us at the Lord's Coming Back

This reward will be given to us at the Lord's coming back. In 1 Corinthians 4:5 Paul says, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." At His coming back, the Lord will judge everything and will reward every one of His believers. We must take heed to the warning in this verse. At His coming back, the Lord "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Today we can hide the things of darkness and the counsels of our hearts. But all this will be brought to light and made manifest at the Lord's coming back. Then every one of us shall receive a reward accordingly.

E. Enjoyed in the Coming Kingdom

The kingdom reward will be enjoyed in the coming kingdom. Both Matthew 25:21 and 23 say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." According to the context of Matthew, to enter into the Lord's joy is to enter into the coming kingdom. The faithful servants will participate in the Lord's joy in the kingdom as a positive reward.

F. Participating in the Coming Sabbath Rest

The kingdom reward is to participate in the coming Sabbath rest. As we have seen in previous messages, this coming Sabbath rest will he Christ's joy and reign in the millennium (Heb. 4:9; Rev. 20:4, 6). There, in the thousand-year kingdom, we shall share Christ's joy and participate in His reign as kings.

G. Paul Having Strived for This Reward

Paul strived for this reward. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, he tells us that he was running the race for the reward. Then in Philippians 3:13 and 14, he was still running the race. Only at the time immediately before his martyrdom did he know for certain that the reward was awaiting him and that the crown of righteousness had been prepared for him and for all who love the Lord's appearing (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

H. Moses Having Looked to This Reward

Because Moses was willing to suffer the reproach of Christ, he will receive the reward of the kingdom (Heb. 11:26). He was not allowed to enter into the rest of the good land because of his failure at Meribah (Num. 20:12-13; Deut. 3:26-27; 32:50-52). But he will be with Christ in the kingdom (Matt. 16:28--17:3). By referring to this, the writer surely intended to encourage his readers, who were suffering persecution for Christ's sake, to follow Moses by esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the things they lost and by looking away to the reward.

I. In Addition to Eternal Salvation

The kingdom reward is in addition to the eternal salvation which is mentioned in 5:9. Based upon Christ's eternal redemption (9:12), eternal salvation has been given to us freely and eternally according to God's eternal selection of us. That is eternally secured. However, after receiving this eternal salvation, how we would behave ourselves is a problem. Hence, according to God's wisdom, in addition to this eternal salvation, a reward is promised as an incentive to us that we may be faithful in our living by the Lord and in our working for Him.

Eternal salvation is by faith, having nothing to do with our work (Eph. 2:8-9), whereas the kingdom reward is for our work after we are saved (1 Cor. 3:8, 14). We may not receive the kingdom reward even though we are saved,

because we are void of the work which the Lord would approve (1 Cor. 3:15). The Hebrew believers were here charged not to miss the kingdom reward--the coming Sabbath rest, the enjoyment of Christ and the reign with Christ in the coming age.

J. Of the Promise Differing from the Promise of the Eternal Inheritance

The kingdom reward is of the promise mentioned in 10:36, which is different from the promise in 9:15. The promise in 10:36 is the promise of the Sabbath rest mentioned in 4:9, in which we shall participate in the reign of Christ in the coming kingdom. That will be the great reward mentioned in verse 35 for the gaining of the soul mentioned in verse 39. This is conditioned on our endurance and doing the will of God. The promise in 9:15 is the promise of eternal inheritance based upon Christ's eternal redemption, not on our work. The eternal inheritance in the promise in 9:15 is by the eternal redemption of Christ, whereas the great reward (v. 35) in the promise in 10:36 is for our reward in doing the will of God.

The will of God mentioned in 10:36 was for the Hebrew believers to take the new covenant way (vv. 19-23) and remain with the church (v. 25), not shrinking back to Judaism (vv. 38-39) but suffering persecution (vv. 32-34). For this they will receive the promise of a great reward at the Lord's coming back. The promise of eternal inheritance is included in God's eternal salvation. The promise found in 10:36 is the reward for the overcomers, while the eternal inheritance is for all the believers who have received eternal salvation.

Verse 34 speaks of "a better possession, and an abiding one." This better and abiding possession is "the eternal inheritance" and the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" (1 Pet. 1:4). Under the old covenant, the Jewish people inherited earthly things as their possession; but under the new covenant, the believers inherit the heavenly riches as

their possession. This better and abiding possession was a great incentive to the Hebrew believers to suffer the loss of earthly things.

Verse 39 speaks of shrinking back to ruin. For the Hebrew believers to shrink back to Judaism would have been to shrink back to ruin, which is not eternal perdition, but punishment by the living God. The ruin mentioned here will be the punishment, as mentioned in verses 27 through 31, to those who would forsake the new covenant and return to Judaism, thus trampling under foot the Son of God, regarding Christ's precious blood common as animal blood, and insulting the Spirit of grace. As the kingdom reward is a positive reward, so the punishment must be a negative one.

III. THE GAINING OF THE SOUL

Verse 39 speaks of "the gaining of the soul." The Greek word translated "gaining" may also be rendered "saving," "preserving," "possessing." Very few Christians understand the meaning of this phrase. Some refer it to the salvation from hell. That is not accurate. The gaining of the soul is different from the salvation of our spirit. In 1 Corinthians 5:5, speaking of a sinful brother who was to be put out of the church, Paul said to "deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Even such a fallen, sinful brother would have his spirit saved, because the salvation of the spirit is eternal. However, the gaining of the soul is conditional. There is no need for us to be sinful in order to lose our soul. Even if we shrink back from God's economy, we shall lose it. Most Christians have only one thought--going to heaven or going to hell, being saved or perishing. But neither the Bible nor our wise Father is that simple. Our Father has many ways of dealing with us. As we shall see, this gaining of the soul is somewhat related to the kingdom reward.

A. For Our Whole Being to Enjoy the Coming Sabbath Rest

The gaining of the soul is for our whole being to enjoy the coming Sabbath rest, that is, to share in Christ's joy and glory in the coming kingdom (4:9). Our being is of three parts--spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23), and our soul is different from our spirit. At the time when we believed in the Lord Jesus and were saved, our spirit was regenerated with the Spirit of God (John 3:6). But we must wait until the Lord Jesus comes back for our body to be redeemed, saved, and transfigured (Rom. 8:23-25; Phil. 3:21). As to the saving or gaining of our soul, it depends upon how we deal with it in following the Lord after we are saved and regenerated. If we lose it now for the Lord's sake, we shall save it (Matt. 16:25; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25, Gk.; 1 Pet. 1:9), and it shall be saved, or gained, at the Lord's coming back (Heb. 10:37). This will be the reward (10:35) of the kingdom to the overcoming followers of the Lord (Matt. 16:22-28).

B. A Great Reward to Our Suffering for Following Christ

To gain our soul in the coming age will be a great reward (v. 35) to our suffering for following Christ in this age. If we care for the enjoyment of our soul, the psychological pleasures, and do not follow Christ faithfully today, we shall suffer the Lord's discipline in our soul in the coming age. If we are willing to lose the enjoyment of our soul for the Lord's sake today, we shall have the full enjoyment of the Lord for our whole being, especially for our soul, in the coming age. That will be a reward to our suffering today.

C. Conditioned on Our Losing of the Soul in this Age for the Lord's Sake

The gaining of the soul is conditioned on our losing of it for the Lord's sake. In the Gospels the Lord tells us many times that if in this age we lose our soul for His sake and

the gospel's, at His coming back in the next age we shall gain it (Matt. 16:25; Luke 9:24; 17:33). Although these verses are very familiar to so many of the saints, not many know what they really mean. As human beings, we have a spirit, but we are a soul. A human being is a soul. To lose our soul in this age means to suffer for the Lord's sake and for the sake of the gospel. When we suffer, our whole being suffers. This means that we lose our soul. Those who are rich and comfortable today, enjoying their physical life, are having enjoyment for their soul. Not many Christians are willing to pay the price to follow the Lord strictly, because they do not want to suffer in their soul; they want to enjoy their life today, desiring luxurious cars, large houses, and many worldly things. They are unwilling to lose their soul.

Losing our soul in this age is to suffer for the Lord's sake in a human way. If we follow the Lord today, we shall certainly suffer for His sake. Because you are a faithful and straight follower of Jesus Christ, your teachers may not give you the higher grade, and you may not receive a promotion on your job. Many such things are related to losing our soul. Our destiny in this age is to lose our soul and all human enjoyment. This loss of our soul today is the condition of our gaining it in the next age. To gain our soul in the next age is to enter into the Lord's joy and reigning. According to the parable in Matthew 25, the Lord said to the faithful servants, "Enter thou into the joy of thy lord." To enter into the Lord's joy is to enter into His reign in the coming kingdom. This age is for us to suffer; the next age is for our enjoyment.

In these last two messages we have seen clearly the matters of dispensational punishment, the kingdom reward, and the gaining of the soul. The punishment which the defeated Christians will suffer is simply the losing of the soul. If in this age you gain your soul, being unwilling to pay the price to follow the Lord, you will lose your soul at the Lord's coming back. That will be a real punishment. While the overcomers enter into the Lord's joy and reign, you will be put aside. To lose our soul in the coming age

does not mean that we ourselves shall be lost. It means to be excluded from the enjoyment and reign of Christ when He rules over the nations in the millennial kingdom. Those who gain their soul in this age and lose it in the next will not be co-kings of Christ in the coming age of the kingdom. If we lose our soul in this age for the Lord's sake, we shall gain it in the next and enter into the Lord's joy and reign, having the full enjoyment of human life as we rule with Him over the nations. This is a great reward.

I would like now to give a further word concerning this matter of the reward. The Bible is very consistent about this. Receiving the reward is not simply doing good works, glorifying God, and receiving a prize at the Lord's coming back. In a sense, this is our natural concept of the reward. We need now to look at this matter in another way.

The gaining of the soul equals perfection, and perfection equals glorification. To be glorified, to be perfected, and to gain our soul in the next age all refer to one thing--the reward. What then is the reward? It is the goal of God's salvation. God's salvation has a goal. This goal is not that we go to heaven. The goal of God's salvation is to make us the same as His Firstborn Son. Romans 8:29 says that we have been, "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the firstborn among many brothers" (Recovery Version). Here we see God's goal--that His many sons, who are Christ's many brothers, might be conformed to the image of His Firstborn Son. God is working today to bring the many sons into glory, that is, to bring all the saved ones into the glorification of the Firstborn Son of God. God has not saved us with the goal that we might go to heaven, but that we might be transformed and conformed to the image of His Son so that God might have for eternity a corporate expression of Himself. This is the goal of God's salvation.

In His foresight God saw that many of His selected ones would not cooperate with Him, not give Him the opportunity to work out the goal of His salvation. Thus, in His wisdom, He decided to make the goal of His salvation a

reward to the selected and saved ones. If there were no weakness, lack, or failure on the part of the saved ones, God would have no need of making the goal of His salvation a reward, for whoever was saved would come into that goal. But only those who cooperate with Him will reach the goal, and that goal will become a reward to them.

Consider the example of the children of Israel. God's intention in calling, saving and bringing them out of Egypt was to make them a kingdom of priests (Exo. 19:4-6). Every Israelite was to be a priest. But when they came to Mount Sinai, they fell short of God's goal through worshipping the golden calf. Immediately, the goal of the priesthood became a reward for one tribe, the tribe of Levi, which stood with God. Although the other eleven tribes did not perish, they did not reach the goal of God's salvation. The priesthood, which was the goal for every tribe, became the reward for just one tribe.

The principle is the same with us today. God's goal is to make us all the same as His Firstborn Son. If we cooperate with God, He will work within us day by day, and every day we shall enjoy Christ to the uttermost. This is the highest enjoyment. If we have this enjoyment of Christ today, when He comes to reign, we shall enter into His reign as His co-kings and partners. This is God's goal. But many of God's selected ones do not cooperate with Him to such an extent today. They are missing the full enjoyment of Christ which they can have now. Although they have been saved, they have no enjoyment of Christ, living each day in the same way as those who do not have Christ. Although they belong to Christ, having Him as their life and Savior, they do not give Him the opportunity to live within them. As a result, they are missing the enjoyment of Christ today and will certainly miss the enjoyment of reigning with Him in the millennial kingdom. Due to their negligence today, they will miss the goal of God's salvation in the coming age.

Those selected ones of God who refuse to cooperate with Him will not only miss the highest enjoyment of Christ

today and the reigning with Christ in the coming age, but, because they break God's will and do not follow His economy, they will also be disciplined by Him. That discipline, that punishment, should be a warning to them to seek after God's goal. Do not say to yourself, "If I am sloppy and do not reach God's goal, I am ready to suffer His discipline. After that discipline is over, everything will be all right." This is not true. After you have undergone God's punishment, you will still need to reach His goal. Sooner or later, all God's selected ones must reach His goal. Suppose I have two children in school. One of them receives excellent grades and graduates; the other fails and does not graduate. Because of this, he is disciplined and put into a dark room for a day. Do you think that after he has suffered for awhile he has no need to study? No, he must still make up his lessons. The purpose of the discipline is to compel him to study. After being punished, he must still read, study, and finish all his lessons; otherwise, he would never graduate from school. The school is patient. If he does not pass in the next semester, he will have to do it in another one. The parents' intention is that all their children do their schoolwork and receive a reward at the end of the semester, enjoying a good time with them as satisfaction for their soul. But the disobedient children will lose this reward, be disciplined, and later be required to finish their lessons. The parents will never let them go until they have completed their schoolwork and graduated. The principal of the heavenly school is very patient. He will wait until every student in His school graduates and is built into the New Jerusalem. Every believer must reach the New Jerusalem, God's ultimate goal.

Now we should be clear concerning the matters of reward and punishment. God's salvation has a goal, and we all must reach it. Most Christians do not see what is God's goal in His salvation. But by His mercy, the vision and revelation of the goal of God's salvation have been made very clear. We all must reach this highest attainment, the goal that is God's reward for His faithful ones. If we are not

faithful to God, we shall miss His goal in the coming age and will suffer some punishment to discipline us that we may reach it. To those who will reach the goal in this way it will not be a reward. How we must thank the Lord for His wisdom in making the goal of His salvation a reward. This is a great incentive for us in following the Lord. May we all follow Him to such a degree that we are ushered into God's goal and that His goal will be our reward.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FORTY-SEVEN

THE UNIQUE WAY OF FAITH AND FAITH'S DEFINITION

Hebrews, Romans, and Revelation are the three best composed books in the New Testament. Of these three, Hebrews is the best as far as composition is concerned. In the first ten chapters of Hebrews we have a clear, thorough, and complete comparison between God's economy and man's religion. This man-made religion frustrates God's people from going on according to His economy. Due to this frustration, the book of Hebrews was written. After presenting a thorough comparison of Judaism with God's economy, this book charges the Hebrew believers, who were in danger of shrinking back, to live, walk, and go on "by faith" (10:38-39), that is, "not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Then in chapter eleven it continues to define what faith is in a historical way.

Suppose you are driving an automobile and come to an intersection where there are two signs, one indicating that a road is closed and the other indicating that a road is open. Would you drive on the road that has been closed? If you did, you would run the risk of losing your life. It would be much better to drive on the open way. The clear comparison given in the first ten chapters of Hebrews is a sign for our driving, showing which way has been closed and which way is open. Over the old way is a sign--Closed, Terminated. Over the new way is also a sign--Open, Freshly Slain. This contrast is the consummation of these ten chapters. After presenting such a contrast, the writer tells us how to take this open, freshly slain way--it is by the unique way of faith.

Before considering this matter of faith, I would like to

say a further word about the gaining of the soul. Hebrews 10:39 says, "But we are not of them who shrink back to ruin, but of them who have faith to the gaining of the soul." The Bible is the most consistent book. Although it has many aspects and uses different terms, its main point is always consistent. The terms glorification, perfection, and the gaining of the soul all point to one thing. As we have seen, glorification is perfection and perfection is the gaining of the soul. We are Christ's followers today. If we would follow Him according to God's economy, we must pay the price. Humanly speaking, in order to follow the Lord we must lose the soulish enjoyments and worldly entertainments. To lose such things is what it means to lose our soul. If we are unwilling to pay the price to lose our soul today, meaning that we do not like to lose any soulish enjoyments or worldly entertainments in this age, we shall not give any opportunity to the law of life to work Christ into us. To lose our soul today means that we give the law of life the opportunity to work Christ into our being. It means that we do not care for shopping, housing, eating, clothing, or any type of entertainment, and that we only care for the working of the law of life within us. We all must say, "I am willing to pay any price that the law of life might have the opportunity to work Christ into every part of my being." This is what it means to be perfected. This is also for our glorification. Our glorification in the future will be the gaining of our soul. Hence, perfection, glorification, and the gaining of the soul all refer to the same thing.

In 10:39 the writer says that "we are not of them who shrink back to ruin." Because we have been cleansed with the Lord's precious blood, regenerated, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are good material for God's economy, and the law of life is able to work Christ into us. If we are unwilling to pay the price for this and shrink back, we shall be ruined as the good material for God's economy, as the material in which the law of life can work. If we come forward, we shall remain good material for the law of life to

work Christ into our being. Shrinking back ruins the good material by soulish enjoyments, worldly entertainments, and religious activities. The Greek word translated "ruined" is the same word as for destruction. This means that if, as good material for the working of the law of life, you shrink back from God's economy, you will be completely destroyed as far as being material is concerned. In the past years, I have seen much good material that has been destroyed by shrinking back from God's up-to-date economy. Although they saw God's present economy, they were unwilling to pay the price for it. They shrank back and were ruined. We must be careful about this.

To be ruined means that we save our soul today and lose it in the future. It also means that we sell our birthright of glorification, giving up our right to full perfection. Those who lose their soul in the future are those who do not care for their future perfection, glorification, and gaining of their soul. They only care for their soulish enjoyments today. If we are willing to pay the price to lose our soul today, in the future we shall gain our soul and be perfected and glorified. As an encouragement to the Hebrew believers to go on in this matter, at the end of chapter ten the writer said that we are of them "who have faith to the gaining of the soul." After presenting a thorough comparison of Judaism with God's economy, the writer charges the Hebrew believers to go on by faith. Immediately after this follows chapter eleven, which covers the unique way of faith.

I. THE UNIQUE WAY OF FAITH

A. To Receive the Word of the Gospel by Faith

In this book faith is first mentioned in chapters three and four. In 4:2 we see that faith is the unique way to receive the word of the gospel. The proper gospel is the gospel of bequests. If anyone would receive the gospel of bequests, he must have faith. Suppose someone would offer you a document which said that a large amount of money

had been deposited in your bank account. In order to receive this document, you must have faith. If you do not have faith, you will say, "This is just a piece of paper. It doesn't mean anything to me." When we preach the gospel, we must infuse people with faith. The power of the proper gospel preaching is that people are infused with faith to such an extent that they believe whatever we tell them. People must have faith if they are to receive the word of the gospel.

B. To Take God by Faith

Hebrews 6:1 speaks of "faith toward God." Since we cannot see God, we must take Him by faith. Although God is great and wonderful, some people say, "As far as I am concerned, God is nothing." If we have faith, God is everything; if we do not have faith, He is nothing to us. Whenever we minister God to people, we must be able to infuse them with faith; otherwise, whatever we minister to them will be in vain. If people are to grasp God, they must have faith.

C. To Enter into the Rest by Faith

Hebrews 4:3, speaking of the Sabbath rest, says, "We who have believed enter into the rest." The only way to enter into the Sabbath rest is by faith. Anyone who does not believe will be unable to enter into it. For this matter we must exercise our faith.

D. To Inherit the Promise by Faith

Faith is the unique way for us to inherit God's promises (6:12). In the Scriptures God has given us many promises. To inherit these promises we need to be infused by God with faith. Since most of the things promised by God are unseen or hoped for, we need faith to substantiate them.

E. To Hold Fast the Beginning of the Assurance Firm to the End

In order to hold fast the beginning of the assurance

(confidence) firm to the end, we must have faith (3:14). The word "assurance" in 3:14 means the practical and actual faith, which we have had from the beginning. We must hold fast this practical and actual faith firm to the end, as we did at the beginning.

F. To Come Forward to the Holy of Holies and to God's New Covenant Dispensation in Full Assurance of Faith

We must come forward to the Holy of Holies and to God's new covenant dispensation in the full assurance of faith (10:22). In these messages we have said a great deal about God's economy. If we shut our eyes of faith, there will be nothing, and everything we have said will be in vain. But if we exercise our faith, we shall see how much there is in God's economy. If we have no faith, everything is gone. But if we have faith, there is great wealth before us. In these messages we have seen the vision of the law of life. We must go on with this vision, not with the knowledge of religion.

G. To Hold Fast the Confession of Our Hope Without Wavering

Our hope is Christ. His indestructible life, which has been imparted into us with its functioning law of life, and His kingly and divine priesthood, in which He ministers all the riches of God into us, are also our hope. This must be our confession. We need to exercise our faith to hold fast this confession of our hope without wavering. Only by faith can we realize the confession of our hope in Christ.

H. To Live by Faith in Suffering for the Promise of Reward

To take God's new covenant way and to follow the Lord in this way causes us a lot of suffering in material things. For this, God has promised us a great reward (v. 35) that on earth today we may live by faith and not by sight. The life that follows the Lord in God's economy is a life of faith.

I. To Gain the Soul by Faith

To gain our soul in the coming age of the kingdom requires that we have faith (10:39; 1 Pet. 1:9). If we would not care for today's enjoyments but for the coming day, we must have faith. Furthermore, if we would be sure that we shall have something better in the future and that it is worthwhile to sacrifice the enjoyments and entertainments of today in order to have it, we must have faith. As we shall see, faith is the conviction of things not seen. Since we cannot see into the future, how do we know that a glorious tomorrow is ahead of us? We know it by faith. Deep within me, I am fully convinced that a glorious tomorrow is awaiting me. This conviction comes by faith.

J. The Warning Concerning an Evil Heart of Unbelief

In 3:12 and 19 we are warned about having an evil heart of unbelief. In the eyes of God, no one is as evil as the one who will not believe in Him. The unbelieving heart is the most evil heart. Nothing insults God more than our unbelief, and nothing honors Him more than our believing in Him. We must believe whatever God says in His word. If our heart does not believe God's word, it is in His eyes an evil, unbelieving heart.

II. FAITH'S DEFINITION

A. Faith as the Substantiating of Things Hoped For

Now we come to the matter of faith's definition. Although faith is realized within our being, it is difficult to define. Faith is just faith. But the writer of Hebrews, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, "Faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (11:1). Since faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, it is the assurance, confidence, confirmation, reality, essence, supporting ground of things hoped for, the foundation that supports the things hoped for. The Greek word translated "substantiating" here is the same word

rendered "substance" in 1:3, "assurance" in 3:14, and "confidence" (which knows it rests on a sure foundation) in 2 Corinthians 11:17 (KJV). It may also be translated confirmation, reality, essence (which means the real nature of things as opposed to appearance), foundation, or supporting ground. The King James Version uses "substance" instead of "substantiating" in this verse. But the meaning here is not of solid matter. The Greek word denotes an action and should be rendered as a gerund, a verbal noun. The paper on which this message is printed is a substance. But by touching it with your hand you substantiate it. You sense, realize, and have a full consciousness of it. This is an act of substantiating. Faith is not a substance; it is a substantiating action. To have faith is not to have a substantial element; it is to have a substantiating ability. Although certain things cannot be seen, heard, or touched, we nevertheless have within us the ability to substantiate them. This is faith. The Bible says that whoever believes shall have eternal life (John 3:15). When we hear this word, we sense that it conveys something real, although no one can see or touch it. Nevertheless, the faith within us substantiates what is conveyed in this word.

The Bible is a will filled with bequests. An unbeliever, however, would say that this is nonsense. To him, the Bible is simply a book which is difficult to understand. But for us, God's called ones, the Bible is a book of bequests. When we hear this, something within us responds to substantiate it. This substantiating is what we call faith. How do you know that you have eternal life? How do you know that the Lord Jesus is in your spirit? We know these things by faith. We can neither explain nor show people that Christ dwells in our spirit. Although we cannot present this to others, we can substantiate it for ourselves.

This substantiating is not a small thing; it is like a sixth sense. Each of our five senses has a substantiating ability. For instance, our nose substantiates fragrances and our eyes substantiate colors. Faith is a specific and particular sense in addition to our five senses. It is the

sense by which we substantiate the things unseen or hoped for.

1. The Believer's Life Being a Life of Things Hoped For

The believer's life is a life of things hoped for, a life of hope which goes together and abides with faith (1 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 13:13; Rom. 4:18). The unbelievers, being without Christ, have no hope (Eph. 2:12; 1 Thes. 4:13). But we, the believers in Christ, are a people of hope. The calling which we received from God brings us hope (Eph. 1:18; 4:4). We are regenerated to "a living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3, Gk.). Our Christ, who is in us, is "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27; 1 Tim. 1:1), which will issue in the redemption, the transfiguration of our body in glory (Rom. 8:23-25). This is "the hope of salvation" (1 Thes. 5:8), a "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13), a "good hope" (2 Thes. 2:16), "the hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:2; 3:7), which is the "hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2), "the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23), "the hope which is laid up for us in heaven" (Col. 1:5). We should always keep "this hope" (1 John 3:3), and "boast in it" (Rom. 5:2). Our God is "the God of hope" (Rom. 15:13), and "through the encouragement of the Scriptures we may have hope" (Rom. 15:4) all the time "in God" (1 Pet. 1:21) and "rejoice in it" (Rom. 12:12). This book of Hebrews charges us to "hold fast the boast of hope firm to the end" (3:6), "show diligence unto the full assurance of hope to the end" (6:11), and "lay hold of the hope set before us" (6:18). It also tells us that the new covenant brings in "a better hope, through which we draw near to God" (7:19). Our life should be a life of hope, which goes together and abides with faith (1 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 13:13). We should follow Abraham "who beyond hope believed in hope" (Rom. 4:18, Recovery Version).

2. Faith Substantiating the Things Which We Are Hoping For

All the things which we are hoping for are

substantiated by our faith. With faith, they all are real; without faith, they seem vain. We need to contact God for His infusion of faith that we may substantiate all the things which He has promised as our hope.

B. Faith as the Conviction of Things Not Seen

Verse 1 also says that faith is the "conviction of things not seen." The Greek word rendered "conviction" may also be translated "evidence" or "proof." The word conviction implies action. Thus, faith is not the substance, but the conviction, action, evidence, and proof of things not seen. All things hoped for are things not seen (Rom. 8:24-25). If anything is seen, we do not need to hope for it. As people of hope, we should not aim our life at "the things which are seen," but at "the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). Hence, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). We are aiming at the Holy of Holies and the New Jerusalem, neither of which can be seen by us. Nevertheless, we have the full conviction of these unseen things. Faith assures us of the things not seen, convincing us of what we do not see. Therefore, it is the evidence, the proof, of things unseen.

Faith, which is the way to realize and enjoy the things of God, is not a part of our natural being. It is a divine ability which has been infused into us. The proper faith is the divine element, even God Himself, infused into our being as the ability to substantiate the things which we do not see. This infused element is our substantiating ability. Whenever we contact God or listen to His word, the substantiating ability which has been infused into our being by God Himself spontaneously begins to realize the things of God, the things hoped for, and the things not seen, and we simply believe. As we have seen, faith is a special sense in addition to the five senses derived from our natural birth. This sense substantiates the things of God, things which we do not see. Since the Christian life is a life of hope and in this life we aim at things unseen, we need

more of the transfusion and infusion of God that we may have the ability, the faith, to substantiate the things hoped for and to have the conviction of things unseen.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FORTY-EIGHT

THE HISTORY OF FAITH AND ITS WITNESSES

Hebrews 11 is a chapter on faith with its history. From verses 3 through 40 it presents a brief history of faith--from God's creation, through all the generations of God's chosen people, to all the New Testament believers, consummating with the New Jerusalem in eternity--to prove that faith is the unique pathway for God's seekers to receive His promise and take His way. As He inspired the writing of this chapter, the Holy Spirit certainly had such a view. Everyone involved in this history of faith was a witness. Hence, Hebrews 11 is not only a chapter on faith with its history, but also with its witnesses. The word "witness" here refers to the person testifying, not to the testimony. In Greek, the word for witness is the same as the word for martyr. Every witness is a martyr, suffering martyrdom for the testimony of faith. In this chapter we read of many martyrs (vv. 32-39). Some were stoned and others were sawn in two. In this message, we shall consider the history of faith, especially concentrating on the consummation of this history, which is very much related to us.

I. IN UNDERSTANDING THE FRAMING OF THE UNIVERSE BY THE WORD OF GOD

Verse 3 says, "By faith we understand that the universe has been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not come into being from things which appear." Scholars have spent a great deal of time in attempting to learn how the universe was framed. All their propositions regarding this are nonsense. The universe was framed by the word of God. God spoke and it came into being. We do

not know this by our five senses; we know it by faith, by our substantiating sense.

II. IN ABEL, OFFERING A MORE EXCELLENT SACRIFICE

Verse 4 says, "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained testimony that he was righteous, God testifying to his gifts, and through it, he having died still speaks." According to typology, Abel's more excellent sacrifice was a type of Christ who is the real "better sacrifices" (9:23). In our reading of Hebrews, we can see that only Christ Himself is the more excellent sacrifice. By faith, Abel offered the type of such a sacrifice.

III. IN ENOCH, BEING TRANSLATED FROM SEEING DEATH

Verse 5 says, "By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he was well-pleasing to God." Enoch was not only translated from death but from the seeing of death.

IV. IN NOAH, PREPARING AN ARK FOR SALVATION

Verse 7 says, "By faith Noah, having been warned concerning things not yet seen, being devout, prepared an ark for the salvation of his house, through which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." Consider Noah's situation: as he was building an ark for a flood that was to come, no one believed him. The sky was clear and no one expected a flood to come. Nevertheless, substantiating the coming flood by faith, Noah built the ark.

V. IN ABRAHAM

Abraham has been called the father of faith. By faith he obeyed God's calling to leave his homeland, dwelling as a foreigner in the land of promise (vv. 8-9). Abraham obeyed God and went out of Chaldea "without knowing where he was going." This afforded him constant opportunity to exercise his faith to trust in God for His instant leading, taking God's presence as his map. Verse 10 says that by faith Abraham "waited for the city which has the foundations, whose Architect and Maker is God." This is "the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem" (12:22), "the Jerusalem above" (Gal. 4:26, Gk.), "the holy city, the New Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:2; 3:12) which God has prepared for His people (v. 16), and "the tabernacle of God" in which God will dwell with men for eternity (Rev. 21:3). As the patriarchs waited for this city, so we also seek it (13:14).

Abraham also acted by faith in offering up Isaac, "counting that God was able to raise him even from among the dead, from whence he also received him back in a figure" (vv. 17-19). Verse 12, referring to Abraham, says, "Wherefore also there was born of one, and that of one become dead, even as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand by the seashore innumerable." The stars of heaven signify Abraham's heavenly descendants, the descendants of faith (Gal. 3:7, 19); whereas "the sand by the seashore" signifies his earthly descendants, the descendants in the flesh.

Verse 13, speaking of Abraham and the other patriarchs, says, "All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar and greeted them, and confessed that they were strangers and sojourners on the earth." The Greek word translated "sojourners" may also be rendered "pilgrims," "exiles," "expatriates." Abraham was the first Hebrew (Gen. 14:13), a river crosser, leaving Chaldea, the idolatrous land of curse, crossing the flood, the river of Perath or Euphrates (Josh. 24:2-3), and coming to Canaan, the good land of blessings. Yet he did not settle here; rather, he sojourned in the land

of promise as a pilgrim, even as an exile and an expatriate, longing after a better country, a heavenly one (v. 16), seeking a country of his own (v. 14). This might imply that he was ready to cross another river from the earthly side to the heavenly side. Isaac and Jacob followed him in the same steps, living on the earth as strangers and sojourners and waiting for the God-built city of foundations (v. 10). In the word of verses 9 through 16, it may imply that the writer of this book intended to impress the believing Hebrews with the fact that they, as the real Hebrews, should follow their forefathers, considering themselves also as strangers and sojourners on the earth and looking forward to the heavenly country, which is better than the earthly one.

VI. IN SARAH, CONCEIVING SEED

Verse 11 says, "By faith also Sarah herself received power to conceive seed, even beyond the season of age, since she considered Him faithful Who promised." Sarah had become an old woman whose function had ceased; yet in the midst of her situation, she believed in God's word.

VII. IN ISAAC, BLESSING JACOB AND ESAU

Verse 20 says, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come." If you read Isaac's history, you will see that he was not a smart man; he was quite common, and there was nothing special about him. Nevertheless, he did something marvelous--he blessed his two sons, Jacob and Esau. Although Isaac blessed them blindly, he did it in faith.

VIII. IN JACOB

Verse 21 says, "By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph." When Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph, he not only did it by faith but with very clear sight. His inner sight was exceedingly clear. When Joseph attempted to change his hands, being displeased that Jacob's right hand was upon Ephraim instead of upon Manasseh, the firstborn, Jacob refused and said, "I know it,

my son, I know it" (Gen. 48:15-19). Jacob knew what he was doing and blessed Joseph's sons by faith.

Verse 21 also says that Jacob "worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff." This is very meaningful, signifying that Jacob confessed that he was a sojourner, a traveler on the earth (v. 13). When we are settled, we no longer need to keep a staff in our hand, for that is a sign of a sojourner, not of a dweller. Jacob's staff also signified that God was his shepherd, having shepherded him all his life long (Gen. 48:15, Heb.). This is the reason that his worshipping, leaning on the top of his staff, is recorded here as a matter of faith.

IX. IN JOSEPH

Verse 22 says, "By faith Joseph, when near his end, remembered concerning the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones." Joseph remembered the coming exodus of the sons of Israel and charged them to bring his bones out of Egypt and into Canaan. This took great faith. When the Israelites entered into Canaan, they brought Joseph's bones into the good land (Exo. 13:19).

X. IN MOSES

Verse 23 says, "By faith Moses, having been born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw that he was a handsome child, and they did not fear the king's decree." His parents hid him by faith. When he had "become great," he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be ill-treated with the people of God than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin" (vv. 24-25). The Greek word translated "temporary" in verse 25 may also be rendered "for awhile," "short-lived," "fleeting." "passing." During Moses' time, to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter was an enjoyment to the life of the soul. But Moses refused this, choosing rather to be ill-treated with the people of God than to have the fleeting enjoyment of sin. The enjoyment in Egypt, that is, the

enjoyment in the world, is sinful in the eyes of God. It is the enjoyment of sin, of a sinful life, and is temporary, short-lived, fleeting, and passing.

In verse 26 we are told that Moses esteemed "the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked away to the reward." When I was young, being troubled by my clock mentality, I questioned how Moses could have suffered the reproach of Christ, since Christ had not yet come. Christ, as "the Angel of the Lord," was always with the children of Israel in their afflictions (Exo. 3:2, 7-9; 14:19; Num. 20:16; Isa. 63:9). Furthermore, the Scripture identifies Him with them (Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15). Hence, the reproach falling on them was considered also as His reproach, and the reproaches of those who reproached God fell upon Him too (Rom. 15:3). The New Testament believers, as His followers, bear His reproach (13:13) and are reproached for His name (1 Pet. 4:14). Moses, choosing to be ill-treated with the people of God (v. 25), esteemed this kind of reproach, the reproach of the Christ of God, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt in Pharaoh's palace, for he looked away to the reward.

Because Moses was willing to suffer the reproach of the Christ, he will receive the reward of the kingdom. He was not allowed to enter into the rest of the good land because of his failure at Meribah (Num. 20:12-13; Deut. 3:26, 27; 32:50-52), but he will be with Christ in the kingdom (Matt. 16:28-17:3). By referring to this, the writer certainly intended to encourage the Hebrew believers, who were suffering persecution for Christ's sake, to follow Moses by esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the things they had lost and by looking away to the reward. We do not know who told Moses of the reward. Perhaps it was his parents. Nevertheless, having great faith, he looked away to the reward and fled Egypt. The palace of Pharaoh, the royal sonship, the worldly enjoyment and attainment, and all the things in Egypt were there before him. According to his sight, these things were real, but

according to his faith, they were not real. Something other than that--the reward--was real to his substantiating sense. Although at that time the reward was far away from him, he looked unto it and was encouraged by it to forsake everything in Egypt.

Verse 27 says that by faith Moses "left Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king, for he was steadfast as seeing the invisible One." At that time, this was a great thing. That great reward was such an incentive to him in fleeing Egypt. This is a full portrait of our life today. Today the world is Egypt and all that it can afford us is a palace. But to our faith, all this is a vanity of vanities. Only one thing is the reality of realities--the coming reward.

Verse 28 says, "By faith he instituted the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborn should not touch them." It took faith for Moses to institute the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood. It also took faith for Moses to tell the people to prepare the lamb and to sprinkle the blood on the lintels and posts of the doors. God honored Moses' faith in instituting the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood. Without seeing the Passover, which was to come, Moses substantiated it by faith and acted according to this substantiation.

XI. IN THE SONS OF ISRAEL

Verse 29 says that by faith the sons of Israel "passed through the Red Sea as through dry land, which the Egyptians attempting to do were swallowed up." Nothing is mentioned in this chapter of the forty years during which the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, since during that time they did nothing by faith; rather, in those years they provoked God by their unbelief (3:16-18). Even their crossing of the Jordan River is not accounted here, because that crossing was due to the delay caused by their unbelief. It would not have been needed if they had not had the unbelief which disabled them from entering the good land at Kadesh-barnea (Deut. 1:19-46), just a short time after they left Mount Sinai (Deut. 1:2). If they had had

faith at Kadesh-barnea, they could have entered the good land thirty-eight years earlier than they did. Although they eventually crossed the Jordan River by faith, the Holy Spirit here made no record of it because it was not pleasing in the eyes of God.

Verse 30, passing over the years of wandering in the wilderness, says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled during seven days." The Israelites did not have the best weapons when they encircled the walls of Jericho. They did this by faith, doing what God had told them to do, and He honored their faith.

XII. IN RAHAB, HAVING RECEIVED THE SPIES AND NOT PERISHING

"By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with the obstinate, having received the spies with peace" (v. 31). When I was young, I liked to use this story in the preaching of the gospel. Rahab let down a scarlet cord which signifies the flowing blood of Jesus (Josh. 2:18; 6:23). By faith, she was saved from the destruction which the Canaanites suffered.

XIII. IN GIDEON, BARAK, SAMSON, JEPHTHAH, DAVID, SAMUEL, AND THE PROPHETS, DOING MANY MARVELOUS THINGS

By faith Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets did many marvelous things (vv. 32-39). Although they did marvelous things, many of them also suffered martyrdom. God performed miracles for some of them, but He did not do such things for all of them. Do not think that if you have faith God will always do something for you. Many times the exercise of our faith will only bring us the enjoyment of God's silence. Perhaps when some are being stoned to death, they would pray, "O Lord, save me from these stones." Instead, the Lord may give them a peaceful silence, not doing anything to rescue them. When Stephen was being martyred, the Lord did not rescue him but gave him such a sweet silence (Acts 7:54-

60). To suffer persecution without any rescue coming from the Lord requires great faith.

God's silence is greater than His miracles. Which do you prefer to have--God's miracles or His silence? If we would be honest, most of us would say that we prefer God's miracles. When the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, the mockers said to Him, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross," and, "If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him" (Matt. 27:40, 42). For at least three of the six hours while the Lord was on the cross, there was silence in the universe. It seemed that there was no God, and the mockers and the blasphemers said whatever they wanted. It was their world and they were the gods at that time. God will remain silent much more often than He will perform miracles. At times, we all must enjoy God's silence by faith.

Many martyrs have testified that they enjoyed God's silence by faith. I can never forget that in the 1930's two missionaries were martyred in China. On the day of their martyrdom, one of them said, "Every martyr's face is like the face of an angel." The other said, "If I had another life to live, I would also give it to be martyred for the Lord." God allowed them to be martyred there in China, doing nothing to rescue them. They enjoyed God's silence by faith. As we read the history of faith recorded in this chapter, we see that it is not just a record of miracles, but also a record of God's silence. He did not always act to help His saints outwardly, but often enabled them to enjoy His silence inwardly.

Verse 35 says, "Others were beaten to death, not accepting deliverance, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection." The better resurrection is not only "the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:4-6), "the resurrection of life" (John 5:28-29), but also "the out-resurrection" (Phil. 3:11, Gk.), the extra-resurrection, the resurrection in which the Lord's overcomers will receive the reward (v. 26) of the kingdom, after which the Apostle Paul sought. Verse 38,

speaking of those who endured such affliction by faith, says that the world was not worthy of them. These faith people are an extra-people, of the highest estate, of whom the corrupted world is not worthy. Only the holy city of God, New Jerusalem, is worthy of having them.

XIV. TO BE PERFECTED BY THE BELIEVERS OF THE NEW COVENANT

A. The Two Dispensations of God's Economy

Verse 40 says, "God having in view something better concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." This verse implies a great deal. None of the witnesses of faith was ever perfected. They all need to be perfected by the believers of the new covenant. In God's economy there are two dispensations: the dispensation of the old covenant of shadows and the dispensation of the new covenant of realities. All the martyrs and witnesses of faith were under the old covenant of shadows; they were not in the reality. Since the new covenant dispensation of reality in which we are is better than the old covenant dispensation of shadows in which the witnesses of faith were, they need us for their perfection.

Verse 40 speaks of "something better concerning us." The Greek word translated "better" means stronger, more powerful, nobler, and greater; hence, it means better. It is used thirteen times in Hebrews: the better Christ (1:4), a better hope (7:19), a better covenant (7:22; 8:6), better promises (8:6), better sacrifices (9:23), a better possession (10:34), a better country (11:16), a better resurrection (11:35), something better (11:40), and better speaking (12:24). (The other two times are in 6:9 and 7:7, where it is translated greater.) All these better things are the fulfillment and reality of the things which the Old Testament saints had in types, figures, and shadows. What God had in view at that time was the things to come in the new covenant concerning us, which are the true and real

things, better, stronger, more powerful, nobler, and greater than their types, figures, and shadows. The Old Testament saints, who had only the shadows, need us for their perfection that they may share with us in the real things of the new covenant. Thus, why should the Hebrew believers leave the real things of the new covenant and return to the shadows of the old covenant?

Verse 40 says that "apart from us they should no be made perfect." Both the participation in the kingdom for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4, 6) and the sharing in the New Jerusalem for eternity (Rev. 21:2-3; 22:1-5) are a corporate matter. The kingdom feast will be for both the Old Testament and the New Testament overcomers (Matt. 8:11). The blessed New Jerusalem will be composed of both the Old Testament saints and the New Testament believers (Rev. 21:12-14). Hence, apart from the New Testament believers, the Old Testament ones cannot obtain what God has promised. For the obtaining and enjoying of the good things of God's promise, they need the New Testament believers to perfect them. Now they are waiting for us to go on that they may be perfected.

B. The Saints in the Shadows of the Old Covenant Expecting to See the Realities of the New Covenant

The saints in the shadows of the old covenant expected to see the realities of the new covenant (Matt. 13:16-17; John 8:56; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). In the past, many of us thought that it would have been wonderful to live during the time of the Old Testament. We were taught that Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, and the other Old Testament saints were outstanding persons and that it would have been better for us to live in their age than in the present age. When I was young, I wished I could have lived during the Old Testament days. This concept, however, is in darkness. We are living in a better age and we have heard, experienced, and participated in better things than the

things in the old covenant age. The saints in the shadows of the old covenant wanted to see the realities of the age in which we are living. Matthew 13:17 says, "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them." Even Abraham was expecting to see the reality of the new covenant (John 8:56). Furthermore, the prophets preached of the grace that has come to us. What they ministered was not for themselves but for us (1 Pet. 1:10-12). All the Old Testament saints, including David and Solomon, were not for themselves but for us. Everything they had was a shadow of the reality which we enjoy today.

C. The Believers in the Realities of the New Covenant Being Greater than the Saints in the Shadows of the Old Covenant

The believers in the realities of the new covenant are greater than the saints in the shadows of the old covenant. Matthew 11:11, a great verse, proves this. "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." John the Baptist was greater than all who had preceded him, including Abraham, David, and Solomon. Nevertheless, he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. Since John the Baptist was greater than Abraham and we are greater than John, then we also are greater than Abraham. All the saints in the Old Testament age looked forward to the realities of the New Testament age, but none of them saw anything of this reality. Between these two ages there was a transitory period lasting approximately three and a half years. During this transitory period, John the Baptist came and saw the Christ, whom all the saints in the Old Testament time had been waiting for. Because John saw Him, he was

greater than all of them. Although John saw Christ, he did not get into Christ. But we, the New Testament believers, are in Christ. Abraham expected to see Christ, John the Baptist saw Christ, but we are in Christ. Therefore, since we are so much closer to Christ, we are greater than Abraham and John the Baptist. We are not only close to Christ--we are in Christ and Christ is in us. We can even say along with the Apostle Paul, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). We are greater than Abraham, David, Solomon, and all the Old Testament saints, for they were in the shadows. We are not only in the reality--we are the reality. Because of this, the Old Testament saints cannot be perfected without us. Without us, they could never enter into the enjoyment of the realities which they were looking for.

If we exercise our substantiating faith, we shall sense that Abraham, David, Solomon, and all the overcoming saints who have preceded us are watching over us like spectators at a football game. They are cheering us on and encouraging us to win the game. Their enjoyment of the reality depends upon us. This is the correct meaning of verse 40, which says that "apart from us they should not be made perfect." As verse 39 indicates, the Old Testament saints did not obtain the promise because God had in view "something better concerning us." They all are waiting for us. Even the Apostle Paul and all the New Testament martyrs are waiting for us. They, the foregoing overcomers, are waiting for the fullness of the overcomers. The number of overcomers has not yet been fulfilled. One day the fullness of that number will be reached. Thus, verse 40 was a very strong encouragement to all the staggering Hebrew believers to come forward and to fill up the gap in the number of overcomers.

In His economy, God does not intend to have an individual expression. He desires to have a corporate expression. This expression requires a complete number of overcomers. Only God knows what this number is. As long as it has not been reached, the time cannot come, and the foregoing overcomers will still need to wait for us. What a

responsibility we have! They are ready, but we are not. We are truly in the last days. Not only are we greater than John the Baptist, but we are even somewhat greater than all the martyrs in the first few centuries, because we are more important than they were. We can experience more than they did because they were at the beginning and we are here at the consummation. The consummation is always richer, greater, and higher than the beginning. It is not a small thing that we are in the Lord's recovery today. We are living in the consummating period of God's economy, and so many foregoing overcomers are expecting to see our completion. We are surely the most blessed people in the universe, for we have the golden opportunity to share in the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

XV. A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Hebrews 12:1 says, "Therefore let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, putting off every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, run with endurance the race which is set before us." The cloud is for leading people in following the Lord (Num. 9:15-22), and the Lord is in the cloud to be with the people (Exo. 13:21-22). The children of Israel followed the Lord by the pillar and enjoyed the Lord's presence in the pillar of cloud. All the witnesses of faith, even the martyrs of faith, are a cloud. By this cloud of witnesses we follow the Lord and enjoy His presence.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FORTY-NINE

THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH

I. THE SAINTS OF THE OLD COVENANT ONLY BEING WITNESSES OF FAITH

In this message we come to the Author and Perfecter of faith (12:2). The saints of the old covenant were only witnesses of faith. None of them was the author, source, perfecter, or finisher of faith. In verse 1 of this chapter the witnesses of faith are considered as "a cloud of witnesses surrounding us." The Lord was in the cloud to be with His people (Exo. 13:21-22). The children of Israel followed the Lord according to the move of the cloud. Where the cloud was, there the Lord was also. Furthermore, the cloud is for leading people in following the Lord. If you have a heart to seek out the Lord and you read Hebrews 11, you may immediately have the sense that by the people of faith you can have the Lord's presence and His leading. If you have the cloud, you will have the Lord. But if you miss the cloud, you will also miss the Lord. All the people of faith, the church people, are the cloud. The best way to seek the Lord's presence is to come to the church. If anyone is seeking the Lord's leading, he must follow the cloud, the church. The Lord is in the cloud, meaning that He is with the people of faith. Since we are the people of faith, we are today's cloud, and people can follow the Lord by following us. Those who seek Him can find His presence with us. The Lord is where we are, and where we are is the direction in which the Lord is moving in these days.

II. ONLY JESUS BEING THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH

A. The Author of Faith

Only Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of faith. As we have seen, the saints of the old covenant were only the witnesses of faith, but Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of faith. The Greek word translated "Author" may also be rendered "Originator, " "Inaugurator, " "Leader, " "Pioneer," "Forerunner." It is the same word in Greek that is used for Captain in 2:10. Jesus is the Author of faith; He is the Originator, the Inaugurator, the source, and the cause of faith. The Author is the Originator and the Inaugurator; then He is the source and the cause. Since the Author is the Originator, He is also the Pioneer and Forerunner. Therefore, He is also the Leader and the Captain. If we put all these titles together, we have an adequate definition of Jesus as the Author of faith.

We need Jesus as the Author of faith because, according to our natural man, we do not have any believing ability. We do not have faith by ourselves. The faith we have through which we are saved is "not of ourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). We have "obtained" this "precious faith" by God's gift (2 Pet. 1:1). When we look unto Jesus, He, as "the life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45 ASV), transfuses us with Himself, with His believing element. Then, spontaneously, the believing ability arises in our being, and we have the faith to believe in Him. It is not of ourselves, but of Him who imparts Himself into us as the believing element to believe for us. Hence, it is He Himself who is our faith. We live by Him as our faith, by His faith (Gal. 2:20}, not by our own faith.

Jesus is the Author and the Originator of faith mainly in His life and in His path on earth. The Lord Jesus originated faith when He was here on earth. The life He lived was a life of faith, and the path He walked was a path of faith. In His life and path He originated faith. Hence, He is the Author of faith.

Jesus, being the Pioneer and the Forerunner, has cut the way of faith. If you read the four Gospels again, you will see that His life was a cutting life, a life that cut the way of faith. Wherever He went, it seems that there was a mountain or a river frustrating Him. But step after step, He cut the way of faith. If we have this view in reading the Gospels, we shall see that the very Jesus who is the Originator of faith was always cutting the way of faith, closing the gaps and removing the mountains like the builder of a highway. Since He has cut the way of faith, He is also the Pioneer and Forerunner on the pathway of faith.

As the Pioneer and the Forerunner of faith, Jesus is also the Leader and Captain of faith. He has cut the way of faith and, as the Forerunner, has taken the lead to pioneer it. Hence, He, as the Captain, can carry us through the pathway of faith in His footsteps. As we look unto Him as the Originator of faith in His life and in His path on earth, and as the Perfecter of faith in His glory and on His throne in heaven, He transfuses and even infuses us with the faith which He has originated and perfected.

B. The Perfecter of Faith

Jesus is also the Perfecter of faith. The Greek word translated "Perfecter" may also be rendered "Finisher" or "Completer." Jesus is also the Finisher, the Completer, of faith. By looking unto Him continually, we shall have Him finish and complete the faith which we need for running the heavenly race.

Jesus is the Perfecter of faith mainly in His glory and on His throne in heaven. He is sitting on the throne in glory to complete the faith which He originated while He was on earth. Being the Finisher and the Completer of faith, He will finish and complete what He has originated and inaugurated.

III. THE TRANSFUSION OF FAITH

A. We Having No Believing Ability Naturally

Now we come to the matter of the transfusion of faith.

As we have seen, according to our natural man, we have no believing ability. The believing element is absent from our natural being. Naturally, we only have the unbelieving ability. the ability to disbelieve.

B. The Saving Faith Being Not of Ourselves

The saving faith is "not of ourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Ephesians 2:8 tells us clearly that the faith through which we were saved is not of ourselves. We have received it as a gift from God. God is the source and giver of faith, and we are the recipients of this divine gift. God has put something into our being which becomes our faith. Second Peter 1:1 says that we "have obtained like precious faith." Faith is precious because it has been given to us as a gift by God.

C. Having Christ as the Believing Element Transfused into Us

When we look unto Jesus, He transfuses us with Himself as the believing element and He becomes our faith. We have seen that faith, the substantiating ability, is like a sixth sense. We acquired this substantiating sense through the preaching of the gospel. Proper gospel preaching is not merely a matter of teaching; it must also be a matter of transfusion. Suppose I am preaching the gospel to some sinners. Before I can preach the gospel to them, I must first receive something of and from the Lord. Then, as I am preaching, what I have received of the Lord will enter, like electricity, into those who are listening. While I am speaking and the people are looking at and listening to me, something spontaneously and unconsciously is transfused into them. Although they may shake their heads, not consenting to my preaching, deep within they believe what I am saying. Although some may say to themselves that it is silly to believe, something within them continues to react and brings them to the point where they say, "Lord Jesus,

thank You. You are so good. Lord, You are my Savior." Because some element has been transfused into their being, they are able to believe in the Lord. I know of many stubborn ones who would not express in the meeting that they had come to believe in the Lord Jesus. They went home, but they had no peace, for something within stirred and troubled them. When it was time for the next gospel meeting, they said, "I would like to go there again." This is the result of the transfusion of faith by God through a preacher.

Every gospel preacher must be a charming person. He must firstly be charmed himself and then he will be able to charm others. What he says may not seem logical, but, like a battery that is being charged, the hearers will be charmed. For this reason, the church must pray a great deal for the preaching of the gospel. The more we pray, the more charming the gospel meeting will be. The gospel preacher must pray until he has a heavenly charm and is fully charged with the divine element. If he is charged and charming, as he stands in front of the people, he will have the sense that something is being transfused into them. Some have even been afraid of such a preacher, saying, "Don't look at him. If you do, you will be attracted by him because he is so charming." This is the power of the gospel. Other speakers may be eloquent and well educated, but they are not charming. The gospel preacher may lack eloquence, but because he is so charming, others are charmed as they listen to him. Some element is infused into them through that charming preacher, and nothing can take it out of them. This infused element is faith.

This principle not only applies to the preaching of the gospel but to other forms of ministry as well. Ministry does not depend upon our eloquence but upon our utterance. Utterance is different from eloquence. Eloquence, like music, is something pleasant to the ear. Utterance, on the contrary, is the release of the divine element. If your ministry is correct, you will be charmed and charming whenever you come to minister. The proper ministry is

altogether a matter of being fully transfused with God Himself. Firstly, we are charged with the divine element, and then, in the ministry, we radiate that divine element into others in a charming way. This is altogether a matter of God's grace.

As we have seen, God's grace is simply God Himself dispensed into us to meet our need. Sinners certainly need to have faith, but how can they have it? Naturally, we have no belief, only disbelief. But when the sinners come to the church and hear the proper preaching of the gospel, they are charged with God. The heavenly electricity, which is God Himself, is transmitted into them. Because God Himself is transfused into them in this way, they find that they have faith. This is the gift of faith, the nature and element of which is God Himself.

If we would have faith, we must look away unto Jesus, the source of faith. When we look away from all other things unto Him, He will radiate Himself into us, charging us with Himself. As a result, spontaneously we shall have faith. Faith does not originate with us; it originates with Him. Faith is Christ Himself believing for us in a very subjective way. He transfuses us with Himself, working Himself into us, until He, the very Person, becomes the believing element in our being. Thus, it is not we who believe; it is He who believes within us. In this way, He makes us a believing being. Apparently it is our believing; actually it is His believing. This is genuine faith.

Once Christ has originated this faith within us, He will never let it go. Rather, He will complete, finish, and perfect it. Do not think that you can be a giant of faith on your own. No, we do not have the slightest amount of faith. All the faith we have is just Christ Himself believing in us and for us. We live by His faith, by Him as our faith (Gal. 2:20).

Christ's believing element is charged into our being through the law of life. The more we allow the law of life to work in our being, the more we are able to believe. If we give the law of life the opportunity to work continuously in our mind, emotion, and will, its working will produce great faith in us. The book of Hebrews is focused on the law of

life, and faith is the firstfruit of the working of the law of life in our being.

We have seen that the ultimate and consummate point of the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle is the law of life typified by the tables of the testimony. The law is called the testimony because it is the expression and definition of what God is. Every law is the expression of the lawgiver. A good man makes good laws, and a bad man makes bad laws. The law one makes reflects what he is. Hence, the law of God is the reflection of God's being. Because God is a God of light and love and because He is righteous and holy, His law is also a law of light and love and is righteous and holy. The law, being the reflection of God, is the expression and testimony of God. It is also a shadow of the law of life. The law of life within us today is actually God's reflection and expression. The more the law of life works in our being, the more we bear God's image. In this way we become His expression and testimony.

The arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle ultimately leads to the law of life--the expression and testimony of God. In like manner, the experience of Christ which begins at the cross and consummates with the law of life issues in the testimony of God. Its goal is to have the expression of God. As the law of life works within us to bring about the expression and testimony of God, the first issue of its working is our believing. The most believing person is the one in whom the law of life has worked the most. Such a person will have the faith to believe God to the uttermost without any strain or strife. His believing is spontaneous because it comes from the working of the law of life within him.

The Bible is consistent. Although many different words, expressions, and terms are used, they all reflect one point. The law of life in Hebrews 8 issues in the believing ability, the faith, in Hebrews 11. Although we cannot understand this simply by reading the Bible, we can know it by our experience. Firstly, we have the experience and then we have the confirmation from the revelation of the Bible.

Apparently Hebrews 11 is unrelated to Hebrews 8. Nevertheless, according to life, Hebrews 11 is the issue of Hebrews 8, for the believing ability results from the working of the law of the divine life. When the law of life operates within us to make us the very reflection, expression, and testimony of God, we find it easy to believe. Our believing is spontaneous. In fact, we are unable to disbelieve, because the believing ability has been wrought into us. Now we can see why we must look away from all things unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. When we look away unto Him, we give Him the opportunity and the freedom to work Himself into us. In this way the law of life can work in every inward part of our being until we are fully saturated with Him. The more we are saturated with Him, the easier it is to believe. This is the way to have faith. May we all experience faith in such a subjective way by looking away unto Jesus.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIFTY

RUN THE RACE

I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE BEING A RACE

In this message we come to the Christian race. The Christian life is a race. Every saved Christian must run the race to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24). This prize is not salvation in a common sense (Eph. 2:8; 1 Cor. 3:15), but a reward in a special sense (Heb. 10:35; 1 Cor. 3:14). The Apostle Paul, who has run the race and won the prize, was nearly the only one who likened the Christian life to a race. In the book of Hebrews he charged the Hebrew believers to run the race, saying, "run with endurance the race which is set before us" (12:1).

Now we must ask a very puzzling question: what is this race? We should not say that the race is perfection or glorification, for that is the goal of the race. Neither is the race the inward working of the law of life, for that is the process of the race. The race is not even the losing of the soul, because that is the way to run the race; it is not the race itself. In order to answer this question, we need to consider the Lord's word in John 14:6: "I am the way." A race is a way, a course. Because Christ is the way, He is also the race. The race we are running is Christ. Our way is our race. These are not two things, one the way and the other the race. No, the way we are walking is the race we are running. Therefore, Christ, who is the way, is the race. Although I have been ministering on this matter of running the race for over forty years, I have never been so clear as I am now that the race is Christ Himself.

I am burdened that we all might be clear about God's way. In the universe God has prepared the unique way

which we must take. This way has no beginning or ending; it is endless, reaching from eternity to eternity. From Genesis 1 through Revelation 22 there is only one way--Christ. Before Christ was manifested, God used types to signify this matter of Christ as God's way, the most striking of which was the tabernacle. As we have seen, the tabernacle has three parts: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. In these three parts of the tabernacle there is a way, starting from the altar; passing through the laver, the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar; and ushering us into the ark, the place where the law of life is. The way in the tabernacle is a picture of Christ as our unique way. As we shall see, there is a reason why this way is called a race.

Genesis 1 and 2 reveal that God's intention was that man, who was created in His image, would be on His way. According to 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15, the image of God is Christ. Thus, for man to be created in the image of God meant that he was made according to Christ. He was created according to Christ that he might be on God's way, which is Christ. In Genesis 2 man was put in front of the tree of life, which signified Christ as our life. Therefore, man was not only made according to Christ, but also was destined to take in Christ as his life. If man had done this, he would immediately have been on God's way. However, soon after the creation of man and before man was on God's unique way, Satan came in to distract man from God's way to something other than Christ. But, in His mercy, God came in to establish the way of redemption that the distracted man might be brought back to God's way. Abel followed this, but Cain did not. Although Abel was brought back to God's way, Cain was distracted by a further step of Satan, never returning to God's original way. Later, God commanded the children of Israel to erect the tabernacle. With the tabernacle there was a clear way by which sinners could enter into the reality of what God is. When the children of Israel were called by God, they all were sinners distracted from the way of God. But God

showed them the tabernacle, in which there was a way to go from the altar in the outer court to the consummate point in the Holy of Holies--the enjoyment of God's element, the law of life. Everything on this way indicates an aspect of Christ. Hence, the way for man to reach God is just Christ Himself.

However, Judaism, the Jewish religion, misused the tabernacle and everything revealed in the Old Testament to make a religion. The very religion which was constituted according to God's holy word eventually distracted God's people from God's way. Both the tabernacle and the temple were constructed for the purpose of showing God's people the way by which they might reach God and enter into Him. When the Lord Jesus came, the priests were worshipping God in the temple, offering sacrifices on the altar, dressing the lamp, displaying the showbread, and burning the incense. They did all this for the purpose of contacting God. But the Lord Jesus went to the house of Simon the leper in Bethany, where He enjoyed fellowship with those brothers and sisters. While the priests were worshipping God in the temple, God was in Simon's house in Bethany. The way was not in the temple; the way--Christ--was in that house in Bethany. Even the worship and service which had been ordained by God to show the way to reach God was utilized by Satan to distract people from Christ, God's unique way.

Consider the example of Saul of Tarsus, who was absolutely for the Jewish religion. When he realized that some of his countrymen, such as Peter, John, and Stephen, were not in this religion, he was stirred up to oppose them. By that time, the way had become a race, and Peter, John, Stephen, and all the other believers were running in it. As Saul of Tarsus was running alongside of this way, attempting to hinder those on the way, the Lord Jesus appeared to him, striking him down and turning him to this way (Acts 9:1-6). I believe that once Saul was in Christ and was walking on this way, he considered his religious background and all the distractions along the way,

thinking that he had been born a Hebrew and circumcised on the eighth day and wondering whether he should give it all up. Eventually he realized that he had to forget about being a Hebrew and not only walk on the way but run the race. Whenever you drive a car fast, you are not looking for an exit. But once you slow down, it means that you are seeking an exit. Saul began to speed up, and his name was changed to Paul. By running, the way was changed into a race.

As a saint in the Lord's recovery, are you walking the way or running the race? If we are walking the way, one day we shall walk out. If we are walking gently and slowly, we shall be distracted by some other way. But if we run the race, taking no time to look around and keeping our eyes fixed on the goal, we shall not be distracted. Paul had the greatest incentive for pressing on and for running the race; he no longer had the time to look around or to consider anything else. Although Paul might never have staggered, as a typical Hebrew believer, he must have considered his background. I believe that after he was knocked down by the Lord on the road to Damascus, he recalled his life in the Jewish religion. Perhaps he said, "I had so many good things. Is the temple false and is the priesthood wrong? Were they not ordained by God?" If he had never considered his religious background, he could not have written Galatians 1, Philippians 3, and the whole book of Hebrews so clearly. If he had not been a typical Hebrew believer experiencing all these things, he could not have helped the staggering Hebrew Christians. But he had been in the same situation and had suffered from the same disease, being an experienced patient. There is a proverb which says that an experienced patient becomes a good doctor. As we shall see, Paul was a doctor and could heal those who were in danger of being crippled. He himself had once been in the same danger, but he had been healed. As a result, he knew the cure for the staggering Hebrew Christians and was able to give them the right medicine. In the book of Hebrews, Paul gave the best medication to the crippled ones that they might be brought back to running the race.

God's intention is to put us into Christ and to work Christ into our being, making Christ our standard and all of us a reproduction of the standard. As we have seen, this will result in our perfection and glorification. When the book of Hebrews was written, many of the Hebrew believers were considering their background and were walking on the way or even standing still. They were in danger of being distracted by the temple, the priesthood, and the offerings. They were in danger of either being stranded or of shrinking back to Judaism and not coming forward to the Holy of Holies. This means that they were in danger of turning from God's goal to something used by the enemy to distract God's people from His way. Thus, after eleven chapters in which he presented the Hebrew believers a clear view of the way, the writer seemed to say, "Let us run the race. Don't stand still, look back, or look around. Don't even walk--run." We should not only refuse to leave Christ and go back to Judaism; we should not even stand still in Christ. Even walking in Christ is inadequate. We must run the race. Do not take the time to consider or look around, to stand still or walk slowly. You must run the race. By now we should be clear what the race is--it is Christ Himself as our way. But we should not take this way as a way; we must take it as a race to run.

In chapter six Paul told us to flee. We must flee everything into the Holy of Holies where our Forerunner, Jesus Christ, has entered within the veil. This is what it means to run the race.

II. ALL THE BELIEVERS OF THE NEW COVENANT MUST RUN THIS RACE

A. By Putting Off Every Encumbrance, Weight, Burden, and Impediment

Hebrews 12:1 says, "Therefore let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, putting off every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, run with endurance the race which is set before us." The Greek

word translated "encumbrance" may also be rendered "weight," "burden," "impediment." The runners in a race must strip off every unnecessary weight, every encumbering burden, that they might have no impediment to winning the race. Notice that here Paul says "us," not "you," including himself in this matter.

B. By Putting Off the Entangling Sin

Verse 1 mentions "the sin which so easily entangles us." Sin here refers mainly to the thing which entangles us from running the race, just as the willful sin mentioned in 10:26 would keep the Hebrew believers away from the new covenant way in God's economy. Both the encumbering weight and the entangling sin would frustrate the Hebrew believers and restrain them from running the heavenly race in the new covenant way of following the Jesus who was rejected by Judaism. To the staggering Hebrew believers, the thought of shrinking back and returning to Judaism was an entangling sin. The sin mentioned in this verse is particular and unique, for Paul uses the definite article, saying, "the sin." This unique, entangling sin was the willful sin of forsaking the assembling together with the saints, of giving up the new covenant way, and of going back to Judaism.

C. With Endurance

There is much opposition to this race. Thus, we must run it with endurance (12:1). This means that in order to run the race of Christ, we must suffer the opposition with endurance, never growing weary or fainting in our souls.

D. By Looking Away from All Things

In verse 2 Paul told the Hebrew believers to look away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith. The Greek word translated "looking away unto" means to look with undivided attention by turning away from every other

object. The runners in a race, such as the hundred yard dash, turn away from everything else and look at the goal with undivided attention. In this verse Paul seemed to be saying, "Hebrew brothers, do not stand there considering and looking around. You must turn away from everything other than Christ and look to Him with undivided attention. This is the way to run the race." The Hebrew believers had to look away from all the things of their situation, away from their old religion and its persecution, and away from all earthly things that they might look unto Jesus who is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God in the heavens.

E. By Looking unto Jesus Who Is Now Seated at the Right Hand of the Throne of God in the Heavens

Paul told the Hebrew believers to look "away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." From 1:3, this book points us continually to the Christ seated in heaven. In all his other epistles, Paul mainly presents to us the Christ who dwells in our spirit (Rom. 8:10; 2 Tim. 4:22) as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45, A.S.V.) to be our life and our everything. But in this book, he points us particularly to the Christ seated in heaven with so many aspects to care for us in every way. In Paul's other epistles, the indwelling Christ is versus our flesh, self, and natural man. In this book, the heavenly Christ is contrasted with the earthly religion and all earthly things. To experience the indwelling Christ we need to turn to our spirit and contact Him. To enjoy the heavenly Christ we need to look away from all things on earth unto Him who is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. By His death and resurrection He has accomplished everything that is needed for both God and us. Now in His ascension He is sitting in the heavens, in the Person of the Son of God (1:5) and the Son of Man (2:6), in the Person of God (1:8) and

man (2:6), as the appointed Heir of all things (1:2), the Anointed One of God (1:9), the Captain of our salvation (2:10), the Sanctifier (2:11), the instant Helper and constant Succor (2:18), the Apostle from God (3:1), the High Priest (2:17; 4:14; 7:26), the Minister in the true tabernacle (8:2) with a more excellent ministry (8:6), the Surety and the Mediator of a better covenant (7:22; 8:6; 12:24), the Executor of the new testament (9:16-17), the Forerunner (6:20), the Author and Perfecter of faith (12:2), and as the great Shepherd of the sheep (13:20). If we look unto Him as such a wonderful and all-inclusive One, He, ministering heaven, life, and strength to us, will transfuse and infuse us with all that He is to enable us to run the heavenly race and to live the heavenly life on earth, carrying us through all the lifelong pathway and leading and bringing us into glory (2:10).

The wonderful Jesus, who is enthroned in heaven and "crowned with glory and honor" (2:9) is the greatest attraction in the universe, like an immense magnet drawing all His seekers unto Him. It is by being attracted by His charming beauty that we look away from all things other than Him. Without such a charming object, how could we look away from so many distracting things on this earth?

F. By Considering Jesus Who Has Endured Contradiction from Sinners against Himself

Verse 3 says, "Consider Him Who has endured such contradiction from sinners against Himself, lest you grow weary, fainting in your souls." This short word refers us to the four Gospels, where we see how Christ endured such contradiction from sinners. At that time, the sinners were all the religionists, Judaizers, priests, scribes, and elders of the people. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He confronted all these opposers who were doing their best to frustrate or stop Him from the way of God's new covenant. But He was not frustrated; rather, He cut the way, slaying it by suffering the death of the cross.

G. By Resisting unto Blood, Struggling against Sin

Verse 4 says, "You have not yet resisted unto blood, struggling against sin." Sin here must refer to something evil in the sight of God that frustrates the believers and holds them back from the new covenant way, for it needs to be resisted, even unto blood.

III. THE APOSTLE PAUL BEING AN EXAMPLE OF RUNNING THE RACE

Because Paul's background was exactly that of the Hebrew believers, he was qualified to be an example in running the race. Galatians 2:2 and 1 Corinthians 9:26 and 27 show how he began to run the race. Philippians 3:5-8 and 12-14 show how he was still running the race. In Philippians 3 we see that Paul was a typical Hebrew believer running the race away from the old Jewish religion. In 2 Timothy 4:7 and 8, written shortly before his martyrdom, he told us that he had finished the race.

As Paul was running the race, he said, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). Although a saved person can never perish, it is quite possible for him to be a castaway. To be a castaway is to fail in the race, missing the opportunity of reaching the goal. Paul feared that he might be a castaway. The Greek word rendered "castaway" also means a reprobate, one not qualified or approved. Paul seemed to be saying to the Hebrew believers, "Hebrew brothers, you must be careful. Although you have been saved, it is possible that you will be a castaway, one who is disapproved." This concept fits in with that of reaching the goal and winning the prize as a reward. But there is the possibility that a runner may be a castaway and not be approved for the reward. In Hebrews 12 Paul was warning the Hebrew brothers and encouraging them, giving them a great incentive to run the race. We, like them, must not only walk the way but also run the race.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIFTY-ONE

DISCIPLINE FOR HOLINESS

I. GOD WANTING THE HEBREW BELIEVERS TO BE HOLY, TO BE SEPARATED ABSOLUTELY UNTO HIM

In this message we come to the matter of discipline for holiness (12:5-14). One of the basic concepts of this book is that God wanted the Hebrew believers to be holy, to be separated absolutely unto Him, not to remain common in Judaism (v. 14; 3:1), but rather to enter into the Holy of Holies (10:19, 22). True holiness is to enter into the Holy of Holies. Once we have entered into the Holy of Holies, we have reached the peak of holiness. There is no place where we can be more holy than in the Holy of Holies.

Entering into the Holy of Holies is not merely a matter of being in the shekinah glory. Even this is somewhat outward and superficial. Although we may be in the shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies, we still need to experience the contents of the ark. Even inside the ark there is something concealed--the hidden manna in the golden pot. This hidden manna is near the tables of the testimony, the ultimate item in the experience of Christ. To be holy means to reach the consummate point of the experience of Christ, that is, to experience the law of life. Nothing can make us more subjectively holy than the law of life, for it works God's holy nature, which is true holiness, into our being. God's divine nature is the substance of holiness. Nothing other than the law of life is able to work God's divine nature into our being. Only when we experience the law of life can we be truly holy.

The aim of the book of Hebrews is to bring us on into

the Holy of Holies, with the intention that we may experience the contents of the ark of testimony. These contents consist of three things: the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the law of life. Both the hidden manna and the budding rod are for our enjoyment and privilege, but the law of life is for God's working. Through it, He works Himself into our being. Therefore, if we would be holy to the uttermost, we must experience the law of life by which God works Himself into us as our real holiness.

II. THE PERSECUTION SUFFERED BY THE HEBREW BELIEVERS BEING A DISCIPLINE

Hebrews 12:7, referring to the persecution of the Hebrew believers, says, "It is for discipline that you are enduring." From God's point of view, the persecution which the Hebrew believers suffered from Judaism was a discipline, a chastening. They were being disciplined that they might be separated from the common things unto the holiness of God.

III. DISCIPLINE BEING THE FATHER'S DEALING WITH HIS SONS THAT THE SONS MAY PARTAKE OF THE FATHER'S HOLY NATURE

Verse 10 says, "For they indeed disciplined us for a few days as it seemed good to them, but He for our profit that we might partake of His holiness." Discipline is the Father's dealing with His sons that they may partake of His holy nature. God's discipline, God's dealing with us, is to bring us into His intention, which is that we forsake everything other than the Holy of Holies and enter into the Holy of Holies where we may have genuine holiness. However, like the Hebrew believers in the ancient times, many of us do not cooperate with God in this way. Thus, under His sovereignty, He disciplines us that we might be brought into His intention.

As we have seen, holiness is God's nature, and to partake of God's holiness is to partake of His nature. It was common, unholy, for the Hebrew believers to remain in

Judaism. They needed to be separated to God's new covenant that they might partake of God's holy nature. For this purpose, persecution was aroused to discipline them that they might be separated from the common to the holy.

In verse 9 God is called the "Father of spirits." "Father of spirits" is contrasted with "fathers of our flesh." In regeneration, we are born of God (John 1:13) in our spirit (John 3:6). Hence, He is the Father of our spirits. Since the staggering Hebrew believers were wandering in their mind, not following the Lord in their spirit, the Father of spirits used the persecution by Judaism to force them to turn from their mind to their spirit (4:12) that they might partake of His holy nature.

IV. DISCIPLINE BEING FOR HOLINESS, RESULTING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Discipline is for holiness resulting in righteousness. Holiness is the inward nature, the nature of the divine life, and righteousness is the outward behavior, the behavior of the sanctified believers, which comes out of the inward nature and which brings forth the peaceable fruit, the fruit of peace (v. 11; Isa. 32:17). If we have never been permeated inwardly with God's holy nature, we can never have proper righteousness in our outward behavior. Firstly, the law of life must work God's divine nature into us. Then in our outward behavior we shall have the peaceable fruit of righteousness as the issue of inward holiness. In our practical experience, holiness is first, righteousness is second, and peace is third.

The Hebrew believers were being persecuted by the Judaizers. Some of the persecutors were probably their relatives, perhaps even parents or children. As they were under this persecution, they tried to make peace with their persecutors. But they did so at the neglect of their holiness. Holiness is entering into the Holy of Holies to reach the law of life, the working of which saturates us with God's holy nature. When we are saturated with God's nature, we spontaneously have the issue of righteousness, and this

righteousness brings in genuine peace. Many Christians have a peace which is not genuine; it is a peace which comes from compromise. Some of the Hebrew believers might have said, "Oh, father, if you will not let me be in the new covenant way absolutely, then maybe I can go with you to the temple on the seventh day and attend the Christian assembly on the eighth day, the first day of the week. Then we can be at peace." This peace is a peace through compromise, a peace which comes from sacrificing holiness.

As we have seen, peace is the fruit of righteousness, and holiness is the inward nature, while righteousness is the outward behavior. God's discipline helps the believers not only to partake of His holiness, but also to make them right with both God and man that in such a condition of righteousness they might enjoy peace as a sweet and peaceable fruit of righteousness.

V. THE WEARIED AND PARALYZED HEBREW BELIEVERS NEEDING TO MAKE STRAIGHT PATHS THAT THE LAMED MEMBERS MAY NOT BE PUT OUT OF JOINT BUT RATHER MAY BE HEALED

Verses 12 and 13 say, "Wherefore lift up the wearied hands and the paralyzed knees, and make straight paths for your feet that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather may be healed." The Christian life is not a matter of theoretical doctrines for the mind. Rather, it must be practical in providing paths for our feet. All the sound, healthy doctrines of the Bible are for the paths. This is absolutely true with this book of Hebrews. This book firstly ministers to us the most high and healthy doctrines concerning Christ and His new covenant. Then, based upon the proper doctrines which it has shown us, it charges us to run the race and make straight paths for our feet. The first section of this book (1:1-10:18) is of doctrines, and the second (10:19-13:25) is of a race, of paths.

In verse 13 the writer tells the Hebrew believers to

"make straight paths for your feet that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather may be healed." The Greek word translated "put out of joint" may also be rendered "dislocated" or "wrenched." The implication of the context is that the staggering Hebrew believers should abandon all appearance of the practices of Judaism (that is, to make straight paths) that they, the lamed members (limbs) of the Body may not fall into apostasy (that is, may not be put out of joint), but rather may be fully brought into the new covenant way (that is, may be healed). Thus, to make straight paths is to abandon all appearance of the practice of Judaism; not to be lamed is not to fall into apostasy; and to be healed is to be fully brought into the new covenant way.

The new covenant way must be straight, having no curves. If the Hebrew believers still went to the temple on the Sabbath day with their relatives, they would have been making curves in the paths of the new covenant way. Every compromising activity is a curve. I like the way highways are built in the United States--straight and flat. Many Christians today have seen the new covenant way, that is, the way of the Lord's recovery. Although they know that the way of the church life in the Lord's recovery is the right way, they do not dare to pay the full price. They compromise by putting curves in the way of the church in the Lord's recovery. How could the Hebrew believers make the new testament way straight? Only by abandoning every appearance of Judaism. They had to say to their relatives, "Because the temple is an appearance of the Jewish practice, I will never go there with you on the Sabbath day." Some saints today who have seen the way of the church are afraid of being criticized and say, "Let us not go to the extreme and cause trouble. Let us go along with others a little bit." During the past fifty years, God has never honored such a compromise. Some have said, "Yes, we know that we are the church, but we should not say this because others will be offended. Let us just be the church." This is compromise. If you are a lamb, you must

say that you are a lamb. If you are a dove, you must declare that you are a dove. We should not say, "I am a lamb, but it is better not to say that I am a lamb." By compromising in this way, many have added curves to God's straight paths. If denominations are wrong, we must plainly say that they are wrong. In the book, *Further Talks on the Church Life*, Brother Watchman Nee says that if denominations are wrong, we should tear them down to the ground. We should not shake hands over the denominational fences in a compromising way. Shaking hands over the fence makes curves in the path.

In the past twelve years, which way has won the fighting in the United States and in Europe? Not the curved way but the straight way. God will never honor the curves. God is not a God of curves; He is a straight God. If a certain way is not right, we must condemn it. But if it is right, we must tell everyone, including the angels and the demons, that it is right. To make the way straight is to abandon the appearance of anything that is not God's new covenant way.

The lame members alluded to in verse 13 were the staggering Hebrew Christians. Paul did not want the lame members to be put out of joint, that is, to be dislocated. To be put out of joint, dislocated, is to fall into apostasy, into the heresy of Judaism. The staggering Hebrew believers were in danger of falling into such apostasy. If your ankle is out of joint, it will be easy for you to fall from the right way. The words "but rather may be healed" mean to be brought fully into the new covenant way.

During the early years of the Lord's recovery in this country, I saw the lameness and paralysis in the denominations. If the denominations were right, we had to join with them. But if they were wrong, we had to declare that they were wrong and tell people what was the right way. By the Lord's mercy, this is what we did. We were, of course, condemned for it. But we do not care for people's condemnation; we care about God's honor. By His mercy, we sounded the trumpet in a clear way, describing things

as they really were. Many were lame because the way was not straight but was full of curves. It was very difficult for them to find the right way. Praise the Lord that in the Lord's recovery in the United States today there is a highway from Los Angeles to New York. Because the way has been made straight, many ankles have been healed. In the Lord's recovery today, there is hardly one of us who is in danger of being out of joint. We all have been healed. According to Hebrews 12, to be healed is to be brought fully into God's new testament way. Today everyone's eyes are clear. Black is black, white is white, and gray is gray. Thank the Lord for such a straight path. I praise the Lord that there is hardly any dislocating or wrenching and that everyone is standing upright and walking along the straight path. We are not only walking--we are running.

VI. THE PROPER CHRISTIAN LIFE BEING A BALANCE BETWEEN PEACE AND HOLINESS

Verse 14 says, "Pursue peace with all men, and holiness without which no one shall see the Lord." The proper Christian life must be a balance between peace and holiness. With God, holiness is His holy nature; with us, it is our separation unto God. The implication here is that while we are pursuing peace with all men, we must also pay attention to the matter of holiness before God. Our pursuing peace with all men must be balanced by our holiness before God, our separation unto God, without which no one shall see the Lord and have fellowship with Him.

We should not attempt to have peace with others without first having holiness. Peace without holiness means compromise. We do not want such a compromising peace. We want the peace that is the product of holiness. In the past years I have met many Christians who compromised in order to keep the peace. Eventually, there was no peace among them. Outwardly, they compromised about so many things, but inwardly they were fighting with one another. Praise the Lord that in His recovery today, the more we come into the Holy of Holies. the more we are

at peace. If the elders in a certain local church are not at peace with one another, that is a shame. When we care for holiness, that is, for being in the Holy of Holies, we have true peace. Praise the Lord that for more than twelve years the church in Los Angeles has been at peace. The same is true of the church in Anaheim. When you come here, you cannot find a hint that peace is lacking. The peace among us is not produced by compromise; it is produced by the holiness in the Holy of Holies.

The staggering Hebrew Christians tried to keep the peace with their opposers, but eventually they lost their holiness. Therefore, the writer tried his best to bring them back to the proper peace, the peace which is the fruit of righteousness and true holiness. Peace is for us to live with man, and holiness is for us to see the Lord. Although you may have peace with man, do you still have the presence of the Lord? We must firstly care for the Lord's presence and then for our living with others. Our peace must issue from the Lord's presence. For us today, His presence is our practical holiness.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIFTY-TWO

DO NOT FALL AWAY FROM GRACE

In chapter twelve we have the fifth and final warning in the book of Hebrews. This book has a special arrangement. It has five main teachings, and with each teaching there is a warning. Three of the warnings come after the teachings (3:7-4:13; 10:19-39; 12:1-29), and two are inserted into the teachings (2:1-4; 5:11-6:20). All of chapter twelve is a warning which follows the teaching given in chapter eleven. This warning tells us to run the race and not to fall away from grace. The race needs the grace, and the grace is sufficient for the race.

Before we consider the matter of falling from grace, I would like to say a further word concerning the race. In chapters ten and twelve we have three synonymous terms. In 10:20 we have the "new and living way" and in 12:1 we have the race. As we have seen, the race is the way on which we are running. If we are walking, the way remains a way, but once we begin to run, the way becomes the race. The third of these synonymous terms is paths (12:13). The living way, the race, and the paths all point to the same thing. The way on which we walk should be the race we are running, and the race should be the paths. Whether we call it the race, the way, or the paths, the meaning is the same.

Perhaps you are wondering why both the way and the race are singular while the paths are plural. This is like one freeway which has many sections. The many sections are many paths.

The way in 10:20 is the way to enter into the Holy of Holies, and the race in 12:1 is for reaching the goal and obtaining the reward. In 12:13 we see that on this highway into the Holy of Holies and toward God's goal, there are

paths, and that these paths must be straight, not having any curves. Some Christians have weak ankles. If their way is not made straight, they will fall away because their ankles are weak. Hence, we must make straight paths that their ankles would not be put out of joint, that is, be dislocated or wrenched, but rather be healed.

To remain in the Holy of Holies is to continue the running of the race. According to our experience, whenever we exercise our mind to compromise a little, we can sense deep within our spirit that we are away from God's presence, that we are no longer in the Holy of Holies. Immediately, our way of contacting God is no longer straight; it has become curved. This curve leads us away from the Holy of Holies, away from the ark of testimony, the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the tables of the testimony. Although at the beginning we may be only a short way off from the Holy of Holies, eventually we find that we are a great distance away.

Our race must eventually be in the Holy of Holies. If we are running the race only in the outer court, we are too shallow. We must run our race in the Holy of Holies. Perhaps you are thinking that the Holy of Holies is too small an area in which to run a race. Yes, in the tabernacle it was a cube only ten cubits in length, width, and height (Exo. 26:8, 16). In the temple it became twenty cubits in length, width, and height (1 Kings 6:20). Eventually, in the New Jerusalem it will be twelve thousand stadia in length, width, and height (Rev. 21:16). The cubical dimensions of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and in the temple and of the New Jerusalem signify the completeness of God's eternal being. From any direction, God is perfect and complete. His completeness and perfection is eternal, unlimited.

The more we run, the larger the Holy of Holies becomes, expanding from the tabernacle, to the temple, and ultimately to the New Jerusalem. When we first run the race in the tabernacle, it is ten cubits. As we continue to run, it becomes twenty cubits in the temple and twelve

thousand stadia in the New Jerusalem. When we run the race in eternity, we shall discover that it is eternally spacious. This is very meaningful.

We can never exhaust the race in the Holy of Holies. I have been running the race for many years, and the more I run, the longer, wider, and higher the Holy of Holies becomes. For the young people, the Holy of Holies in which they are running may be just ten cubits long, wide, and high. After they have been running the race for a number of years, it will be much larger. When we enter into eternity, we shall see that the whole city of New Jerusalem, which is the same in each of its three dimensions, is the Holy of Holies. Today our continual race is in the Holy of Holies, and the paths of this continual race must be made straight. In order to make the paths straight, we must have grace. We must run the race and not fall away from grace. We need grace to run the race.

I. THE GRACE OF GOD

Now we must ask a crucial question: what is grace? When I was young, I was taught by some great teachers that grace means that we do nothing and that God does everything for us. According to this teaching, anything we do is work, not grace, but whatever the Lord does for us is grace. For example, there is no need for us to do anything for our sins. If we do this, it is our work. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and that is grace. Are you satisfied with this definition of grace? For a while, I was satisfied with it. But as a result of considering certain verses in the Bible, I began to question it. John 1:17 says that grace came through Jesus Christ, and John 1:16 says, "Of His fullness we all received, and grace upon grace" (Recovery Version). In 1 Corinthians 15:10 the Apostle Paul says, "By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." One day, as I was comparing this verse with Galatians 2:20 where Paul says,

"Not I, but Christ liveth in me," I realized that grace is just God in Christ dispensed into our being for our enjoyment in our experience. It is not only the work the Lord does for us; it is the Triune God Himself dispensed into our being and experienced as our enjoyment. In brief, grace is the Triune God experienced by us. According to the entire revelation of the New Testament, grace is nothing less than God in Christ dispensed into our being for our enjoyment. Firstly, He is dispensed into our spirit, and then, as He spreads into our inward parts, He becomes our enjoyment. This grace has come to us through Christ (John 1:14, 17), and it is the grace of Christ (2 Cor. 13:14; 12:9), even Christ Himself (Gal. 6:18; cf. 2 Tim. 4:22).

II. TO FALL AWAY FROM GRACE BEING TO FALL AWAY FROM CHRIST

To fall away from the grace of God is to fall away from Christ. When we are "fallen from grace" we are "severed from Christ" (Gal. 5:4, Gk.). In this matter Paul warned the churches of Galatia, which were in the same danger as the Hebrew believers, not to be "severed from Christ" by being turned aside to the law of the Jewish religion, lest they fall away from the grace of God which is Christ Himself. We should not fall away from grace, but rather "have grace" (v. 28), "be confirmed by grace" (13:9), and "stand in grace" (Rom. 5:2). Both Galatians and Hebrews close with the blessings of grace (Gal. 6:18; Heb. 13:25).

According to the Greek, to be severed from Christ means to be cut off from Him like a branch is cut off from a tree. We all have had this experience. A number of times when we were cut off from the fellowship with the living Christ, we also had the sense that we were severed from grace. On the contrary, when we are in intimate fellowship with the dear Lord, we have the deep sense that we are in grace, having grace for our strength and enjoyment and for our every need. If we need life, grace is life. If we need strength and comfort, grace is our strength and comfort.

Thus, in an experiential way, not in a doctrinal way, we clearly see that grace is Christ Himself.

A. For the Hebrew Believers to Fall Away from the Grace of God Being to Give Up the Enjoyment of Christ in the New Covenant Way and to Return to Their Old Religion

For the Hebrew believers to fall away from the grace of God was to give up the enjoyment of Christ in the new covenant way and to return to their old religion. The arrangement of the furniture of the tabernacle is a revelation of the enjoyment of Christ. At the altar, we enjoy Christ as our sacrifices, and at the laver we enjoy Him as the life-giving Spirit who washes us. At the showbread table we enjoy Christ as our daily supply, at the lampstand we enjoy Him as our light of life, and at the incense altar we enjoy Him as the resurrection fragrance by which we are accepted by God. Then at the ark of testimony within the Holy of Holies, we enjoy Christ as the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the law of life. This is the enjoyment of Christ according to the new covenant way. If the Hebrew believers had given up this way, they would have fallen away from grace. We should not understand 12:15 in a superficial way. If we plunge into the depths of Hebrews, we shall realize that what the writer meant by not falling away from the grace of God was not giving up the new covenant way of enjoying Christ. In other words, the writer seemed to be saying, "Hebrew believers, do not go back to Judaism. If you do, you will be giving up the way to enjoy Christ as your grace, and you will fall away from the grace of God."

B. The Hebrew Believers Remaining in the New Covenant Way by Having Grace, Being Confirmed by Grace, and Standing in Grace

Verse 28 says, "Let us have grace, through which we may serve God well-pleasingly with godly fear and awe." For the Hebrew believers to remain in the new covenant way was to "have grace." I prefer the translation, "take

grace" to "have grace," for the word "have" in this verse is the equivalent of "take." A mother will often say to her child, "Take your food," or "Take your milk." Likewise, we all need to take grace and to help one another to take grace. If your wife is about to give you a difficult time, you must tell her to take grace. To remain in the new covenant way is to take grace. Whenever we take even a little grace, the entire situation is changed. Sometimes when a brother and his wife are sitting at the dining table, everything is dark. In such a situation, I would advise the wife to be the first to take grace. If she would do this, the dining table would shine, and the husband would say, "Praise the Lord!" Grace certainly is the most healthy food.

In 13:9 Paul tells us to "be confirmed by grace," and in Romans 5:2 he says that we should stand in grace. Since we all have received grace, we now need to stand in it. Once we take grace and have been confirmed by grace, we shall be able to stand in grace.

III. THE CAUSE OF FALLING AWAY FROM THE GRACE OF GOD

A. The Root of Bitterness--The Judaizer

In verses 15 and 16, Paul says, "Looking carefully lest anyone be falling away from the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and through this many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one meal gave up his birthright." In these verses we see three causes of falling away from the grace of God: the bitter root, the fornicator, and the profane person. According to the implication of the context of this book, the root of bitterness must be some Judaizer who could cause the Hebrew believers to be turned aside from the grace of God to the rituals of Judaism and, neglecting the holiness of God, to thus defile themselves in the sight of God. This root of bitterness troubled the Hebrew believers by convincing them with Judaism and

capturing them back to Judaism to be defiled in the common religion, rather than to be sanctified unto the Holy God. The Judaizers attempted to convince the Hebrew believers that the new covenant way was wrong and that the old covenant way was right. In principle, there have been some roots of bitterness in the churches in the Lord's recovery. Such a root of bitterness will say that there is heresy in the churches. Recently there was such a root of bitterness in one of the churches, and several dear ones were poisoned. Once this poison of bitterness enters into a person, it is not easily extracted. I have seen this not only in the United States but also in Taiwan and in mainland China.

We should not listen to the roots of bitterness, for their intention is to damage the Lord's recovery. The root of bitterness can cause us to fall away from the grace of God. I have the full assurance that the Lord's recovery is the best place for us to enjoy grace today. If you leave the Lord's recovery, you will certainly fall away from the grace of God. Deep within our spirit, we know that before we came into the church we never enjoyed grace like we do now. Do not care for what the opposers say; care for your experience. The opposers always try to stir up your mentality, just like the serpent stirred up Eve's mind. Once they have stirred up your mentality to think things over, they will poison you with their talk. As a result, you will either leave the Lord's recovery, or else you will be cold and negative concerning it.

B. The Fornicator

The second cause of falling away from the grace of God is the fornicator. When Paul wrote verse 16, he might have had in mind Reuben, the first son of Jacob, who was wrecked by his fleshly lust and thereby lost his birthright (Gen. 49:3-4; 1 Chron. 5:1). By the lust of the flesh, the fornicator is kept from the enjoyment of Christ in God's new covenant. Nothing ruins God's people as much as fornication does. We all must flee it. The fornicator, like

Reuben, will lose the blessing of the birthright because of the defilement of his lust.

C. The Profane Person

The third cause is the profane person. The profane person is one who loves the world and the worldly things, and who is captured by the entertainment of physical things. He is like Esau who sold his birthright for one meal (Gen. 25:29-34). Esau's birthright as the firstborn son of Isaac was the double portion of the land, the priesthood, and the kingship. Due to his profaneness in giving up his birthright, the double portion of land was given to Joseph (1 Chron. 5:1-2), the priesthood went to Levi (Deut. 33:8-10), and the kingship was assigned to Judah (Gen. 49:10; 1 Chron. 5:2). Verse 17, speaking of Esau says, "For you know that also afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it with tears." The words, "no place for repentance," do not mean that Esau had no ground to repent, but that he had no way to reverse by repentance the result of what he had done.

We Christians, born of God, are the "firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18) which He has reaped in His creation. In this sense, we are the firstborn sons of God. Hence, the church composed of us is called the church of the firstborn ones (12:23). As the firstborn sons of God, we have the birthright of the firstborn. This includes the inheritance of the earth (2:5-6), the priesthood (Rev. 20:6), and the kingship (Rev. 20:4), which will be the main blessings in the coming kingdom and which the profane, world-loving-and-seeking Christians will lose at the Lord's coming back. Eventually, this birthright will be a reward to the overcoming Christians in the millennial kingdom. Any worldly enjoyment, even one meal, can cause us to forfeit this birthright of ours. If after such a serious warning, the Hebrew believers still preferred to indulge in one meal of their old religion, they would have missed the full

enjoyment of Christ and lost the kingdom rest with all its blessings.

Actually, what we are privileged to enjoy in Christ today is the foretaste of the blessings in the coming kingdom. The proper enjoyment of this foretaste will usher us into the full taste of the kingdom blessings. If we do not enjoy Christ today as our good land, how can we enter into His rest in the kingdom and inherit the earth with Him? If we do not exercise our priesthood today to contact Him and prayerfully minister to Him, how can we fulfill our priestly duty in the kingdom? If we do not exercise our spirit with a God-given authority to rule our self, our flesh, our entire being, and the enemy with all his power of darkness today, how can we be Christ's co-kings and rule the nations with Him in His kingdom (Rev. 2:26-27)? Our enjoyment of Christ and the practice of the priesthood and kingship today are the preparation and qualification for our participating in Christ's kingdom tomorrow.

In Genesis 1, we see that God created man in His image so that man might express Him. According to the deep thought of the book of Hebrews, expressing God is a matter of the priesthood. To have the priesthood today in the new covenant way is to have the law of life work God into our being that we may become His expression and testimony. This is what it means to be the priesthood expressing God's image. From the very beginning, man was destined to be God's priest. Furthermore, the man created in the image of God was committed with God's dominion to rule over all created things. This is the kingship. Expressing God in His image is the priesthood, and ruling over all created things with God's dominion and authority is the kingship. Hence, both the priesthood and the kingship were with man in the beginning. Moreover, God gave the earth to man that he might take possession of it and replenish it through the spreading of God's expression and dominion. Therefore, in Genesis 1 we see the priesthood, the kingship, and the land, the three things assigned by God to man as his destiny.

After Adam fell, God selected another race, the race of Abraham, to be His people. By reading the Old Testament, we see that God's intention with the children of Israel was the same as with mankind originally. God intended to give the children of Israel the priesthood that they might express Him and His authority that they might represent Him. God also gave them the best land on earth. Hence, with the children of Israel there were the priesthood, the kingship, and the land. However, most of the children of Israel became fallen. Although Reuben, the first son of Jacob, should have had the birthright, he lost it due to his fall and the defilement of his fleshly lust. As a result, the birthright was divided. The land portion of the birthright went to Joseph, whose two sons received the double portion of the land, the priesthood portion went to Levi, and the kingship portion went to Judah.

When we come to the New Testament, we see that God's intention is that all the church people express God through the priesthood, represent Him with the kingship, and take possession of the land in order to have the proper human living. No one on earth today has a proper human living. The unbelievers do not have it because they are still fallen, and we Christians, though we are saved, do not have it now because this is the time for us to lose our soul and to suffer for God's testimony. According to the book of Hebrews, one day we shall have all three items of the birthright. The land, the coming inhabited earth, is mentioned in chapter two. In the future, the inhabited earth will be given to us, the human partners of Christ. In the next age, we shall possess the land, rule the whole earth, and be the priesthood. During the coming millennial kingdom, we shall have the proper human life. That will be the full recovery of what was lost in Genesis 3. When, in the coming age of the kingdom, all the overcomers take possession of the inhabited earth, express God as priests, and rule as kings over the nations, everything that was given to man in Genesis 1 will be recovered. That will be the proper human living. This is God's intention.

Because not all of God's people care for His intention, He has made it a reward for those who do care for it. In the past, we have seen the reward and the gaining of the soul. The gaining of the soul is simply having the proper human life with the proper humanity. We cannot have such a life today because the earth has not been cleared up. But in the coming age of the kingdom, the whole earth will be cleared up, and we shall enter into our possession and be God's priesthood to express Him and His kingship to represent Him. Then we shall be the proper humanity living by Jesus, the proper man, to fulfill God's eternal purpose. At that time, Genesis 1 will be completely fulfilled. The whole earth will be under the possession of the proper humanity, which will be the expression of God in the priesthood and the representation of God in the kingship. This is God's intention in His eternal purpose, which has been assigned by our wise God and Father to be our portion and reward. During the coming age of the kingdom, we shall be in perfection and glorification and shall gain our soul to enjoy the proper human living with the proper humanity. This is the goal of God's intention, the reward, and the birthright.

Since we have this birthright today, we must exercise it. We must exercise our spirit to express God, to represent God, and to enjoy Christ as our real land. If we fail to do these three things today, how shall we be able to do them during the coming age of the kingdom? We must practice the priesthood and the kingship and we must enjoy and take full possession of our good land today. If we do this, we shall be fully prepared to enter into the joy of taking possession of the coming inhabited earth and of exercising our priesthood and kingship. At that time, we shall receive the reward and enjoy the birthright. This is God's goal.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIFTY-THREE

A CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SIGHT OF THE OLD COVENANT AND THE SCENE OF THE NEW COVENANT

In this message we come to a very exciting subject--the contrast between the sight of the old covenant and the scene of the new covenant (12:18-24). Paul was undoubtedly marvelous both in the spirit and in the mind. He was a very brilliant man. Like one of today's writers who includes photographs in his books, Paul gave us some pictures in 12:18-24. The two scenes portrayed in these verses not only give us a comparison but also a clear view of the situation of both the old and new covenants.

If we read these nine verses carefully, we can see that there are six items belonging to the old covenant and eight belonging to the new covenant. Six is the number of the old creation, which was made in six days (Gen. 1). Eight is the number of resurrection. The Lord Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week (John 20:1), which is the eighth day. The six items of the old covenant indicate that the old covenant was on the side of the old creation. The eight items of the new covenant indicate that the new covenant is on the side of resurrection. The number eight signifies a new beginning after the passing of a period of time. A week is the first period of time, and the first day of the second week, the eighth day, is a new beginning. Hence, the number eight signifies resurrection, a new beginning. The new covenant is a new start after the period of the old covenant has passed.

The old covenant was of the law, whose position is that of a concubine. The new covenant is of grace, whose position is that of the proper wife. Sarah, Abraham's wife,

symbolizes grace in resurrection, and Hagar, the concubine, symbolizes the law related to the flesh. Paul makes this quite clear in Galatians 4, where he tells us that these two women, Hagar and Sarah, are two covenants, Hagar being the old covenant and Sarah the new. In other words, Hagar stands for the law and Sarah for grace. We Christians today are not the children of Hagar but of Sarah. We are children of grace. These two women also symbolize two mountains. Hagar signifies Mount Sinai, and Sarah signifies Mount Zion, which is the heavenly Jerusalem, our mother.

I. THE SIGHT OF THE OLD COVENANT ON THE SIDE OF THE LAW

A. Comprising Six Items

Let us now look into the six items of the old covenant presented in verses 18 through 21. This side is the side of the law.

1. The Mountain Being Touchable and Set on Fire

Verse 18 says, "You have not come to the mountain which might be touched and which was set on fire." The first item in the sight of the old covenant was the mountain which was set on fire (Exo. 19:11-12, 18). Do you like such a mountain? I prefer a mountain covered with trees and flowing streams, but I do not like a mountain that is set on fire. That would terrify me. Paul seemed to be saying, "Hebrew brothers, do you still want to go back to the old covenant? Don't you know that that belongs to the mountain which was set on fire?" After saying so many things in the foregoing chapters, he showed them such a picture.

2. Darkness

The second item in the sight of the old covenant is darkness (v. 18; Deut. 5:23). Ordinarily, when there is a great fire, there is also some shining and enlightening. But

the Bible says that while the fire was burning on Mount Sinai, there was darkness. This darkness came from two sources: from the thick cloud in the air and from the heavy smoke on the earth. The mingling of the cloud and the smoke produced a thick darkness. This picture depicts the negative situation of the old covenant.

3. Gloom

The third item in the sight of the old covenant is gloom (v. 18; Exo. 20:21; Deut. 5:22, Heb.). What is the difference between darkness and gloom? According to my understanding and experience, darkness is objective and gloom is subjective. When darkness is afar off, it remains darkness, but once we enter into it, it becomes gloom. Gloom is an atmosphere in which we dwell. When we enter into darkness and dwell in it, that darkness becomes gloom. Darkness was not only an objective condition for those in the old covenant; it had become the gloom in which they dwelt.

The same is true in our spiritual experience. When we were not seeking the Lord, we were in darkness. But when we began to pursue spiritual things, we immediately had the deep sense that we were in gloom. Before we were revived, we were in darkness. After we were revived, we were in a gloomy situation. If the Hebrew brothers had returned to the old covenant where the darkness was, that darkness would have brought them into gloom.

4. Whirlwind

The next item is the whirlwind (v. 18). A whirlwind is a type of wind that has no direction or peace. In my background in Christianity, there was no direction or peace. Neither was there any direction or peace with the Judaizers. With them there was just the whirlwind.

5. The Sound of a Trumpet

In the sight of the old covenant there is also the sound of a trumpet (v. 19; Exo. 19:13, 16, 19; 20:18). The sound of

a trumpet indicates a warning. Religion is filled with warnings, such as, "Don't do this or you will go to hell," or, "Be careful or you will lose your salvation." In religion, they sound the warning trumpet much more often than they deliver a positive message. Religion always says, "Be careful--don't do that," for in religion there are always many more "don'ts" than "do's." The sound of the trumpet is a sign of the poverty of religion. Religion has nothing positive to afford us; it can only warn us negatively. Every religion, including Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism, is the same in principle, sounding warnings and telling us what we should not do.

6. The Terrifying Voice of Words

The sixth item in the sight of the old covenant is the terrifying voice of words (v. 19; Deut. 4:12; Exo. 19:19). What people finally have in religion is the terrifying voice of words, not the jubilant praise to the Lord. However, in the church we always hear the praises to the Lord.

B. All Items Being Temporal

Because all the items in the sight of the old covenant were of the old dispensation they were temporal, not permanent. Just as the old creation will one day pass away, so all the items of the old covenant, belonging to the old creation, have been terminated.

II. THE SCENE OF THE NEW COVENANT ON THE SIDE OF GRACE

A. Comprising Eight Items in Four Pairs

Now we come to the scene of the new covenant on the side of grace (vv. 22-24). This scene comprises eight items in four pairs. That these items are arranged in pairs is very meaningful. The six items of the old covenant are presented singly, while the six items of the word of foundation in Hebrews 6 are arranged in three pairs. Here,

in chapter twelve, we have the eight items of the new covenant arranged in four pairs.

1. The First Pair

The first pair consists of Mount Zion (v. 22; Psa. 2:6; Rev. 14:1) and the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem (v. 22; 11:10, 16; Rev. 22:2). Here there is no fire but a beautiful mountain with a glorious city, the heavenly Jerusalem, which is God's habitation and the center of His universal administration.

2. The Second Pair

The second pair is composed of the myriads of angels, that is, the universal gathering (v. 22; Rev. 5:11), and the church of the firstborn ones who have been enrolled in the heavens (v. 23; 2:12; Luke 10:20). The Greek word rendered "universal gathering" may also be translated as "festal gathering." This Greek word, paneguris, means universal gathering, whole or full assembly, and is used for a gathering of the people to celebrate a public festival, such as the Olympic games. The entire new covenant age is a festival, and the myriads of angels, who are the ministering spirits rendering service to the heirs of salvation (1:14) under the new covenant, are a universal festal gathering celebrating the marvelous festival of "so great a salvation" (2:3), the greatest and most exciting "game" in the universe. The word of the Lord in Luke 15:7 and 10 may indicate this.

As we have seen, the Greek word used by the Apostle Paul for "universal gathering" was used to describe the Olympic games, the greatest and most important public games in ancient Greece. At the time of the Olympic games, the people held a large public gathering. In like manner, huge crowds attend football games in the United States today. The Apostle Paul used the background of the Olympic games to show us that in this universe a game is in progress. The spectators at this game are the myriads of angels who have gathered together to watch it. The game is

the race mentioned earlier in this chapter (v. 1). We are qualified to participate in this game, but the angels are not. They are only qualified to be the cheering spectators. In Luke 15:7 and 10, the Lord Jesus said, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Whenever a sinner is saved, the angels are excited. I wholly believe that the angels in heaven are also very excited about what is happening in the Lord's recovery today. We are playing the greatest game, and the angels are our spectators.

It is very significant that Paul put the myriads of angels together with the church of the firstborn ones who are enrolled in the heavens. We are the firstborn, and they are the spectators; we are the runners, and they are the observers. In a football game, the spectators are always more excited than the players. Although we may not always be excited, the angels are very excited as they observe us. First Peter 1:12, speaking of things which "the angels desire to look into," indicates that the angels are eager to know this gospel game. I do not believe that the cheering angels are very interested in poor Christianity. There is hardly a game there because there is no race there. But there is a real game in the church life today. Whenever we are excited about what is happening in the church life, the angels must be even more excited. The church life has been keeping the angels very excited.

The focus of God's intention in the whole universe is to gain a group of people like us. The angels have been waiting for this for a long time. If there were no games in the United States, many Americans would be waiting, wondering when there would be a game. Likewise, for centuries, the angels, who saw those in Catholicism worshipping idols and burning candles, have been waiting and watching to see a group of real seekers of Jesus. Whenever they see this, they rejoice in a praising way.

3. The Third Pair

As the third pair in the scene of the new covenant, we

have God, the Judge of all (v. 23; Gen. 18:25; Psa. 94:2), and the spirits of just men who have been made perfect (v, 23). In this pair, we have the just God as the Judge and the spirits of the just men, who are the Old Testament saints, made perfect through their faith in the types of Christ.

4. The Fourth Pair

The fourth pair is Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant (v. 24; 8:6; 9:15) and the blood of sprinkling which speaks better than that of Abel (v. 24; 9:12, 14; Gen. 4:10). As we have seen, Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant. The Greek word, neos, here means new, fresh with respect to quality. In this pair, we have not only the Mediator, the Redeemer, of the new covenant, but also the blood of the new covenant.

In this book, the blood of Christ is particularly prominent and crucial. It is the blood of the eternal covenant (13:20), with which the new and better covenant was enacted (10:29). Through this blood, Christ entered once for all into the Holy of Holies and found eternal redemption for us (9:12). By this blood Christ also cleansed the heavens and all things in the heavens (9:22-24). This blood sanctifies us (13:12; 10:29), purifies our conscience to serve the living God (9:14), and speaks better for us than that of Abel (12:24). It is by this blood that we have boldness for entering into the Holy of Holies (10:19). We should not regard this blood common as animal blood. If we do, we shall suffer God's punishment (10:29).

The blood of Christ not only redeems, sanctifies, and purifies; it also speaks. It is the speaking blood, speaking better than the blood of Abel. Abel's blood speaks to God for accusation and vengeance (Gen. 4:10, 15), whereas Christ's blood speaks to God for forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, and redemption. Moreover, this precious blood speaks to God for us saying that by it (as unveiled in this book) the new covenant, which is eternal, has been enacted, and that in this new covenant God must give

Himself and all His blessings to the believers in Christ who receive this covenant by faith.

B. All Items Being Eternal

Because the eight items of the new covenant are on the side of resurrection, all of them are eternal, existing forever. Just as the new heaven and new earth will still remain after the old creation has passed away, so these eight items will remain through eternity.

The things mentioned in verses 18 and 19 are earthly or physical, signifying the side of the law, on which side everyone including Moses was terrified (vv. 19-21). The things mentioned in verses 22 through 24 are heavenly or spiritual, in contrast with the earthly and physical things listed in verses 18 and 19, signifying the side of grace. On this side, both the firstborn ones and the spirits of just men are saved by grace. The people under the old covenant came to the side of the law, whereas we Christians under the new covenant come to the side of grace. Hence, we are "not under law but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). This portion of the word, like Galatians 4:21-31, shows us that we are not under the bondage of law but under the freedom of grace to be heirs of inheritance. This is our birthright. We should not give it up by falling away from grace (v. 15), but rather have grace (v. 28). The things on the side of grace are heavenly, but not all are yet in heaven. A great number of the firstborn ones of the church are still on earth, while the spirits of just men, who are the Old Testament saints, are in paradise where Abraham is (Luke 16:22, 23, 24, 26) and where the Lord Jesus and the saved thief went after they died on the cross (Luke 23:43).

As we have seen, none of the six items listed on the side of the law is pleasant. Firstly, there is a mountain set on fire! Who would approach such a place! Then, the darkness, the gloom, and the stormy whirlwind. Lastly, the terrifying sound of the trumpet and the solemn warning voice of words. All these together present a fearful sight. On the side of grace, however, everything is pleasant. The eight

items here may be considered as four pairs. The elevated Mount Zion and the beautiful heavenly Jerusalem are the first pair, denoting God's habitation and the center of His universal administration. What a lovely place! Then the celebrating jubilant angels, so much related to the heirs of salvation to whom they minister, and the blessed firstborn ones of the church form the second pair in the scene. What a joyful demonstration of an angelic gathering! They celebrate the human heirs of salvation participating in the blessings of the new covenant as the church of the firstborn ones. God, the Judge of all, who is just, and the spirits (their bodies, not resurrected, are not worthy of listing here) of just men, the Old Testament saints, are related together as the third pair, showing how God, being just, justifies the just saints of old because of their faith. Lastly, the dear Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, which is "a better covenant," and His precious sprinkled blood, which speaks better things, compose the last pair, indicating that a better covenant has been enacted with His better blood, that He died and has bequeathed this new covenant as a new testament to His believers, and that He is now the Mediator, the Executor, of this new testament to enforce the full realization of all the blessed facts which are contained within it. What a pleasant scene! What a contrast to the sight on the side of the law, where no God, no Savior, and even no angels are mentioned! No wonder not one saved person is seen there! In the scene of grace, there is the justifying God, the Savior who is the Mediator of His new covenant with His speaking blood, the ministering angels with the assembly (the church) of the saved ones, and the spirits of the justified saints. On the side of the law, the sight ends with a terrifying trumpet and the warning words. On the side of grace, the scene ends with a sympathizing Mediator and a vindicating speaking. After looking at such a contrast, who would be so foolish to leave the side of grace and turn to the side of the law? All eight things on the side of grace are not only heavenly or spiritual but also eternal. Hence, even when

the heaven will be shaken (v. 26), these eight things, which are eternal, will still remain (v. 27).

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIFTY-FOUR

AN UNSHAKABLE KINGDOM

In this message we come to a very sober matter--the unshakable kingdom (12:25-29). The kingdom which we are receiving is unshakable (v. 28). Since this kingdom is unshakable, it is neither of the earth nor of the heavens. This is a strong word. Because we have such a doctrinal mind, we may argue with this statement, saying, "What about the kingdom of heaven? Doesn't the Bible speak of this?" Yes, the New Testament does speak of the kingdom of the heavens, but it also says that heaven will be shaken (v. 26; Hag. 2:6). That heaven will be shaken proves that the kingdom which we are receiving is not of heaven. Although there seems to be a contradiction between the terms unshakable kingdom and the kingdom of the heavens, later on we shall see that there is actually no contradiction here.

I. FOR THE OLD COVENANT, THE EARTH BEING SHAKEN AS A WARNING UPON EARTH

For the old covenant, the earth was shaken as a warning upon earth (vv. 25-26; Exo. 19:18). When the old covenant was given at Mount Sinai, the earth was shaken. That shaking was a warning to the people on earth.

II. FOR THE NEW COVENANT, NOT ONLY THE EARTH BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN TO BE SHAKEN AS A WARNING FROM HEAVEN

One day, for the new covenant, not only the earth but also the heaven will be shaken as a warning from heaven. This is according to the word in Haggai 2:6.

III. ONLY THE LORD AND THE THINGS COMING OUT OF HIM REMAINING FOREVER

The earth and the heavens are shakable. Only the Lord and the things that come out of Him will remain forever (v. 27; 1:11; 13:8). This means that the kingdom which we are receiving has come out of the Lord Himself. Hebrews 1:11, speaking of the heavens and the earth says, "They shall perish, but You remain; and they all shall become old as a garment."

The kingdom is actually the Lord Himself as the kingship within us. We have seen that faith is the Lord Himself as the believing element within us. Now, in the same principle, the kingdom is the Lord Himself as the kingship. As a help in realizing this matter, let us read Daniel 2:34 and 35. "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." The stone cut without hands is the heavenly Christ who was cut on the cross without human hands. Verse 44, referring to the toes of the image, says, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Verse 45 also speaks of the stone, saying, "The stone was cut out of the mountain without hands" and "it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold." These verses indicate that the stone, which is Christ, will eventually become a great mountain filling the whole earth. This great mountain is the coming kingdom. Hence, the unshakable kingdom which we are receiving is Christ with His enlargement.

IV. THE KINGDOM, COMING OUT OF THE LORD, BEING UNSHAKABLE

A. We Having Repented for the Kingdom

The gospel which the New Testament has preached to us is the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17, 23; 10:7; 24:14). We repented for the kingdom (Matt. 3:2). Perhaps when we were saved, we did not hear such a clear gospel. At that time, we were afraid of going to hell and desired to go to heaven. Thus, we repented for heaven. This is the preaching of the wrong gospel, for repentance is not for heaven but for the kingdom.

B. We Having Been Reborn into the Kingdom

We have been reborn, regenerated, into the kingdom. In John 3:5 the Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Recovery Version). Many of us were wrongly told that regeneration is for going to heaven. Here we see clearly that regeneration is for entering into the kingdom of God.

C. We Having Been Translated into the Kingdom

Colossians 1:13 says, "Who hath delivered us from the authority of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love" (Gk.). This verse reveals that we have been translated out of one kingdom, Satan's kingdom of darkness, into another kingdom, the kingdom of the Son of God's love.

D. The Church Life Being the Kingdom of God Today

In the church, we are living in the kingdom of God today. Romans 14:17 is a strong proof that today's church life is the kingdom: "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Recovery Version). Revelation 1:9 also proves that

we are in the kingdom of God today: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." When John wrote the book of Revelation, he was already in the kingdom of God. These two verses are a strong proof that the church today is the kingdom. However, as we shall see, what we are in now in the church today is the kingdom in its reality, whereas the kingdom in its manifestation will come with Christ's return in the future.

V. THE REALITY AND MANIFESTATION OF THE KINGDOM

If we would understand the New Testament truths regarding the kingdom, we must realize the two main aspects of the kingdom--the aspect of its reality and the aspect of its manifestation. In the church today, we do not have the kingdom in manifestation; we have the kingdom in reality. According to the outward appearance, men cannot see the kingdom in the church. Nevertheless, the kingdom is a reality among us.

A. The Reality of the Kingdom Being an Exercise and Discipline in the Church Today

The reality of the kingdom, the kingdom in its reality, is an exercise and discipline for us in the church today (Matt. 5:3, 10, 20; 7:21). Suppose you purchase a hamburger at a stand and the cashier gives you too much change. If you are exercised and are ruled by the kingdom, you will return this extra change immediately. This is an experience of the rule of the reality of the kingdom, which is both an exercise and a discipline.

The situation of today's Christianity is very poor, for many Christians have been drugged, thinking that everything is of grace and that there is no need for training, exercise, or discipline. But we realize that we must uplift the standard of the church life through the

discipline and exercise of the reality of the kingdom. Through the years, I have seen the Lord's grace working in so many of us. I thank the Lord that there has been a great improvement in His recovery. Nevertheless, we must uplift the standard even higher. If we do this, our cheering angels will be very happy, for they will see a group of believers who are quite serious regarding God's eternal purpose. How we need the discipline for the kingdom today!

B. The Manifestation of the Kingdom Being a Reward and an Enjoyment in the Millennial Kingdom in the Coming Age

The manifestation of the kingdom, the kingdom in its manifestation, will be a reward and an enjoyment to us in the millennial kingdom in the coming age (Matt. 16:27; 25:21, 23). Today, in the reality of the kingdom, we have the exercise and the discipline. In the coming age, in the manifestation of the kingdom, we shall have a reward and an enjoyment. If we read Matthew 16:27 in its context, we shall see that the Lord's coming to reward every man according to his work is related to the manifestation of the kingdom. In Matthew 25:21 and 23, the Lord says to His faithful servants, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." To enter into the joy of the Lord is to be in the manifestation of the kingdom during the thousand years.

C. Taking the Spirit's Exercise and God's Discipline Today and Receiving the Lord's Reward and Entering into the Sabbath Rest in the Coming Age

If we take the Spirit's exercise and God's discipline in the reality of the kingdom today, we shall receive the Lord's reward and enter into the enjoyment of the coming Sabbath rest (4:9) in the manifestation of the kingdom in the coming age. If we do not accept the Spirit's exercise and

God's discipline today, we shall miss the coming kingdom in its manifestation as a reward. We shall not be rewarded with the manifestation of the kingdom at the Lord's coming back; we shall have no right to enter into the glory of the kingdom to participate in Christ's reign in the millennial kingdom; and we shall lose our birthright to inherit the earth in the coming age, to be the royal priests serving God and Christ in His manifested glory, and to be the co-kings with Christ ruling over all the nations with His divine authority (Rev. 20:4, 6).

D. Missing the Coming Kingdom and Losing our Birthright in the Coming Age Meaning that We Shall Lose the Reward

To miss the coming kingdom and to lose our birthright in the coming age does not mean that we shall perish, but that we shall lose the reward. Although we may lose the reward, we shall never lose our salvation (1 Cor. 3:14-15). Our salvation is secured forever. But whether or not we receive the reward and the birthright in the manifestation of the kingdom depends upon our exercise today.

E. The Warnings in Hebrews Referring to the Suffering of the Loss of the Kingdom Reward and to Being Punished by God

As we have seen, the loss of the reward in the coming kingdom, the forfeiture of our birthright, does not mean that we shall perish. It means that we shall lose the reward and suffer loss, but still "be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:14-15, Gk.). This is the basic concept upon which all the five warnings of this book are given and with which they all are pervaded (2:3; 4:1-11; 6:8; 10:27, 29-31; 12:25). All the negative points of these warnings are related to suffering the loss of the reward in the coming kingdom and to being punished by God, whereas all the positive points are related to the reward and enjoyment of the kingdom. All the seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3

are concluded with the same concept--the reward of the kingdom or the loss of it. Only with this concept can the word in Matthew 5:20; 7:21-23; 16:24-27; 19:23-30; 24:46-51; 25:11-13, 21, 23, 26-30; Luke 12:42-48; 19:17, 19, 22-27; Romans 14:10, 12; 1 Corinthians 3:8, 13-15; 4:5; 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; Hebrews 2:3; 4:1, 9, 11; 6:4-8; 10:26-31, 35-39; 12:16-17, 28-29; Revelation 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-27; 3:4-5, 11-12, 20; and 22:12 be rightly understood and properly applied. Apart from this concept, the interpretation of these verses will fall either into the extreme objectiveness of the Calvinist school, or the extreme subjectiveness of the Arminian school. Neither of these schools has seen the reward of the kingdom, and even the more they have not seen the suffering of the loss of the kingdom reward. Hence, both consider all the negative points in these verses as perdition. The Calvinist school, believing in eternal salvation (that is, once a person is saved, he shall never perish), refers all these negative points to the perdition of false believers; while the Arminian school, believing that a saved person shall perish if he falls, applies them to the perdition of fallen saved persons. But the complete revelation of the Bible refers these negative points to the suffering of the loss of the kingdom reward. Salvation is eternal: once we get it, we shall never lose it (John 10:28-29). But we may suffer the loss of the kingdom reward, even though we still shall be saved (1 Cor. 3:8, 14-15). All the warnings in Hebrews do not refer to the loss of eternal salvation, but to the loss of the kingdom reward. The Hebrew believers had received the kingdom, but they would have lost the reward in the manifestation of the kingdom if they shrank back from the grace of God, from God's new covenant way. This was the main concern of the writer's warning regarding the staggering Hebrew believers.

Some Christian teachers say that the slothful servant in Matthew 25 is a false servant. But this is altogether illogical. Although one of your children may be slothful, this does not mean that he is false. Since some Christian teachers do not see the matter of the kingdom reward, they

must say that the slothful servant is a false servant. On the contrary, some say that the slothful servant is a real servant who has fallen away and lost his salvation.

We have seen that God's original intention was to have a corporate man to express Him with His image, to represent Him with His dominion, and to take possession of the earth. This is the proper human living. Because man fell from God's original intention, God came in to redeem and save us. This is God's salvation, in which there is the birthright having three aspects: being the priests to express God with His image, being the kings to represent God with His dominion, and taking full possession of the lost earth for God's eternal purpose. If we live in this birthright, we shall spontaneously be in the reality of the kingdom of God, for the reality of the kingdom of God is the living out of the birthright, the realization of the full birthright. Since not all Christians are willing to cooperate with God in this matter, He, in His wisdom, has decided to make the birthright a reward. If we take grace, enter into the Holy of Holies, and cooperate with God, we shall certainly live out the birthright. Then whatever we live out will be the reality of the kingdom today. The reality which we are living out today will become our reward in the manifestation of the kingdom. This is the fulfillment of God's original intention. It is also our perfection, glorification, and the gaining of our soul in the coming age. As a result, we shall have the proper human living with an uplifted and resurrected humanity. This is the crucial focus of the entire Bible, and the Bible is very consistent about it. How can all this be worked out? Only by our turning to the spirit, entering into the Holy of Holies, experiencing Christ in all His riches, and allowing the law of life to take us from one stage of glory to another as it permeates us, saturates us, and conforms us to His image.

Hebrews 12:29 says, "Our God is also a consuming fire." God is holy. Holiness is His nature. Whatever does not correspond with His holy nature, He, as the consuming fire, will consume. If the Hebrew believers had turned

aside to Judaism, which was common (unholy) in the sight of God, it would have made them unholy, and the holy God, as the consuming fire, would have consumed them. God is not only righteous but also holy. To satisfy God's righteousness we need to be justified through the redemption of Christ. To meet the demands of His holiness we need to be sanctified, to be made holy, by the heavenly, present, and living Christ. Romans stresses the matter of justification (Rom. 3:24) for God's righteousness (Rom. 3:25-26), whereas Hebrews emphasizes the matter of sanctification (2:11; 10:10, 14, 29; 13:12) for God's holiness (12:14). For this, the Hebrew believers had to separate themselves from unholy Judaism unto the holy God who has fully expressed Himself in the Son under the new covenant; otherwise, they would have defiled themselves with their old, profane religion and suffered the holy God as the consuming fire. That would have been "fearful" (10:31)! No wonder Paul was very much concerned about "the terror [fear] of the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:11).

The focal point of the book of Hebrews is to bring us into the holy nature of God. If we do not cooperate with God in this, we shall break His administration. To break God's administration is a governmental matter. Breaking God's law is not as serious as breaking His government. God has revealed that if we do not cooperate with Him in His administrative economy but rather break His government, He will punish us. This means that we shall lose the kingdom reward on the positive side and suffer punishment on the negative side. In Hebrews 10 and 12 we see the way, the race, and the pathway that we must take, run on, and pass through. In these chapters we also see the punishment, the reward, and the kingdom. These three things are crucial aspects of the basic concept in the composition of this book.

No other book in the New Testament reveals the focal point of God's economy as clearly as the book of Hebrews does, for no other book points us to the Holy of Holies and to the law of life in the ark. Although Romans 8:2 does

mention the law of the Spirit of life, Hebrews covers the law of life much more thoroughly than Romans does. The writer of Hebrews warns us to take the revelation of God's economy as found in this book. If we take it, we shall receive a reward in the manifestation of the kingdom. If we do not take it, we shall suffer some punishment due to our breaking of God's administrative economy. Those who do not have the substantiating sense, or who fail to exercise it, cannot see this. While we are so serious and sober about this matter, many other Christians are not. Under the enlightening of the heavenly revelation we have been seeing in these messages, we must be serious and sober about running the race on the straight paths. The way we run today will determine our future destiny.

Although we are concerned about our future destiny, we must have the grace to say to the Lord, "Lord, by Your grace I do not care for my destiny--I care for Your economy. You take care of my destiny, and I'll take care of Your economy. Lord, I want to cooperate with You, not for the sake of my future destiny, but for the sake of Your economy today. I want to see that Your economy, which has not been carried out through the centuries, will be fulfilled in these days." We all need to have such a clear vision and be brought on so that God's purpose might be fulfilled among us. God wants to bring a group of His sincere seekers into the Holy of Holies that they might experience the working of the law of life and thus become the corporate reproduction of the standard model, His Firstborn Son. The Lord's coming back depends upon this corporate reproduction. It is impossible for the Lord to come back until this has been accomplished. His having the reproduction of the standard model depends upon the working of the law of life within us. As we have seen, the law of life is neither in the outer court nor in the Holy Place; it is in the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies. Therefore, we must enter into the Holy of Holies, plunge into the ark of testimony, and experience the law of life. We know where the law of life is--it is in our spirit. Now we

just need to say, "Lord, by Your mercy and grace, I am here to cooperate with You. I am ready for You to go on. Lord, do everything You can and whatever You like. I don't care for my future destiny. I only care for Your recovery in today's economy, for the proper recovery of the church life. Lord, may all Your seekers be brought into this way for the fulfillment of Your will!" This is the Lord's recovery in His economy today.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIFTY-FIVE

TEN PRACTICAL VIRTUES FOR THE CHURCH LIFE

Apparently, the book of Hebrews does not touch the matter of the church. Actually, it is absolutely for the church, because the church is the consummation of God's economy. In Hebrews 2 we clearly see that the resurrected Christ with His uplifted humanity is for the church. According to 2:12, after His resurrection Christ came back to His brothers and, in the midst of the church, He sang hymns of praise unto the Father. In this verse the church is clearly and definitely mentioned in a very deep way. By this we see that Hebrews is not only a book on Christ; it is a book on Christ for the church.

Hebrews 10:25 says not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. As we have pointed out, for the Hebrew believers to forsake the assembling of themselves together with the saints meant that they were forsaking the new covenant way. When the believers assembled themselves together in ancient times, that assembly was the practical and actual church.

As we have seen, in 12:18-24, we have a contrast between the sight of the old covenant and the scene of the new covenant. In the scene of the new covenant, we see Mount Zion, God's holy city, the myriads of celebrating angels, and the church of the firstborn ones. The church is the center of this scene. After the mention of the church, we have the justifying God, the justified spirits of the ancient saints, and Jesus, the Mediator of the better covenant with His precious blood that speaks better than that of Abel. By this we can see that the church is the focus of the scenery of the new covenant.

In this message we come to chapter thirteen. Although

the word church is not found in this chapter, the entire chapter is concerned with the church life. The experiences of Christ (vv. 8-15) and the ten practical virtues (vv. 1-7, 16-19) covered here are for the church. Nearly everything mentioned in verses 1 through 7 and 16 through 19, such as brotherly love and hospitality, is for the church life, not just for the Christian life. If we would have the proper church life, we need all ten of these virtues. Let us now consider each of them.

I. BROTHERLY LOVE

Verse 1 says, "Let brotherly love continue." No one can say that brotherly love is not for the church life. If we were not in the church life, we would not need brotherly love, for we would be far away from one another and would not need to love one another. But because we have been flocked together, we need brotherly love to continue.

Every local church passes through a honeymoon period. I believe that all the churches in the United States and Canada have passed through their honeymoon. After the honeymoon is over, every newly married couple will eventually have a collision. In order to stay married, we must have the marriage love. In the church we need brotherly love, and in our families we need marriage love.

First Corinthians 13:13 says, "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (Gk.) According to this verse, love is the greatest virtue. It is also the most excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31, Gk.). The most excellent way is not the way of gifts or teachings but the way of love. Love is the most excellent way because it is the expression of life (1 Cor. 13:1). Love is just life appearing in another form. In 1 Corinthians 8:1, Paul says, "Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up" (Gk.). If we would be built together, we must have brotherly love.

II. HOSPITALITY

Verse 2 says, "Do not be forgetful of hospitality, for through this some have entertained angels without knowing it." How we need hospitality in the church life in

the Lord's recovery today. No one can estimate how much hospitality has built up the Lord's testimony since the beginning of the Lord's recovery in this country. Hospitality truly edifies. It brings much new blood into the fellowship of the Body. How we thank the Lord for this! In Romans 12:13 we are told to pursue hospitality, and in 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8, and 1 Peter 4:9 (Gk.) we are admonished to be hospitable. Among us, brotherly love should continue and hospitality should not be forgotten.

III. REMEMBERING THE SUFFERING MEMBERS

Verse 3 says, "Remember the prisoners as bound with them, and those who are ill-treated as being yourselves also in the body." Remembering the suffering members is undoubtedly for the church life. If we remember the suffering members, it means that we are living in the Body and have the sense of the Body. When one member suffers, all the members sense it and suffer with him (1 Cor. 12:26). This is the Body life. Hence, to remember the suffering ones is a function in the Body, in the church life.

IV. HOLDING MARRIAGE IN HONOR

Verse 4 says, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and the bed undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge." Apparently this is unrelated to the church life. However, marriage is a very important factor in the church life. Whether a church is sound and healthy or loses its element and essence is very much dependent upon the marriage life. Do not consider the matter of marriage to be a light thing. We must hold it in honor. This means that we must possess our body, our vessel, in sanctification and honor (1 Thes. 4:3-4), that "no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter" (1 Thes. 4:6). In the church life, the brothers and sisters must contact one another in a holy way. This means that we honor our marriage and others' marriage. To honor marriage means to possess our body in sanctification and honor and to flee fornication.

In the church life, contacts between the brothers and sisters are unavoidable. Hence, for our protection from

falling into defilement, we must hold marriage in honor and not behave loosely. This is a matter which seriously affects our birthright in God's economy. Reuben lost it due to his defilement (Gen. 49:3-4; 1 Chron. 5:1), and Joseph received it because of his purity (1 Chron. 5:1; Gen. 39:7-12). God will judge fornicators and adulterers, and the church also must judge them (1 Cor. 5:1-2, 11-13). Nothing damages the saints and the church life so much as this defilement.

Verse 4 says that God will judge the fornicators and adulterers. Hebrews is a book concerning God's holiness. The holy God will never tolerate any defilement among us. He will judge His people (10:30; 12:23).

V. WITHOUT LOVE OF MONEY

Verse 5 says, "Let your way of life be without love of money, being satisfied with your circumstances." Surely money-lovers cannot enter into the reality of the church life. Every money-lover is a Judas, a traitor, betraying the Lord, the Lord's testimony, and the church life. It is impossible for such a person to live the church life.

Verse 5 also tells us to be satisfied with our circumstances, for the Lord has said, "I will by no means cease to uphold you, neither by any means will I forsake you." We must be satisfied with whatever we have and with whatever circumstances we are in, knowing that we have the Lord and that we can trust in Him for our living. We should always be satisfied with our circumstances that we may not be distracted from the church life by mammon. Since we have the Lord as our helper, we should be content and at peace that we may be fully kept in the enjoyment of the church life.

By the Lord's mercy and grace, I, an old man, can give a strong word of testimony to the young people. I can assure you that you have no need to worry about your living. Our God is our Father, and He knows all we need. I can still remember the day when the Lord forced me to give up my job for His ministry. I had been struggling with the Lord about this for approximately three weeks. On that last day,

August 23, 1933, I went to the Lord at midnight Before that time, I had received from Him the word in Matthew 6:33, which says that if we seek God's kingdom and righteousness, the Lord will add to us whatever we need for our daily living. That night I went to the Lord to make a thorough deal with Him about whether it was His will that I leave my job for the sake of full-time ministry. But when I went to Him, He did not give me time to pray. He just rebuked me, telling me that He had already given me a word from Matthew 6. The Lord said, "If you believe it, take it. If you don't believe it, that's all." Suddenly I had the feeling that the Lord had left me and that His presence was gone. I was unable to pray any further. I could not even say, "In the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen." As I was kneeling there, I wept and said, "Okay, Lord, I take Your word." From that day until now, I have never lacked anything. The Lord knows our need. We may have the peace to sacrifice everything for the Lord and for the church life, not worrying about our living. As long as we enter within the veil and go outside the camp, the Lord will take care of our needs. He is our Helper and He never forsakes us. Our responsibility is to live in the Holy of Holies. Our life is in Him, and our living is in His hands. Praise Him that He is so living and real!

VI. REMEMBERING THE MINISTERS OF THE WORD OF GOD

Verse 7 says, "Remember the ones leading you, who have spoken to you the word of God, and considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith." This is essential in the church life. Verse 7 is a continuation of verses 5 and 6. Their "manner of life" here must refer to the way of life pursued by those ministers of the word of God--without love of money and being satisfied with their circumstances. Their "faith" must refer to the fact that they trusted in the Lord, who is their Helper, for their living. The word which they ministered and the life which they lived should all be Christ, and their faith should be the faith in Christ, of which Christ is both the Author and

Perfecter (12:2). Such a manner of life and such a faith are surely worthy of imitation by the believers.

The ministers of the word of God should have a manner of life that issues in an example of faith for the church members, the receivers of the word of God, to imitate. Then the church members will not only receive the word they minister, but also imitate their faith expressed in their manner of life. Their manner of life should be that of trusting in the Lord for all their needs. How different this is from the worldly manner of life! As the believers consider the issue of the manner of life of those who minister the word of God to them, they will be influenced to imitate their faith in God.

VII. DOING GOOD

Verse 16 says, "Do not be forgetful doing good and sharing with others, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased." This verse speaks of doing good. This is not the good of good and evil; it is the good in God's economy. Doing good according to God's economy, which is a sacrifice well-pleasing to God, is according to God's working within us (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13), that is, according to the working of the law of life. Our outward doing good must be according to the inward working of the law of life.

VIII. SHARING WITH OTHERS

Verse 16 also speaks of sharing with others. This is necessary for a proper church life. It is really improper if in the church some needy saints are not well cared for. This means that the sharing with others is absent or inadequate. Sharing with others is also a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. Its purpose is to supply the want of the needy saints for equality (2 Cor. 8:14-15). Those who have more than they need should share with those who have less than they need. When those who have more share with those who have less, there will be an equality among us. This is similar to the gathering of manna by the children of Israel in the wilderness. In those days, "He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered

little had no lack" (2 Cor. 8:15; Exo. 16:18). As a result, there was equality among the children of Israel.

IX. OBEYING THE LEADING ONES AND SUBMITTING TO THEM

Verse 17 says, "Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will give account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable to you." I have heard of many so-called spiritual people who say that as long as we have the Spirit, we all are leading ones and we do not need anyone to lead us. They say that it is wrong to have leaders among us. According to them, having leading ones means to have an organization with a hierarchy and a pope. We must be balanced in this matter. We thank the Lord that in His recovery during the past fifty years there have always been the proper leading ones among the churches for the keeping of the order in God's house.

In every household there are, in addition to the parents, the older brothers and sisters. Suppose there are six children in a family. Spontaneously, each one of them knows his order. When the oldest brother speaks, all the others listen to him. But if the third brother would presume to be the oldest brother, all the others would refuse to listen to him. If we would maintain a good order in the house of God, we must have the leading ones, and all the saints must obey them and submit to them. This is necessary for the building up of the church.

This matter of leadership, however, should not be too official. For example, in a family there is no need for the oldest child to say, "I am the number one child, and you all must realize that I am the leader of the children in this family. Since I have this position, I am God's deputy authority." I am sorry that the leaders of many Christian groups have utilized the book, *Spiritual Authority*, written by Brother Nee. They have used this book to build up their empire, saying, "I am the spiritual authority here. According to Watchman Nee's book, you all must listen to me." Some time ago, three young men came from a certain

place to visit the elders of the church in Anaheim. They rebuked the elders saying, "Are you elders? You don't know how to be elders. We are elders." These young men, all of whom were in their early twenties, were just boy elders, having been established by some self-appointed king. They were not true elders; they were actors.

If a brother is truly an elder, everyone will realize it, and he will have no need to assume any authority. If you are the oldest child in a family, all the other children realize this. There is no need to exercise yourself to assume authority. Rather, you should take loving care of your younger brothers and sisters. Likewise, the elders in the churches should not assume authority but take loving care of the saints. Elders, forget your authority. On their side, the saints must obey you and submit themselves to you. On your side, however, you should not assume authority. Nothing is uglier than assuming authority. We should simply be what we are without assuming anything. Nevertheless, in the house of God and for the building up of the Body of Christ, we must have a beautiful order among us.

X. PRAYING FOR THE APOSTLES

Verses 18 and 19 say, "Pray for us, for we are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring in all things to conduct ourselves rightly. And I beseech you much more to do this that I may be restored to you more quickly." Praying for the apostles is also an aspect of the church life. To pray for the apostles is not to pray in a personal and private way; it is to pray for the ministry and to participate in the Lord's move for the fulfilling of God's purpose. I thank God for the prayer meetings in Anaheim. Every week we spend a long time praying for the Lord's move on earth and for the fulfilling of His purpose.

As we consider these ten virtues, we see that they are all necessary for the church life and should be practiced among us.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIFTY-SIX

THE EXPERIENCES OF CHRIST FOR THE CHURCH LIFE

In this message we come to the experiences of Christ for the church life (13:8-15). Before I come to this matter, however, I am burdened to say a further word about the way, the race, and the paths, particularly about the one race becoming the many paths.

By looking at the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle, we can see how Christ is the way and the race, and how the one race becomes many paths. As we have seen, the altar and the laver are in the outer court; the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar are in the Holy Place; and the ark, containing the golden pot, the budding rod, and the table of the testimony, is in the Holy of Holies. The altar, laver, incense altar, and ark form a line, and the showbread table and the lampstand form an intersecting line. These two lines form a cross. Each of these items signifies an aspect of Christ.

Consider the experience of a sinner who comes to Christ. Firstly, he comes to the altar where he kneels down, makes confession, and takes Christ as his substitute, Redeemer, and Savior. Here at the altar he begins to enjoy Christ. After experiencing Christ at the altar, he goes to the laver, which signifies that the Redeemer has become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17), and there he experiences the washing of the living water. The washing of the water in the laver is different from the washing of the blood at the altar. The blood at the altar washes away our sins; the water of the laver washes away the earthly dirt.

While many Christians go back and forth between the

altar and the laver, the laver and the altar, we need to take a straight path into the Holy Place. Once we are in the Holy Place, we make a right turn to the showbread table where we enjoy Christ as the bread of life. Before coming into the church, we never heard that Christ was eatable. But the Lord Jesus said, "I am the bread of life," and "He who eats Me shall also live because of Me" (John 6:48, 57, Recovery Version). Now, after coming into the church, we have been helped to eat Christ, to feed on Him, and even to masticate Him. After feeding on Christ at the showbread table, we must make an about-face and take a straight path to the lampstand. Here at the lampstand we are enlightened by the light of life (Jn. 1:4), that is, by the light which comes from feeding on Christ. At the lampstand we make another about-face to the central line, and then make a left turn and go to the incense altar to experience Christ in resurrection as the sweet fragrance by which we are accepted of God. This experience of the incense altar will then usher us directly into the Holy of Holies. In the tabernacle we can see several paths: the path from the cross to the laver, from the laver to the show-bread table, from the showbread table to the lampstand, from the lampstand to the incense altar, and from the incense altar to the ark in the Holy of Holies. Once we are in the Holy of Holies, we are in the shekinah glory. But we should not stop there. We must proceed even further and experience all the contents of the ark, feeding upon Christ as the hidden manna, partaking of Him as the budding rod, and experiencing the working of the law of life. As we have seen, the working of the law of life will make us the corporate reproduction of God's standard model for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. All the paths from the altar in the outer court to the ark in the Holy of Holies are the way for us to have the fulfillment of God's economy and the enjoyment of the birthright. Ultimately, it is the way into perfection, glorification, and the full taste of God. Everything we need is on this way.

Once we are on this way, we should not linger or

hesitate. We must run the race, forgetting Judaism, Christianity, and every other religion. As soon as we start to run on the way, it becomes a race composed of many paths. The path from the altar to the laver, from the laver to the showbread table, from the showbread table to the lampstand, from the lampstand to the incense altar, and from the incense altar to the ark--these are the paths which compose God's unique way.

Why do we need so many turns in Christ as the way? Because we need the cross to eliminate all the negative things in us. I have already pointed out that the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle forms the symbol of the cross. The way in Christ is in the shape of a cross. In fact, the way even is the cross. When we begin at the altar in the outer court, we are filled with many negative things, such as sin, the world, the flesh, lusts, and Satan. But as we move along the paths, making all the turns, these negative things are crossed out. Once we reach the ark in the Holy of Holies we are a purified person. I say again that all the negative things are crossed out by the turns which form the paths. What remains after making all these turns is a resurrected, uplifted humanity which is suitable to be mingled with divinity. How marvelous this is! Only God could have designed it.

Now we may come to the experiences of Christ in 13:8-15. Since so many things have been covered in the first twelve chapters of Hebrews, why does the writer include the experiences of Christ found in chapter thirteen? Because the Judaizers were using a certain aspect of their religious ceremonies--the eating of the festival food--to attract the Hebrew believers. According to the Old Testament, the children of Israel came to Jerusalem three times a year for the worship of God in their annual feasts, coming together to feast for several days. In these feasts they ate the festival food. This eating together, which was a very attractive thing, is the background of verse 9, which says, "Do not be carried away with various and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be confirmed by

grace, not by foods, in which those who walked were not profited." The word "food" mentioned here is in contrast with "grace" and refers to the foods of the ceremonial observances of the old covenant (9:10; Col. 2:16) which the Judaizers used in their attempts to carry away the Hebrew believers from the enjoyment of grace, which is the participation in Christ in the new covenant.

At the time of their festivals, all the Israelites were excited, much more excited than Americans and Europeans are at Christmas time. It was very difficult for the seekers of Christ to stay away from such a charming attraction. The Judaizers might have come to the Hebrew believers, saying, "In a few days the feast of tabernacles will begin. If you don't go, you will lose all the enjoyment. Where will you be while we are singing, dwelling together, and enjoying all the riches of the good land? You will be assembling with that church in a little house. What will you have to eat there? If you go there, you will lose the right to kill the sacrifices for your eating. If you want to eat, you must go with us to the temple. But you have given up our precious feast. This means that you so-called Christians have lost all this enjoyment." If you were a Jew and had been there at the time, could you have withstood this attraction? Most of us would have been unable to resist. Then a fellow believer might have come to the Hebrew Christians, saying, "Don't go back to the temple. If you do, you will fall away from the grace of God. Don't listen to the strange teachings about the food in our old religion. Christ is the reality. He is everything." In the midst of such a dilemma, the Hebrew believers did not know what to do. Because of this, the writer gave them a strong word in chapter thirteen.

I. CHRIST BEING UNCHANGEABLE, REMAINING THE SAME FOREVER

Verse 8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." The Christ, who is the word which the ministers of the word of God in verse 7 preached and

taught, who is the life which they lived, and who is the Author and Perfecter of their faith, is perpetual, unchangeable, and unchanging. He remains the same forever (1:11-12). The writer seemed to be telling the Hebrew believers, "Brothers, God sent His messengers to preach to you the word of Christ. Christ was not only the word they preached, but the very life by which they lived. This Christ is always the same. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If you accepted Him as the Christ in the past, you should not change your concept now due to the strange teachings about eating. Do not sell your birthright in Christ for one meal of this ceremonial eating. If you had not received Christ, I would not speak to you this way. But you have received the unchangeable Christ. Since He does not change, you should not change either. Do not be distracted by the strange teachings about ceremonial eating. That eating means nothing." Hebrews is a deep book. We cannot understand it according to the black and white letters. If we would understand chapter thirteen, we must plunge into the depths of this book.

II. HOLDING ON TO THE UNCHANGEABLE CHRIST FOR A TRUE AND STEADFAST CHURCH LIFE

Verse 9 mentions "various and strange teachings." For a true and steadfast church life, we must hold on to the unchangeable Christ and not be carried away with various and strange teachings used by Satan to cause dissension and even division in the church. Because of the dissension and division caused by strange teachings, the apostle charged people "not to teach differently" (1 Tim. 1:3, Gk.). These various and strange teachings must have been taught by the Judaizers at that time. The writer warned the Hebrew believers not to let the teachings carry them away from the church life under the new covenant. There must not be "another Jesus," "another gospel," preached in the church (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:8-9). For a true and steadfast church life, we must hold on to the Christ who is

the same yesterday, today, and forever, and not be carried away with various and strange teachings.

III. BEING CONFIRMED BY GRACE TO REMAIN IN THE NEW COVENANT TO ENJOY CHRIST AS GRACE

As the Judaizers used the foods of their ceremonial observances of the old covenant to distract the Hebrew believers, so the writer of this book charges the believers to be confirmed by grace. At that time, to be confirmed by grace was to remain in the new covenant to enjoy Christ as grace (Gal. 5:4) and not to be carried away to Judaism to participate in the eating of foods in the Jewish religious ceremonies.

Many dear ones have seen the Lord's recovery, but due to the matter of Christmas, they sold their birthright. Their Christmas celebration was like the religious meals in Judaism. Many American and European Christians find it difficult to give up Santa Claus and Christmas trees. The teachings about Christmas trees, Santa Claus, and stockings are some of today's various and strange teachings. A number of saints in the western world have been distracted from the Lord's recovery by these very things. If we would take away these things, many of the children would forsake the church, and many grandparents would be unhappy, saying, "Who is this preacher who comes to our country to take away Christmas, Santa Claus, and the Christmas stockings?" Others have said, "We know that the Lord's recovery is the way, but because our children cannot give up Christmas, we cannot take this way." In principle, they have been drawn away by today's religious attractions as the Hebrew believers were by the festival foods in the first century.

IV. THE CROSS BEING OUR ALTAR ON WHICH CHRIST OFFERED HIMSELF AS THE SIN OFFERING

Verse 10 says, "We have an altar, from which they have

no right to eat who serve the tabernacle." This altar must be the cross on which the Lord Jesus offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins (10:12). According to the regulations regarding the offerings in the Old Testament, the sacrifice for sin, or sin offering, whose blood was brought into the Holy of Holies or Holy Place for atonement, afforded nothing for the offering priest or the offerer to eat. The entire offering was burnt (Lev. 4:2-12; 16:27; 6:30). Hence, from the altar of the sin offering (which in the fulfillment of the New Testament is the Lord's cross) those who served the tabernacle have no right to eat. Verse 10 is a strong argument against the food used by the Judaizers in their strange teaching, attempting to carry away the new covenant believers from the enjoyment of Christ. As we have seen, their emphasis was on the food which they enjoyed in their religious services. But the writer of this book argues that in the sin offering, the basic offering for their yearly atonement (Lev. 16), there was nothing for anyone to eat. With the sin offering it is not a matter of eating, but of receiving its efficacy. Now the real sin offering is Christ, who has offered Himself to God for our sins and accomplished full redemption for us that we might be brought into the enjoyment of God's grace in Him under the new covenant. What we need today is not to eat the foods of the old covenant services, but to receive the efficacy of Christ's offering and follow Him in the new covenant grace outside the camp, outside the Jewish religion.

In this book Christ is presented only as the sin offering, not as any other offering. Since our problem with God is basically a problem of sin, the sin offering is the basic and most crucial of all the offerings. If our problem of sin had not been solved, our problem with God would still remain. Several times in this book we are told that Christ offered Himself (7:27; 9:14), but each time we see that Christ offered Himself as the sin offering. Thus, the argument in chapter thirteen is this: however much the Hebrew Christians went to the festivals to eat the ceremonial meals, they could not eat of the sin offering. But now they

enjoy Christ as the sin offering. Of this offering there was nothing for those in Judaism to eat. Furthermore, verse 11 says, "The bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the Holy of Holies by the high priest concerning sin, are burned outside the camp." Christ's body was carried outside the gate. There He suffered death and, in a sense, was burned. As the sin offering, Christ is not for food but for sacrifice outside the gate.

V. CHRIST'S BODY SUFFERING THE DEATH OF THE CROSS OUTSIDE THE GATE AND HIS BLOOD BEING BROUGHT INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES FOR OUR SANCTIFICATION

Verse 12 says, "Wherefore also Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate." The blood of the sin offering being brought into the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement to make atonement for the people and its body being burnt outside the camp (Lev. 16:1416, 27) typify the blood of Christ, the real sin offering, being brought into the true Holy of Holies to accomplish redemption for us and His body being sacrificed for us outside the gate of the city of Jerusalem.

Christ's body suffered the death of the cross outside the gate, and His blood was brought into the Holy of Holies for our sanctification (vv. 11-12). This book unveils that God's heavenly calling is to make us a heavenly people (3:1), a people who are sanctified unto God. Christ is the Sanctifier (2:11). He suffered the death of the cross, shed His blood on it, and entered the Holy of Holies with His blood (9:12) that He might be able to do the sanctifying work by the heavenly ministry (8:2, 6) of His heavenly priesthood (7:26), and that we might enter "within the veil" by His blood to participate in Him as the heavenly Sanctifier. By participating in Him in this way, we shall be enabled to follow Him outside the camp by the sanctifying pathway of the cross.

VI. GOING FORTH TO HIM "OUTSIDE THE CAMP" BEARING HIS REPROACH TO FOLLOW HIM IN THE SANCTIFYING PATHWAY OF THE CROSS

The Lord's blood, through which He entered into the Holy of Holies (9:12), has opened a new and living way for us to enter "within the veil" to enjoy Him in the heavens as the glorified One (10:9-20); and His body, which was sacrificed for us on the cross, cut the narrow way of the cross for us to go outside the camp to follow Him on earth as the suffering One. Verse 13 says, "Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach." If we would be real Christians, we must experience Christ, not in the way of eating a religious meal, but in the way of going outside the camp to bear His reproach, following Him in the sanctifying pathway of the cross. We must experience Christ in this particular aspect. If we would experience Him in this aspect, we must enter "within the veil," that is, enter into the Holy of Holies, to enjoy Him as our heavenly Sanctifier in His heavenly priesthood (10:19-20; 6:19-20).

As we have pointed out, chapter thirteen covers many virtues needed for the church life. If we do not have these virtues, we cannot have the church life. Suppose the Hebrew believers had gone back to the temple to eat the ceremonial food. By doing that they would have been forsaking the experience of Christ as the One who was rejected by religion. If they had forsaken Christ in this aspect, returning to eat the ceremonial food in Judaism, it would have been impossible for them to have the church life. The principle is the same today. Those who have forsaken the church meetings and have returned to the religious practices in Christianity have given up their birthright. Those who have done this do not care for Christ and the church; they only care for today's religious attractions. Since they have sold their birthright, they can neither enjoy Christ nor exercise the priesthood and the

kingship. Do you think that such believers will enjoy the birthright as the reward in the millennial kingdom? According to the clear revelation in the New Testament, if we do not exercise our spirit to remain in the church, enjoy Christ as our good land, and practice our priesthood and kingship today, we shall not deserve to enjoy our birthright as a reward in the millennial kingdom. If we would have the exercise of our birthright which will issue in receiving the reward in the kingdom, we must remain in the church.

In order to remain in the church, we must drop every religious practice. Some who have been pastors enjoy being called reverend, being unwilling to drop this title. Although only God is reverend (Psa. 111:9), they insist on keeping this title, enjoying it as their religious food. What profit is there in keeping such a title? If you keep it, you do so at the cost of your birthright. Our heart must be confirmed by grace, not by any religious food, that is, not by any religious attractions, positions, titles, and practices. We must forsake them all.

Grace is on the race, on the path. We should not be distracted from any path of this race, but continue on the race of grace. But many things are waiting for an opportunity to distract us from the paths of this race, that is, from the enjoyment of grace. As the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle reveals, every path of this race is an aspect of the enjoyment of Christ. We must keep on running this race in the enjoyment of Christ. Never be distracted by titles, positions, or religious attractions, all of which are merely religious "foods." We must experience Christ as our grace for the church life. If we do not experience Him in such a way, we cannot have the church life.

If we would experience Christ in this aspect, we must take the way of the cross, suffering persecution, rejection, and opposition from religion. Christ suffered outside the gate, and we must follow Him outside the gate to bear His reproach. If we share His suffering today, in the future we shall share in His glorification. If we experience Christ in this way, bearing His reproach on the pathway of the

cross,

we shall be kept in the rich church life, and every meeting of the church will be uplifted and enriched. In such a church life we shall be able to exercise our birthright. This will issue in our receiving the reward in the coming kingdom.

VII. HAVING HERE NO PERMANENT CITY, NO ORGANIZED REALM, BUT SEEKING THE COMING ONE, GOD'S HOLY CITY, THE NEW JERUSALEM

Verse 12 speaks of being "outside the gate," and verse 13 tells us to go "outside the camp." The gate here is the gate of the city of Jerusalem. The city signifies the earthly realm, and the camp signifies the human organization. The two signify one thing, the Jewish religion with its two aspects, the earthly and the human. Judaism is both earthly and human. Verse 14 says, "For here we do not have a permanent city, but we seek the coming one." This means that we do not have a permanent city, any organized realm, but we seek the coming one, God's Holy City, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2, 10). By using the pronoun "we" in these verses the writer was considering himself and his readers as real river-crossing Hebrews like the patriarchs (11:9-10, 13-16).

VIII. IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES, OFFERING UP THROUGH HIM THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE TO GOD

Verse 15 says, "Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name." This verse is a continuation of verses 8 through 14. Since in the church life we enjoy the unchanging Christ as grace and follow Him outside religion, we should offer up through Him spiritual sacrifices to God. Firstly, we should offer up through Him a sacrifice of praise continually to God in the church. In the church, He sings hymns of praise unto God the Father in

us (2:12). We also should praise God the Father in the church through Him. Eventually He and we, we and He, will praise the Father in the church in the mingled spirit. He as the life-giving Spirit praises the Father in our spirit, and we, by our spirit, also praise the Father in His Spirit. This is the best and highest sacrifice we can offer to God through Him. This is greatly needed in the church meetings.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIFTY-SEVEN

ENTER WITHIN THE VEIL AND GO OUTSIDE THE CAMP

If we get into the depths of the book of Hebrews, we shall see that the whole book is covered by two things--entering within the veil and going outside the camp. We must enter within the veil and go outside the camp. Within the veil there is one unique place--the Holy of Holies. When we are within the veil, we are within the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies, the unique place, there is one unique thing--the ark of testimony, which is the full symbol of Christ. Inside this unique item are three precious things: the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the law of the testimony, that is, the law of life which issues in God's expression and testimony. This brief word, which opens a very wide field, tells us the meaning of the phrase "within the veil." To be within the veil is to be in the Holy of Holies, in a realm where we partake of Christ and enjoy the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the law of life which issues in God's corporate expression. This is the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

Hebrews 13:13 says, "Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach." Both in this book and in typology the camp signifies the organization of religion, which is human and earthly. To go outside the camp means to go outside the human organization of religion. While the camp signifies the human organization, the city signifies the earthly realm. In the book of Hebrews, both the gate and the camp signify the Jewish religion with its two aspects, the earthly and the human. Judaism is both earthly and human. Every religion is both a human

organization and an earthly realm which keeps people away from God's economy.

On the one hand, God's economy is being fulfilled within the veil. On the other hand, many religious things are taking place inside the camp. All we can see in the camp are just the religious things. Although many of the things in the camp may be related to the Bible, God is not there. Inside the camp, that is, in the organization of religion, there are no angels, church, Savior, saved ones, Christ, or sprinkled blood. Rather, there is a mountain set on fire producing a thick darkness and gloom, there is a whirlwind which moves without direction or peace, and there is the terrifying sound of a trumpet with the fearful words of warning. This is the picture of the Jewish religion as portrayed in this book. In all the foregoing messages we have seen a very vivid picture of what is within the veil on the one side and of the religious things in the camp on the other side. Now we all must choose where we shall be--within the veil or within the camp. We cannot be neutral.

The book of Hebrews instructs and charges us to come forward to the Holy of Holies and to enter within the veil. The way into the Holy of Holies, a new and living way, has been slain. Hence, this book firstly ushers us into the Holy of Holies and then directs us to go outside the camp. According to our mental figuration, we firstly go outside the camp and then enter within the veil. But this is our human mathematics. According to God's mathematics, we firstly enter within the veil and only then can we go outside the camp. Everyone who has gone outside the camp has firstly experienced what is within the veil. Perhaps when you began to come to the meetings of the church, you were not yet outside the camp. You were simply coming within the veil to have a taste. But that taste attracted you, caught you, and supplied you with the energy to go outside the camp. No one has firstly gone outside the camp and then entered within the veil. Although the Lord Jesus firstly went outside the gate and then entered within the veil, it is exactly the opposite with us. In other words,

firstly we enter into the Holy of Holies, where we are strengthened and encouraged to go outside the camp, and then we go out of the organization of religion. The more we enter within the veil, the more we go outside the camp.

I. THE HEAVENLY CHRIST WITHIN THE VEIL

The book of Hebrews firstly shows us the heavenly Christ who is within the veil, within the Holy of Holies (6:19-20). He is there as our High Priest (4:14; 7:26), as the heavenly Minister (8:2), and as the Mediator of the new covenant (8:6; 9:15; 12:24). As our High Priest, He is there interceding for us and ministering all the riches of God into us. As the heavenly Minister, He is carrying out His excellent ministry for us, and as the Mediator of the new covenant, He is executing all the contents of the new covenant for our enjoyment. All this is much better than what He did for us on earth while He was in the flesh.

II. THE BELIEVERS ENCOURAGED TO ENTER WITHIN THE VEIL

After showing us the heavenly Christ within the veil, the book of Hebrews encourages us to enter within the veil (10:19-20, 22). Within the veil, we can look away unto Him (12:2) and can consider Him (12:3; 3:1). We need to have direct contact with Him. Since He is within the veil, we also must enter within the veil that we may see Him, look at Him, and consider Him in order to receive the transfusion and infusion of Him. Of course, we can only do this by exercising our spirit. As we have seen, our spirit is joined to the heavenly Holy of Holies. When we turn to our spirit and exercise it, we enter within the veil. Here we participate in the heavenly ministry of the heavenly Christ. Here we are saturated and permeated with all the divine riches that make us the corporate reproduction of the Firstborn Son of God for His expression. Here we receive grace and are strengthened to go outside the camp and follow Him on the pathway of the cross.

III. THE BELIEVERS CHARGED TO GO OUTSIDE THE CAMP TO FOLLOW THE LORD

A. Moses Moving Outside the Camp Where the Lord's Seekers Went to Meet with Him

After the children of Israel worshipped the golden calf (Exo. 32), Moses moved "without [outside] the camp," where everyone who sought the Lord went to meet with him, for both the Lord's presence and speaking were there (Exo. 33:7-11). Likewise, we must go outside the camp, wherein is the worship of the idol, that we may enjoy the Lord's presence and hear His speaking. This is necessary for the practical and proper church life.

B. Religion, Being a Camp Given Up by the Lord

The religion, either Judaism, Catholicism, or Protestantism, which has rejected the Lord, is a camp, a human organization, given up by the Lord. The great Babylon mentioned in Revelation 17 is even a worldly city, an earthly realm, from which the Lord's people must come out (Rev. 18:4).

The Devil has injected religion into our blood. Because of this, the camp is not merely outside of us; it is deep within us. Since the day Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, religion has been in man's blood. When the serpent tempted Eve, he did not ask her to do anything immoral. Rather, the serpent spoke to her in a religious way, saying, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1). Here we see that the serpent even spoke of God. This is religion. The serpent seemed to be saying, "Eve, I know that you and your husband are both for God. I am not here to talk with you about worldly entertainments. I want to talk with you about God." Talking about God is an aspect of religion. Do you know what religion is? It is the mere talk about God.

Some may say, "Isn't it wonderful that people talk about God? Why do you condemn them for this? In religion people are taught to know God. Their subject is not fornication or gambling; it is the true God." Nevertheless, as Genesis 3 reveals, religion began with the serpent's talking to Eve about God. Eve answered the serpent, saying, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Gen. 3:2-3). To this the serpent responded, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4-5). Knowing good and evil is also a matter of religion. Religion teaches people to know about God and to know good and evil. Eventually, Eve ate of the tree of knowledge, and religion was injected into man's blood.

There is no need for anyone to be taught religion; we all were born religious. This is the reason that whenever we preach in a religious way we are welcomed. But if we preach the gospel in the way of the Holy of Holies, the people will shout, "Crucify him!" as they did to the Lord Jesus. Because we were born and raised in religion, religion is not only in our concept, but also in our being, in our blood. Day after day we must go outside religion, outside the camp.

In a sense, religion closely resembles God's economy. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament we can find verses which seem to be for religion. But we must understand those verses in the light of the basic revelation of the Bible, which is the economy of God, the dispensing of God into man for His expression. God does not care for religion; He cares for His economy. He is for the dispensing of Himself into man. While God's intention is to work Himself into man, so many Christians only know their religion. They know nothing of God's economy, nor what it means to say that the Triune God is dispensed into our being. Having become a religion, Christianity is far off from

God's economy. But we in the Lord's recovery do not care for anything religious. We just care for the dispensing of the Triune God into us.

C. Going Forth Unto Jesus Outside Religion, Bearing His Reproach

To be within the veil is to enter into the Holy of Holies where the Lord is enthroned in glory, and to go outside the camp is to come out of religion, whence the Lord was cast out in rejection. This signifies that we must be in our spirit, where, experientially speaking, the practical Holy of Holies is today, and outside religion, where the practical camp is today. The more we are in our spirit enjoying the heavenly Christ, the more we shall be outside religion following the suffering Jesus. To be in our spirit to enjoy the glorified Christ enables us to come outside religion to follow the rejected Jesus. The more we contact the heavenly Christ in His glory in our spirit, the more we shall go to the lowly Jesus in His suffering outside religion. To contact Christ in the heavens, enjoying His glorification, energizes us to take the narrow pathway of the cross on the earth and to bear His reproach. The book of Hebrews firstly gives us a clear vision of the heavenly Christ and the heavenly Holy of Holies, and then it shows us how to walk the pathway of the cross on the earth, that is, to go forth unto Jesus outside the camp, outside religion, bearing His reproach. To go forth unto Jesus outside the camp, bearing His reproach, is to take the pathway of the cross.

D. The Holy of Holies Enabling Us to Take the Pathway of the Cross and the Pathway of the Cross Ushering Us into the Kingdom

The Holy of Holies, the pathway of the cross (signified by going forth unto Jesus outside the camp, bearing His reproach), and the kingdom are three crucial matters set forth in this book. The Holy of Holies enables us to take the pathway of the cross, and the pathway of the cross ushers

us into the kingdom in its manifestation. To enter into the kingdom in its manifestation we need to take the pathway of the cross, and to take the pathway of the cross we need to enter into the Holy of Holies within the veil. The Holy of Holies is crucial to our Christian walk.

IV. TO ENTER WITHIN THE VEIL IS TO GET INTO OUR SPIRIT

If we would enter within the veil, we must get into our spirit (4:12). To be within the veil is to be in our spirit, and to be outside the camp is to be outside anything religious. We must not remain in any camp, but get into our spirit. If you remain in the religious camp, you are still camping outside your spirit. But we are no longer camping--we are in the Holy of Holies. The writer seemed to be telling the Hebrew believers, "Brothers, get out of your camping mind and get into your spirit." Today we also must exercise to bring our whole being into the spirit. We must not remain in our camping mentality, for that mentality is religious. Again and again we need to enter within the veil by entering into our spirit.

It is difficult for Christian readers to understand why the writer of Hebrews mentions the spirit in 4:12. As he is comparing Christ with Judaism, he suddenly says, "The word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit." Now we understand that this verse shows us the key to experiencing Christ--our spirit which is joined to the Holy of Holies. Therefore, we must discern our spirit from our camping mentality, from our camping soul. We must no longer camp in our mind but turn to our spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). Grace is with our spirit (Gal. 6:18). We have seen that we must take grace, but where do we go to take grace? We must go to our spirit. The Holy of Holies, God's economy, and even the fulfillment of God's economy are all related to our spirit. What we need today is to enter within the veil by getting into the spirit.

Suppose some young brothers are fighting with one another. This is a type of wild camping. But do not think they need some religious ones to tell them to behave themselves, to learn patience, and to camp religiously. That would merely be to teach them how to camp in their religious soul. This is not to enter within the veil. The brothers who are fighting with one another need to turn to their spirit. Once they turn to the spirit and take grace, they will taste Christ as their hidden manna, partake of Him as the budding rod, and experience the regulating of the law of life. Then they will not need anyone to teach them patience, humility, or the lesson of giving in.

God's economy is the dispensation of the Triune God into our being. This builds up the Body of Christ, producing material for the building up of the church. This transpires in the Holy of Holies within the veil, which is joined to our spirit. What a difference between this and religion! If we experience Christ in such an inner way, we shall see how much of the religious camping element is still in our blood. Spontaneously, we shall begin to hate this religious element and loathe our camping self. We all need to enter within the veil that the Lord may bring us into such a realization.

If we are faithful to the Lord and enter within the veil day after day and week after week, we shall discover that much of our religious background still remains within us. The brothers with a Jewish background will find that the Jewish religious element is still in them, and those with a Presbyterian or Southern Baptist background will discover that those camping elements remain in their blood. Many times in the past you have probably measured or estimated the condition of the church life by your religious background, comparing the church life with that camping element. But the more we enter within the veil and are transfused and infused with the heavenly Christ, the more we shall say, "Religious background, get away from me!" Nevertheless, although it seems that we have cast out the camping element, some of it still clings to us. Therefore, we

need to continue to enter within the veil and go outside the camp.

A very touchy camping element is the matter of tongue speaking. Those who have had a tongue-speaking background often ask, "What about tongue speaking in the church? Where do you put this? Do you think that it is useless?" Perhaps you have asked such questions many times. How difficult it is to leave our religious background! I am not condemning tongue speaking. We are for anything that is for God's economy, for the dispensing of the Triune God into us for the building up of the Body of Christ. We are not for any kind of religion, whether it is fundamental, Pentecostal, or charismatic. We are for just one thing--the dispensation of the Triune God into our being that we might be transformed and built together as His corporate expression and that we might terminate this age and usher in the kingdom. This can only be accomplished by our entering within the veil to experience the ark of God's testimony with the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the law of life. By experiencing these things, we are infused, empowered, strengthened, and enabled to go outside of every camp. My real burden in all these messages on Hebrews is that we may all enter within the veil and go outside the camp. This is the goal and the ultimate conclusion of this book.

When we enter within the veil by getting into our spirit, we taste the sweetness of the heavenly Christ that we may be enabled to go outside the camp, forsaking the earth and its love. As we stay within the veil, we also have our spirit filled with the glory of the heavenly Christ that our heart may be freed from the possession of the earth's enjoyment outside the camp. Furthermore, within the veil we behold the glorified Christ that we may be attracted to follow the suffering Jesus outside the camp. Beholding His countenance in heaven enables us to trace His footsteps on earth. As we enter within the veil, we are infused with resurrection power (Phil. 3:10) that we may be empowered to walk the pathway of the cross outside the camp. We also

participate in the ministry of the heavenly Christ that we may be equipped to minister Him to the thirsty spirits outside the camp. Here we enjoy the Lord's best that we may be enriched to meet the needs of people outside the camp.

V. BEING EQUIPPED IN EVERY GOOD WORK BY ENTERING WITHIN THE VEIL AND GOING OUTSIDE THE CAMP

Verses 20 and 21 say, "Now the God of peace Who brought up from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of an eternal covenant, equip you in every good work for the doing of His will, doing in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory forever and ever, Amen." By entering within the veil and going outside the camp we are equipped in every good work. In this way God is doing in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ. He is doing this that we may be able to do His will. God "works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). From beginning to end, this book presents to us a heavenly Christ. Only here, with the word "doing in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight," does this book imply the indwelling of Christ. It is through the indwelling Christ whom we enjoy within the veil in our spirit that God works in us that we may do His will.

In verse 20 the Lord Jesus is spoken of as being the great Shepherd of the sheep." The "sheep" here are the flock which is the church. This confirms the understanding that everything covered in this chapter is for the church with the experience of the unchanging Christ as our sin offering, through whom we have been redeemed, and as our great Shepherd, by whom we are now being fed.

Verse 20 also speaks of an "eternal covenant." Hebrews is not a book concerning temporal things, such as the things of the old covenant; it is a book of eternal things, things which are beyond the limit of time and space, such as eternal salvation (5:9), eternal judgment (6:2), eternal

redemption (9:12), eternal Spirit (9:14), eternal inheritance (9:15), and eternal covenant (13:20). The new covenant is not only a better covenant (7:22; 8:6), but also an eternal covenant. It is eternally effective because of the eternal efficacy of Christ's blood with which it was enacted (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20).

This book closes with the word of blessing, "Grace be with you all. Amen." If we would realize and participate in all the things unveiled in this book, we need grace. To take grace (12:28) we need to come forward to the throne of grace that we may find grace for our timely need (4:16). It is by touching the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies through the exercise of our spirit that we enjoy the Spirit of grace (10:29) and that our heart is confirmed by grace (13:9). By such an enjoyment of grace we run the race which is set before us (12:1) to reach the goal of God's economy.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIFTY-EIGHT

EATING AND MANNA

In this message we come to the manna in the golden pot (9:4).

EATING, A BASIC MATTER IN THE BIBLE

If we would understand what the hidden manna, the manna in the golden pot, is, we must understand a basic concept in the Bible, a concept which most Christians have not grasped. After God created man, He did not do anything with him, nor did He charge him to do anything for Him. According to Genesis 1 and 2, the basic requirement for living in the presence of God is to eat properly. What matters the most in God's presence is what and how we eat. Hence, in the Bible eating is a basic concept concerning our relationship with God. God has created everything, including man. If He can make the heavens and the earth and billions of items, what is there that He cannot do? He can easily do everything. Actually, there is even no need for Him to do anything, for He just speaks and what He desires comes into being. Nevertheless, there is one thing which God cannot do--He cannot eat for us. Although a mother may do many things for her children, she cannot eat for them. The children must eat for themselves. As far as our relationship with God is concerned, the basic matter is eating properly.

EATING FOR THE SUPPLY OF LIFE AND FOR REDEMPTION

In Genesis 2, man's eating was a matter of the tree of life. After man fell, God came in to redeem him. But when God brought in redemption in Exodus 12, the eating was

changed to include more than just the one item, the tree of life. Eating was no longer simply to have the supply of life; it was also related to redemption. In Exodus 12 the children of Israel were instructed to eat a lamb. The tree of life is of the vegetable life, and a lamb is of the animal life. While there is no blood with a tree, there is blood with a lamb. In the Bible, blood is for redemption. At the time of the exodus, the children of Israel struck the blood that they might be redeemed and they ate the lamb that they might have the life supply. In the first stage, eating was only for man's life supply, but in the second stage, eating was for both redemption and the life supply.

EATING THE LORD'S FLESH AND DRINKING HIS BLOOD

During the years in the wilderness, the children of Israel ate manna. Since there certainly was no blood in the manna, the eating of manna was unrelated to redemption; it was altogether for the life supply. How could the children of Israel, who wandered in the wilderness for forty years, continue to live and move? They lived and moved by the supply of manna which they ate every day. In chapter six of John, the Lord Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (v. 35). This troubled the Jews. Then the Lord said, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves" (v. 53, Recovery Version). In this chapter the Lord firstly said that He was the bread of life. Then He said that we must drink His blood. How could the bread have blood in it? This bread is not only the bread of the vegetable life but also the meat of the lamb. In John 6:51 the Lord said, "The bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (Recovery Version). The bread is of the vegetable life and is only for feeding; the flesh is of the animal life and is not only for feeding but also for redeeming. Before the fall of man, the Lord was the tree of life (Gen. 2:9), only for feeding man. After man fell into sin, the Lord became the Lamb (John

1:29), not only for feeding man, but also for redeeming him (Exo. 12:4, 7-8).

THE NEED TO KEEP EATING

I want to say again that after the creation of man and even in God's redemption of man, the basic concept regarding our being in the presence of God is this matter of eating. Thus, we must devote our complete attention to it. Do not try to learn so many things--just continue to eat well in the presence of the Lord. I was a Christian for over thirty years before I knew anything about eating in the spirit. I was never taught about this. Many of us can testify that before we came into the church, we were never told that we could eat Jesus. But from beginning to end, the Bible covers the matter of eating. The Bible begins and ends with the eating of the tree of life (Rev. 2:7, 22:1-2, 14).

EATING IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

As we have pointed out, the entire book of Hebrews is focused on Christ as the heavenly Minister with His kingly and divine priesthood. As our heavenly Minister, His main responsibility is to minister the Triune God into us as our supply. He is now ministering such a wonderful supply, not in the outer court, but in the Holy of Holies, and not on the cross, but on the throne of grace. We have seen that the book of Hebrews calls us to come forward to the Holy of Holies, to the throne of grace, and to God. In the Holy of Holies we are not gathered around the cross for redemption; we are meeting around the throne of grace for the life supply. Here we enjoy Christ as our Melchisedec ministering to us the bread and wine as our life supply. This also is absolutely a matter of eating. Hence, this book brings us from the outer court to the Holy of Holies, where there is one unique item--the ark of testimony, which represents Christ. In the Holy of Holies there is nothing but the all-inclusive Christ. According to the outward appearance, He is only one item, the ark of testimony. But when we experience Him as the ark, we see not only one

unique item; we see three items--the golden pot containing manna, the budding rod, and the law of life.

These three items are the kernels within the kernel. After entering into the tabernacle, we find ourselves in the Holy Place where everything is rather outward. After passing through the second veil, we enter into the inner chamber of the tabernacle called the Holy of Holies. Once we have come into the Holy of Holies, we are in the heart, the kernel, of the tabernacle. But within the Holy of Holies we have the ark of testimony, and within the ark we have the golden pot containing manna, the budding rod, and the law of life. Because these items are all in the ark in the Holy of Holies, we may say that they are the kernels within the kernel.

As we touch the first of these items, the golden pot containing manna, we find something even deeper. After passing through four layers, the layer of the tabernacle, the layer of the Holy of Holies, the layer of the ark of testimony, and the layer of the golden pot, we come to the manna. When we touch this, we have truly come home. If we are only in the Holy of Holies but are not feeding on the manna in the golden pot, we are not yet home. Even if we touch the ark of testimony, we are still not home. The tabernacle is for the Holy of Holies, the Holy of Holies is for the ark, the ark is for the golden pot, and the golden pot is for the hidden manna. In Revelation 2:17 the Lord Jesus said, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." Where is this hidden manna? It is in the golden pot which is in the ark in the Holy of Holies. The one main kernel, the living kernel among all the kernels, is the hidden manna. The Lord Jesus promised His overcomers that they would eat this hidden manna.

THE MEANING OF MANNA

Before we learn how to eat the hidden manna, we must first know what manna is. The word manna means "What is this?" (Exo. 16:15). The manna which the children of Israel ate in the wilderness was different from the other

foods they had known, for it was unlike any food stuff on earth. It was neither wheat, corn, nor barley. When the people saw it, they asked, "What is this?" In Numbers 11 we see a comparison between manna and the foods with which the children of Israel were familiar. Numbers 11:5-6 says, "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes." Here we see the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. Although the children of Israel knew what these were, they did not know what manna was. In color, shape, appearance, taste, and in every other aspect it was absolutely different from anything they had ever seen before. They could only ask, "What is this?" They seemed to be saying, "What is this? It is neither fish nor leeks, onions nor garlic. Is it animal or vegetable? It seems that it is neither one." No human language can explain what manna is. Manna is simply manna. Manna is "What is this?" Everyone knows what onions are, but when you speak of manna they can only ask "What is this?" Manna is simply "What is this?"

Manna is a type of Christ. What is Christ? Christ is "What is this?" He is extraordinary. He is so special that He cannot be ranked with anything else.

THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF MANNA

Coming with the Dew

Let us now consider the various aspects of the manna in the Old Testament. Numbers 11:9 says, "When the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it." Manna always comes early in the morning with the dew. What does the dew signify? Psalm 133:3 says, "As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion." In the Bible, dew signifies God's gracious visitation from the heavens. When God comes from the heavens to visit us as grace, He is like the dew, so

precious and watering. That manna always comes with the dew signifies that the very Christ who is our manna today always comes with grace, with God's gracious visitation from the heavens. Whenever we touch Christ as our life supply, we have the deep sense that heaven has come to us in a soft, watering manner. This watering is so well proportioned that it does not trouble us, but it certainly refreshes us. As we enjoy touching Christ as our manna, we have the sense that heaven has come down to visit, water, and refresh us.

Small

Exodus 16:14 describes manna as "a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground." Although some hymns have been written to praise Christ for His greatness, we also need to praise Him for His smallness. Manna was small; yet the Bible does not give us its dimensions. Although manna is small, it is immeasurable; we cannot say how small it is. This indicates that we cannot tell the size of Christ. Our Christ is without size. Nothing is smaller than He is, and nothing is greater than He is. He is the smallest as well as the greatest. Nothing can exceed Him. Who can measure the greatness or the smallness of Christ?

Round

We are also told that the manna was round (Exo. 16:14). In typology, this signifies that manna is eternal, without beginning or ending. Christ is the eternal food with the eternal nature for the eternal nourishment without any limitation. Whoever eats Him will have the eternal life with the eternal nature and receive the eternal nourishment.

Like the Frost

Manna was like the frost (Exo. 16:14), which is between dew and snow. Dew is refreshing, but it is not as refreshing as frost is. Although dew refreshes, it does not kill the

germs. Frost does kill germs. As manna, Christ not only refreshes us; He also kills all the negative things within us. He comes with the dew, and He comes as the frost. Whenever we experience Christ as the supply, we sense that heaven has come down to visit and water us. While we are being watered and refreshed, we also sense that the negative things within us, such as our negative attitudes, are being killed. I enjoy the refreshing and the killing of this frost. If two brothers are upset with one another, it means that they need the killing of the frost.

The frost not only kills the negative things in us; it also cools us down. Although the young people love the Lord, sometimes they are "hot" for sports. If they do not have the time to go to a football game, they may at least try to watch a game on television. When, while they are so "hot" for sports, they touch Christ, the "frost" will come to cool them down. Other brothers and sisters like to talk, talking in vain words about many things. When we talk like this, we are "hot." But when we touch Christ, the "frost" cools us down. The older brothers and sisters also need to be cooled down by the "frost." Although the older sisters love their husbands, if we would ask the husbands to speak frankly, they would say that they cannot stand the bothering of their wives. Neither can the older sisters bear the bothering of their retired husbands. Many of the retired brothers have little to do every day except to bother their wives. By this we see that even the older ones need to be cooled down. The older we are, the more bothersome we are. Hence, we all need the "frost" to cool down our hot temper. In a sense, this "frost" is our spiritual refrigerator. The very Christ within us who nourishes us is also the frost which freezes us.

White

The manna in the wilderness was white (Exo. 16:31). This means that it was clean and pure. No earthly food is as white as manna. Manna is the purest food. The more we feast on Christ, eating of Him as our manna, the more we

are whitened. We are not only cleansed and purified; we are whitened. To be white means to be absolutely without stain. As we feed on Christ, all our stains are eliminated. Although we may be good in certain respects, we are not white. Although we may be loving, our love is not white; it is colored. Our humility is also colored. In fact, none of our human attributes is white; every one of them is colored. But the more we take in Christ as our life supply, the more our color will be reduced and the whiter we shall become.

An excellent Chinese food is sea cucumber. But because it is black in color, the American brothers are unwilling to eat it. Although I have tried my best to convince them to eat it, they are all afraid of its black appearance. Manna, on the contrary, is white and does not frighten anyone. Rather, it gives us the feeling of peace.

Eaten as Bread, Cakes, and Wafers

The manna was eaten as bread (Exo. 16:15), as cakes (Num. 11:8), and as wafers (Exo. 16:31). As our manna, Christ has different aspects and nourishes us in different ways. When we eat Him as our manna, sometimes He tastes like bread and at other times He tastes like a cake or like a wafer which is thin and easy to eat and digest.

Like a Coriander Seed

The manna was also like coriander seed (Exo. 16:31; Num. 11:7). This food is a seed. When we eat Christ, He comes into us as a seed. The coriander seed, unlike corn, is very tiny. A seed is something of life which brings the life element into our being. As such a seed, Christ will grow within us.

With the Taste of Honey

In Exodus 16:31 we are told that the taste of manna was like wafers made with honey. Honey is sweet and is the produce of two lives, the animal life and the vegetable life. Honey is the mingling of these two lives. The honey

bees which produce honey receive the supply from flowers, from the vegetable life. As our manna, Christ has this element of the mingling of the animal life with the vegetable life which becomes our sweet nourishment.

As the Taste of Fresh Oil

Numbers 11:8 says of the manna that "the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil." Oil typifies the Holy Spirit. When we eat Christ as our manna, we taste the Spirit of God. The oil here is the fresh oil. The Spirit we taste when we enjoy Christ as manna is always fresh. As our manna, Christ tastes like fresh oil and has the flavor and nourishment of honey.

With the Appearance of Bdellium

According to the original Hebrew, Numbers 11:7 says, "The manna was as coriander seed, and the eye thereof as the eye of bdellium." It is difficult for anyone to translate this verse properly. The King James Version says that the color was as the color of bdellium. Bdellium is a pearl produced by the resin from a tree and is very much like the pearl produced by an oyster. The color of manna is the color of bdellium. Other versions use the word appearance instead of color. However, the Hebrew word here is eye. Manna has an eye, for its appearance is like that of an eye. A pearl somewhat resembles an eye. If you examine a pearl, you will see that it is like an eyeball. An eyeball has the appearance of pearl, and this appearance is its color. In other words, the appearance and color of bdellium are like an eye.

When we eat the manna, we eat many eyes, and all these eyes get into us. As the manna, Christ resembles an eye. The more we eat of Christ, the more eyes we shall have. The four living creatures in Revelation 4:6 are "full of eves before and behind." At the front and at the rear, within and without, they are full of eyes. If you go to a greenhouse, you will see that none of the walls is opaque; every side is transparent. An eye means transparency.

With the exception of our eyes, which are transparent, our whole body is opaque. If we do not have Christ, we do not have any eyes, and we are absolutely opaque. When we were saved, we began to be transparent. Now the more we enjoy Christ, the more transparent we become. Whenever we are with a brother who truly enjoys Christ, we can sense that he is transparent. Standing before him is like being in a transparent greenhouse. However, anyone who is not in the enjoyment of the Lord is altogether opaque. If you are with four such persons, you will feel like you are in a dungeon surrounded by opaque walls. But if you are surrounded by several brothers who love the Lord and feed on Him, you will sense that everything is transparent. As the manna, Christ is transparent. When we eat Him, we eat eyeballs and we become transparent.

This transparency will eventually become our appearance. If we enjoy Christ day after day, eating Him as the eyeball, we shall have the appearance of Christ, the appearance of an eyeball, and this appearance will become our color. By eating Christ, we are colored with the transparency of Christ. In this way, transparency becomes our appearance and color.

Not Legal

Finally, as the manna, Christ is not legal. Numbers 11:8 says, "The people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it." Christ can be ground, beaten in a mortar, or baked in pans. He is not legal. Nearly every Christian, however, is legal. If you experience Christ in a certain way, you make that a legal way. But Christ would say, "To you, I am ground. But others prefer to beat Me. I feel quite good when I am beaten in this way. Still others bake Me and put Me into an oven. I also feel good about this. Why are you so narrow and legal?"

What a wonderful record we find in the Bible regarding the manna. If we are asked what it is, we must simply say that it is manna. It comes with the dew and is like the frost

on the ground. It is small, round, white, and like a coriander seed. It can be eaten as bread, cake, and wafers, it has the taste of honey and fresh oil, and its appearance is like an eyeball. Although we might have read Exodus 16 and Numbers 11 many times, we probably have never noticed all these aspects of the manna. We need to eat more eyeballs that we may have the transparent sight.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE FIFTY-NINE

THE MANNA IN THE GOLDEN POT

In the last message we laid the foundation for knowing the manna. In this message we need to consider the hidden manna, the manna in the golden pot.

GOD'S COMMANDMENT REGARDING THE MANNA

The term hidden manna is used in Revelation 2:17, where the Lord Jesus says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." This word was spoken to the church in Pergamos, a degraded, worldly church. If anyone overcomes degraded Christianity, the Lord will give him the hidden manna. Nearly everything mentioned in the book of Revelation, including the manna, can be found in the Old Testament. Exodus 16:32 and 33, referring to the manna, say, "Moses said, This is the thing which the Lord commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations." The Lord commanded that an omer of manna be put into a pot. An omer is "the tenth part of an ephah" (Exo. 16:36). An ephah is a complete unit, and an omer is one tenth of a unit. This small portion was put into a pot and laid up before the testimony to be kept (Exo. 16:34). In Exodus, the testimony means the two tables of the law which were put into the ark. The omer of manna was put in front of the testimony, meaning that it was quite close to the ark. This portion of the manna became the hidden manna.

Manna came from heaven, from God, as a gift to His

people. It was not a temporary gift; it was a gift lasting for forty years. Morning after morning, this gift came down from heaven to feed and satisfy the children of Israel. After they had been satisfied, God seemed to say, "Take an omer of what you have enjoyed and put it before Me as a testimony and a reminder that the coming generations may be reminded that you enjoyed this heavenly food as you wandered in the wilderness." The open manna, the people's portion, came from God, and the hidden manna, God's portion, was offered back to God.

THE TITHE OF THE PRODUCE OF THE LAND

Now we need to consider the tithe, the basic concept of one tenth of the produce. The children of Israel were required to take the top tenth, the choicest portion of their produce in the good land, and offer it to God (Deut. 14:22-23). All the produce came from God. God ordained that one tenth of the produce which He had given the children of Israel be offered back to Him. The majority of the produce was for the people, but the tithe was offered to God as His portion. The tithe which was offered to God went to the priests and the Levites (Num. 18:21) who in turn took a tenth of the tithe they received and offered it to God. This tenth of the tenth went to the high priest who ministered in the Holy of Holies (Num. 18:26, 28-29). I repeat, the children of Israel offered one tenth of their produce to God as His portion. After this had been offered to God, it was given to the serving ones, to the priests and Levites who served the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites then took one tenth of this top tenth and offered it to God. It was then given to the high priest who ministered in the Holy of Holies. The Levites who served in the outer court and the priests who served in the outer court and in the Holy Place could only enjoy the tenth offered by the children of Israel. Only the high priest who served in the Holy of Holies was privileged to enjoy the tenth of the tenth, the topmost

portion of the produce of the good land. Thus, the more we serve, the more we shall enjoy the topmost portion, God's portion.

THE HIDDEN MANNA BEING GOD'S PORTION

When the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, God gave them manna from heaven as a gift every day (except the Sabbath day). They all enjoyed this gift of manna. Then God seemed to say, "Take a portion, one tenth of an ephah, of the manna I have given you and place it before My testimony." This portion of the manna was for God. The open manna was the people's portion, and this offered, hidden manna in the pot before God's testimony was God's portion. The principle was the same with offering the produce after the children of Israel had entered into the good land. Once they were in the land, God no longer sent manna from heaven, for the good land provided all that was needed for their living. Thus, instead of gathering the manna, they harvested the produce of the good land. Regarding this, God seemed to say, "Give Me as My portion a tenth of all the produce you have harvested." The children of Israel did so, giving this one tenth to the priests and the Levites who served in and around the tabernacle. Then God told the priests and the Levites to take one tenth of what they received from the people and offer it to God. This portion, which we may call the top of the top, was then given to the high priest as his portion. Only the high priest, the one serving in the Holy of Holies, was privileged to enjoy this topmost portion.

Based upon this principle, we see that the hidden manna is the portion for God. The basic concept of the hidden manna is that it is God's portion. In the past, I was troubled whenever I read Exodus 16:36, which says, "Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah." I thought that this verse was unnecessary and wondered why Moses included it. I could not understand the significance of an omer of manna being placed in a pot and put in front of the testimony of God. But just recently the Lord enlightened

me about this, and I saw that the tenth is the choice portion, the portion for God. Manna signifies Christ whom God has given to us as a gift. While we are enjoying Christ as our manna, we must take the best portion and offer it to God, offering Christ to God.

If we would eat the hidden manna, we must firstly eat the open manna. If we do not experience the open manna, we shall have no manna to offer God as the hidden manna. The hidden manna is the very manna which we experience, enjoy, and then offer to God. Eventually, because we are so intimate with God, He will say, "Come into My dining room and dine with Me." Do not think that you will suddenly enjoy Christ as your hidden manna if you have never enjoyed Him as your open manna. No, the hidden manna comes out of our enjoyment of the open manna. We enjoy manna and, out of the manna we enjoy, we offer a small portion to God, saying, "God, I offer to You the very Christ whom I have been enjoying. You have given Christ to me as my portion, and now I give the best of Him to You as Your portion." To this God will say, "Child, come into My Holy of Holies and enjoy this portion with Me." This is the hidden manna.

Let us consider our experience. When we enjoy Christ in a general way as our daily supply, we spontaneously desire to offer the very Christ whom we have enjoyed back to God, saying, "O God, how I thank You for the Christ whom You have given me. I have enjoyed Him very much. Now I would like to offer the best portion of Him to You." This is the omer of manna, the choice portion of the manna which is offered back to God. This portion is not for all of God's people; it is only for those who serve Him in a very intimate way in the Holy of Holies. This is the hidden manna, which comes out of the manna we enjoy in a general way.

Again I say that God has given us Christ as our food. As we enjoy Him as food, we gratefully offer Him back to God. In this way Christ becomes the choice portion of our enjoyment which we offer to God as His portion. God is

pleased with this, accepts it, and says, "Since you are now with Me in the Holy of Holies, not serving Me in the outer court or in the Holy Place, I would like to serve you with what you have offered to Me. I ask you to enjoy the choicest portion of Christ with Me." How wonderful this is! It closely matches both our experience and the whole revelation of the Bible and fits in with Revelation 2:17. Enjoying Christ as our hidden manna is not a sudden experience; it must have a history behind it.

HIDDEN BENEATH SEVERAL LAYERS

The hidden manna was hidden under at least four layers. Among the children of Israel was the tabernacle, within the tabernacle was the Holy of Holies, within the Holy of Holies was the ark, and within the ark was the golden pot. Anyone who wanted to enjoy the hidden manna firstly had to be among the children of Israel. Secondly, he had to enter into the tabernacle. Then he had to enter into the Holy of Holies. After that, he had to get into the ark containing the golden pot in which was the hidden manna.

Applying this to our situation today, we see that outside the church life it is impossible to enjoy the hidden manna. In the church life we have the various service groups. But these service groups, being the Levitical service, are only in the outer court. Nevertheless, by this outer court service, we are ushered into the Holy Place. Through the Holy Place we enter into the Holy of Holies. As many of us can testify, before we joined a service group, we were not even in the outer court; we were on the street. But as we serve with others, we have the sense that we are in the Holy Place enjoying Christ. Through this enjoyment we enter into the Holy of Holies where the hidden manna is.

THREE STAGES OF EATING IN THE TABERNACLE

In the tabernacle there are three stages of eating: eating the sacrifices around the altar, eating the showbread in the Holy Place and eating the hidden manna

in the golden pot in the Holy of Holies. Enjoying Christ at the altar ushers us into the Holy Place, where we enjoy Him in a finer way. The showbread on the table is much finer than the sacrifices on the altar. This is not merely a doctrine; it can be proved by our experience. As we enjoy Christ as our showbread, we experience something still different and say, "I am in the Holy of Holies eating something which I have never experienced before." This is the hidden manna.

THE HEAVE OFFERING

In the Old Testament there were two special offerings--the wave offering signifying the resurrected Christ and the heave offering signifying the uplifted, ascended Christ (Exo. 29:26-28). The tenth of the tenth which was offered to God for Aaron was a heave offering (Num. 18:28). As we experience Christ in the outer court and in the Holy Place, we enjoy not only the wave Christ but also the heave Christ, not only the resurrected Christ, but also the uplifted, exalted Christ. This means that eventually we shall be in the Holy of Holies enjoying the special portion of Christ hidden in God.

HIDDEN IN THE DIVINE NATURE

We have seen that Revelation 2:17 says that the Lord will give the overcomers to eat of the hidden manna. Colossians 3:3 says that our life is hid with Christ in God. Christ is hidden in God. The hidden manna mentioned in Revelation 2:17 was hidden in a golden pot (Heb. 9:4). In the Bible, gold signifies the divine nature. Hence, the hidden manna in the golden pot signifies the topmost portion of Christ hidden within the divine nature. The divine nature is in the ark, and, as we have seen, the ark is just Christ. This ark today is in our spirit, which is joined to the Holy of Holies. In our spirit we have the Holy of Holies, in the Holy of Holies we have Christ, the ark, and within Christ we have the golden pot, the divine nature. Here, within the divine nature, is the hidden manna. What is the hidden manna? It is Christ as our special portion of

food hidden in the divine nature. When we are in the place where we touch the golden pot, we are absolutely outside the world, our self, and our natural man. We are touching the divine nature, and in the divine nature we partake of the hidden manna.

I ask you to check with your experience. After joining a service group, you were ushered into more of the church life and you began to experience something finer. Eventually, you were close to God and became intimate with Him. On some occasions, you were so close to God that you were beyond the world, your self, and even your natural being. You were another person with God in His nature. As you touched the divine nature, you touched the golden pot and enjoyed the manna hidden within it, enjoying Christ as your hidden portion in the divine nature.

As we shall see, the budding rod comes after the hidden manna, and the law of life follows the budding rod. These three crucial items, the contents of the ark, are arranged in such a sequence. Firstly, we must enjoy the hidden manna. Then out of our enjoyment of the hidden manna our rod will bud, and after that we shall have the law of life. Because so few Christians experience the hidden manna, their rod does not bud, and we very rarely find one who lives by the law of life. They do not understand the record in the Bible concerning the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the law of life because they lack experience. However, in the Lord's recovery, all these riches are being recovered among us.

When we partake of the hidden manna, we are not experiencing a Christ on the altar, nor are we partaking of a Christ on the showbread table. We are enjoying a Christ who is in the golden pot within the ark. Here we are beyond the world and every situation. We are beyond ourselves and our natural being, touching the divine nature and partaking of it. Second Peter 1:4 says, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." Unless we touch the golden pot, it will be difficult

for us to partake of the divine nature. The divine nature is here with the golden pot in the ark. In the golden pot, that is, in the divine nature, there is the hidden manna as the special portion for our enjoyment. It is here that we enjoy the hidden Christ, the Christ who is hid in God with us and the Christ with whom we are hid in God. The Christ hidden in God is the manna hidden in the golden pot. Here Christ is the hidden manna, and here we also are hidden with Him in the divine nature.

If we are in the wilderness far off from the tabernacle, we can, by God's mercy, still enjoy the open manna as a normal experience in the wilderness. But this is too shallow, too outward, and too far off. God wants us to enter into the Holy of Holies and to be so intimate and close to Him, touching the golden pot. The hidden Christ as the heavenly hidden manna is here in God's divine nature. We cannot find Him in any other place. Today God's divine nature is in our spirit. Although we have the golden pot, the problem is that often we are far off from our spirit. You need not be quarreling or fighting with others in order to be out of the spirit. Even when you joke with the brothers you are outside the spirit. Also being religious is much different from being in the spirit. By being religious we are carried out to the wilderness. The golden pot is in the ark, and the ark is in the Holy of Holies, and the Holy of Holies is joined to our spirit. I like the hymn which says,

In my spirit deeper still
I would touch the Lord I love,
Touch Him in His hidden depth
And His hidden manna prove.

Within the Holy of Holies is the very Christ who is the ark of God containing the golden pot. This Christ comprises the divine nature and contains the hidden manna, for the hidden Christ is within the divine nature. In order to touch this special portion, this topmost portion, of Christ, we must touch the divine nature. In principle, everyone who enjoys this portion is in the Holy of Holies.

Everyone who enters into the Holy of Holies is with the High Priest. Christ, our High Priest, is in the Holy of Holies, and we also must be there. We must not only be the priests in the outer court or in the Holy Place; we must also be the priests where the golden pot is--in the Holy of Holies. If we would be in this place, we must be beyond the world and every kind of situation. We must be beyond being bothered by people. Sometimes we are offended by a small, unpleasant word. Some are troubled to such an extent that they cannot sleep well for months. If we are troubled in this way, we are far off from our spirit, and thus it will be difficult for us to be in the Holy of Holies. When we are beyond all situations, good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, then we are in our spirit touching the ark and the golden pot. I say again that in this golden pot is the hidden manna, the hidden Christ, as our special portion. If we would partake of the hidden manna, we must constantly be in our spirit touching the divine nature. May we all go on and enter into this experience.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIXTY

ENJOYING THE HIDDEN MANNA IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US AND THE LORD

In this message we need to consider some principles regarding spiritual food. The eating of spiritual food altogether depends upon the distance between us and the Lord. This distance determines how much spiritual food we can eat. If we are far off from the Lord, we cannot partake of any spiritual food. When the children of Israel were in Egypt, they could not eat the manna, because the manna was the spiritual food for God's people in the wilderness. Those who were in the wilderness were closer to God than those who were in Egypt. At that time, God was not in Egypt; He was in the wilderness. If anyone wanted to partake of spiritual food, the heavenly manna, he had to leave Egypt and go into the wilderness. As long as the Israelites were in Egypt, they had no spiritual food. Even if an Israelite was in the wilderness, he still had to be near the camp of the children of Israel in order to partake of the manna. If he was far away from the camp, it would have been difficult for him to enjoy the heavenly manna. Anyone who wanted to eat the manna had to camp with the children of Israel. By this we see that the distance between us and the Lord is a very important matter in the enjoyment of spiritual food.

The manna came down near the camp, and only those who had come out of Egypt and who were camping with God's people had the privilege of enjoying it. After the children of Israel had enjoyed the manna, God commanded the Israelites to present an omer of manna to Him (Exo. 16:33). The manna had come from God to them, and they

offered a portion of it back to God. What is the hidden manna? The hidden manna is simply the top portion of the manna given by God and offered back to God. It is the special portion of manna. Once the manna had been presented to God, it was no longer the open manna; it had become the hidden manna because, after being presented to God, it was placed in a golden pot and hidden in the ark in the Holy of Holies within the tabernacle. Originally, the manna was under the sky in the open air. It was open to anything and anyone. But after the top portion had been presented to God and placed in the pot, it was hidden within the innermost part of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, where it was placed before the testimony of God. Among the children of Israel was the tabernacle, within the tabernacle was the Holy of Holies, within the Holy of Holies was the ark, within the ark was the golden pot, and within the pot was the manna. Hence, manna was altogether hidden. In this way, the top portion of manna became hidden.

Suppose you are an Israelite who has come out of Egypt and who is camping with God's people. You have the privilege of eating the open manna, but you do not have the right to enjoy the hidden manna. Because you are far off from the innermost chamber of the tabernacle, you do not have the right to enjoy the hidden manna. Where is God? He is in the Holy of Holies, in the innermost chamber of the tabernacle. Compared with the Egyptians and the others in the wilderness, you are closer to God. But, being outside the outer court of the tabernacle, you are not that close to Him. Although you may eventually come into the outer court, you still cannot enter into the Holy Place, much less into the Holy of Holies. If you are a priest, you may be in the Holy Place and be closer to God than the Levites who are serving in the outer court. Nevertheless, although you may be a priest ministering in the Holy Place, you are not yet in the Holy of Holies. Thus, there is still a distance between you and God. If you want to enjoy the hidden manna, there must be no distance between you and God. All the distance between you and the Lord must be eliminated.

In this message I do not care to explain what the hidden manna is, for the more I explain it, the more troubled you will be. Rather, I would ask this question: how close are you to the Lord? Is there still a distance between you and Him? If there is, you may enjoy the open manna, but you cannot eat the hidden manna. If we would partake of the hidden manna, there must be no distance between us and the Lord. This matter of distance is quite exposing. Although we may not know what the hidden manna is, we do know how far we are from the Lord. Where are you? Are you in Egypt? Are you in the wilderness, or across the street from the tabernacle? Are you in the outer court, the Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies? If we are honest, some would say that they are in the outer court of the church life. Even in the church life there are sections: the section of the outer court, the section of the Holy Place, and the section of the Holy of Holies. Even in the Holy of Holies there are some small sections. If you are in the outer court or in the Holy Place of the church life, you cannot touch the hidden manna. You can only eat the sacrifices on the altar or the showbread on the table. You are still not in the place where the hidden manna is.

After the children of Israel had entered into the good land, they ate the produce of the land. In the Old Testament we are told clearly that all the children of Israel who were in the good land could partake of the produce of the land at any time. But anyone who was outside the border of the land had no right to enjoy this produce. Here again we see the matter of distance. When the children of Israel came together to eat at the time of the three yearly feasts, they did not eat the general produce, but the portion of the produce which was purposely reserved for the feast. At ordinary times, the Israelites enjoyed the common portion. At the time of the feasts, however, they enjoyed the special portion, the one top tenth, because they were closer to God, having come together to meet around God's dwelling place where they enjoyed the top portion of the produce of the good land, which they had offered to God (Deut. 12:17-18; 14:2-3).

Another tenth of their produce

was given to the priests and the Levites who served in the outer court or in the Holy Place and who were closer to God than most of the people were. Thus, the closer an Israelite was to God, the better was his enjoyment of the spiritual food. According to Numbers 18:26-28, after the priests and the Levites received the tithe, they offered one tenth of the tenth to the Lord. This topmost portion, which was offered to God as a heave offering, was then given to the high priest who ministered to God in the Holy of Holies. Since he was the one closest to God, he had the right to enjoy the topmost portion of the produce of the good land.

If we would be fed by God, we must be within the realm in which God feeds His people. Otherwise, we cannot enjoy any spiritual food. If we stay within this realm, we are privileged to enjoy spiritual food. However, if we remain close to the border of this realm, only the common part of the spiritual food will be ours. But if we come to the center, to God, we shall enjoy the better portion of this spiritual food. If I am an Israelite in the good land, I have the right to enjoy the common portion of the produce of the land. But if I seek God, going to the temple at the time of the yearly feasts, I shall be closer to the Lord and have the privilege of enjoying something better three times a year. This is not the common portion; it is a special portion of the produce of the land. If I am a Levite in the outer court or a priest in the Holy Place, I can enjoy a better portion of the produce of the land every day. If I am a high priest ministering in the presence of God, being so close to Him, I have the right to enjoy the best portion, the topmost portion, of the produce of the good land. Hence, the portion of the spiritual food which is ours depends upon the distance between us and the Lord.

THE HIDDEN MANNA PROMISED TO THE OVERCOMERS

Some may say that the hidden manna was kept only for a memorial, not for eating. If we did not have Revelation 2:17, this argument might have some meaning. But in this

verse the Lord promises that the omer of manna which is kept in the presence of God as a memorial will be given to the overcomers to eat. It is not promised to the worldly Christians, to those who are saved but who still remain in Egypt; neither is it promised to those who are wandering in the wilderness. It is a promise given to the overcomers in the church at Pergamos. The church at Pergamos was married to the world. It was a church that had gone back to Egypt, making God's house more worldly than the house of the Egyptians. The promise of eating the hidden manna was given to the overcomers who were in such a worldly church. This means that if we overcome being worldly, we shall be in the presence of God and have the privilege of eating the hidden manna. This manna has been hidden here for centuries. But now the Lord seems to be saying, "Because you hate the world, the worldly situation, the worldly church, and the worldly relationship between the church and the world, and because you are so close to Me, I will give you to eat of the hidden manna that has been kept in My presence." Before the Lord spoke this promise to the overcomers in Revelation 2:17, He said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." May we all have an ear to hear this.

For nearly twenty centuries, Christ has been given from the heavens as the open manna. But, under His economy, God has kept and is still keeping a special portion of Christ in His presence, and anyone who has a distance between himself and God has no right to eat it. Many Christians have enjoyed Christ as their open manna. If you read history and the biographies of the saints, you will see that many of them enjoyed Christ as the open manna. But the top portion of Christ has been kept in the presence of God and is here even now for those who refuse to go along with the church when it has become worldly and married to the world. In God's eyes, there has been a spiritual marriage between the degraded church and the world. Christ should be the church's husband. But today the church has married the world, not considering Christ to be her husband. For

those dear ones who do not agree with this marriage but who stay strictly in the presence of God, the Lord has promised them the privilege of eating that portion of Christ which has been kept in the presence of God. This is the hidden manna.

MINISTER TO THE LORD IN HIS PRESENCE

In the little booklet, "Ministry to the House or to the Lord," Brother Nee encourages us to minister to God, not to something good other than God. But look at the situation among Christians today. Nearly all Christians are ministering to something other than God, not to God Himself. They go to the mission field, preach the gospel, win souls, and teach the Bible. There are many such works, works which are for God, but which are other than God Himself. All those engaged in such work have the right to enjoy the open Christ, the open manna. But there is still the top portion of Christ which is kept in the presence of God, reserved especially for those who do not serve anything other than God Himself.

Today we are in the same situation as that of the church at Pergamos. Christianity has gone out from the presence of God. Not only apostate Christianity but even the so-called fundamental Christianity is far off from God's presence. Christianity does many things for God, but these things are not God Himself. Hence, there is a special portion of Christ kept in the presence of God for the dear ones who overcome the situation of the church in Pergamos. To overcome the condition of the church in Pergamos is to separate yourself from the general practice of today's Christianity and to remain in the presence of God ministering directly to Him, not to anything else. Here we have the enjoyment of the hidden manna, the special portion of Christ. Here we enjoy something of Christ which all those who are far off from His presence cannot taste.

Consider the service around the tabernacle in the Old Testament. The Levites served in the outer court, and the

priests served in the outer court and in the Holy Place where they arranged the showbread, trimmed the lamp, and burned the incense. But when the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies, there was hardly any work to do. Here, in the Holy of Holies, the high priest ministered directly in the presence of God. Here, in the Holy of Holies, the ministering one enjoys the hidden manna. What is the hidden manna? It is that portion of Christ which we enjoy in the presence of God when there is no distance between us and Him.

As we all can testify, there have been many times when we realized that we were not very close to the Lord. Yet, although there was a distance between us and the Lord, we still enjoyed something of Him. Nevertheless, we had the sense that our enjoyment of the Lord was not that sweet. At other times we were somewhat closer to the Lord and sensed that our enjoyment of Him was sweeter. Some of the young people may still be tempted to go to the movies. If a young brother goes to a movie, he may, in a sense, still enjoy Christ while he is there. As he is watching the movie, Christ may disturb him, saying, "What are you doing here? Get out of here and don't come back anymore." What kind of experience is this? It is an experience of Christ as the most open portion of the open manna. Sometimes as Christian husbands and wives are exchanging words with one another, they have the sense, even as they are arguing, that they are enjoying Christ. When a brother is arguing with his wife, the Lord may say, "Stop! What are you doing here? You are just damaging the whole situation. Don't do this anymore. Go to your bedroom. kneel down, and pray to Me." This also is an enjoyment of Christ as the open manna. But at other times, when there is no distance between us and the Lord, we enjoy Christ in the most intimate and hidden way. This is the enjoyment of the hidden manna the hidden portion of Christ.

Many of us who were involved in various types of Christian work in the past were enlightened to see that we could no longer participate in such work. We gave it up and

took the narrow way. Outwardly, people said of us, "You are killing yourself." Yes, by giving up our work we were killing ourselves. But at the same time, after dropping our work for the Lord Himself, not allowing even the work of saving souls or of teaching the Bible to be a distance between us and the Lord, we immediately came into the direct presence of the Lord and enjoyed the hidden manna. Why can I not join so many types of work? Because such work is far from the presence of God. It is worldly, a sign of the church which has married the world and is full of worldliness. When we forsook that work, even at the cost of our lives, we were brought directly into the presence of the Lord. Many of us have had this experience.

In 1932 we began to have the church life in my home town. After approximately a year, the opposition came. I had been respected among the Christians, and nearly everyone loved me. But because of the church life, even some who were intimate with me would not greet me on the street. I was bothered by all the opposition and attack, thinking that I might be wrong in following the Lord in this way and wondering why the Lord's children were treating me so badly. However, as I went to the Lord regarding this, what intimacy there was between Him and me! I simply do not have the words to describe it. As I look back upon it now, I can see that it was the enjoyment of the hidden manna.

The hidden manna is the same as the open manna but in a different situation. When the manna is in the open air, it is the open manna. When it is in the presence of the Lord, concealed under several layers, it becomes the hidden manna. In nature, function, and every other aspect, the hidden manna is the same as the open manna. While there is no difference in nature or in function, there is a difference in position. The open manna is open to the public and the hidden manna is closed. We all must ask ourselves whether we would go along with worldly Christians or with God. If we go along with worldly Christianity, we may only enjoy the open manna, the open Christ. However, we shall

be unable to enjoy the hidden Christ because He is always hidden in God.

The farther we are from God, the less service we have toward Him. The closer we are to Him, the more service we render to Him. Eventually, when we enter into the presence of the divine glory in the Holy of Holies, all service ceases. Here we only have the presence of the Lord and enjoy the hidden Christ, the hidden manna. It is here that we have direct fellowship with the Lord and know His heart and His intention. It is here that we can be charged with Him, with His intention, and with all He wants us to do. In this way we become a person who knows His heart and His intention. When we are such a person, His commitment will be ours. Why do we have God's commitment? Because we are in His presence. How do we know that we are in the presence of God? We know it from within and by realizing that there is no distance between us and God. We also know it by the deep inner sense that we are enjoying the hidden Christ as the top portion of the produce of the good land. This is the hidden manna. Praise the Lord!

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIXTY-ONE

THE BUDDING ROD

(1)

In this message we come to the matter of the budding rod (Heb. 9:4; Num. 17:1-10). Not many Christians have realized the full significance of the budding rod. Many simply regard the record of the budding rod as an interesting Bible story of a piece of dried wood that budded, blossomed, and yielded fruit overnight. But this incident is not a small point in the divine revelation.

Christians pay attention to the tabernacle. We have seen that with the tabernacle there are the altar and the laver in the outer court; the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar in the Holy Place; and the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies. The ark of testimony, the unique unit in the Holy of Holies, signifies Christ as the unique testimony of God. The contents of the ark comprise three items: the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the tables of the law. In the three previous messages, we have covered the first item, the hidden manna. Many Christians can understand something of the manna, for they know that it is a heavenly food signifying Christ as the bread of life. It is difficult, however, to understand the significance of the budding rod.

THREE SYMBOLS OF EXPERIENCES

The children of Israel had many experiences in the wilderness, and the Lord commanded them to place in His presence symbols of three of the experiences through which they passed. These symbols were the tables of testimony, the manna, and the budding rod. After the Israelites had received the law at Mount Sinai, the Lord told them to put

the two tables of the law into the ark (Exo. 34:1, 29; 25:21; 40:20). An omer full of manna was put in a pot and laid up the Lord to be kept (Exo. 16:32-34). In the wilderness, the children of Israel also passed through some experiences of rebellion. Numbers 16 is an account of the most serious rebellion. Out of that rebellion came the budding rod, which was put before the testimony, which was in the ark, as a sign (Num. 17:10-11). By this we see that each of these items came out of the experiences of the Israelites. They were not teachings, but the issue, the outcome, of their experiences. Thus, if we try to understand these three items by our mentality and for the purpose of knowledge, we shall not succeed. We can only understand them in, with, and for our experiences.

THE FOCUS OF THE DIVINE REVELATION

If we would understand the budding rod, we must have a little background. God's purpose is to gain a collective people to be His corporate expression to express and represent Him that He might have a dominion, a kingdom, in which to carry out His eternal economy. Many people think that God had a partial love for the Jews, working for them and doing things for them, and that He did not care for the Gentiles. This is a religious concept; it is not the focus of the divine revelation. The focus of the divine revelation is that the eternal God has a purpose. This purpose is to gain a people as a corporate unit to contain Him, to be one with Him, and to let Him be one with them that they might be the living expression of the invisible God, and that God might have a kingdom on earth to carry out His economy for His glory and to deal with His enemy. This was God's purpose when He called the children of Israel out of Egypt, making them a chosen and a called people.

THE NEED OF LEADERSHIP FOR THE BUILDING UP OF GOD'S PEOPLE

As such a people outside of Egypt, the Israelites were walking in the wilderness toward God's goal. The children of Israel were at least a few million in number, for the male

warriors alone numbered more than six hundred thousand (Num. 1:45-46). Since the number of the Israelites was so great, there was certainly the need, as there is today, for the building up of God's people. For the building up of the people of God, there was, in turn, the need for some authority. Using today's term, there was the need of leadership. As we shall see, God did not only raise up this leadership--He built it up. The leadership among the children of Israel was a corporate leadership comprising at least two men: Moses, representing the aspect of dominion and kingship, and Aaron, representing the aspect of image and priesthood.

THE PRIESTHOOD AND THE KINGSHIP

In order for God's people to express God and to represent Him, there must be both the priesthood and the kingship. Even the New Testament tells us clearly that in God's redemption He has made us priests and kings (Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10). Thus, we have the priesthood and we are in the kingship. We have the priesthood so that we may express God. This is related to the image of God. The kingship is for God's dominion. God created man in His image and gave him dominion over all the creatures (Gen. 1:26). This is the kingship for God's kingdom. In the church today there is still the need of the priesthood to express God and the kingship to represent God. In the coming millennial kingdom, we shall also be the priests expressing God and the kings representing God (Rev. 20:6). Furthermore, for eternity in the New Jerusalem we shall be priests and kings (Rev. 22:3-5) expressing God through our priesthood and representing Him with His dominion in our kingship. From the first chapter of Genesis through the last chapter of Revelation, the Bible is very consistent about these two aspects of God's corporate people.

THE BUILDING UP OF THE LEADERSHIP

Moses, representing the kingship, and Aaron, representing the priesthood, were put together for God's leadership. As we have already mentioned, they were both

raised up and built up. God did not take Moses and put him into the leadership immediately after he had completed his education in Pharaoh's palace. No, after Moses had been educated, God brought him into the wilderness where He built up his leadership. Moses was born into a Jewish family and thus received the knowledge concerning God. Since he did not have a worldly education, God raised up the circumstances to enable him to receive the highest education in Pharaoh's palace (Acts 7:22). I believe that his education was higher than that of a Ph.D. Although he was so well educated, he was still not qualified to be the leader. During his first forty years, Moses learned of God and gained the world's best education. After that, he had to spend another forty years in the wilderness in order to be built up as a leader. The Bible does not afford us a clear record regarding the leadership of Aaron, but, in principle, Aaron must have also been under God's building hand. When Moses told the Lord that he was not eloquent but was "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exo. 4:10), the Lord said that Aaron, his brother, who could speak well, would be unto Moses "instead of a mouth" and that Moses would "be to him instead of God" (Exo. 4:14, 16). Only after Moses and Aaron had been built up as leaders were they able to take the lead.

THE REBELLION IN THE WILDERNESS

The journey through the wilderness was a test to the Israelites. When the Lord sent Moses to the children of Israel, He told him to speak to the people, saying on His behalf, "I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto...a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exo. 3:17). This was a good promise. The children of Israel were delivered out of the land of Egypt and they should have entered into the land of milk and honey. But due to their unbelief, which is recorded in Numbers 14. they could not enter in. Eventually, in Numbers 16, the rebels blamed Moses and Aaron, and not their own unbelief, for their not entering into the good land. The rebellious ones said, "Is it a small thing that thou has brought us up out of a land

that

floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey" (Num. 16:13-14). Numbers 17:10 refers to these rebellious ones as "the rebels." The Hebrew word rendered rebels means "sons of rebellion." These sons of rebellion seemed to be saying to Moses and Aaron, "You promised to bring us into a land flowing with milk and honey, but you have not done it. Don't you know that the land out of which you brought us was a land of milk and honey? You have not fulfilled your promise." These sons of rebellion even said that Egypt was the land of milk and honey. What rebellion!

Who were these rebels? The first was Korah. Korah, who was a Levite (Num. 16:1), considered himself to be the same as Moses and Aaron, who also were Levites. Korah might have said within himself, "You two are Levites. How about me? Am I not also a Levite? Why must you take the lead, while I have no share in it?" Two of the other rebels were Dathan and Abiram, descendants of Reuben, the first son of Jacob. Considering themselves to be the tribe of the birthright, they might have said, "You Levites are number three, but we, the sons of Reuben, the first son of Jacob, are number one. Since you came after us, why should only the two of you take the lead?" Eventually, they all said to Moses and Aaron, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" (Lev. 16:3). This was the subtle, devilish argument and condemnation within those rebels. What a rebellious root we see here!

NO LOSS OF TEMPER

Moses and Aaron were not young men. Both of them must have been about a hundred years of age. According to Psalm 90, which was written by Moses, the span of a human life is seventy years. If one's health is good, he might live to be eighty years of age. Hence, according to Moses' own writing, he should have been dead. But he was

serving God after the age of death, and Aaron was even older than he. What was the good of their being so aged? The fact that it was not easy for them to lose their temper. The rebellion in Numbers 16 was serious and terrible, but it did not cause Moses to lose his temper. When the rebels gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron, Moses "fell upon his face" (Num. 16:4). As we shall see in the next message, God came in to judge this rebellion.

THE VINDICATION OF THE PROPER LEADERSHIP

In Numbers 17 God seemed to be saying to Moses, "Those sons of rebellion were fighting with you over the leadership. Tell them that I shall do something to vindicate the leadership. I shall show them who the real leaders are, and their mouths will be shut." In Numbers 17:2 the Lord said to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod." A rod is a piece of dead and dried-up wood. Its nature is that of dead wood. What is the function of a rod? It is to rule over others. A rod is different from a staff. A staff is for helping and supporting those who are weak and crippled and who have difficulty standing or walking. But a rod is not for supporting; it is for ruling and beating. According to the book of Proverbs, a father must use a rod to discipline his children (Prov. 23:13-14).

Our God is very wise, and He had the best way to vindicate the leadership. God did not argue. Rather, He seemed to say, "Since you have been arguing about the leadership, I ask you to bring your rods in before the testimony. You thought that you had the rods and could rule over others, and that Moses and Aaron assumed too much. You said that since you are all the people of God you all have the same authority. Do you have authority? Every tribe has a rod. Bring your rods to Me and put them in front of My testimony for a night, and let us see what will come out." In Numbers 17:5 the Lord said, "And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose,

shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you."

Twelve rods were laid up before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness (Num. 17:7). Numbers 17:8 says, "It came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." This signifies that the real leadership, the real authority, is in the budding life. This life not only buds and blossoms; it yields fruit that we might feed others, not that we might beat them. Although the rod is for ruling, this ruling is for feeding, not for beating.

The leadership among God's people is different from that found among the Gentiles. All the Gentile kings use their rods for ruling. No rod among the Gentile leaders is useful for feeding, because none of their rods is living. Every rod is just a piece of dead wood. Only with the proper leadership among God's people is there a rod budding with resurrection life and yielding fruit to nourish others.

The almond tree is the first tree in the year to blossom, blossoming in either January or February. The first fruit which comes out of a tree is the almond. This signifies resurrection. Hence, the budding, blossoming, fruit-yielding rod signifies the resurrection life of Christ. The leadership among God's children must be Christ Himself as the resurrection life which buds, blossoms, and bears almonds to feed God's people.

AMBITION FOR LEADERSHIP

Some may say, "I am not an elder and I don't want to be a leader among the Lord's children. I want to be free, take it easy, and not be bothered by this kind of thing." Although you may say this, I do not believe it, for everyone likes to be a leader. If you say that you do not like to be a leader, you are a liar. Deep within, you enjoy being a leader. When the service groups are arranged, you like to

be number one. You do not want to be the last. The sisters may say. "As females, we don't care for the leadership." Sisters, do not say this. Suppose a piano service group is formed which includes five sisters. Every sister on the group will be concerned about the order in which the names are mentioned. When the fifth sister hears that her name is mentioned last, she may be so bothered that she will be unable to pray for a week. She may say, "If I can't be the first, I should at least be the third, but I'm not even the fourth. I have been saved for over fifteen years. Why should I be the last? What have the elders done? Don't they have any discernment?" This is the ambition for leadership.

I thank the Lord for this ambition. It is a good ambition, far better than the ambition to be the President of the United States. It is good that Christians have such ambition. If we had no ambition, we would be like chairs and benches, and God could do nothing with us. But because we are so ambitious, God can do something with us. Probably only those who are aged are no longer ambitious. A brother who is close to eighty years of age may have no ambition, but a young man may desire to be today's Apostle Paul. I encourage all the young people to be like this. I would be happy if all the young people would desire to be today's Peter or Paul.

In our life-study of Genesis, we have seen that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob plus Joseph are aspects of one complete person in the experience of life. In like manner, we should not consider Korah as being separate from Moses. In our nature, we have the same ambition Moses had. When Moses was forty, he was ambitious to take the lead to rescue God's people from the tyranny of the Egyptian king (Acts 7:23-27). However, in Moses there was also the rebellious element of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Young brothers, I know that you have both the positive nature of Moses and the rebellious nature of Korah within you. Even worse, the negative elements of Dathan and Abiram are also in you. In the following message, we shall see that God has judged the rebellious nature and

resurrected the positive element, the element of resurrection life.

If you had never been saved, you would have no ambition among God's people. Why are you so ambitious in the church life? Simply because you love the Lord. If you did not love the Lord and if you had no ambition, you would be like the street people, wandering about aimlessly, having no ambition to be anything for God. But today, as those who are in the church loving the Lord, you are ambitious and expect that one day you will be qualified for the leadership. This is a good ambition, yet it must be resurrected. But we must also realize that within us we also have Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and all the rebellious elements. At the same time that we are ambitious for God's goal, we are also rebellious. I understand this very well because I have been sick of this disease myself.

THE REBELLION OF THE SOUL AGAINST THE SPIRIT

Not only is there within us the rebellion against other leaders, but many times our soul rebels against our spirit. (Often our mind says, "Spirit, why cannot I serve God? Why cannot I, the mind, do something for God?" Have you not had this kind of rebellion within you? Many times my soul has rebelled against my spirit, saying, "Spirit, I don't agree with this. I am smarter than you are and I can do a great deal. You are a part of Witness Lee. Am I, the soul, not also a part of Witness Lee? Are we not all the children of God? Why do you, the spirit, take so much upon you?" Many times in functioning we have used our soul in a rebellious way to show that our soul can do something for God and that we, the natural man, can do some service for God without exercising our spirit. This is a type of rebellion.

THE AMBITION AND REBELLION WITHIN US

Do not consider the children of Israel in Numbers 16 as being separate from one another. We must look at them as

a collective person, a corporate person, who includes Moses, Aaron, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Within us, there are both Moses and Aaron and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Both ambition and rebellion are in our being. Sometimes we cannot help laughing at ourselves, for we are so ambitious for God, yet we are so rebellious. I believe that everyone of us has experienced being ambitious and rebellious at the same time. Unless you have no heart for God, you have experienced this. As soon as you began to have a heart for God, you found that both ambition and rebellion were within you. The first rebellion is the rebellion of the soul, the mind, against your own spirit. The second rebellion is your rebellion against those who are over you or before you.

Although you may not admit it, this rebellion is in you. You may say, "Brother So-and-So, I love you and I submit myself to you." But while you are saying with your lips that you submit to Brother So-and-So, deep within you are rebellious, saying to yourself, "Brother So-and-So, you have taken too much upon you. You are altogether too much! In some aspects you are not as qualified as I am. One day my qualifications will be vindicated by God." This is the rebellion within you.

JUDGMENT AND VINDICATION

Thank God for ambition and, in a negative sense, thank God for rebellion. The rebellion in Numbers 16 brought in God's judgment and vindication. Firstly, God judged the rebels. After judging the rebellious element, the Lord commanded that the brass censers of the rebellious ones be made into plates for the covering of the altar as a sign to the children of Israel (Num. 16:36-40). After this, God told Moses to have twelve rods laid before His testimony. This was not for judgment; it was for vindication. Out of this vindication, the budding rod came forth. God then told Moses to bring Aaron's rod before the testimony "to be kept for a sign against the rebels" (Num. 17:10). Hence, there were two signs--the brass plates covering the altar, which came as a result of God's judgment, and the budding rod

before the testimony, which came through God's vindication.

Ambition and rebellion are both within us. We all have them, for we are the real Israel. Among and within the Israelites there were both ambition and rebellion. Firstly, God judged and burned the rebellious element. This judgment was then followed by God's vindication. As a result of this judgment and vindication, two signs came forth--one at the altar in the outer court and the other in the ark in the Holy of Holies. These signs indicate that our natural, rebellious nature must be judged and burned, and that resurrected ambition must be vindicated, and made to bud, blossom, and yield fruit. In this way we have the proper leadership.

In the ark in the Holy of Holies we experience Christ as the real leadership. Concerning the leadership, there are two aspects. The first is that the natural, rebellious element must be burned on the altar. The second is that in the Holy of Holies whatever has been regenerated into us and whatever belongs to the resurrected life must be enriched, strengthened, and made to bud, blossom, and bear almonds. Here is real leadership.

EVERY MEMBER, LIKE THE LEADER, BEING A SERVING ONE

A leader among the Lord's people is a serving one. Although you may not be an elder or the leader of a service group, you are still a serving one. In principle, you are the same as a leader in the Lord's service. Every member of the church is a serving one. God's building depends upon the serving ones. As a serving one, there is in you the rebellious element which must be judged and burned on the altar as a sign to the universe that your natural man has been dealt with. But there is also another element within you--the regenerated element, the life element which is Christ Himself as the resurrection life. When you get into the ark in the Holy of Holies and touch Christ as the resurrection life, this element will become your

leadership. It will bud, blossom, and yield almonds for the nourishment of others.

Even the youngest brothers and sisters are serving ones. But their rebellious nature must also be burned, dealt with, and judged, and the resurrection life within them must bud, blossom, and yield almonds to feed others. Even within the youngest brothers and sisters are both ambition and rebellion. Even they have criticized the elders.

Praise the Lord for our proper ambition. Nevertheless, we must recognize that we also have the rebellious element. As long as these two things, the ambition and the rebellion, are fighting within us, the building can never go on. Thus, there is the need to judge the rebellion and to vindicate the ambition. The element of Christ within us must be vindicated, strengthened, enriched, uplifted, and made to bud, blossom, and yield almonds. The judgment is upon the rebellion, and the vindication is upon the ambition. We do have such a proper ambition. As we walk the path from the altar to the budding rod, the rebellion must be eliminated and the positive ambition must be released. Then we shall have the proper leadership and the proper service which are for the building up of God's people. God's building depends upon this budding rod, which can only be experienced within. the ark in the Holy of Holies. For this, we must come forward to enter the Holy of Holies and enjoy the very Christ who is the unique ark of God's testimony.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIXTY-TWO

THE BUDDING ROD

(2)

As we pointed out in the last message, few Christians have paid attention to the budding rod in Hebrews 9:4. The reason for this is that the budding rod is a matter of experience. Although we may understand the types of the tabernacle, we cannot know the true significance of the tabernacle until we have had the necessary experiences. As far as the experience of the tabernacle is concerned, the writings and messages of the various Christian teachers mainly speak of the altar. But once we go on from the altar to the Holy Place, we find that not many have touched the real experiences there. Thus, throughout the years, the three items in the ark in the Holy of Holies have remained a mystery. Few have even talked about them. Have you ever heard a message on the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the two tables of the law contained in the ark? This shortage is altogether due to the lack of experience.

THE BUDDING ROD AND THE BUILDING UP OF GOD'S PEOPLE

The budding rod is related to the building up of God's people. If we only had Hebrews 9:4, we could not see this. But if we consider the first mention of the budding rod in the Old Testament, we shall see that it is fully related to the building up of God's people. In the previous message we pointed out that for the fulfillment of His purpose God had to have a people as a corporate unit. In the Old Testament, this people was the children of Israel. They were at least a

few million in number and had to be built up as one. According to the record of the history of Israel, they were treated as one unit. The Bible does not say that they were saved individually. No, they were all saved corporately. They held the Passover all together as a corporate people and they all crossed the Red Sea as one unit. Moses did not cross the Red Sea alone, with Aaron following him a few days later. Even as they were wandering in the wilderness, they were a corporate people, not a group of individuals with everyone taking his own way. Moreover, among them was the tabernacle, God's unique dwelling place. There was not one tabernacle of God in Moses' back yard and another one in Aaron's yard. There was just one tabernacle which, as God's unique dwelling place, was the center for the building up of God's people. As we have seen, in order for so many to be built up together, there was the need of the leadership. The budding rod is related to this leadership and is for the building up of God's people.

Korah, who belonged to the tribe of Levi, the same tribe to which Moses and Aaron belonged, considered himself to be equal to Moses and Aaron. Korah might have said, "Moses and Aaron, you are children of Levi. I am, too. I am the same as you are." Along with Korah, there were Dathan and Abiram, descendants of Reuben, the first son of Jacob. Dathan and Abiram probably thought that because their tribe was the first, they also should be among the leaders. These three men stirred up a great rebellion. According to Numbers 16:2, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram "rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown." As Numbers 16 indicates, nearly the whole congregation of Israel rebelled against Moses and Aaron. Undoubtedly, that rebellion was the work of the enemy to destroy the building among God's people. It surely hindered the children of Israel from going on to reach God's goal. I mention this to show that the budding rod is related to the building up of God's people.

When many Christians read Hebrews 9, they pay no attention to the budding rod because among them there is not the building up of God's people. I would like to address a question to those who have been Christians for many years: have you ever heard a message telling you that what God needs today is the building up of His people? There is no such thing in today's Christianity. Because most Christians do not pay attention to this matter of the building, they are not interested in the budding rod. Many today talk about spirituality, gifts, behavior, and speaking in tongues, but who is concerned about the building up of God's people? Without the building up of His people, there is no way for God to fulfill His purpose. God wants a people that is built up as a unique unit. As the Head, Christ needs the Body, not many separate members. And God needs a house, not a pile of stones. This is what God is after today. If we are not for this, we have neither the standing nor the qualifications to understand the significance of the budding rod. If you have no interest in God's eternal purpose but are still for the world, everything in this message will merely be vain talk as far as you are concerned.

May the Lord be merciful to us that we may see that what He is seeking today is the building. It is not a question of how spiritual we are, nor how good we are, nor how gifted we are; it is a question of whether or not we have been truly built up with God's people. Today there is too much religion, too much of the human concept, and too little divine revelation. If we would understand the significance of the budding rod, we must have a heavenly, divine vision that God's need today is for the building up of His people. What matters to God is not how many people He has, but whether or not they have been built up. If we are here for God's eternal purpose, then we must see that God's need is for the building.

Consider the tabernacle. There is no building at the altar. What we see at the altar is the sacrifice for redemption. Although this is wonderful, it is not God's goal.

It is the beginning, not the end. As we have seen already, the experience of the tabernacle starts with the altar and consummates with the ark. Within the ark there are three items--the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the tables of the law. At the altar we see nothing regarding the building. Neither do we have the building at the laver. The washing of the life-giving Spirit at the laver is for the building, but it is not the building itself.

From the laver we proceed to the showbread table, where there is much food for us to eat. But eating should not simply be for eating; it also must be for the building. The term hidden manna is used only once in the New Testament. It is found in Revelation 2:17 which says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone." This verse indicates that eating the hidden manna transforms us into a white stone. Eating the hidden manna transforms us into an acceptable stone, and this transformation is for God's building. Eventually, as Revelation 3:12 indicates, the eating ones are built into God's temple. By this we see that eating is for the building. At the showbread table, however, we still do not see the building. Hence, we must not stop here but continue on to our destination.

From the showbread table we go to the lampstand and from there to the incense altar. At neither of these two stations do we see the building. Then we enter into the Holy of Holies, touch the ark, and find within it the budding rod. Why was the budding rod not found at the altar? If it were at the altar, you could never have any experience of the ark. If you enter into the Holy of Holies and experience the ark, you will discover that in the ark is a basic item--the budding rod. Following this, we must learn the significance of the budding rod--that it is related to God's building. If you are seeking the Lord, you must realize that God's goal is to bring you to the budding rod within the ark in the Holy of Holies.

As we have seen, the budding rod signifies that Christ, the resurrected One, should be our life, our living, and the

resurrection life within us, and that this life should bud, blossom, and bear almonds. Is the Christ within you budding? Do not say yes doctrinally, but answer according to your experience. Is your Christ budding, blossoming, and bearing almonds, the fruit of resurrection?

THE AMBITION FOR POSITION

Recently, a brother gave a testimony about being assigned to a service group. When he heard that he had been put on that service group, he wondered whether his position in that group would be the first or last. When he learned that he was not number one, he was somewhat disappointed. That testimony revealed to me that even among us there is the ambition for position. Everyone likes to be number one. Not only is there the ambition for position among us, but also the ambition for promotion. In the church service, the second one is endeavoring to be promoted to the position of number one. Furthermore, those who are first are afraid of losing their leading position. When I learned of this, something within me said, "Do you believe that all the saints in the Lord's recovery are so spiritual that they don't care for position or promotion? Do you think that they just love the Lord and have no ambition for anything? You are too spiritual. There is not such a spiritual condition here." The ambition for position and promotion is found among us.

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON REBELLION

Being ambitious, however, does not work, except in the negative sense of working out God's judgment upon us. In the last message we pointed out that we should not consider Moses, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram as separate individuals but as parts of a corporate people. Likewise, you should not consider yourself only to be like Moses. Although I do not know whether or not you are Moses, I am quite sure that Korah, Dathan, and Abiram are within you. We all have these rebellious elements within us, for we were born with them. We all were born Korahs. But by

God's mercy and grace, the real Moses element is being wrought into us. Without His mercy and grace, we would only be Korah. If in Numbers 16 Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had been dormant, probably nothing would have happened. But they were very ambitious and seemed to say, "Moses and Aaron, are you the only leaders? Are we not leaders also?" Because of this, God's judgment was brought in. The earth swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. 16:31-33), and "there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense" (Num. 16:35).

TWO SIGNS

After this judgment upon rebellion, God commanded that the brass censers of the two hundred and fifty men who were consumed by fire be made into plates for the covering of the altar as a "sign unto the children of Israel" (Num. 16:36-40). These brass plates on the altar became a sign of God's judgment on rebellion. In this we see that the altar is not only a place for our redemption but also a place for our judgment. At the altar the natural element in us is judged, and that judgment remains as a sign, a memorial, and an indicator that our natural life and our natural element must be judged and burned.

In Numbers 16 and 17 there are two signs, one at the altar and the other in the ark. The sign at the altar is the judgment of the natural element (Num. 16:38), and the sign in the ark is the resurrection of the resurrected life (Num. 17:10). In Numbers 17 God told Moses to bring twelve dead rods, one for each of the twelve tribes, and to place them in His presence for a night. That each rod was a dead stick signified that the leaders of the twelve tribes were nothing but dead wood. The next morning one of the twelve rods budded, blossomed, and yielded almonds. This rod did not live by itself but by the resurrection life. This indicated that firstly our natural element must be judged and burned. Our ambition for position and promotion must be burned. Whenever we come into the tabernacle, we must

firstly come to the altar and see there a sign of God's judgment upon our natural element. Both our sin and our natural element must be judged at the altar of brass. After experiencing this judgment at the altar, we may proceed to the laver, the showbread table, the lampstand, the incense altar, and then come forward to the ark in the Holy of Holies. Here in the ark we can see the budding rod. This is the second sign.

The first sign, the brass plates on the altar, signifies that our natural element must be judged and burned. This negative element has no share in God's building. In God's building there is no room for anything natural. If you want to participate in the leadership, your natural Korah, Dathan, and Abiram must be judged and burned, and that judgment must remain as a reminder to you. Whenever you come into God's service, you then will see that reminder on the altar. If we would participate in God's service, we must realize that our natural element must be judged. Whether you desire to be the first or the last, you still must be judged and burned on the altar. The first thing in God's building is His judgment.

Although you may love the Lord and care for His testimony, within you there are the elements of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. At times, the Lord may say to you, "This natural element must be judged. You love Me and you care for My testimony--that is wonderful. But your natural element must be dealt with and condemned." If this does not happen every month, it may happen at least every six months. The more you experience this, the brighter will shine the brass on the altar as a reminder that your natural man must be judged. Hallelujah, for these two signs! One sign is at the altar, and the other is in the ark. In the ark is the budding rod signifying the resurrected Christ in our spirit. This budding rod is the authority.

Suppose that two ambitious brothers are struggling against one another for the leadership, and that only one of them has passed through the experience of Numbers 16

and has been judged and dealt with. The brass on the altar reminds him of God's judgment upon him. As the issue of this experience, he has the budding rod. In a very real sense, the budding rod comes out of the brass altar. In like manner, the resurrection life comes out of the judgment of God upon our natural life. The brother who is struggling against him, however, has not had his natural man dealt with. The brother who has experienced both the judgment of the altar and the budding rod in the ark may be small and rather unintelligent, and the brother who has not been dealt with may say, "Am I not more capable than he? Surely I am. But whatever I do results in death. It is the issue of a rod of dead wood. I'm just a dead stick, but this brother who is less skillful and intelligent than I am, buds, blossoms, and bears almonds." If you bring a case to the natural brother, the issue will always be death, for he is a dead rod and can do nothing but kill. But if you bring a case to the brother with the budding rod, the issue will be buds, blossoms, and fruit. If a deadened person stays with him for a while, he will become alive. As a result, the natural brother will say, "I can't understand why everything that comes to me in the church life becomes dead and everything that comes to this brother becomes so living. God is not fair." But God is more than fair.

NO COMPETITION IN THE CHURCH SERVICE

There should be no competition in the church service. Competition never works. The more you compete to be the first, the less you are qualified even to be the last. The more you compete, the more you will remain in your dead condition. It is not a matter of competition; it is a matter of being judged and of having the self, the natural life, and the natural element burned. Then at the altar there will be a reminder that our natural life must be dealt with and eliminated. Hundreds of us can testify that whenever we competed with others, we were killed. Whenever we say, "Why does God use him and not me?" we are finished. The

more you say this, the less God will use you. The more competitive you are, the less qualified you will be. During the past years I have not seen an exception to this among the Lord's children. We all need to say, "There's nothing good in me. I'm filled with Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and with so many natural things that must be judged on the brass altar." Whoever is willing to be judged will immediately be brought into the Holy of Holies and have the budding rod, the resurrection life. When you are such a person, whatever comes to you, even if it is a dead situation, will issue in life.

THE BUDDING ROD BEING GOD'S VINDICATION

Many Christian organizations are unhappy with us. They say, "How can you claim to be the church? Are we not the church also?" Being the church is not a matter of what we say; it is a question of where the budding rod is. Whether people appreciate us or oppose us means nothing. The only thing that counts is the budding rod. If this is the church in Anaheim, the Lord's testimony in Orange County, it will bud, blossom, and yield almonds to nourish others with resurrection life. Whenever some rumors are spread about us or some papers are written against us, I tell the brothers that those rumors and papers mean nothing and that we should forget about them. The only thing that matters is whether or not we have the budding rod. The budding rod is God's vindication. Of the twelve rods laid up before the Lord, only one budded, blossomed, and yielded almonds. What will you say about this? Although Aaron's rod budded, the rebellious ones were still not convinced. They continued to murmur. Do not think that when the budding rod appears everyone in Orange County will be convinced. No, the more our rod buds, the more murmuring there will be.

What we need, and what the church needs, is the budding rod. Competition, promotion, position, and ambition mean nothing. From now on, in the church

service there will be no number one, number two, nor any other number. Everyone is number nothing. We have no number because we are nothing; we are nobody. We all must be judged, and then we all must have the budding rod.

Having authority is not a matter of what we can do; it is a matter of how much we bud. You may do a great deal, but there is no blossoming. Instead of budding, you die; instead of blossoming, you kill others; and instead of bearing fruit, you deaden everyone who contacts you. This proves that you do not have the authority. However, if you have the budding rod and a dead one contacts you, he will be revived and become living. This proves that you have the authority. The authority is not in our capability or skill. The real vindication is in our budding, not in our doing. Doing means nothing, but budding means everything. In our church life and in the church service, we all must bud, blossom, and yield almonds. This is our need today.

THE WAY TO HAVE THE BUDDING ROD

Now we come to a very crucial point--the way to have the budding rod. The budding rod follows the hidden manna. This means that if we enjoy the hidden manna, we shall bud, for the issue of enjoying the hidden manna is the budding rod. How much you will bud with life depends on how much you eat of the hidden manna. We all need to exercise our spirit to contact the hidden Christ and to enjoy the topmost portion of the Christ hidden in the divine nature. The more we enjoy the hidden Christ as the highest portion in the divine nature, the more our rod will bud. There is no need for you to compete for any position, nor to care for anything. Simply enjoy the hidden manna which will nourish you and cause you to bud. As long as you are budding, you are the authority. If you bud, blossom, and yield almonds, others will know that you are the authority.

The authority among God's people today is neither capability nor position; it is the budding, the blossoming,

and the fruit-bearing. We need to forget our past concern with competition, position, and promotion and have a new start. Among us in the Lord's recovery, we should not be concerned about position. We should only care for the enjoyment of the top portion of the hidden Christ, that we might be able to bud even during the dark night. Although the night is dark, we are budding, blossoming, and yielding almonds to nourish others. The one who buds, blossoms, and yields almonds is surely the authority among God's people.

In the book of Hebrews, we see that we must experience Christ at the altar, at the laver, at the showbread table, at the lampstand, at the incense altar, and at the ark in the Holy of Holies. Here in the Holy of Holies we enjoy Christ in God's presence. This enjoyment causes us to bud, not with our ability but with the resurrected life. In this way, God can exercise His authority for the building up of His people. I have the full assurance that this is exactly what God is doing among us. He is causing us all to realize the judgment of the natural element and to participate in the resurrected life that we may bud, blossom, and yield almonds.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIXTY-THREE

THE LAW--THE TESTIMONY OF GOD

As we have pointed out, in the ark in the Holy of Holies there were three crucial items: the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the tables of the law (9:4). In the past five messages we have somewhat covered the hidden manna and the budding rod. In this message we come to the tables of the law.

THE LAW BEING GOD'S TESTIMONY

In the Bible it is difficult to find the term the tables of the law. The Old Testament frequently speaks of the tables of the testimony (Exo. 31:18), and the New Testament mentions the tables of the covenant (Heb. 9:4). Why was the law called the tables of the testimony and the tables of the covenant? It is quite easy to understand why the law was called the tables of the covenant because in the Old Testament the law was the old covenant. It is difficult, however, to understand why the law was called the tables of the testimony. When God commanded Moses to build the ark (Exo. 25:10), He said, "Thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee" (Exo. 25:16). The testimony in this verse undoubtedly denotes the law. God did not say to put the law in the ark; He said to put the testimony into it. Because the testimony was placed in the ark, the ark was called the ark of the testimony (Exo. 25:22). Furthermore, the tabernacle was called the tabernacle of the testimony (Num. 17:8, Heb.). Hence, we have the testimony, the ark of the testimony, and the tabernacle of the testimony. When the manna and the budding rod were placed before the law, they were put in

front of the testimony (Exo. 16:34; Num. 17:10). Whatever was placed in front of the testimony was before God (Exo. 16:33-34), for the testimony could not be separated from Him. When something was before the testimony, it was before God, and when it was before God, it was before the testimony. What is this testimony? We have seen that the ark is called the ark of the testimony and that the tabernacle is called the tabernacle of the testimony. The law was called the testimony because it testified of God. For this reason, it was God's testimony.

In Genesis 1:26 we are told that God created man in His own image. God's intention is to have an expression through man. This expression is His testimony. Therefore, the testimony of God is the expression of God. It is God expressed. God's intention has been, still is, and for eternity will be the same--to work Himself into man that He may be expressed and have a testimony. But before God accomplished this, man fell. In his fallen nature, man tried to do good in order to please God. Because of this, God gave man the law. God gave man the law because man did not know that, as a fallen being, he could neither satisfy God nor express Him. After the law was given, however, God immediately changed the term, calling it the testimony. What God gave man was the law, but it was not mainly called the law but the testimony. In Psalm 119 the word testimony is used many times to denote the law (vv. 2, 88, 168). Every time this word is used in Psalm 119 it refers to the law.

According to man's concept, the law means the ten commandments. But God's intention was not that the law should be some commandments, but that it should be His testimony. When I was in Christianity, I never heard the term testimony used with respect to the law. I only heard about the ten commandments. In Christianity, when many young people are examined for membership in the so-called churches, they must recite the ten commandments. Although you may be able to recite the commandments, perhaps you have never heard that the testimony in Psalm 119 is the law. In fact, in the book of the Psalms the word

testimony refers to the law. I say once again that in God's intention and according to His concept, the law is His testimony. But in the human concept, the law is the ten commandments. If you are trying to keep God's law, it will certainly be the ten commandments to you. But if you know what life is, and if, instead of trying to keep the law, you walk with God, you will realize that the law is God's testimony, God's expression.

THE TWO ASPECTS OF EVERY LAW

Every law has two aspects, the aspect of the law-keeper and the aspect of the law-maker. Laws are for people to keep. As we have mentioned several times in the past, the kind of law you make reveals the kind of person you are. If bank robbers could make laws, they would legalize bank robbing. Some legislators want to legalize such an evil thing as prostitution. This reveals that they themselves are evil. Evil lawmakers will enact evil laws. That the laws we make express the kind of people we are is true not only in a nation but also in a family. If the parents in a family get up very late every day and do not clean the house, they will make family laws which allow their children to get up late and to be messy. But if the parents are strict, clean, neat, and diligent, they will have a different family law. They will require their children to arise early in the morning, to wash themselves, and then to clean their rooms. If I visit this kind of home and see this type of regulation, I shall immediately know that the parents there must be diligent and clean. But if I go into a home where everything is a mess and where the children are allowed to sleep until late in the morning, I shall also realize what kind of people the parents in that home are. Since the laws we make testify to what we are, our law becomes our testimony. On the side of the law-maker, the law is a testimony; on the side of the law-keeper, the law is a commandment or regulation. God's law also has these two aspects. To us who attempt to keep the law, it is the ten commandments, but to God, it is His testimony.

THE LAW AS A TYPE OF CHRIST

I have read some books which say that the law is a type of Christ. For a long time, I was troubled by this. How can the law, whose position is that of the concubine (Gal. 4:24), be a type of Christ? From the aspect of the law as commandments for us to keep, its position is that of the concubine. But from the aspect of the law as the testimony of God, it is a type of Christ. The real, living, full, and adequate testimony of God is just Christ Himself. Thus, the law typifies Christ as God's living testimony. Christ expresses God. The law was given, but Christ came to be the living expression of God (John 1:17). In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God (John 1:1). Then the Word became flesh, full of grace and reality (John 1:14), for the purpose of being the expression of God. Because God is embodied in Christ, Christ is the living, full, and adequate testimony of God.

We have seen that the law is God's testimony, God's expression. If you want to know what kind of God God is, you should read the laws He has made. If you read the ten commandments, you will see that the Maker of those laws certainly must be a holy One, a righteous One, a loving One, One who is in the light. The ten commandments prove that God is holy and righteous and that He is love and light. God is a God of light and a God of love. He Himself is light and is love (1 John 1:5; 4:8), and He is holy and righteous. The law testifies that He is such a God. But the law was merely a testimony in letters. When Christ came, the testimony of God became living. It was no longer letters, but a living Person. While Jesus was on earth, He was God's living testimony. Wherever He went, He expressed God. Whatever He did, said, and thought expressed God. Because He was the embodiment of God, He was the expression and testimony of God. If in the days of the Old Testament you wanted to know what God was like, you had to consult the law. But today if you want to know what God is like, you must come to Jesus Christ. In

the Old Testament the law was God's testimony, but today Jesus Christ is His living, full, and adequate testimony.

THE ULTIMATE AND CENTRAL ITEM IN THE TABERNACLE

Holding this concept of the law as the testimony of God will help us to understand Hebrews 9. Hebrews 9:4 mentions the tables of the covenant, referring to the tables of the testimony of the law. According to Hebrews 9, the tables of the covenant were the last of the items related to the tabernacle. In the outer court were the altar and the laver; in the Holy Place were the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar; and in the Holy of Holies was the ark in which were the hidden manna, the budding rod, and the tables of the covenant. In this we see that the last and ultimate item is the tables of the covenant, that is, the testimony. The three items in the ark are deeper than those in the Holy Place. The items in the Holy Place are merely the beginning, but the items in the ark are the ultimate consummation. The ultimate consummation of the showbread is the hidden manna, the ultimate consummation of the incense altar is the budding rod, and the ultimate consummation of the lampstand is the testimony. Of all the things related to the tabernacle, the tables of the testimony are the topmost. Not only are they the top item; they are also the most central item. They are in the very center of the tabernacle.

In the tabernacle we can see a number of layers. The first layer is the curtain separating the tabernacle and the outer court from everything else, the second is the wall of the tabernacle, and the third is the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. The ark of the testimony, within which is the testimony, is the fourth layer. Thus, the testimony is in the center of the tabernacle.

THE LAW OF LIFE BEING IN CHRIST

As saved people, we are the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16).

Our body is the outer court, our soul is the Holy Place, and our spirit is the Holy of Holies. The law of life is neither in the outer court nor in the Holy Place but in the Holy of Holies. However, it is not sufficient to say that it is only in the Holy of Holies, for it is in the ark, that is, within the fourth layer. The law of life is in the ark, the ark is in the Holy of Holies, the Holy of Holies is in the tabernacle, and the tabernacle is within the separating curtain of the outer court. We have seen that the outer court is our body, that the Holy Place is our soul, and that the Holy of Holies is our spirit. What then is the ark? It is Christ. Since Christ is the ark, we should not say that the law of life is directly in our spirit. Although we have a spirit, if we do not have Christ in it, the law of life is not in our spirit. The law of life is in our spirit because the law of life is in Christ and Christ is in our spirit.

Why did God not tell His people to put the law in the altar? Why did He command them to put it into the ark? It would have been a mistake for God to put the law in the altar, because His intention was not that man should keep the law. No, according to God's concept, the law was to be His testimony. Therefore, He put His law in the ark in the Holy of Holies.

Do you think that you can be like God? It is impossible. If you read the ten commandments every day, prayed about them, fasted concerning them, and tried your best to keep them, you would still be unable to fulfill them. You can never make yourself correspond to God's law. Neither can you express Him. God's intention is not that we try to obey the law nor attempt to express Him. Firstly, His intention is to show us what He is. However greatly we may love the law, we cannot fulfill it. What then should God do? He said, "This is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them, and I will be God to them, and they shall be a people to Me" (8:10). God's intention is to put His law into us, into our inward parts and even into

our heart. This does not mean that we should keep the law. No, it means that the law will work itself out from within us. This reveals why God put the law into the ark and put the ark into the Holy of Holies. How can this law get into us? Only through Christ. When Christ gets into us, this law comes into us. When we received Christ, we received the law. The law is in Christ, and Christ is in our spirit. Thus, Romans 8:2 speaks of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Not only is this law in Christ; it is Christ. When you received Christ and accepted Him as your Savior, you received the law of life.

LETTING CHRIST LIVE OUT OF US

When God gave the law to Moses, He did not intend that His people should keep it. He gave them the law to show them what kind of God He is and to reveal to them what He wants. Because He wants man to be His expression, He wanted them to be like Him, to be the same as He is. Although God had this desire, nothing happened. Instead, man tried to imitate God, attempting to make himself the same as God. But man failed. One day the real law, the living law, Christ, the reality of God's testimony, came, and we received Him into us. As a result, this real law, the reality of the law, has been wrought into the very center of our being. Now in the innermost part of our being is something wonderful--Christ Himself as the reality of the law. We have seen that the innermost matter in the tabernacle is the law. Today, the innermost thing within us is Christ in our spirit as the reality of the law. Now that we have this law within us, it is no longer a matter of our keeping the law; it is absolutely a matter of allowing Christ to live out of us. We should not try to keep the law from without, but let Christ live Himself out from within.

Every religion, whether it is Judaism, Catholicism, or Protestantism, is the same. God's intention is to put the law into our innermost part and to have us submit ourselves to it, not to try to keep it. Although we cannot keep the law, we should submit to it and let it live itself out

of us. Religion, which teaches people to keep the law, is the exact opposite of this. When Christians read the Bible, they often select verses to keep as commandments. For example, the married brothers who are not good husbands always choose the commandment which says that the wives should submit to their husbands. But the better husbands choose the commandment which says that the husbands should love their wives. These brothers say, "O Lord, I can't fulfill this commandment. Please come in to help me. Lord, in the past I have not behaved as a loving husband. Forgive me and make me the best husband." Although you may pray in this way, you will never succeed. Such a husband must realize that the real love for his wife is Christ. Since this love is in us, we need not try to love. We should simply submit to this love, that is, to Christ, and let Him come out of us.

Take the example of humility. James 4:6 says, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." After reading this verse in the past, I prayed, "Lord, I want to be humble. But You know, Lord, that it's difficult for me to be humble. I ask You to please help me." This prayer is in the darkness of religion. One day, the Lord opened my eyes, and I saw that my name is pride and that I could never be humble. How can pride be humble? I am a dog. How can a dog be a bird? It is impossible. Our eyes must be opened to see that we can never be humble and that real humility is Christ. We should simply submit ourselves to Him and say, "Lord, You do it. It is no longer I, but Christ who lives in and out of me." If you simply submit to Christ, He will live Himself out of you, and you will become the expression and testimony of God. This is God's economy.

THE WAY TO HAVE CHRIST AS THE REALITY OF THE LAW

How can Christ as the reality of the law be real to us? Consider the contents of the ark once again. The first item, the manna, is firstly followed by the budding rod and then by the testimony. This implies and even indicates that

when we eat and enjoy Christ as the hidden manna, something will bud in us. The manna we eat eventually becomes the budding element in us. The more we eat and enjoy Christ, the more He becomes our budding element. When this element blossoms and yields fruit, that is the testimony, the expression. Sometimes in the late afternoon I am exhausted and my stomach is empty. This indicates that I need to eat something. After I eat, I am filled and experience a quick transformation, for what I have eaten for dinner begins to blossom out of me, becoming my expression and testimony. In like manner, if we would experience Christ as the reality of the law, we must firstly eat the hidden manna. Once this manna gets into us, it will become the budding element, and this budding element will bring forth the fruit which is God's expression and testimony.

We should not stay at the altar, nor linger at the laver, nor even remain in the Holy Place eating the superficial food. We must come forward to the Holy of Holies, dive into the ark, and eat the hidden manna, the hidden Christ. This Christ will then become our budding element. When He buds and blossoms, He will yield the fruit which will be God's expression and testimony. This expression will correspond to and even surpass the ten commandments. Praise the Lord that now we are not in the outer court, nor even in the Holy Place, but in the Holy of Holies. Now that we are touching the ark and eating the hidden manna, we shall surely bud, blossom, and bear fruit. In this way, we shall have the testimony of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIXTY-FOUR

THE LAW OF LIFE SPREADING IN OUR INWARD PARTS

THE BASIC CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE BIBLE

If we would thoroughly understand and apprehend the law of life, we must understand the basic concept of the divine revelation in the Bible. The basic and central concept in the Bible is that God intends to work Himself into us in order to make us His living expression. God desires to work Himself into His chosen people that they may be born of Him and have Him as their life and thus become His expression. This is God's desire and intention. The only way for God to have such a living expression is for Him to work Himself into us. Although this basic concept is found throughout the Bible, it has nearly been lost by fundamental Christianity. Fundamental Christianity mainly stresses redemption. But redemption is not the goal; it is a way, a procedure, to reach the goal. The goal is to have God wrought into our being that we might be born of Him and that He might become our life. He is our Father and we are His sons. Being His sons, we all have Him in us as our life. Eventually, this life will transform us and conform us to His very image, making us His living expression in the universe.

Although this basic concept has nearly been lost, we thank God that now, in these last days, He has opened up to us this matter in His Word. For more than forty years, we have been burdened to minister this basic concept to God's people. It is for this reason that we have been falsely accused of teaching heresy, of preaching and teaching

something that is not according to the Bible. Our opposers say this because their understanding of the Bible is lacking and inadequate. A little knowledge is dangerous, for it makes people short-sighted and even kills them. We praise God that under His mercy we have seen the basic revelation in the Scriptures. This is not simply a matter of redemption. No, it is something deeper and higher than this. God is now working Himself into us that we may have His life, that we may be one with Him, and that He may be one with us.

THE SON OF GOD COMING INTO US AS LIFE

I say again that the way in which God accomplishes His intention is by coming into us, causing us to be born of Him. In order that we might be born of Him, God comes into us in the Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God and God Himself, is God's image. Colossians 1:15 says that Christ is the image of the invisible God. The Son is the image, the expression, of the Father. Thus, when you see the Son, you see the Father. At the moment we believed in Him, the Son of God came into us. This does not mean that He gave us something; it means that He Himself came into us. We need to discard the concept that when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, God gave us His life. This understanding is incorrect. It was not that we believed in the Lord Jesus and that God in heaven gave us something and put it into us. No, it was that we believed in the Lord Jesus and that the Son of God, the very God Himself, came into us as life. God did not give us His life; He came into us as life. What a great difference!

When God comes into us, He comes in the Son and as the Son, not as the Father. This involves the Trinity. It is at this point that we are accused of teaching heresy. But we do not teach heresy--we speak the truth according to the pure word of God. The very person who has come into our being is God Himself. But when He comes into us, He

does not come as the Father but as the Son. The Father is the source, and the Son is the expression of the source. The expression and the source are one.

THE FIRSTBORN SON AND THE MANY SONS

Because God comes into our being as the Son, we have been born of God in the Son and have the sonship. This means that we all have become sons of God. We are not simply saved sinners but also sons born of God. This is not a small thing. Before Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead, God had only one Son, the One whom the Bible calls the Only Begotten Son (John 3:16). Before His resurrection, Christ was the unique Son of God. But after His resurrection, He was no longer the unique Only Begotten Son of God, for in resurrection He became the Firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:29).

How many sons does God have? On the one hand, John 3:16 speaks of the Only Begotten Son. But Hebrews 2:10 says that God is leading many sons into glory, and Romans 8:29 says that Christ is the Firstborn among many brothers. Does God have two kinds of sons? No, He has just one kind. In China, the Fukienese like to have many sons. If they cannot beget enough sons, they may buy some others. A certain man may beget only two sons and later buy another ten sons, giving him a total of twelve. These twelve sons, however, are of two kinds, the born sons and the purchased sons. Deep in his heart, this man feels that only two of his sons are sons in life, sons in reality, while the other ten are merely sons in term. Does God have two kinds of sons, the Only Begotten Son being one kind and the many sons being the other kind? No, the Bible reveals that the Only Begotten Son of God has become the Firstborn among many sons, proving that God has just one kind of son. The Firstborn is the Son of God, and the many sons are also sons of God. The Firstborn Son and the many sons are all of the same one Father (Heb. 2:11).

THE NEED FOR CHRIST TO SPREAD INTO OUR MIND, EMOTION, AND WILL

In saying that God has only one kind of son, are we saying that we, the many sons, are exactly the same as

Jesus Christ? If God has only one kind of son and if we also are the sons of God, then are we not the same as Jesus Christ? How can we answer this question? Are you exactly the same as Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Jesus Christ has come into our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17). According to our spirit, we are exactly the same as Christ. But, as a human being, we also have a soul composed of the mind, the emotion, and the will. Although in our spirit we are the same as the Son of God, in our mind, emotion, and will we are not yet the same as He.

The Son of God is in us, not partially but wholly. The complete Person of the Son of God is in us. He did not cut Himself into pieces and then put a small piece of Himself into us. Christ, the Son of God, has come into us as a whole, perfect Person. Although the whole Person of Christ is in our spirit, time after time our thinking does not originate with Christ in our spirit but with our ugly mind. Perhaps even today you were thinking about a certain brother, saying to yourself, "I don't like Brother So-and-So. He should be excluded and cut off." But as long as he is a brother, whether he is good or bad, you should not say that you do not like him. This thought comes from your ugly mind, not from Christ in your spirit.

What about your emotion? When you love, do you love from the spirit where the Son of God is, or do you love from your emotion? I do not ask what you love, but from where you love--from your natural emotion or from the indwelling Christ. If we, like Christ, are sons of God, then why is our emotion different from His? Because Christ is only in our spirit. He has not yet spread into our emotion, and thus our emotion is still independent of Him.

Let us say a word about our will. Whether your will is wild or tame, it is still your will. When you go shopping,

you must examine the source of your going shopping. Is the source the indwelling Christ in your spirit, or your own natural will? Sisters, when you decide to go shopping, how often do you decide from Christ and how often from your will? Out of ten times, perhaps hardly once have you decided to go shopping from the indwelling Christ. This shows that your going shopping is not pure. It is a mixture, coming mostly out of your own will. What about the decisions you make day after day? How many times do you make a decision by Christ and not by your own will? As a son of God, what is the source of your decisions--Christ or your own will? I am not talking about being good or bad, nor about anything religious. I am asking whether you make decisions from your spirit, the place where the Son of God is, or from your own will. Although we are sons of God, we must admit that most of our decisions are made from our will, not from the Son of God, Jesus Christ, in our spirit. When we sing hymns in the meetings we take one way, but when we make decisions in our practical living we take another way, the way of using a source other than Christ. Therefore, although we have Christ in our spirit, we cannot express God, because Christ is confined within us. After coming into us, He has been imprisoned within us, for He does not have the freedom to spread out from our spirit.

THE MEANING OF THE LAW OF LIFE

This again brings us to the law of life. In the previous message we pointed out that the law of life is just Christ Himself. The Christ who indwells our spirit is our life. What then is the law of life? It is life functioning. A law is an unchanging, automatic regulation. Whenever you throw an object into the air, the object will fall to the ground. This is the law of gravity which is an unchanging, automatic law.

Every life has its own law. I have often used the illustration of a peach tree. If you have a peach tree in your back yard, there is no need for you to worry that it might

bring forth watermelons, or to say, "I love the form and beauty of peaches. I don't want this tree to bring forth melons. Since I'm concerned that the fruit of this tree might not have the form of a peach, I'll make some peach molds, put them on the branches of the tree, and command the tree to fit into this pattern and not to change its form." To do this would be ridiculous. But this is exactly what Christianity does. The ministers and teachers in Christianity make molds, put them on people, and charge them to live in a certain way. This is foolish. If you did this to a peach tree and the peach tree could talk, it would say, "Take your molds away from me. I don't need any outward regulations. I have a living regulation by which I grow and bring forth fruit in the shape of peaches. The life will form the shape of the fruit." This is a law. Every year the peach tree produces fruit with a peach shape. The same is true of an apple tree. The apple life has the apple law. As an apple tree grows, it spontaneously produces fruit in the shape of apples. This is the result of the regulation of the law in the life of an apple tree. This matter, however, is missed by Christianity.

NO NEED FOR TEACHINGS

Both in Jeremiah 31:33 and 34 and in Hebrews 8:10 and 11 we are told that we do not need anyone to teach us. If you would attempt to teach a peach tree to bring forth peaches, the tree would say, "No one is as stupid as you are. You can't teach me. Besides, I don't need your teaching." Since coming to this country, especially during the first two years I was here, I told people wherever I went that they did not need to be taught. I said, "You don't need teaching because you have life in you, and life needs no teaching." Tell me, who taught you to breathe? Did you attend a breathing school and graduate from it? No mother teaches her children to breathe, for breathing is a matter of life. In like manner, no one instructs an apple tree to bring forth apples, because producing apples is the function of the life of an apple tree. When the apple tree functions,

apples are produced. During my first two years in this country, I was burdened to tell people wherever I went that they should drop their teachings and let life work. Without one exception, I was rejected in every place. Many came to me with their Bibles, saying, "Brother Lee, in your message you said that we don't need any teaching. Isn't the word teaching found in the Scriptures?" I did not care to argue with them. I simply said, "If you like teaching, you may have it. But I don't like teaching--I like life. Praise the Lord that I have life and that life is growing within me. If you like the teaching, go to the dead letters." In some places I even boldly told people, "You are as dead as a door nail. The teachings have killed you. Because you are filled to the brim with teachings, you are dead."

THE ONE LAW BECOMING MANY LAWS

We have seen that Christ is in us. This Christ equals life, and this life has its law of life. Thus, within us, we have Christ, the life, and the law. The very Christ who indwells our spirit is life, and this life has a law. In Jeremiah 31:33 the Lord says, "I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts." But Hebrews 8:10, which is a quotation of Jeremiah 31:33, says, "I will impart my laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them." Notice that the law in Jeremiah 31:33 becomes the laws in Hebrews 8:10. Furthermore, in 8:10 the word mind is used instead of inward parts, indicating that the mind is one of the inward parts. The inward parts include at least the mind, the emotion, and the will. What is the reason for these changes? Jeremiah 31:33 and Hebrews 8:10 say that God imparts His law, or laws, into either our inward parts or our minds, and that He inscribes His law, or laws, upon our heart. The heart is composed of the mind, the emotion, the will, and the conscience. Hebrews 8:10 does not say that God imparts His laws into our hearts and inscribes them on our mind. No, it says that God imparts His laws into our mind and

inscribes them on our hearts. This means that Christ has firstly come into our spirit. This Christ is the law which must spread into our mind. The spreading of the indwelling law into our mind is the imparting of this law into our inward parts. This law must also spread into our emotion and will. By spreading into our inward parts, the one law becomes many laws. Whenever we give this law the opportunity, it will spread within us. This spreading is the imparting, and the imparting is the inscribing. Thus, the Lord imparts His law into our inward parts and inscribes it on our hearts. As the Lord continues to spread, impart, and inscribe, Christ's image will be expressed in our soul, and we shall be conformed to the image of God's Firstborn Son.

THE WAY TO BE TRANSFORMED AND CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF THE FIRSTBORN SON

Now we know what answer to give whenever we are asked if we are the same as the Son of God. We should say, "The very Son of God is in my spirit. But my mind, emotion, and will have not yet been conformed to the Son of God. Although my mind, emotion, and will have not yet been conformed to His image, I thank God that I'm under the process of conformation. As the unique law spreads into my mind, my mind is being transformed and conformed to His image. After He spreads into my mind, my mind will be exactly the same as His. Also, He will spread into my emotion and will, making my emotion and will the same as His. Eventually, my whole being will be exactly the same as His. In this way, I shall be the image of God."

Once we have received this vision, we shall hate the religious teachings. Do not teach me to do this and not to do that. I do not care for such teachings. I only know that Jesus Christ as the Firstborn Son of God is in my spirit waiting for the opportunity to spread Himself into my mind, emotion, and will. I simply want to open to Him

again and again without trying to do anything. I just open myself and say, "Lord Jesus, spread Yourself into my mind, emotion, and will. Lord, cause the unique law to become the many laws in all my inward parts. I want You to spread in me until You possess every part of my being. I don't want to love, hate, or do anything. I only want You to spread Yourself into me." In this way, we shall be transformed and conformed to the image of the Firstborn Son of God. This is God's doing, the work which He is performing in us today. This is absolutely different from religion, for it is the work of life. This life is Christ Himself with the law working in us, regulating us, ruling us, and spreading Himself into every part of our inward being.

How much we need to see this vision and empty ourselves of every religious concept. I want to drop the teachings and only love the living Christ who is in me as my life and as the unique law spreading Himself into my being. I do not care for loving or hating, for being good or bad. I do not care for anything religious. I only care for the living Christ in my spirit. Praise Him that He is in our spirit! Now He is waiting for the opportunity to get into our mind, emotion, and will that He might saturate our being with His element, causing Himself to become the very element of our being. In this way, He makes us the same as He is. We may even say that He is making Himself us. This is the working of the law of life. This is God's economy, the basic concept of the divine revelation in the Bible. May the Lord have mercy on us that we may see this vision.

THE WAY TO HAVE CHRIST SPREAD IN US

How can this Christ spread within us? Only by our eating of Him as the hidden manna. The hidden manna which we eat will become the budding element in us. As this element buds out of our innermost being, it will bud into and through our mind. This is the working of the law of life to transform us and conform us to Christ's image that we all might become His living expression.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIXTY-FIVE

BEING CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF THE FIRSTBORN SON BY THE WORKING OF THE LAW OF LIFE

THE FIRSTBORN SON BEING THE PROTOTYPE

The central thought of the whole Bible is that God wants to have many sons for His expression. In order to accomplish this, God must firstly have a model, a prototype This prototype is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. When Christ came the first time, He came as the Only Begotten Son of God. As the Only Begotten Son of God, He became a genuine man in the flesh. Although He was a real man with the human nature, He was still the Only Begotten Son of God. When He was on earth, He often called Himself either the Son of God or the Son of Man (John 10:36; 5:25; 1:51; Matt. 8:20). When the demons met the Lord Jesus, they addressed Him as the Son of God (Matt. 8:29), but He commanded them not to say this. The Lord seemed to be saying, "You demons, the followers of the Devil, must realize that I am here as the Son of Man. I have come as a man in the flesh to deal with the Devil and with you." It was by His death in the flesh that Christ destroyed the Devil (Heb. 2:14). Therefore, the Devil and all the demons were afraid of Him as the Son of Man. When the Devil tempted the Lord in the wilderness, he said, "If thou he the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Matt. 4:3). The Lord Jesus replied, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). The Lord seemed to be saying, "Satan, you must know that I am here not as the Son of God, but as the very man promised in the

book of Genesis. I have come as a man to bruise your head."

In today's Christianity there are the so-called modernists. In ancient times there were the ancient modernists, called the Sadducees, who believed neither in angels, nor in demons, nor in resurrection (Acts 23:8). Today's modernists are followers of those Sadducees. The Sadducees, along with the Pharisees, thought of the Lord Jesus simply as a Jew whose parents were Mary and Joseph. When Jesus came to such a person, He always stressed that He was the Son of God (John 5:17-18, 25). While the demons are afraid of Jesus being the Son of Man, the modernists, under the inspiration of the Devil, do not confess that He is the Son of God. Once the demons admit that Jesus is the Son of Man they are destroyed, and once a man confesses that Jesus is the Son of God he is saved (John 20:31). Who is Jesus? He is the Son of God and the Son of Man. To us, He is the Son of God, and to the enemy, He is the Son of Man.

Recently, two young men, aged eighteen and twenty-one, came to me with an argumentative spirit, saying, "John 3:16 says that Jesus is the Only Begotten Son of God, and Hebrews 13:8 says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. How can you say that the Only Begotten became the Firstborn? This means that Jesus has changed. But the Bible says that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Before His incarnation, Christ was only the Son of God; He was not a man. Was not His incarnation a great change? According to the Greek, John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh." This certainly indicates a change. If Christ had never had such a change, we would still be in a pitiful situation. If He had not become a man but had forever remained only as the Son of God with divinity, how could we have been saved? Christ has changed. He changed from being just the Son of God into a man. Consider the Lord's incarnation. Before His incarnation, He was the Son of God, and He did not have the human nature. He was solely, singly, and absolutely the divine Son of God, having only divinity. He had no flesh

and blood. But by His incarnation He changed radically. In making this radical change, He did not put off His divinity. No, keeping His divinity, He took on humanity. Hence, in His incarnation, He had divinity plus humanity. Many Christians today have only been taught that Jesus is the Only Begotten Son of God. They have never learned that this Only Begotten Son has become the Firstborn Son.

John 1:14 says that the Word became flesh, and 1 Corinthians 15:45 says that the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit. Here in 1 Corinthians 15:45 we have another "became." Firstly, Christ was the Son of God. In His incarnation He became flesh, and then, as a man in the flesh He became the life-giving Spirit. We believe John 1:14 which says that the Word became flesh, and we believe 1 Corinthians 15:45 which says that the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit. I have been condemned as a heretic for saying that Jesus became the Spirit. According to their old, traditional teaching of the Trinity, the opposers say that the Father is the Father, the Son is the Son, and the Spirit is the Spirit. But now they are troubled, for 1 Corinthians 15:45 says that Christ became the life-giving Spirit. How many Spirits are there? There is only one. Is Christ the Son or the Spirit? He is both the Son and the Spirit and also the man. This does not mean that when Christ became the man He was no longer the Son of God, nor that when He became the Spirit He was no longer the man and the Son of God. He is all-inclusive.

Suppose you have a glass of pure water. When you add tea into it, you do not eliminate the water, do you? When you add milk, you still have the water and the tea. The water, the tea, and the milk make an all-inclusive drink. When we drink the water, we drink the tea and the milk. Basically, this drink is plain water, but it has been enriched with the elements of tea and milk. Who is Jesus today? He is the life-giving Spirit who includes divinity and humanity. Our Savior today is not the same as He was before the incarnation, nor the same as He was when He was on earth. Before His incarnation, He was purely

divine, having no human element. When He was born of Mary in the manger at Bethlehem, He was mingled with humanity and put on human nature. While He was on earth, He was both divine and human. Being the Son of God and the Son of Man, He was both God and man. By His resurrection, He became the life-giving Spirit. This absolutely does not mean that He is no longer the Son of God nor the Son of Man; it means that as the Son of God He has brought the Son of Man into the Spirit.

When I was young, I was only taught that the man Jesus Christ was the Son of God. I was never told that through resurrection this wonderful God-man became the life-giving Spirit. I was only told that He died on the cross for our sins, resurrected from the dead, and ascended into heaven where He is now sitting as the Savior who is living, mighty, and able to save us to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25). But, being a thoughtful young man, I wondered how Jesus could save me to the uttermost. I said to myself, "How can this be? He is sitting on the throne in heaven far away from me, and I am here on earth far away from Him. How can He save me to the uttermost?" Although I tried to solve this problem, I could not do it. Undoubtedly, Jesus is now sitting on the throne in heaven. How then can He save us to the uttermost? He can do it because He is not only in heaven but also in our spirit. This wonderful One is in heaven and in our spirit at the same time. I have often used the illustration of electricity. The electricity which we use in our homes is also in the power plant. The same one electricity is in both places at the same time.

Christ is the life-giving Spirit. Within this life-giving Spirit there is the powerful, indestructible divinity, and there is also the proper, uplifted humanity. No humanity is as right and proper as the humanity of Jesus. Both this wonderful divinity and this uplifted humanity are now in the Spirit, just like both the tea and the milk are in the water. When we drink the water, we get the tea and the milk, and when we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, who is the life-giving Spirit, we get His divinity and humanity.

God's way is firstly to have a prototype, a model. This prototype is God the Son who came to be a man. This man, the embodiment of God, lived on earth for thirty-three and a half years, tasting and passing through all the sufferings of human life. Then He went to the cross and died. Through His death, the old creation was terminated, the problem of sin was solved, and all the enemies and adversaries of God were destroyed. His death on the cross was an all-inclusive death accomplishing everything for God's economy. But this was not the end, for He was resurrected with His divinity and humanity. His divinity was expressed, manifested in full, in His resurrection, and His humanity was transformed from a physical form into a spiritual form. This is very mysterious, and no human words can explain it. After His resurrection, He became such a wonderful One. I cannot adequately explain all the aspects of this wonderful Person. In this wonderful Person, who today is our Savior, we have the eternal, powerful, unlimited divinity; the uplifted, transformed humanity; the proper human living; the all-inclusive death that solved the problem of sin, defeated the enemy, and terminated the old creation; and the resurrection. How much we have in Him! He now expresses God in the proper humanity. Sin is under His feet, Satan has been defeated, and the old creation has been terminated. This is the prototype, the model of the expression of God.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF IMITATING CHRIST

Can you imitate such a One? We cannot even make imitation tea. We should not try to produce an imitation tea, but simply drink real tea. Every imitation is a falsehood. In Christianity, people are taught to imitate Christ, but it is impossible to imitate Him. We are all familiar with artificial flowers. As plastic imitations of real flowers, they have the same color, shape, and appearance as genuine flowers. When they first came out, I liked them. But after awhile I came to hate them because they have no

life. Man can imitate, but he cannot create. Praise the Lord that while we cannot imitate Christ, He has a way of reproducing Himself in us.

THE SPREADING OF THE PROTOTYPE INTO OUR BEING

In a factory, a company firstly manufactures a prototype. Then the mass production is according to that prototype. In a good sense, our wonderful Christ is a prototype. God's way is to put this prototype into us. This living model is a living Person including divinity, humanity, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. Such a model, consisting of all these marvelous elements, has come into our being. The human, religious way is to correct or improve us from without. God's way is to put Christ into us. Who is Christ? He is the Son of God, the Son of Man, and the life-giving Spirit. God has put this wonderful Person into the very center of our being. If we agree and cooperate with this wonderful One, opening up to Him, He will spread outward into our soul from our spirit. This is not imitation; it is the spreading of the prototype within our being. This is what the Bible calls sonship. Christ has come into us as the Son to be the life of the Son in us. According to Romans 8:15, we have the spirit of sonship. We have the sonship which makes us real sons. This sonship is actually the wonderful model Himself, the Firstborn Son of God. We have the life of the Son, the Spirit of the Son, and the sonship within us.

Consider once again the illustration of a tea bag placed in a glass of water. The more we stir the water, the more it will be saturated with the tea. The tea will spread into and mingle with the water until it becomes tea-water. No one can imitate Jesus. If we could imitate Jesus, then a monkey could imitate a boy. Christ is such a wonderful Person. How can we imitate Him? It is not a matter of imitating Jesus; it is a matter of being saturated with the sonship, just as water is saturated with tea. The Son, as the very sonship, has come into us. As the sonship, He is

the life, the Spirit, the position, and the right of the Son. This sonship is now waiting for our cooperation that He might spread throughout our being.

THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON BECOMING THE FIRSTBORN SON

In both Hebrews and Romans the matter of sonship is covered. In Hebrews we are told that, after His first coming, Christ eventually became, through resurrection, the Firstborn Son (1:5-6). Before His incarnation He was the Only Begotten Son of God, but through resurrection He was born the Firstborn Son of God. When I read the Scriptures years ago, I was bothered by Psalm 2:7, which says, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." This verse is quoted both in Acts 13:33 and in Hebrews 1:5. Being troubled by this, I asked myself, "Wasn't Christ the Son of God already? Since He already was the Son of God, why did He need to be born of God in order to be the Son of God?" Later I realized that before His incarnation, Christ was the Son of God without human nature. When He was incarnated, He put on humanity. His divine element was the Son of God, but His human element was not. Hence, He had to be resurrected that His human element might be born of God. Through this birth, the Only Begotten Son of God became God's Firstborn Son. In other words, the Only Begotten Son did not have the humanity which had been begotten of God. When He became the Firstborn Son of God, His humanity was born of God. In this way He became the Firstborn Son of God, and this Firstborn Son became the prototype, the model. This is what it means to say that Christ is the Firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:29). The Firstborn Son is the prototype, and the many brothers are the mass production. This model today is a living Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the totality of the divine sonship. When this living Person comes into us, we have the sonship and become a son of God. Now we are the sons of God, and the Lord Jesus as the model is working and moving in us.

A MATTER OF INWARD SATURATION

Although we have become sons of God by having the sonship in us, we still do not look like the Son of God. Suppose I put a tea bag in a five-gallon jar of water. The tea may be in the center of the jar, but the water does not yet have the appearance of tea. The tea must spread into and saturate the water. Gradually, all the water will be teaified and become tea. In like manner, we have been born of God by having Christ come into our spirit. But after coming into us, He has not had much opportunity to spread Himself into our being. This is not a matter of outward behavior; it is a matter of inward saturation.

Hebrews tells us that the Only Begotten Son has become the Firstborn. This Firstborn Son has regenerated many sons and now He is the model in perfection, completion, and glorification. Although He is perfect and complete, we, the many sons with the sonship within us, have not yet been perfected, completed, and glorified in this sonship. Presently, we are in the process of perfection, completion, transformation, and glorification.

SONSHIP AND CONFORMATION

The book of Romans, especially chapter eight, speaks of the same thing. Many Christian leaders have written a great deal on Romans 8. However, they mainly emphasize the Spirit. They have more or less neglected the law of life and the conformation to the image of the Firstborn Son of God. It is difficult to find a Christian book which deals with the subject of conformation. Nevertheless, conformation is necessary for the completion of the sonship, for the completion of the many brothers of the Firstborn. Although we are brothers of God's Firstborn Son, we do not resemble Him very much. We may not look much like Him today, but we are in the process of being conformed to His image. How much the sonship is completed in us depends on how willing we are to be conformed to the image of Christ. This is not a question of outward doing, but of whether or not we

are willing to be conformed to the image of the Firstborn.

SONSHIP AND THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

If we would know how to be conformed to Christ's image, we must read Romans 8 again and again. This chapter is a treasure chest in a treasure store. All the riches are here. In this chapter we have the law of life, the sonship, and the conformation. Verses 14 through 16 speak clearly about sonship. Verse 14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Recovery Version), and verse 15 says that we have received "a spirit of sonship." We know that we have received a spirit of sonship because the "Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God" (v. 16). Deep within, we have a strong witness, a strong testimony, that we are the children of God. Many of us can confidently say, "I know that I do not look like Christ, but I have the full assurance that I am a son of God. I don't care how much you criticize or belittle me, I have no doubt that I have been born of God."

We have this witness in our spirit, not in our mind. If you turn to your mind, you will begin to doubt, saying to yourself, "Probably I have not been born again. If I have been regenerated, why am I still the same? I need to say, 'O Lord, be merciful to me. If I have not been born again, cause me to be born again right now.'" In the past, I did this very thing. But while we are doubting in our mind, we have the witness deep in our spirit that we have been born of God. This is not a teaching; it is our experience. Whoever has called on the name of the Lord Jesus has been regenerated, and the spirit of sonship, that is, Christ Himself, is in his spirit witnessing to the fact that he is one of God's children. However bad we may be or however defeated we are in our Christian life, we still have the witness in our spirit that we are sons of God. This is a fact,

and no one can argue with it. It is not a small thing to be born again.

THE WAY TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF THE FIRSTBORN

However, we should not stop with the mere fact of being born again. Romans 8 mentions the Spirit of life in verse 2, sonship in verses 14 through 16, and conformation in verse 29. We are now in the process of being conformed to the image of God's Firstborn Son. How can we be conformed? The way is found in Romans 8:6--by setting our mind on our spirit. The mind set on the spirit is life. In whatever we do and say, we must be sure that our mind is on our spirit. When our mind is off our spirit, we are like an electrical appliance which has been disconnected. If we sense that our mind is not on our spirit, we should stop and call on the name of the Lord Jesus. Many of us can testify that after simply calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, we had the sense deep within that, once again, our mind was on our spirit. Although this is a simple matter, it is very serious.

I would ask the sisters to consider their experience in shopping. Many times when you went shopping in a department store, you sensed that your mind was not on your spirit, but you still bought something. If you look back on that experience, you will realize that your mind was altogether off your spirit. If in going shopping you sense that your mind is on the spirit, you may go ahead. But if you sense that it is not on the spirit, you should stop. This is exactly what it means to walk, to have our being, according to the spirit.

WALKING BY THE INNER SENSE OF LIFE

Today the Spirit is not far away in the heavens; He is within our very being. Romans 8:6 implies that the Spirit in our spirit can be sensed. How do we know that setting our mind on the flesh is death? We know it by the inner sense. Deep within, we sense that we have been cut off and

that we are dead. Whenever we have our mind set on the flesh, we have this sense within. We do not need anyone to tell us this; we can sense it ourselves. A married brother may say to his wife, "While I'm arguing with you, I'm in the spirit. Can't you realize this?" While he is saying this with his mouth, deep within he can sense that his mind is not on his spirit. I understand this quite well because I have experienced so much of it myself. Although we may tell others that we are right, in our spirit we know that we are wrong, for the sense of life does not stand with us, nor does it justify what we are doing. According to our deep inner sense, we know that we have been cut off. This is a red light in our spiritual driving. Whenever we see a red light, we must stop. When we have the sense that the inner light is green, we may then proceed. This is what it means to follow the Spirit within and to live, walk, and have our being according to the inner sense of life.

The way to be conformed to the image of Christ is by keeping our mind on our spirit. The mind of a fallen person is the representative of his whole being, for such a person does everything according to his mind. It is the same with the believers who do not walk in spirit. Thus, when our mind is on our spirit, it means that our whole being is on our spirit. In our daily living, in all that we are and do, we must have the assurance that our mind is on the spirit. To have our mind, our whole being, on the spirit is life. This is according to the working of the law of life.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIXTY-SIX

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE LAW OF LIFE AND MOVING ACCORDING TO THE ANOINTING

The Bible reveals that God's eternal intention is to have many sons and to make all these sons the same as He is. Since God is divine and we are human, how can we become God's divine sons, becoming the same as He is in both life and nature? In order to have many sons, God in the Son firstly took the step of incarnation. By incarnation, He put on human nature. Before His incarnation He had only divinity, not humanity. But by being incarnated, He put on human nature and became a man. Although He became a man, He was still the very God, for He did not put off His divinity to become a mere human being. He was the God-man having both divinity and humanity. How wonderful that our God, the unique God, the Creator, became a man with flesh and blood! As far as human nature is concerned, He became exactly the same as we are. He was a real man with flesh and bones. Never forget that this real man, named Jesus Christ, was also God. He was the real God and the genuine man. Before He could make us like Him, He had to become like us.

THE MYSTERY OF THE RESURRECTED AND INDWELLING CHRIST

Having become a man in the flesh with human nature, Christ was crucified on the cross, was buried, and was resurrected. In resurrection He then took another step: as the last Adam, He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). This is mysterious. On the day of His resurrection,

the Lord appeared to His disciples. "When the doors were shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them, Peace be to you." (John 20:19, Recovery Version). The doors had been tightly closed, but, to the surprise of the disciples, Jesus came. When the disciples were terrified, supposing that they had seen a spirit, the Lord Jesus said, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). Speaking to Thomas eight days later, the Lord said, "Bring your finger here and see My hands, and bring your hand and put it into My side," and Thomas said, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:27-28, Recovery Version). The Lord seemed to be saying to the disciples, "Don't think that I am a spirit. I am standing here with a body of flesh and bones. Look, the marks of My crucifixion are still upon Me. You can even touch the prints in My hands and feet."

The Lord was not only the Spirit; He was the wonderful One with a body of flesh and bones in which could be seen the prints of the nails. The wonderful Christ today is the life-giving Spirit; yet He has a body of flesh and bones. Furthermore, the New Testament reveals that this wonderful Christ is in us (Col. 1:27; 2 Cor. 13:5); He is in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17). Christ in resurrection still possesses a body of flesh and bones and He is in us. We cannot explain how He, having flesh and bones, can be in us. This is beyond our knowledge. Although we cannot understand Him, He is real and wonderful.

According to the New Testament, Christ has had two "becomings." John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh," and 1 Corinthians 15:45 says, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." Through these two becomings, Christ has become a wonderful Person. He is the very God, the very man, and the life-giving Spirit. As the Son of God, He became a man, and after becoming a man, He became the life-giving Spirit consisting of divinity and humanity. In Him we see the real God and the genuine man. Today this

God-man is also the life-giving Spirit. If He were not the Spirit, He could never have come into that locked room to meet with the disciples. Nevertheless, He still has a body of flesh and bones. I cannot explain this because I am limited, but I do know that He lives in me, and I cannot deny that He has done many things for me. Even now, He is living in and for me.

THE TWO NATURES OF THE INDWELLING CHRIST

After Christ became the same as we are in His incarnation, bringing divinity into humanity, by becoming the life-giving Spirit He brought humanity into divinity. Through incarnation and resurrection, He mingled divinity and humanity, humanity and divinity, into one. This is our Lord Jesus Christ. Not many Christians have this concept of the Lord Jesus. But this is the very Savior whom we received into our being when we believed in Him and called on His name. The Christ who dwells in us is such a wonderful One. Now He is not only the Savior and the Lord; He is also the wonderful life-giving Spirit with two natures. Most Christians have missed the mark, having never heard that the very Christ who dwells in us has the two natures of divinity and humanity, and that both these natures are in the life-giving Spirit. As the wonderful life-giving Spirit, He is now working all that He is into our being, transforming our being into His.

RELIGION MISSING THE MARK

In its concern with miracles, teachings, and behavior, Christianity misses this mark. In Christianity, there are two main religions: the religion of teachings and the religion of miracles. Many Christians are obsessed with miracles. The basic revelation of the New Testament, however, is focused on one crucial point: that Christ is one with the Father; that He sends the Spirit, who is just Himself, that He might abide in us and that we might abide in Him; and that Christ is living, moving, and

working in our spirit, even transforming our very being that we might be His expression. Although this matter is found again and again in the New Testament, not many Christians pay attention to it.

Fundamental Christianity stresses teaching, but at least two verses in the Bible, Hebrews 8:11 and 1 John 2:27, say that we do not need anyone to teach us. Hebrews 8 reveals that because we have the law of life within us, we do not need anyone to teach us. Not even the smallest among us needs anyone to teach him. First John 2:27 says that because the anointing abides in us, we do not need anyone to teach us. Since we have the law of life and the anointing working and moving within us, we do not need the outward teachings of man. Some may oppose this point, but where do they put Hebrews 8:10 and 11 and 1 John 2:27? We should take the clear and pure Word of the Bible.

In so-called Pentecostal Christianity, people stress the exercise of the gifts, especially speaking in tongues. If they come to a meeting where there is no tongue speaking or manifestation of the so-called gifts, they are unhappy. But only a very small percentage of the verses in the New Testament is devoted to speaking in tongues. A far greater percentage of the verses speak of the indwelling Christ. Here we see the subtlety of Satan. On the one hand, fundamental Christianity stresses the teachings; on the other hand, Pentecostal Christianity stresses tongues. Even when the tongues are false, they still enjoy them, and even if their prophecies are not fulfilled, they are still addicted to them. More than twelve years ago, some people prophesied that Los Angeles would fall into the ocean. Although that prophecy was not fulfilled, so many of the Pentecostalists are still addicted to their prophecies. I am not against these things, but I do have a burden for the children of God.

THE WONDERFUL NATURE OF CHRIST

When Christ came into us to be our life, He brought His

nature, the nature of His wonderful being, into us. Before we were regenerated, we had only the base, corrupted nature of fallen humanity. But when we were regenerated, the highest nature was added into our being. Now there is in us the very nature of the Person of Christ. As an illustration of this wonderful nature, let us take the example of a baby. When something sweet is put into a baby's mouth, he will spontaneously swallow it. But when something bitter is put into his mouth, he will spit it out. Who teaches the baby to do this? No one. As long as the little baby is living, he does not need anyone to teach him about what is sweet and what is bitter. The baby's reaction to sweet and bitter substances is not a matter of knowledge; it is a matter of the taste of nature. A baby has a human nature, and human nature does not like the taste of anything bitter. Our nature knows what it likes and dislikes. In like manner, however babyish we may be in spiritual things, as long as we are in Christ, we have a special life nature. By coming into us, Christ brought into our being a wonderful life nature. This is not merely the divine nature; it is the divine nature with the uplifted human nature.

THE FUNCTION OF THE LIFE NATURE BEING THE WORKING OF THE LAW OF LIFE

The function of this life nature, or the nature of life, is the working of the law of life. Every life has a law. The law of a certain life is the innate ability of that life. This ability is inborn, spontaneous, automatic, constant, and instant. It always works. As long as you are a living person, this innate ability of the human life is in you. If a baby dies, it no longer has any response to sweet- or bitter-tasting substances. But a living baby has the taste of nature which comes from the innate ability of life. When Jesus Christ our Lord came into us, He brought His wonderful nature into our being. The work and function of this nature are the working of the law of life. This nature functions

automatically. Its function does not depend on teaching; it depends on life.

Before we were saved, we all did things which were not good, things such as gambling, drinking, smoking, dancing, and going to movies. But from the very moment we were saved, we have had something within us which troubles us and disagrees with our doing certain things. You may still go dancing, but within you is a taste which does not feel good about it. Before you were saved, the taste always felt good, but not now. We all have had this kind of experience. If you have not had this experience, I doubt whether you have been saved. This experience is the function of the life nature, which is Christ Himself wrought into our being. This function is simply the working of the law of life. There is no need for anyone to teach you. In fact, because you have Christ's nature working in you, you do not even need Him to speak to you. For example, because a mother has given her nature to her baby and because this nature works in the baby, he does not need to be taught how to react to a bitter-tasting substance. The baby's human nature functions automatically. This function is the working of the law of human life. Likewise, the function of Christ's life nature in our being is the working of the law of the divine life. It is not a matter of teaching or miracles.

CHRIST COMING INTO US TO BE A PERSON

When Christ came into us, He not only brought His nature, but also Himself as a Person. Nothing troubles us more than a person. I do not like to live alone. I like to have at least two or three others living with me. But it is troublesome to have another person living with you. When Christ came into us, He came in to be a Person. Do you realize that Christ is in you as a Person, as the living One who "bothers" you all the time? His bothering, of course, is the best bothering, for it is very profitable. Nevertheless, it is still a bothering. Before you were saved, you were free to do what you wanted. For example, you were free to go

dancing. But after you were saved, especially after coming into the church life, you began to be troubled by the living Person of Christ. Daily, He bothers us from within.

THE MOVING OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST BEING THE ANOINTING

The Bible gives the moving of this Person a special term--the anointing (1 John 2:27). This term, the anointing, is difficult to understand. The anointing which abides in us is the moving of a Person, the Person of Christ. This anointing teaches us. We all have something within us called the anointing teaching us in our very being. Thus, within us we have both the nature of Christ and the Person of Christ.

The anointing is the moving of the ointment within us. In typology, the ointment is composed of olive oil and some of the finest spices (Exo. 30:22-25). The main element in this composition is the oil, into which are added a number of ingredients. When the tabernacle, the utensils in the tabernacle, and the priests were anointed, all the components of the ointment were upon that thing or person which was being anointed. In typology, this ointment is Christ. The very Christ who is now indwelling our spirit is the ointment composed of the Spirit of God and other elements. As this ointment, He is moving and living in us day by day. This inward moving of the ointment affords us a living teaching. Christ teaches us in this way.

THE NORMAL LIVING OF THE WONDERFUL ONE

When Christ came into us, He brought His wonderful nature into our being. The function of this nature is the working of the law of life. Christ is also in us as the ointment which constantly anoints us. This anointing gives us a comfortable, soothing sense. Whenever the Lord Jesus teaches us from within, His teaching is that of His anointing which gives us this comfortable, soothing sense.

As Christians, we all have the automatic, spontaneous, constant, and instant working of the law of life, the law which works according to Christ's wonderful nature, and we have the anointing which moves in us according to Christ's Person.

Let us use the illustration of shopping once again. Going shopping is like going to hell. After not going shopping for more than two years, I recently had to shop for a lamp. In the store I saw some very fancy lamps, but my wonderful nature did not like them. Those lamps were bitter to my taste. Some of the other lamps were like garlic to my inner taste, and my inner sense could not tolerate them. When the sisters are in a department store, many times their inner taste forbids them to purchase a particular item. This taste comes from the wonderful nature within them. Fifty years ago, I might have been able to purchase a fancy lamp. But if I did this today, I would be unable to sleep at night because of the function of the nature of life. We all have this nature with its automatic function. If you try to suppress this function, it will spring up all the more, for the more it is suppressed, the higher it rises. We all have experienced this working of the law of life.

As we have seen, we not only have this nature within us, but also a Person. Whether I should go shopping today does not depend upon the working of the nature; it depends upon the teaching of the anointing. A living Person is constantly living and moving within us. This living and moving is His teaching. If we are about to go shopping, we should open ourselves to the Lord, saying, "Lord, I'm one with You, and I know that You are one with me. Lord, do You want to go shopping this morning?" When we do this, we shall sense the anointing within. This is the moving of the living One within us. As this lovable One works in us, we sense the comforting and the soothing. How pleasant this is! Whether or not we go shopping is secondary. The primary thing is that as we look to Him and fellowship with Him, we enjoy His anointing. Whenever we are under

His anointing, we know what to do. If we take a step which He does not want to take, the anointing will stop, and the soothing, comforting sense will diminish. By this we know that we should not do that particular thing. At such a time we should say, "Lord, I'm one with You. If You don't want to go, I won't go either." If we do this, the anointing and its comforting sense will return.

The living and moving of the anointing is Christ's inward teaching. We have a living Person in us teaching us all the time. Sometimes in our fellowship with the saints we may sense that the inner anointing has stopped. When we have this sense, we should stop talking. You might have spoken half a sentence, but, sensing that the anointing has ceased, you should not speak the remainder of that sentence. Simply be one with the inner anointing. Many times, however, we disregard the anointing and do whatever we want. When I was young, I told the Lord a number of times, "Lord, please forgive me and let me do this just one more time." Later I said to Him, "Lord, let me do it just once more." Many of the young people have done the same thing. Some sisters might have said, "Lord, I know that You don't want me to go shopping, but let me go this one time." Whenever you do this, you kill yourself, and it may be several days before you are living again.

What we are talking about here is neither a matter of teaching nor of miracles. It is the normal living of this wonderful One. I live absolutely according to the law of life, and I move, act, and behave according to the anointing. I do not need anyone to teach me. The wonderful nature of the life of Christ and the very anointing of the Person of Christ are more than adequate for us to live a normal Christian life. Here we have fellowship and here we grow in life. Here we have the spreading of the indwelling Christ into every part of our being and we undergo the process of God's transformation. Here we also have the church life and the real building up. And here we prepare ourselves for the Lord's coming back.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIXTY-SEVEN

THE COMPLETION OF SONSHIP

The focus of God's revelation in the New Testament is sonship. Sonship is God's desire. God can only satisfy His desire for sonship by having His Son become the model and prototype. This prototype must be wrought into our being. What is being wrought into us is not only the Savior or the divine life, but also the prototype of the sonship, the Firstborn Son of God. As we have pointed out, there is a great difference between the Only Begotten Son of God and the Firstborn Son of God. With the Only Begotten Son, there was no humanity. He was divine, but He was not human. With the Firstborn Son, on the contrary, there are both divinity and humanity because He is not only the Son of God but also the Son of Man. The Son of Man has been brought into sonship through His resurrection. Now this Firstborn Son, constituted with both divinity and humanity, has been wrought into our very being.

PREDESTINATED UNTO SONSHIP

Ephesians 1:5 says that we have been predestinated unto sonship. Sonship is our destiny. Our destiny is not to be saved. Salvation is a process; it is not the goal but the way to reach the goal. God's goal is sonship. God's forgiveness, justification, salvation, and regeneration are all focused on sonship. God has forgiven us, justified us, saved us, and regenerated us that we might be His sons.

THE PROCESS OF SANCTIFICATION, TRANSFORMATION, AND CONFORMATION

Sonship has both a beginning and a completion. It begins with regeneration and it will be completed with

glorification. Between regeneration and glorification there is the process of sanctification, transformation, and conformation. Many Christians have heard about sanctification. However, the concept of sanctification in Christianity is much different from that found in the Bible. The vocabulary, the terminology, is the same, but the understanding is vastly different, because the dictionary of today's Christianity differs from the dictionary of the Bible. According to the pure word of the Bible, the meaning of sanctification is to be saturated with the element of the prototype. The more we are saturated by the element of the Firstborn Son as the prototype, the more we are separated unto God from the world. Through sanctification we are separated from the world, not by teachings or miracles, but by being permeated with the element of the divine and human nature of the prototype.

Our whole being is like a black spot. One day, the wonderful element of the prototype came into our spirit and sanctified it. What about the remainder of our being? We must admit that it is still very dark. Although you may consider yourself to be good, moral, ethical, and even "spiritual," you are still dark. Perhaps you are in a dark grave. Whether you are good or bad, right or wrong, moral or immoral, ethical or unethical, "spiritual" or unspiritual, your being is still dark. Whenever others contact you, they sense your opaqueness. You dwell in the gloomy dungeon of your religion and ethics, and there is nothing transparent about you. Because you are so dark and non-transparent, you need to be sanctified by having the wonderful element of the prototype saturate your being. The more Christ spreads into you, the more you will be sanctified and separated from the world. This is sanctification.

Transformation is related to sanctification. The more we are saturated with the element of Christ, the more we are sanctified, and the more we are sanctified, the more we are transformed. As we have pointed out several times, transformation is not an outward change, adjustment, or correction. It is an inward metabolic change, a change in

life, nature, and form. Sanctification is for transformation and transformation is for conformation. We must be transformed in order to be conformed to the image of the Firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29). By the Lord's mercy, we are in the proper church life being sanctified, transformed, and conformed to the image of God's Firstborn Son. This is deeper, higher, and more profound than being moral, ethical, or even "spiritual." Some teachings regarding so-called spirituality are merely vanity. Genuine spirituality is conformation. Being spiritual depends upon being conformed to the image of the Firstborn Son of God. No human effort, labor, or imitation can manufacture this. It can only be produced by the indwelling prototype, the real and living Firstborn Son of God, who automatically works in us. As He works in us by the law of life, He continually anoints us from within.

THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

Because we are sons of God according to the law of life and the anointing, we are God's people. God is our God according to the law of life and the anointing. In ancient times, God called His people, the children of Israel, out from among the Gentiles and gave them the law. God was their God and they were His people according to the outward law of letters. If they were right with the law, then they were right with God. Since the people went astray from the law, the prophets came in. Hence, the Old Testament is composed of the law and the prophets.

The law corresponds to God's unchanging nature. For time and eternity, God's nature will remain the same. Although the law does not change, the prophets do change. A prophet of God may tell you one thing today and the opposite thing tomorrow. If you consult a prophet about going to a certain place today, he may say that it is all right to go, but if you ask him the same question tomorrow, he may tell you not to go. God is living. As the living God, He is the highest Person, having the full right to tell us one

thing today and another thing tomorrow. Due to this, the word of the prophet may change. The law is according to God's nature, but the prophets are according to God's activity, God's move. God may want you to stay where you are today, but tomorrow He may want you to go elsewhere. The law is always the same for everyone. For example, the law commands you to honor your parents. God will never tell you to honor your parents today and then command you to hate them tomorrow. No, the law remains constant. However, if you read the Old Testament, you will see that the prophets differ from one another. In ancient times, God was a God to His people according to the law and the prophets, and God's people were a people to Him also according to the law and the prophets.

What do we have in the New Testament which corresponds to the law and the prophets in the Old Testament? For the law, we have the law of life, and for the prophets, we have the anointing. Today, God is our God according to the inner law of life and according to the anointing, and we are His people according to the inner law of life and according to the anointing. The inner law of life corresponds to God's nature, and the anointing corresponds to God's move. The law of life always remains the same. As far as the law of life is concerned, there is no change either with you or with others. If you attempt to go to a movie tonight, the inner law will forbid you. It will also forbid you tomorrow and at any other time. The anointing, however, may change. Tonight the anointing may not allow you to go to the department store, but tomorrow the anointing may encourage you to go. While the law of life will never allow you to buy a fancy lamp, the anointing may or may not allow you to go to the department store. Furthermore, the anointing may permit one brother to go shopping, but it may forbid another brother to do the same thing. By this we see that the anointing changes. If I intend to speak to you in a condemning way, the law of life will always say, "No, don't do that." But whether or not I should speak on Hebrews in the meeting tonight depends on the anointing.

Tonight the anointing may encourage me to speak on Hebrews for forty-five minutes, but in the next meeting the anointing may say, "Don't speak anything in this meeting. Be at rest." By all these examples we see that the law remains the same but the anointing constantly changes. It is according to this law and this anointing that we are a people to God and God is a God to us. How different this is from religion! Here there are no outward regulations, forms, rituals, or controls. There is only the law of life and the anointing.

Approximately fourteen years ago, I was invited to the home of a Jewish brother in New York. His background was that of a typical orthodox Jew. He told me that the orthodox Jews do everything according to a verse in the Old Testament. When they go to bed at night, they must even place their shoes in a certain direction according to a verse in the Old Testament. They are very "scriptural" and religious. There are many regulations among them, but no life. These orthodox Jews think that they are the people of God and that God is their God according to their religion. Actually, God is far away from them. He is not their God and they are not His people according to their way. But today God is our God according to the law of life and the anointing.

THE LAW OF LIFE AND THE ANOINTING VERSUS REGULATIONS AND ORGANIZATION

Although we may be clear about these matters doctrinally, we may not be clear about them experientially. In the church life we should live according to the law of life and move according to the anointing, but we have gradually come to live according to regulations and move according to organization. In the beginning, the church life was not like this. It was living, and we lived according to the inner law of life and moved according to the anointing. Gradually, however, our living according to the law of life developed into a habit, and the habit became a regulation.

Thus, today we live according to regulations and move according to organization. Because we have become organized, we neglect the anointing. How I long to see the dear ones coming to clean the meeting hall according to the anointing, not according to any arrangement or organization. If in the service groups we care for who is first, second, and last, we shall have an organization. In an organization there is no need to pray, to contact the Lord, and to move according to the anointing, because everything is arranged, and we are told what to do and when to do it. A brother who is not a leading one may say, "I am neither the first nor the last. Whatever I do will be all right. I don't need to look to the Lord about what time to clean, because the time has already been announced. If I am a few minutes late, it will not make any difference." When this brother arrives, he will stand around waiting to be told what to do. If the leading one does not come, he will not know how to function. This is not the service we see in the New Testament.

THE LIVING REVEALED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

According to the New Testament, the law of life is written into our being. In fact, even the writer Himself is in us. By coming into us, He brings both His nature and His Person into us. The nature works and the Person moves. Hence, we must live according to His nature and move according to His Person. We must clean the meeting hall according to His moving. Do not care about your rank in the church service. Only care for the living Person within you. This is the living found in the New Testament. Compared with the Old Testament, the New Testament is quite short. The Old Testament may have over a thousand pages, but the New Testament has less than three hundred pages. Christianity has become a religion of teachings and miracles. I hope that in the Lord's recovery we shall realize that we do not need the teachings and miracles found in religion. We simply need to live according to Christ's

wonderful nature and move according to His wonderful Person. Do not depend upon regulations, arrangements, or organization. Move and act according to the living Person within you. If we do this, we shall enjoy God and become His people, and God will become so living, rich, and enjoyable to us. He will be our God, not according to regulations, but according to the inner law of life and the anointing. This is the working of the divine and human nature of the wonderful One.

THE NEED TO BE RESCUED FROM RELIGION

You may wonder why I am against religion. It is because I have passed through so many things, especially the teachings and speaking in tongues. In the past, I taught many people how to speak in tongues. But after a period of time, I saw that speaking in tongues only stirred people temporarily and that the result was not much of life. I was also in fundamental Christianity where I learned the teachings of the Bible. More than forty-five years ago, I became familiar with all the types, teachings, and prophecies. These teachings made me dormant for seven and a half years. Due to this, I have the sure standing to declare that we do not need the teachings in letters. After a certain time, I became involved with the Pentecostal movement. Now I have been commissioned and burdened by the Lord to minister Christ as life to His people. Only when you have been wholly rescued from the other things will my burden be discharged. The Spirit knows how much you need to be delivered. Not only those in Christianity but even the church people need to know the sonship. We must see that life is the only way the sonship can be brought to completion within us. The working of the law of life within us is for the carrying out of the sonship.

GOD'S WAY OF LEADING THE MANY SONS INTO GLORY

Hebrews 2:10 says that God is leading many sons into

glory. How will God bring the many sons into glory? Will all the Christians remain the same day after day until they are suddenly transported into glory? No indeed! In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul says that the resurrection is like the growth of a plant. After a seed is sown into the earth, it dies and begins to grow. At first, the plant is a tender sprout. This tender sprout must grow until it reaches maturity and blossoms. The blossom is its glorification. The plant, unlike a mushroom, is not glorified suddenly. No, it is glorified by its gradual growth. Likewise, we all have been regenerated and are growing. Many are like tender sprouts which have a long way to go before they can be glorified. The distance between regeneration and glorification encompasses the process of sanctification, transformation, and conformation to the image of the Firstborn Son of God. A few among us who have grown in life throughout the years are on the verge of glorification. They are ready to blossom. How about you? If you are still a tender sprout, then you are not ready to blossom. You must continue to grow until you reach maturity. Then, at the time of your maturity, you will blossom into glorification. In this way God will lead the many sons into glory.

GLORIFICATION--THE COMPLETION OF SONSHIP

At this point, we need to read Romans 8:29 and 30: "Because whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the Firstborn among many brothers; and whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Recovery Version). Verse 30 does not say, "And whom He justified, these He brings to heaven." No, it says, "These He also glorified." We must also read Romans 8:16 and 17: "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, heirs also; heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him." Verse 17 does not say that we may be brought to heaven. No, it

says that we "may be glorified with Him." The goal is glorification. This glorification is the perfection, the completion, of conformation. In other words, glorification is the perfection and completion of sonship. The sonship has begun in us, but it has not been perfected and completed. Presently we are undergoing the process of sanctification, transformation, and conformation. Daily we are being saturated by the indwelling wonderful One. He is constantly seeking an opportunity to spread Himself into every part of our being. He desires to saturate us until we are sanctified, transformed, and conformed to His image and reach the perfection and completion of sonship. This is God's desire today.

This is not a matter of being right or wrong, proud or humble, ethical or unethical. It is not even a matter of being "spiritual" or unspiritual. God does not care for these things. Thirty years ago, I was with some people who sought spirituality. But the more we pursued it, the more it eluded us. Even the pursuit of "spirituality" is vanity. God's intention is to conform us to His Son. His Son, the prototype, has been wrought into us and is awaiting the opportunity to saturate us with His element. We must cooperate with Him by living according to His nature and moving according to His Person. We should say, "Lord, I don't care for spirituality. I only want to live according to Your nature and move according to Your Person." By the Lord's mercy, I have been living and moving this way throughout the years. All I have received for it is condemnation. I have been condemned because I refuse to tolerate the religious things. Having passed through the teachings and the Pentecostal things, I can testify that they neither work nor supply us. Although they may help to a small extent, they do not supply us. But if you live according to the nature of this wonderful One and move according to His Person, you will be abundantly supplied and others will be supplied through you. This is what the church life needs today.

The church life in the Lord's recovery is absolutely and

wholly different from Christianity. Because we are different, we are condemned as being heretical. I admit that we are different, but I do not admit that we are heretical. Our understanding of the Bible is according to the pure Word with the light from the heavens. We do not care for traditional teachings. We only follow the pure Word of God in the Bible. Although we are absolutely different from tradition, we are absolutely according to the Bible.

The working of the law of life and the moving of the anointing will complete the sonship in us. We all have been destined to sonship and we are presently undergoing the process of becoming the full sons of God. Today our law is the law of life and our prophet is the anointing. As we have seen, this law is according to Christ's nature and this prophet is according to His Person. We live according to His nature and move according to His Person. This is our standing. I look to the Lord that we all might see this. This must be ministered to all the saints in the church life. We do not care for the teachings in letters; neither do we care for the outward miracles. We only care for the inward law of life and the inward anointing.

Our God is real and living. He is real and living within us, not according to religion, nor according to our human thought. Having passed in the Son through incarnation and resurrection and having both divinity and humanity, He has come into us as a living Person with a wonderful nature. His nature is now functioning within us. We have seen that the function of His nature is the working of the law of life and that the moving of His Person is the anointing. In the church life we are not concerned with doctrine, teaching, miracles, and "gifts." We are daily dealing with a living Person and His wonderful nature. His nature constantly remains the same, working within us to spread His element into our being. And His anointing continually guides us in our actions, movements, and behavior. It is by His nature and His Person that we live and move. In this way, He gradually works Himself into

our being. The more He is wrought into us, the more we become the sons of God in perfection and glorification. If we see this, we shall not be distracted by other things. Christianity is a religion, but the church is a matter of life. This life is simply the wonderful One, the One who has passed through incarnation and resurrection and who is now the life-giving Spirit consisting of divinity and humanity. As we live according to His nature and move according to His anointing, we shall grow and be saturated, transformed, and conformed to His image until we are ripened in the sonship and prepared for the rapture. Then we shall be ready to meet Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIXTY-EIGHT

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF GOD

The focus of the divine revelation in the Bible is sonship. God's intention is to express Himself. In order to have His expression, He must have many sons. Do not think that salvation is the center of God's revelation. The center of His revelation is sonship. God wants many sons. When God sent His Only Begotten Son into the world, His intention was to beget many sons through Him, making Him His Firstborn Son. Although the Lord Jesus came the first time as the Only Begotten Son of God, when He comes the second time, He will come as the Firstborn Son (Heb. 1:6). Being the Firstborn Son means that He is the first among many sons, the Firstborn Son among many brothers (Rom. 8:29).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SONSHIP

In the Bible, the significance of sonship is the expression of the Father. A son always expresses his father. When we look at a boy, we see in him the expression of his father. A human father may need only one son to express him, but the divine Father, who is marvelously and wonderfully great, needs millions of sons to be His expression. One day the earth will be filled with the sons of God, and wherever we go, we shall see the image of the Father, the expression of God. If you read the New Testament carefully, you will see that God does not want a company of sinners who have been redeemed, cleansed, and brought into heaven. This is meaningless. God wants many sons to be His corporate, universal expression. Wherever these sons are, there the Father will be expressed. This is sonship. "Behold, what manner of love

the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). This is the basic concept in the Scriptures.

THE SONS OF GOD HAVING THE DIVINE NATURE

If you spend time with a father and his son, you will discover that the son not only bears his father's image, but that he also carries his father's nature. As his father's son, he has his father's nature. Likewise, if we have truly been born of God, then we must have His nature. The nature in life is a very significant thing. Every life has a nature. The nature of a life is the very substance of that life. If there is no nature, then there is no life. Regardless of the kind of life it is--vegetable, animal, human, or divine--as long as it is a life, it has a nature. The substance and essence of a life are in its nature. What the nature is, that is what the life is also. An apple tree produces apples because it has an apple-tree nature. In like manner, a dog has a dog's life because it has a dog's nature, and a man has a human life because he has a human nature. Could we be human without having a human nature? Of course not. We are human beings because we have a human nature. Because we have a human nature, whatever we do, think, and say is human. Similarly, whatever a dog does is according to the dog's nature. This nature is the source of the law of life.

THE LAW OF LIFE BEING THE WORKING OF THE NATURE OF LIFE

The law of life is not only according to the nature of life; it is also of the nature of life. The law of life comes out of the nature of life. Because a particular life has a certain nature, it has a certain law. An apple tree has an apple-tree nature: hence, its law is the law of the apple-tree nature. Why does an apple tree bring forth apples? Because the life law regulates it according to its life nature. In this we see that the law of life is actually the working of the nature of life. When the nature of a life works, the law of

that life also works. Suppose we have two trees, an apple tree and a peach tree. If these trees fail to bring forth fruit, we cannot see the law of life. But if the apple tree spontaneously produces apples and if the peach tree spontaneously produces peaches, we see the working of the law of life regulating each tree according to the nature of its life. Therefore, the law of life is simply the working, the functioning, of the nature of life.

Suppose a dog and a man are standing in front of you. If the dog and the man do not move, you will not see the function of the law of life. But if the man behaves in a human way and if the dog begins to bark, these actions will indicate the working of the nature of each life, which is the law of that life. You may command the dog, saying, "Little dog, you must imitate this man. I charge you to follow him and to be one with him, saying and doing whatever he does." But the more you speak this way to the dog, the more it will react according to the working of the law of its nature. If, on the contrary, you command the man to behave like the dog, he will find it impossible, for he does not have a dog's nature.

THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON BECOMING THE PROTOTYPE

We have seen that God's intention is to have many sons. His way to have the many sons is to make His Only Begotten Son the prototype. Christianity misses this, having never seen the difference between the Only Begotten and the Firstborn Son of God. Most Christians consider the Only Begotten and the Firstborn Son as being the same. However, there is a great difference between Jesus' being the Only Begotten Son and His being the Firstborn Son. As the Only Begotten Son, He was not the prototype. In order to be the prototype, He had to become the Firstborn Son of God. In the Only Begotten Son there was only divinity, no humanity, but in the Firstborn Son of God there is humanity as well as divinity. This humanity has been "sonized," that is, it has been begotten of God in

Christ's resurrection. In Psalms 2:7, God said to the Son, "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee." Because Christ's human nature, His humanity, has been "sonized" in His resurrection, He is no longer merely the Only Begotten Son of God, but the Firstborn Son of God with divinity and humanity. Hence, He is the prototype.

THE MASS PRODUCTION OF THE PROTOTYPE

God's way to mass-produce this prototype differs from the mass production in a factory. In a factory, a company first produces a prototype and then mass-produces the models according to the prototype. God's way is to work His living prototype, the Firstborn Son, into our being to be our life and nature. This life is the divine life, and this nature is the divine nature. Now God is working to spread this divine life and nature into every part of our being, transforming our natural being into that of the Firstborn Son of God.

According to Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18, this is transformation. In the process of transformation, the living prototype spreads from our spirit into every part of our being. Transformation wholly depends upon the imparting of the law of life into our spirit. The law which has been imparted into our spirit is the function of the divine life; it comes from the nature of the divine life. Since the day this law came into our spirit, it has been awaiting the opportunity to spread into our mind, emotion, and will. Eventually, it will spread throughout our being. As it spreads, the one law will become several laws. Because the law is the working of the nature of the divine life, when it works, it produces sonship. Its working will always produce the image of God.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LAW OF LIFE AND THE ANOINTING

With scarcely one exception, nearly all Christians have

been distracted from this law and have gone astray from it. Out of a hundred Christians, probably less than five know this law or have heard about it. In Christianity, there is no word or message on the law of life. Because most Christians have gone astray from the law of life, there is the need of the anointing.

What is the difference between the law of life and the anointing? As we have seen, in the Old Testament there were the law and the prophets. The Old Testament comprises these two categories of the divine word. In ancient times, the Old Testament was even called "the Law and the Prophets." What is the difference between the law and the prophets? Why did God, after giving the law to Moses, still need to use Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the other prophets? We have pointed out that the law was given to be a testimony of God, having been given according to the nature of the Lawgiver. Since the laws you make express the kind of person you are, your laws are your testimony. The law was the testimony of God because it testified what kind of God He is. It testified that He is a holy, righteous God, a God of light and love. Since He is such a God, His law had such a nature. In nature, the law was righteous, holy, and full of light and love. Hence, the law was God's testimony. God chose Israel from among the nations to be His people, desiring that they would be His people according to what He is. Because the law revealed what God is, the children of Israel had to be God's people according to His law.

In the first chapter of Isaiah we see that the children of Israel went away from God and His law (Isa. 1:4, 10). If the Israelites had not gone astray from God's law, there would have been no need for the prophets. But because the people did go astray, God sent the prophets to call them back by rebuking, charging, and directing them to return to God's testimony. God did not intend to make the ministry of the prophets the standard. The standard of His testimony was the law, and the ministry of the prophets was to bring the off-center people back to the center, to bring God's straying

people back to God's testimony. Hence, the ministry of the prophets was to recover God's fallen people to His law.

We have seen that the old Testament comprises the law and the prophets. With what is the New Testament composed? It is composed of the law of life and the anointing. The law of life replaces the law of letters, and the anointing replaces the prophets. In a previous message we pointed out that the law was given to testify of God's nature and that the prophets were sent to represent God's Person. Therefore, the prophets spoke, saying, "Thus saith the Lord." In the law we have the nature of God, and in the prophets we have the Person of God.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND THE NATURE OF GOD

Which do you prefer to have--the nature of God or the presence of God which represents His Person? Every Christian regards the presence of God as dear and precious. In Christianity there is much talk about the presence of God. We are told that the presence of God should mean everything to us and that we must do all things in God's presence. In Christianity, the believers are taught to live and walk in God's presence, and a number of books have been written about living in the presence of God. But where can you find a book telling you to live according to the nature of God? If we have the revelation, we shall prefer the nature of God to the presence of God. I may live in a certain brother's presence, loving him and walking with him. Nevertheless, he remains a Caucasian and I remain a Chinese who lives in the presence of a Caucasian. What does this mean? Nothing. Simply to live and walk in the presence of God without having His nature in you means very little. For thousands of years, the angels have been walking in the presence of God, but they have never satisfied Him. Only one thing can touch God's heart--to have a people who live and walk according to His nature. For a flea to walk in your presence means nothing, but for

a flea to live according to your human nature means a great deal. Thus, walking in the presence of God means little, but living in and by His nature has great significance. However, most Christians only know the presence of God; they do not know His nature.

THE NEED TO BE DELIVERED FROM WORK TO LIFE

Because most Christians know only the presence of God but not His nature, it is easy for them to grasp the matter of the anointing. However, it is difficult for them to get into God's nature. Recently, many have testified that formerly they served in the church by organization, but that now they serve by the anointing. For example, some have said that now they come to clean the hall by the anointing. This is wonderful. However, after having been sent by the anointing to clean the meeting hall, with what life do you clean? Perhaps you clean in your old life. While the anointing is for moving, the law of life is for living. Few Christians pay attention to life. When they hear about the things of life, they respond like the Jews in ancient times saying, "This is a hard word; who can hear it?" (John 6:60, Recovery Version). But whenever a revivalist comes to stir people up, they are excited. Anointing is for activity, but the law of life is for being.

God does not care for what we do; He cares for what we are. The record of Jacob in the book of Genesis illustrates this. Throughout his entire life, Jacob did nothing. Although he performed no outstanding work, he was constantly under the process of God's transformation. Even when he was in his mother's womb, God used Esau to deal with him. As we have pointed out in some of the life-study messages on Genesis, his family functioned as a team to transform him. After Jacob had fled his home and had come to the home of his Uncle Laban, Laban's hand was upon him. Do you think that Jacob's life was a waste? Should someone have gone to Laban's home and spoken to

Jacob, saying, "Jacob, why are you here wasting your life? Why don't you go to the mission field or establish a church? Why don't you have a Bible study in your home? You are wasting your time living here under Laban's hand." But those years were not a waste. God does not want your work. He can do anything He wants simply by speaking. He calls things not being as being (Rom. 4:17). If He wants something, He simply needs to say the word and it will come into being. He does not need you to help Him. But God cannot just say, "Jacob, you must be Israel." In order for Jacob to become Israel requires a long process. This is life.

We all must be delivered from work to life. Actually, it matters little whether you stay home or go to clean the meeting hall. I am not saying that the hall should not be cleaned. I am saying that whether we stay home, come to the meeting hall, or even enter into heaven means nothing. What counts is what we are. If you stay home, you should stay there not only according to the anointing, but also according to the law of life. Some brothers may be guided by the anointing to stay home, but while at home they fight with their wives because they do not live according to the law of life. When they are home, their wives may pray, "Lord, have mercy on me and rescue me. Send my husband to the hall. I don't want him to stay home because he bothers me so much." When such a brother is at home, he bothers his wife; and when he comes to clean the meeting hall, he bothers the brothers. Wherever he goes, he troubles someone because he has no change in life. Consider a dog. A dog will bother people wherever it goes. Do not think that if a dog is in an unclean place, it will bother someone, but if it is in your living room, it will not bother anyone. The environment may change, but the dog remains the same. Likewise, whether I stay home or come to clean the meeting hall, I am still what I am. My wife may be afraid of my being home, and the brothers may be afraid of my coming to the hall, saying, "Be careful with this brother. Don't touch him. He is very fragile. If you

touch him, he will break." This brother may have the anointing, but he does not live according to the law of life. The law of life, not the anointing, is what changes us.

THE FUNCTION OF THE ANOINTING

Although the anointing does not change us, it has a good function. Firstly, it rebukes us, and secondly, it tells us to return to the law of life. Perhaps all of us have misunderstood 1 John 2:27, which says that "the same anointing teacheth you of all things." The anointing does not teach us to do everything; it teaches us to abide in Christ. Some brothers and sisters may wonder whether or not to go shopping and they pray to the Lord, saying, "O Lord, should I go shopping or stay home? Lord, grant me the anointing." But the Lord may say, "My anointing doesn't care for your going shopping or staying home. My anointing only cares that you abide in Me. As long as you abide in Me, you may go anywhere. If you abide in Me, whatever you do will be all right." If we abide in Christ, we may go anywhere. But remember this crucial clause--"if we abide in Christ." As long as we abide in Christ, God does not care where we go or what we do. Many who are concerned about marriage pray to the Lord regarding it, saying, "Lord, should I marry this one?" Some can testify that although they prayed in this way, the Lord never answered their prayers. Many young brothers have prayed, saying, "Lord, let me know whether this sister is the dear one You have chosen for me." But the more the brothers pray like this, the more confused they will be. I know of some sisters who have prayed for ten years about getting married without receiving an answer. If the Lord were to answer them, He would probably say, "I don't care about your marriage. I only care whether or not you abide in Me. If you abide in Me, you may get married. But if you do not abide in Me, you should not even marry the best brother." The only thing that counts is whether or not we abide in the Lord. In God's economy, it is not a matter of our doing;

it is absolutely a matter of our being. It is a matter of what we are. And what we are depends upon the life according to which we live day by day.

BEING RECOVERED TO THE LAW OF LIFE

In ancient times, the people of Israel got off the center, which is God's law, and God sent the prophets to bring them back. Today most Christians are away from God's center, which is the law of life. Therefore, the epistle of 1 John was written to the degraded Christians, calling them back to the anointing. The law of life is a basic matter. Because it is basic, it is mentioned in the book of Romans, a book of basic teachings. The anointing, on the contrary, is not mentioned in any of the basic books. Rather, it is mentioned in a book dealing with degradation, because many Christians had been distracted by the teachings of the antichrists. In the First Epistle of John, John told them to care for the anointing. John seemed to be saying, "The anointing tells you what to do and where to go. Don't listen to the teachings of the antichrists--obey the anointing. The anointing will bring you back to the law of life." First John 2 brings us back to Romans 8. But if we are truly living in Romans 8, we do not need 1 John 2. Likewise, if the Israelites had never gone astray from God's law, there would have been no need for the prophets. From now on, we should live according to the law of life and not just move according to the anointing.

God cares for His nature, but His presence is our safeguard. God's nature is within us, and we must live according to it. This means that we must live according to the law of life. However, we are often distracted. In times of distraction, God's presence will watch over us, observe us, and warn us. If we stray from the law of life, the anointing will say, "No!" After we say, "Lord, I repent," then the anointing will tell us to return to the law of life. In a foregoing message, I said that we must live according to the law of life and move according to the anointing. The

anointing represents God's presence directing us, correcting us, and bringing us back to His nature. We must live according to the law of life. This means that we must live and walk according to God's nature.

Why is it easy to grasp the matter of the anointing but difficult to get into the law of life? It is easy to know a brother by his presence. With even a short glimpse, we can easily recognize his presence. But it takes a great deal of time to get into his nature. Perhaps his wife, who has lived with him for many years, is the only one who has gotten into his nature. We may know this brother's face, but we do not know his nature. In like manner, it is easy to apprehend God's presence, but it is difficult to know His nature in our being. Merely to tell people to walk in the presence of God is rather natural and religious. It is not life. But to know God's nature within our being and to live according to it is exceedingly deep. This is what God desires.

GOD'S CONCERN

God is not concerned with what we do; He is concerned with what we are according to His nature within us. He does not care much about what we say to our wives, but He does care about the life by which we speak to them. According to what nature do you speak to your wife? Sometimes you may say, "Dear, I love you." This is a good word, but in saying it you might be playing politics. Any kind of political talk, even if it is about love, is like rotten honey because it originates from our corrupted nature. It does not issue from the divine nature in your being. Likewise, God does not care whether or not you go to the mission field. He cares about the life by which you go to the mission field. I do not go to any sinful place, because the divine nature in my being does not allow me to go. I do not live according to religion or regulations; I live according to the divine nature in my being. When we live day by day according to the divine nature, we shall be saturated with Christ and transformed to His image. During the twenty years he was in Laban's home, Jacob did nothing, but he

underwent a good deal of transformation. Jacob was not instantly transformed; it took more than twenty years.

In the church service, it is not just a matter of serving according to the anointing and of not serving according to organization. If our service is merely like this, before long we shall be fighting with one another. We may even fight over cleaning the chairs. One brother may say, "Don't you know that this is my territory? Don't touch it and don't bother me. Go someplace else to clean." This brother's way of cleaning is according to his corrupted nature. Although he might have been sent by the anointing, he cleans according to his fallen nature. Following the anointing is not as important as living according to the law of life. We may all be sent by the anointing to clean the meeting hall, but still not have any building among us. Everyone may become independent, saying, "Don't bother me. We are in the new church service. In the old service we had an order and a sequence. According to that order, I was last and could not say anything. But now I'm the same as everyone else. Don't tell me what to do. I'm not under you--I'm under the anointing." If this attitude does not come out immediately, it will come out after a few weeks. A brother who claims to be following the anointing but who does not live according to the law of life may say, "We are not in the organization--we are in the organism." But this is the "organism" of a corrupted nature. If we live this way, there can be no building. I cannot find a verse in the New Testament which says that the building comes from the so-called anointing. But in Romans and Ephesians we see that the building issues from the growth of life. The more we grow, the more of the building we shall see.

How can we grow in life? By obeying the anointing which teaches us to abide in Christ. To abide in Christ is to live according to His nature. His nature is working and functioning within us. As we have seen, the functioning of the nature of life is the law of life. The more we live according to this law of life, the more we become the kind of being God desires.

THE CONSUMMATION OF GOD'S WORK

According to the Bible, God's work throughout the centuries will consummate in the New Jerusalem. It will not consummate in a work, for there will be no work in the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will be a being bearing God's image. Hence, the very being of the New Jerusalem will be God's expression. The church life today must be a miniature of the New Jerusalem.

We should not care much for work, but we should care for our being, for what we are according to the nature of God within us. I would like to hear a brother or sister testify, saying, "I thank God that in recent days I have been living according to the inner law of life. Last night I was distracted from the law of life, but the anointing checked me and told me to return to the divine nature within me. After a few minutes I did return, and now, once again, I am living according to the law of life." I would also like to hear a brother testify, saying, "This morning I began to speak to my wife in a nice, yet political, way, but because my speaking did not correspond with God's divine nature within me, I could not even complete one sentence." Learn to live according to the law of life. The anointing is God's presence to direct us, to correct us, and to bring us back to the law of life. It is the law of life which works in us to transform us. If the brothers and sisters in the churches live according to God's divine nature in their being, the Lord will have a prevailing testimony on earth today. This testimony will shame the enemy and bring the Lord back. This is what the Lord is waiting for. We all must see that it is not merely a matter of following the anointing; it is absolutely a matter of living according to the law of life, according to the functioning of the divine nature of God in our being. As God's nature works within us, it makes us exactly the same as He is, transforming us and conforming us to the image of the Firstborn Son of God. In this way, God will have the complete sonship for His corporate expression.

LIFE-STUDY OF HEBREWS

MESSAGE SIXTY-NINE

THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW OF LIFE

In the tabernacle we see a clear picture of the anointing and of the law of life. The anointing was upon the tabernacle, for the tabernacle and everything in it were anointed with oil (Exo. 40:9). As we have seen, the inmost item of the tabernacle was the tables of the law, the testimony of the law. By this picture we see that the anointing was outside but that the law of life was inside. In the Old Testament the anointing was for inauguration into function. For example, there was an altar in the outer court, but before it was anointed it could not function. Likewise, although the tabernacle had been erected, it could not function until it had been anointed. Hence, anointing is neither a matter of life nor of nature; it is a matter of inauguration for function. Every time you are anointed, you are inaugurated into your function.

The law was not spread upon the tabernacle; it was placed in the center of it. At the center of God's people, the children of Israel, was the tabernacle which was enclosed by a wall of linen curtains. Within the tabernacle was the Holy Place, within the Holy Place was the Holy of Holies, within the Holy of Holies was the ark, and within the ark was the heart of the universe, the place where God was. In ancient times, God did not require His people to work nor to engage in certain activities; He required them to live and walk according to the law. If anyone was wrong with the law, he was wrong with God. God was the God of the children of Israel according to the law, and they were His people according to the law.

In the New Testament the anointing is mentioned several times. For instance, in Luke 4:18 the Lord Jesus

said that He was anointed to preach the gospel, and Hebrews 1:9 says that the Lord was anointed with the oil of gladness. The Apostle John also speaks of the anointing a number of times (John 9:6; 1 John 2:20, 27). The New Testament also mentions the inner law of life which comes out of the nature of God. In the New Testament the divine life is referred to more than a hundred times. This divine life has been imparted into our being. Most Christians pay attention to the outward anointing, but neglect the inner law of life. Many of those in the so-called Pentecostal movement talk about the anointing. Although they may experience the anointing which is upon the tabernacle, they do not enter into the ark in the Holy of Holies and touch the tables of the law.

Our eyes must be opened to see that the Lord's recovery is not so much in the anointing as it is in the law of life. In the New Testament the anointing is mentioned less than twenty times, while life is mentioned more than a hundred times. Many Christians are familiar with verses like Galatians 2:20, which says, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me," and Galatians 4:19, which says, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." Although many Christians know these verses, they pay no attention to them. Rather, the Pentecostalists devote their attention to the manifestation of the gifts. In His recovery, the Lord turns us again and again from the outward to the inward.

THE NEED TO TOUCH CHRIST HIMSELF

Although we are saved and in the church life, many of us are still in the church's outer court. Some might not even be in the outer court, but on the street outside the outer court. Others have gone farther than the outer court, having passed from the altar and the laver into the Holy Place where they enjoy Christ as the showbread and the lampstand, as the life supply and the light of life. Thank the Lord that many of us enjoy Christ in this way. However, this is still only the Holy Place. We must come

forward and enter into the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies we touch the ark, Christ Himself. The hidden manna, the budding rod, and the law of life are all in Christ. How we need to touch Christ Himself! Christ today is in the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies signifies that our spirit has been joined to heaven, for the very Person of Christ is the ladder joining earth to heaven and bringing heaven down to earth (John 1:51). If we continually touch Christ in our spirit, we shall enjoy Him as the hidden manna and as the budding rod. Then our daily life and walk will not be according to any teaching, work, activity, or movement, but according to the law of life, the function of the nature of the Triune God. God's nature is now moving and working within us, adding Christ's element into our being, transforming us, and producing the many sons whom God desires.

THE DIVINE BIRTH

Most Christians are off-center. When I was young, I read a number of books about victory over sin. Those books presented various ways to overcome sin. However, not one of those ways ever worked. Eventually, I discovered a precious word in 1 John 3:9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Whether we sin or not depends upon whether or not we have been born of God. He who has been born of God never sins. Furthermore, 1 John 5:4 says, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." Therefore, overcoming sin and the world does not depend upon a method; it depends upon the birth of God. When we were born of God, the divine life with its nature and law was imparted into our being. As long as we have this divine life with its nature and its law, everything will be all right.

THE SHAPING FUNCTION OF THE LAW OF LIFE

In understanding the Bible, we have been influenced too much by our natural concepts. In the past, I said that

the function of the law of life was to regulate us. According to this concept, if we are about to argue with our wife, the law of life will regulate us. This teaching, which is according to our natural concept, is not accurate. Consider an apple tree. Its apple-tree life has the apple-tree nature, and issuing from this apple-tree nature is the law of the apple life. Does the law of life in the apple tree regulate it from being wrong? Absolutely not. The law of the apple life does not function this way. How then does it function? As the life of an apple tree grows, its law shapes the form of its life. Thus, when an apple tree bears fruit, it bears fruit with the proper form, the form of apples. The same is true of a peach tree. Hence, the law of life does not regulate us from doing wrong; it regulates the shape of life.

If a certain life does not grow, the law of that life cannot function. The law only operates as the life grows. The law of life does not primarily function in the negative sense of telling us what not to do. No, rather, while life grows the law of life functions in the positive sense of shaping us, that is, conforming us to the image of Christ. This is the function of the law of life.

Do not think that the law of life will always correct you. For example, when you are about to exchange words with your wife, the law of life will not merely restrict you from arguing with her. The working of the law of life is not as low as we have thought. Due to our human, natural, religious concept, we have greatly depreciated the function of the law of life. We all have been sin-centered and sin-conscious, but we should be neither sin-centered nor sin-conscious. Though we are occupied with overcoming sin, the world, our ugly flesh, and our bad habits, God would say, "Forget about these things! Don't you realize that on the day you were regenerated you were transferred out of one realm into another? Will you please forget about the old realm?" Praise God that we have been born of Him! This divine birth has transferred us into a new realm, a realm in which there is no sin, world, or flesh. In this realm there is the function of the law of life. Remember that the

law of life is not mainly regulating us; it is mainly shaping us, conforming us to the image of Christ.

In the past, I saw this matter of the law of life, but being under the influence of my natural understanding, I thought that the function of the law of life was mainly to regulate us. This natural understanding frustrated the vision of the function of the law of life. Recently, I was rebuked by the Lord. The Lord asked me, "Who told you that the law of life mainly regulates? You cannot find such a word in the Bible. Why don't you use the words of Romans 8:2 and 29?" The law of life in Romans 8:2 does not regulate us from being wrong. This concept is according to our human, natural, ethical, religious understanding. We need a vision of Romans 8:29. We are now in another realm and do not need any regulations. In this realm there is no sin, world, flesh, or self. Consider two trees, an apple tree and a peach tree. They have no sin, world, flesh, or self. But both trees have a law of life which shapes them. This shaping by the law of life is the meaning of the word "conformed" in Romans 8:29. The law of the Spirit of life conforms us to the image of the Firstborn Son of God. As the life grows, the law conforms us to the image of Christ. How can Christ be formed in us? Only by the positive working of the law of life which shapes us to His form. What a difference between this reality and our natural concept!

Satan is subtle. Although the Bible tells us clearly of the function of the law of life, we have been blinded by our natural concept. Many saints who were seeking after the Lord but who were blinded by their natural concept have written books on how to overcome sin. If you do not try to overcome sin, it may lie dormant in you. But if you try to overcome it, it will say, "What! Are you trying to defeat me?" Many of us have some weak points. If we pay no attention to them, they will remain idle and dormant. But if we are aware of them and, for the sake of our holiness, try to overcome them, they will rise up and defeat us. It is

best for us not to touch them. Praise the Lord that we have had a new birth, a divine birth. In this new birth there are no weak points. There is only the divine life with the divine nature and the divine law which shapes us and conforms us to the image of Christ. However, this shaping requires the growth in life, for the law of life only functions as life grows. The law of life does not regulate us from sin, because it is not in the realm of sin; it is in the realm of the divine life where there is no sin, world, flesh, or self. As life grows, its law works, not mainly to regulate or correct us, but to shape us, to conform us to the image of the Firstborn Son of God. Eventually, through the function of the law of life, we all shall become the mature sons of God, and God will have His universal, corporate expression.

A WORD OF CONCLUSION

God's intention is to produce many sons that He may have His full, corporate expression. This is the unique goal of God's divine economy. His Only Begotten Son, who is the express image of His substance and the effulgence of His glory (1:3), became a man to declare Him and to express Him in human life. In His humanity, Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, expressed God. In His humanity, He was also begotten of God through His resurrection to be the Firstborn Son of God with both divinity and humanity. Now, as the Firstborn Son of God with divinity and humanity, Christ is the model, the pattern, for a mass production. Through His resurrection, all those who believe in Him have also been regenerated to become the many sons of God. We, the many sons of God, who are the many brothers of the Firstborn Son of God, are those who constitute the church.

The Firstborn Son of God has been perfected and glorified, and He is now the Pioneer who has entered into the realm of glory. He is also the Captain of our salvation who has fought the battle and who is taking the lead to bring us, His many brothers, into His glory. Now in the

heavens as our High Priest, He is ministering into His believers whatever He is, whatever He has accomplished, and whatever He has attained. His ministry in the heavens is a better ministry, a more excellent ministry (8:6), because through it He ministers to us in His resurrection life all that He is and all that He has done. On the one hand, He is in the heavens as the High Priest ministering life into us, and, on the other hand, He, as the life-giving Spirit, is now in our spirit to be our life. In this life within us, which is the wonderful Christ Himself, there is the law of the divine life which constantly works and functions in the depths of our being.

According to the type, the law was God's testimony, for the law was the expression of what God is. This law was placed into the ark which was in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle, God's dwelling place. The book of Hebrews tells us that we are the many brothers of God's Firstborn Son (2:11), that we are the church (2:12), that we are the partners of God's appointed and anointed One (1:9, 3:14), and that we are also the house of God (3:6). The house of God is the equivalent of God's dwelling place which was typified by the tabernacle wherein was the Holy of Holies. Therefore, we, the many brothers of God's Firstborn Son, the church, the partners of God's appointed and anointed One, and the house of God, are God's real dwelling place today. In this dwelling place there is the Holy of Holies. This Holy of Holies is our regenerated human spirit which is joined to the heavens where the glorified Firstborn Son of God is.

Christ is now both in the heavens and in our spirit. In the heavens, He, as the High Priest in His kingly and divine priesthood, is ministering into us all that He is and all that He has done. In our spirit, He is working within us as the life-giving Spirit with the law of life. Thus, His ministry in the heavens and His working in our spirit correspond with each other. His ministry in the heavens is carried out by His functioning, His working, in our spirit. Whatever He is and whatever He has done are now being

wrought into us through the working of the law of life in our spirit.

By means of the clear picture portrayed by all the furniture in the tabernacle, we can see that the aim of the experience of this wonderful Christ is to bring us into the Holy of Holies so that we may fully participate in the function of the law of life. As we have seen, we firstly experience Christ as our redemption at the altar in the outer court. After this, we experience Him as the washing and cleansing Spirit at the laver. This brings us into the Holy Place where we may enjoy Christ as our showbread, the bread of life, and as our lampstand, the light of life. Following this, we experience Christ as the incense altar through which we are ushered into the Holy of Holies. Here in the Holy of Holies, we enjoy Christ as the hidden manna and as the budding rod. By this enjoyment we are enabled to participate fully in the law of life. It is only here in the Holy of Holies, that is, in our regenerated human spirit, that we can fully participate in the function of the law of life. The function of the law of life is not mainly to regulate us from doing wrong, but to conform us to the image, the form, of God's Firstborn Son that we may become the same as the model.

The book of Hebrews is very deep. It is deep in its revelation of Christ as the appointed and anointed One of God, as the Pioneer into the realm of glory, as the Captain of salvation leading His many brothers into His glory, and as the High Priest in His kingly and divine priesthood ministering all that He is in His divinity and humanity and all that He has attained into His brothers to make them the reproduction of Himself so that God may have His corporate expression. Hebrews is also deep in its unveiling of the fact that this wonderful Christ is now joined to our spirit, which is the very Holy of Holies of God's dwelling place today, to be our life with the law of life functioning and working to conform us to His image. This is the most crucial point of the whole book of Hebrews. It is the vital focus of the experience of the Christ revealed in this book. This is why 4:12 says that our human spirit must be

divided from our soul so that we may enter into the Holy of Holies to touch the throne of grace and enjoy grace in our time of need. And this is also why we are charged in 10:22 to come forward with boldness to the Holy of Holies so that we may participate in the function of the law of life. It is through this functioning of the law of life that the very Christ who is now ministering in the heavens can minister all that He is and all that He has accomplished and attained into our very being, not only to transform us, but also to conform us to His image so that we, His many brothers, may be absolutely the same as He is. In this way, God will have the many sons as His full expression. This is the goal of God's divine economy. This goal can only be attained by Christ's ministering in the heavens as the High Priest and by His working as the life-giving Spirit within our spirit through the law of life.