LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE ONE

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD

Scripture Reading: Psa. 1:2, 6; 2:6-7, 12; Luke 24:44

In a recent conference, there were four main points which I would like us to take note of in this introductory word to the Psalms:

1) The economy of God is to bring forth an organism for His Divine Trinity.

2) The law in the economy of God is to be used by God for exposing the sinful nature and evil deeds of the sinners.

3) The grace in the economy of God is God's embodiment for man to receive to be his enjoyment and supply.

4) The issue of the experience of grace in the economy of God is the organic Body of Christ, consummating in the New Jerusalem.

I praise the Lord for His sovereign arrangement in allowing us to have this conference with these four main points before we begin our life-study of the Psalms. In the Psalms we will see these four main points.

The first psalm is concerning the law. David did not know the real function of the law. He likened himself, as one who delighted in the law, to a tree growing beside streams of water and flourishing all the time (v. 3). But after Psalm 1, there is Psalm 2 concerning Christ. Then there is Psalm 3. The heading of Psalm 3 says, "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son." The one who enjoyed the law as the streams of water by which he grew became a kind of exile due to the rebellion of his son. This happened to David because of his murder of Uriah and his taking of Uriah's wife (2 Sam. 12:10-12). The one who enjoyed the law so much in Psalm 1 became an intentional murderer. Does this show that the law works? The law does work, but not in David's way. The law

works to expose us. The law exposed David to the uttermost as one who conspired to kill Uriah and rob Uriah of his wife. Does the law work or not? We have to say that the law works, not according to David's concept in Psalm 1, but according to the apostle Paul's teaching in the New Testament. Paul pointed out that the law was something added to the central line of the divine revelation to expose man's sinful nature and wicked deeds (Rom. 3:20b; 5:20a). We need this view of the law in order to understand the Psalms according to the divine concept in the New Testament. We are not in the Old Testament as David was, but we are in the New Testament.

I. THE PSALMS BEING:

A. Not a Book of Doctrines or Any Kind of Teachings

The book of Psalms is not of doctrines or of any kind of teachings. The writings of the Psalms are in the form of praises. These praises were not composed by doctrine or understanding of teachings.

B. But a Book of the Expressions of the Sentiments, Feelings, Impressions, and Experiences of Godly Men

The book of Psalms is composed of the expressions of the sentiments, feelings, impressions, and experiences of godly men. This is the very crucial key for us to understand the Psalms. If we do not pick up this key, we have no way to understand this book. Not seeing this key is a big mistake many Christians have made.

The book of Psalms is not a book of stories, but a book of divine revelation through the expressions of the sentiments, feelings, impressions, and experiences of godly men concerning eight things. We need to see what these eight things are; otherwise, we will not be able to understand the Psalms. These eight things are:

1) God and the way He is in His dealing with them.

2) The law of God as the holy Word with the divine revelation.

3) The house of God, the temple, and Mount Zion on which the temple was seated, as the center of God's dwelling place on the earth.

4) The holy city of God, Jerusalem, as the encompassing protection of the house of God.

5) The holy people of God, Israel, as God's beloved elect among the nations.

6) Their love toward God, their fellowship with God, their blessings received of God, their sufferings under God's dealing, and their environment.

7) Their captivity.

8) Their thanksgivings and praises to Jehovah their God, whom they tasted and enjoyed.

The psalmists, as godly men, loved the law, loved God, loved the temple, loved the holy city, and loved the holy people, but eventually, they were exiled. They were brought into captivity. The law, after being given, results in captivity. Jeremiah shows the pitiful captivity and exile which the people of Israel experienced. They experienced captivity upon captivity and exile upon exile. Many of them were killed by the Babylonians. A small remnant of them remained, but they would not take the word of God to remain in their holy land. Instead, they wanted to go to Egypt. They went there to be exiles (Jer. 42:1—43:7).

The Old Testament law given by God through Moses resulted altogether in captivity. Captivity came because of the failure of the carrying out of the first covenant. Because the old covenant was altogether a failure, Jeremiah said that God would make a new covenant (31:31-34). Even by the end of the time of the early apostles, the New Testament believers had entered into captivity due to the fact that they remained in the old covenant although they had been put into the new covenant. Today's Catholic Church is a mixture of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Their rituals, formalities, and even the clothing of their clergy are an Old Testament mixture. Today's Pentecostalism is also a mixture of the Old Testament with the New Testament. These are proofs that even today's New Testament believers have entered into captivity as a result of keeping the Old Testament practices

with the law. Eventually, the psalmists turned from enjoying the law in which they delighted to enjoying their God whom they loved and sought after.

II. THE PSALMS WERE WRITTEN ACCORDING TO TWO KINDS OF CONCEPTS

The Psalms were written according to two kinds of concepts. We also have to pick up this point. Otherwise, we cannot properly understand the Psalms.

A. The Human Concept of the Holy Writers

The first concept, according to which the Psalms were written, is the human concept of the holy writers. Their human concept was produced out of their good nature created by God, formed with the traditions of their holy race, constituted with the teachings of their holy Scriptures, promoted by their practice of a holy life, and uttered out of their holy sentiments and impressions. These are the constituents of the human concept of the holy writers of the Psalms. They were from a holy race, possessing the Pentateuch, the first five books of Moses. They were a greatly cultured people. The traditions of their holy race formed their human concept according to which many of the psalms were written.

B. The Divine Concept of God

The Psalms were also written according to the divine concept of God as the divine revelation. This divine concept of God as the divine revelation is concerning His eternal economy in Christ, taking Christ as its centrality and universality. It is also concerning Christ in His divinity, humanity, human living, all-inclusive death, life-imparting and seed-producing resurrection, glorification, ascension, appearing in glory, and reigning forever. All these points are clearly, and even in detail, revealed in the Psalms. The divine concept in the Psalms is also concerning God's heart's desire, His good pleasure in Christ as His centrality and universality, in the church as His fullness for His expression, in the kingdom for His eternal administration, and in the recovery of the earth for His eternal kingdom in eternity. This divine

concept of God was uttered from the godly writers of the Psalms as a part of the utterance in their holy writings. The same writers uttered two kinds of concepts—the human concept and the divine concept.

We need to apply these two kinds of concepts to Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. Psalm 1 says:

1 Blessed is the man
Who does not walk
In the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand on the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the company of mockers;
2 Rather his delight is in the law of Jehovah,
And in His law he meditates by day and by night.
3 And he will be like a tree
Transplanted beside streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season,
And whose foliage does not wither;
And everything he does prospers.
4 The wicked are not so,
But are like chaff,
Which the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment;
Nor the sinners, in the assembly of the righteous.
6 For Jehovah knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.

According to what concept was Psalm 1 written? Is Psalm 1 good or not? Surely it is a good psalm, yet it was written according to the human concept. In Psalm 1 the psalmist said that the one who delighted in the law of Jehovah would prosper in everything that he does, but eventually the psalmists were not prospering. They were suffering. In Psalm 73, the psalmist was bothered. He thought that he had cleansed his heart in vain because he was being plagued

and chastened (vv. 13-14). On the other hand, he saw all the evil ones prospering (v. 3). He was bothered until he went into the sanctuary of God, the temple of God (v. 17). Then he received the revelation, and he was led to have nothing in the heavens nor anything on the earth but God (v. 25). So, he declared that God was his living portion (v. 26); not the law, but the very God Himself was his portion.

This shows us that Psalm 1 is good, but it was written with a wrong concept. The law was not given for us to keep for our prosperity. Instead, the law was given to expose us. The writer of Psalm 1, David, was exposed by the law as being a murderer and a robber of someone's wife. Because of what he had done, the situation with his entire family became a mess. Fornication and murder were among his children (2 Sam. 13:1-29), and rebellion came from his son, Absalom (15:7-12). The third psalm was a psalm of David when he was fleeing from his rebellious son. Thus, we should not highly appraise Psalm 1. It was written wrongly with a wrong concept, a human concept.

Now let us read Psalm 2:

1 Why are the nations in an uproar,
And why do the peoples contemplate a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth take their stand,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against Jehovah and against His Anointed:
3 Let us break apart their bonds
And cast their ropes away from us.
4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
The Lord has them in derision.
5 Then He will speak to them in His anger,
And by His burning wrath He will terrify them:
6 But I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.

7
I will recount the decree of Jehovah;
He said to Me: You are My Son;
Today I have begotten You.
8
Ask of Me,
And I will give the nations as Your inheritance
And the limits of the earth as Your possession.
9
You will break them with an iron rod;
You will shatter them like a potter's vessel.
10
Now therefore, O kings, be prudent;
Take the admonition, O judges of the earth.
11
Serve Jehovah with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
12
Kiss the Son
Lest He be angry and you perish from the way;
For His anger may suddenly be kindled.
Blessed are all those who take refuge in Him.

Jehovah's Anointed in verse 2 and the King in verse 6 are Christ. The Son in verse 7 is also Christ as the resurrected One. He was the only begotten Son of God from eternity (John 1:18; 3:16), but He needed to be begotten again in His resurrection to be the firstborn Son of God (Acts 13:33; Rom. 8:29). Psalm 2:8 says that the nations and the earth will be given to Christ. The nations will be His inheritance, and the earth will be His possession.

We need to consider why the Psalms are arranged with Psalm 1 as the first one and Psalm 2 as the second one. Psalm 1 is altogether not related to Psalm 2. David was saying that the one who delights in the law and meditates in the law will be blessed and will prosper in everything he does. While he was declaring this, God came in to make a declaration concerning Christ in Psalm 2, saying, "I have anointed Him and set Him up as the King. He will prosper because He will gain the whole earth as His possession, and He will gain all

the nations as His inheritance. Blessed are those who take refuge in Him. You have to kiss Him."

These two psalms are two kinds of declarations. One is made by the psalmist according to his human concept, and the other declaration is made by God according to His divine concept, concerning Christ as His centrality and universality. We have to say amen to God's divine concept in Psalm 2. In God's eyes, it is not a matter of our keeping the law. In God's eyes, it is a matter of taking refuge in Christ and kissing Him. To take refuge in Christ means to believe in Him, and to kiss Him means to love Him. This is according to the divine concept of the New Testament. We need to believe in Christ and to love Christ. By doing this, we are blessed.

Have you seen the difference between the two concepts in the Psalms? Through one writer, David, two different declarations came out in Psalms 1 and 2. Psalm 1 was a declaration by David, and Psalm 2 was also a declaration by David. Psalm 1 was declared according to his human concept. Psalm 2 was also his declaration, but according to the divine concept. First, the human concept came out of this one speaker. But while he was speaking humanly, the tone changed! Another speaking came out according to the divine concept.

Many preachers have spoken on Psalm 1, exalting this psalm. But it is hard to find anyone who has spoken properly on Psalm 2. It seems that not many understand Psalm 2. When we read Psalms 1 and 2 in the past, we may have greatly appreciated Psalm 1. How good Psalm 1 was to us! But Psalm 2 may have been placed into the category of portions of Scripture which we did not understand. We all need to see the two kinds of concepts, human and divine, in the Psalms, as seen in Psalms 1 and 2.

C. The Human Concept of the Holy Writers Uplifting the Law as Their Central Emphasis

I hope that we would remember these points concerning the human and divine concepts in the book of Psalms. The human concept of the holy writers uplifts the law as their central emphasis to treasure the law and remain in it for their whole life.

D. The Divine Concept of the Unveiling God Exalting Christ as His Central Stress

The divine concept of the unveiling God exalts Christ as His central stress to turn the holy writers' human concept from the law to Christ according to the divine concept of the divine revelation.

III. THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK

A. The Book of Psalms, Composed of One Hundred Fifty Psalms, Being Divided into Five Books

The book of Psalms, composed of one hundred fifty psalms, is divided into five books. Psalms 1—41 are the first book; Psalms 42—72 are the second book; Psalms 73—89 are the third book; Psalms 90—106 are the fourth book; and Psalms 107—150 are the fifth book. These five books can be likened to the five floors of a building. The first book is the ground floor, whereas the fifth book is the highest floor. Book 5 is a book of praises with thanksgivings.

B. The Contents of the Psalms according to the Human Concept

Apparently, according to the human concept, all the Psalms are the expressions of the sentiments, feelings, and impressions of godly men who were intimately close to God.

C. The Contents of the Psalms according to the Divine Concept

Actually, according to the divine concept, the central thought of the book of Psalms is Christ, as revealed in plain words (Luke 24:44), and the church as the house of God and the city of God for His kingdom, as typified by the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

Thus, the book of Psalms is one book, but in two kinds of tones. One tone is uttered according to the human concept, and the other tone is uttered according to the divine concept. How could this be? No doubt, these holy writers were wrong in their understanding according to their human concept, but

they were still godly men. They were very close to God. Therefore, while they were speaking wrongly, God came to speak through them. Because they were so intimate, so close, and even so one with God, while they were speaking, God came in to speak in their speaking. We should not separate Psalm 1 from Psalm 2. These two psalms were one speaking by David. The first psalm was uttered according to the human concept spoken by David directly. The second psalm was also David's speaking, but it was actually uttered by God.

Then in Psalms 3 through 7, there is David's tone again, but in Psalm 8 God's tone came. Psalms 3 through 7 show us how poor and full of trouble the situation on earth is. But Psalm 8 begins by saying, "O Jehovah our Lord, / How excellent is Your name / In all the earth" (v. 1). When His name is absent, the earth is a mess. When His name is here on the earth, the earth is excellent. This is the name of the One who became a human being, a little lower than the angels, and the name of the One who passed through human life and died, resurrected, and ascended to the heavens to be glorified and honored (vv. 5-6). When this One's name is on this earth, the earth becomes excellent.

Today in the newspapers murders are reported all the time. We have to warn the sisters that they should not walk home alone after the meetings in the evening. Can we say that it is excellent on the earth today? If we want to make the earth excellent, we need to preach the gospel and turn sinners into Christians. The day will come when the entire earth will be excellent because the Lord's name will eventually be excellent in all the earth. This is the divine concept. According to God's divine concept, the central thought in the five books of the Psalms is Christ and the church.

1. Book One

Book 1 indicates that God's intention is to turn the seeking saints from the law to Christ that they may enjoy the house of God—the church. In Book 1 there are forty-one psalms. In Psalm 1 the psalmist appreciated the law to the uttermost, but in Psalm 27 he no longer appreciated the law. Instead, he appreciated dwelling in the house of God to behold God's

lovliness. He desired to dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of his life (v. 4). This is to enjoy God, not the law, in God's house. Then in Psalm 36 the psalmist declared that they would be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house. In God's house they could drink the river of His pleasures. The psalmist also said that with God is the fountain of life and in His light we can see light (vv. 8-9). What a difference we can see between Psalm 1 and Psalms 27 and 36. Psalm 1 begins from the ground floor, the basement. But in Psalms 27 and 36 the psalmists have gone up to the "fifth floor." They came up from the basement. If we still highly appreciate Psalm 1, we are remaining in the basement. We need to come out of the basement in our appreciation to the higher level of the divine concept.

2. Book Two

Book 2 indicates that the saints experience God and His house and city through the suffering, exalted, and reigning Christ.

3. Book Three

Book 3 indicates that the saints, in their experiences, realize that the house and the city of God with all the enjoyments thereof can be preserved and maintained only with Christ properly appreciated and exalted by God's people.

4. Book Four

Book 4 indicates that the saints, being joined to Christ, are one with God so that He can recover His title over the earth through Christ in His house and city. Psalm 90 is the first psalm of Book 4. The title of Psalm 90 says that it is a prayer of Moses, the man of God. In the first verse, Moses says, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place / In all generations." The one who wrote the law declared that God was his eternal dwelling place. I was shocked when I read this psalm for the first time and saw that it was written by Moses. According to our thought, Moses only knew how to give the law, the Ten Commandments.

When we read the Ten Commandments, do we feel that

they bring us close to God? After reading these commandments, a number of Christians would say that they cannot make it since they break the commandments all the time. People lie frequently and spontaneously. Someone may call on the telephone and ask, "Is your father home?" Then the person would say that he is not home, even though his father is there reading the newspaper. People lie to one another all the time. The children lie to their parents. The husbands lie to their wives and vice versa. People also break the commandment concerning not coveting again and again. When we see others with possessions better than ours, we covet what they have. A person covets another person's expensive car. A young boy in school covets another boy's expensive pen. The commandments of the law are impossible for fallen man to keep. The law does not bring people close to God. However, the law does escort people to Christ. The law of God is the custodian and child-conductor of God's chosen people to bring them to Christ (Gal. 3:23-24).

When Moses, the one who wrote the Ten Commandments, became old, he declared, "O God, You are our dwelling place for eternity. I am not actually living on this earth. I am living in You. I am dwelling in You. You are my dwelling." This is the introductory word to Book 4 of the Psalms.

5. Book Five

Book Five indicates that the house and the city of God become the praise, safety, and desire of the saints, and that Christ comes to reign over the whole earth through the house and the city of God—the church.

This is the content of the five books of the Psalms. We need to pick up all of these crucial points in this introductory word. Then we will be prepared and qualified to study the book of Psalms. We will be able to receive the real and genuine interpretation of all one hundred fifty psalms.

We need to see that, on the one hand, the book of Psalms was written according to the human concept, and on the other hand, it was written according to the divine concept. If we do not see this, our understanding will be natural, and the Psalms will be understood by us according to the human

concept. In our understanding of the Psalms, we will not have anything of the divine concept. We all need to be brought into the divine concept of the unveiling God. We need to be turned from the law to Christ according to the divine concept.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWO

CHRIST IN GOD'S ECONOMY VERSUS THE LAW IN MAN'S APPRECIATION

(1)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 1:1-6; Rom. 5:20; Gal. 4:24-25; Rom. 7:12, 14a; Psa. 119:103, 105, 130; 2 Tim. 3:16a; Exo. 20:3-17; Psa. 78:5; 119:88b; Rom. 3:20b; 4:15b; 5:20b; 7:7b; Gal. 3:23-24; Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:21b; Rom. 8:3a; 3:20a; Gal. 3:11a, 12b; Psa. 36:8; 1 Cor. 3:6; John 4:10, 14; Rev. 21:6; 22:1, 17b; John 7:38-39; Psa. 73:1-7, 13-17, 23-26; Matt. 5:10; Psa. 1:5-6; Rom. 2:12; Rom. 10:4a; 6:14b

In the previous message, we gave an introductory word concerning the Psalms. In this message we want to see the truth concerning Christ in God's economy versus the law in man's appreciation.

I. THE LAW IN MAN'S APPRECIATION

Psalm 1 is concerning the law in man's appreciation (v. 2). I hope that we will receive a clear view to see this Psalm. We need to see the truth concerning the law in its position, its nature, its content, its function, and its weakness. We need to fight the battle against the wrong teachings concerning the law which are not in the light of God's New Testament economy. Among Christians there are two schools concerning the law. One school is positive and the other school is very negative. The top person in the negative school related to the law is the apostle Paul. Concerning the law, he was negative to the uttermost. I want to point out some of the points he stressed in his teaching concerning the law.

In Romans and in Galatians, Paul stressed that no flesh, no fallen human being, can be justified before God by the

works of the law (Rom. 3:20a; Gal. 2:16; 3:11a). To work to be justified by the law is to labor in vain. In Romans 7 Paul told us that the law, instead of giving us life, becomes the killing instrument by which sin deceives and kills us (v. 11). Do we like something that kills us? David was wrong to exalt and appreciate something by which we can be killed. This shows us how negative Paul was in his view concerning the law.

I want to raise up Paul's argument as my argument against the law. Some may say that Paul told us in Romans 7 that the law is holy, righteous, good (v. 12), and even spiritual (v. 14a). But this is only in its nature. In nature the law is holy, righteous, good, and spiritual, but we also need to see what Paul says concerning its position, its function, and its weakness.

A. Its Position

We need to consider what the position of the law is. In order to see the law's position, we have to take Paul's teaching.

1. Entering In alongside the Main Line of God's Economy

The first thing we need to see concerning the position of the law is that the law entered in alongside the main line of God's economy (Rom. 5:20a). Because of this, the law does not have an orthodox position. It was not orthodox because it entered in alongside the main line of God's economy.

Many today do not see this main line. Instead, they teach the Bible according to the natural way, without any governing principles. Over sixty years ago, I first heard that we have to interpret the Bible with the proper principles. When I heard that, I was asking myself, "What are the principles for us to understand the Bible?" At that time, I did not understand, but gradually I came into the proper realization of the governing principles of understanding and interpreting the Bible. In this message I am interpreting the Word according to these principles.

The principle we need to see concerning the law is this—Paul in Romans 5:20a told us that the law entered in alongside.

The Greek word here also means to "come in alongside." The law did not come in by itself. It came in alongside of something. This means that the main line of God's economy was there already.

After the creation of man, however, something happened. Satan came in, sin followed Satan, and man became fallen. Thus, man became a fallen man constituted with sin to be a sinner. God created man in His own image and after His own likeness (Gen. 1:26) with the intention that man could take in God, live God, and express God. The main line of God's economy began with man and was on the way when something happened. A "car accident" occurred. Therefore, the law needed to come in alongside the main line of God's economy. This should help us to understand Paul's word in Romans 5:20a.

The law was not originally ordained and arranged by God. In God's original economy, there was not such a thing. God in His economy planned to create and to have a man in His image and after His likeness that man one day could receive Him as life to live Him and to manifest Him so that He might have an organism to express His Divine Trinity. But Satan came in to deceive man, and Satan and man became one. The man created by God in His own image was constituted by Satan with Satan's nature to be a sinful man. Now God had to fix the situation. Would God keep man out of His plan, forgetting about man? Of course, God would never do that because He is the Alpha and also the Omega (Rev. 22:13). He cannot start anything without completing it.

In order to continue His purpose with man after man's fall, God added something to the main line of His economy. The Chinese version of the Bible says in Romans 5:20 that the law was added. It was something in addition to grace. The law was in addition to the orthodox line of grace in God's economy.

2. As a Concubine, Symbolized by Hagar

Second, the position of the law is that of a concubine, symbolized by Hagar (Gal. 4:24-25). Paul told us in Galatians 4 that Abraham had two wives. One was the orthodox

wife, Sarah, and the other was the concubine, Hagar (vv. 22-31). We all know that a man's concubine does not have an orthodox position. Paul indicated that Sarah signifies the new covenant of grace, and he pointed out that Hagar symbolizes the old covenant of the law. Thus, the law's position is that of a concubine.

In God's creation, He did not ordain man to have a concubine. He ordained that man should have one wife (Matt. 19:3-9). Anyone that has more than one wife enters into corruption. We should not try to bring a concubine into God's economy. If we are appreciating and uplifting the law, we are bringing a concubine into God's economy. This is absolutely against God's ordination.

The law as a concubine entered in alongside the main line of God's economy. Whoever is of the law, is a child of the concubine, not a son of the free woman. The law does not have an orthodox position. The followers of the law are not the children of the orthodox wife. Ishmael, the son of the concubine, Hagar, was looked down on and was chased away. He was chased away from the main line of God's economy, the line of grace. We must remember this point in our interpretation of Psalm 1. The writer of Psalm 1 uplifted the law according to the human concept, which is contradicting to the main line of God's economy.

B. Its Nature

1. Holy, Righteous, and Good

Now we need to see the nature of the law. In its nature, the law is holy, righteous, and good (Rom. 7:12).

2. Spiritual

The law is also spiritual (7:14a). This is because the law was God's speaking. Since the Ten Commandments are God's speaking, they are God's breathing. All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16a). The entire Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible considered as the law, is God's breathing. God's breathing, of course, is altogether spiritual. Thus, in this sense, the law is spiritual.

Although the position of the law is not right, the nature of the law is good. This is the point where troubles can arise in our understanding. The positive school stands on the nature of the law. They point out that Paul said that the law is holy, righteous, good, and even spiritual. Then they ask, "How could you say the law is negative?" It is true that the nature of the law is good and spiritual, but its position is wrong. A lady may be good and spiritual in her nature, yet still be a concubine. This lady may be a "golden" lady, a spiritual lady, but she does not have an orthodox position.

The nature of the law is good because the law is spiritual, being the word of God (Psa. 119:103, 105, 130) and the breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16a). This is why we may have a problem in our understanding of the law when we come to Psalm 119. We need to realize that Psalm 119 refers to the word again and again. No other psalm refers to the law as God's word so much. In verses 147-148, the psalmist said that he anticipated the morning dawn that he might meditate in the Lord's word. The psalmist said here that he meditated, not in the law but in the word. Psalm 119:103 does not say that the law is so sweet. Instead, the psalmist declares here how sweet the Lord's word is to his taste. Because the law is the word of God, it is good and spiritual in its nature.

C. Its Content

1. The Ten Commandments

Now we need to see the content of the law. The content of the law mainly is the Ten Commandments. We need to analyze the Ten Commandments in a proper way. The first three commandments require man to have only God and not have any idols (Exo. 20:3-7). The first commandment says that we should not have another god, the second is that we should not make idols, and the third is that we should not worship idols.

The fourth commandment is concerning keeping the Sabbath (vv. 8-11). To keep the Sabbath is to take God and all He has created for us as our satisfaction and rest. The fourth commandment requires man to have satisfaction and

rest only in God and all that God has accomplished for man. God created the heavens and the earth with billions of items for us. On the sixth day, the last day of God's creating work, God created man. Man came out of the creating hand of God with everything ready. The universe was just like a wedding room. Before the bride comes, the wedding room is fully prepared. Man came out of God's creating hand, and everything was ready for man. God worked for six days, and the seventh day was the day of rest, the Sabbath, for man to enjoy God and God's work as his rest and satisfaction.

The fifth commandment requires man to honor his parents that man might trace back to man's source—God who created man (v. 12). If we trace our genealogy back to the beginning of creation, we come to the first pair of parents, Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve came from God. When we honor our parents, we trace back to God.

We should have a heart to honor our parents, but quite often, we fallen people do not honor our parents as we should. Today in this evil age many people want to put away their parents when their parents become old. To lose our parents, though, is a big loss. If we honor our parents, we realize something of God as our source. The fifth commandment concerning honoring our parents goes with the foregoing commandments. The Ten Commandments were written on two tablets. The first tablet covers the first five commandments, from having only God to honoring our parents.

The last five commandments were on another tablet as a group. These commandments are concerning the prohibition of murder, fornication, stealing, lying, and covetousness (vv. 13-17). These five commandments may not seem so sweet, but they are very good for mankind. The sixth through the tenth commandments require man to live out the virtues that express God according to God's attributes.

The law of most major countries today is based on Roman law, and Roman law was based upon and written according to the Mosaic law, the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are so brief, yet they are so complete and all-embracing. They cover our relationship with God, our relationship with our parents, and our relationship with

others. If a man did not kill people, did not commit fornication, did not steal and rob, did not tell lies, and did not covet, he would be the top ethical person.

However, we need to ask ourselves whether or not we have been successful in keeping these commandments. Actually, according to the Lord's word in Matthew, we have broken these commandments. The Lord said that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to the judgment (5:21-22). Eventually, the Lord Jesus, in interpreting the Ten Commandments, did not deal merely with the act of murder, but with anger, the motive of murder. To be angry and to hate others is equal to killing in the Lord's higher law of the kingdom of the heavens. This is logical. If you are not angry and do not hate, you could never kill anyone. Killing comes out of anger and hating. The Lord Jesus also went deeper in His teaching concerning the outward act of adultery. Again, He dealt with the inward motive of the heart (Matt. 5:27-28). When Paul was in the Jewish religion, he endeavored to keep every item of the Ten Commandments, but later he testified that he had no way to keep the last commandment—"You shall not covet" (Rom. 7:7-8). This commandment is not related to outward conduct, but rather to the sin within man.

In order to illustrate this, I would like to relate a story about a missionary speaking to his cook about man's sinfulness. This Chinese cook was a proud, ethical person. He had the attitude that the foreigners who came to China did many things wrong, but he did not do anything wrong. The missionary knew this. One day he asked the cook if he was sinful. Then the missionary said, "Of course, I know you would say that you are not sinful. But, let me know what you are thinking about right now. Right now, tell me the truth. What are you thinking within?" This cook then confessed to the missionary that he was jealous of the missionary's having a big horse and that he was thinking about how he could get this horse. Then the missionary replied, "This is coveting. Are you not sinful?" The cook had to admit that he was sinful.

Even as you are reading this message, perhaps there is something in your heart right now which is violating the law.

If a certain sister were to tell me right now what is in her heart, she might say, "This morning a sister offended me, and I cannot forgive her. I am still thinking about how she offended me!" This is evil. The law exposes our sinful nature and evil deeds. The law is holy, righteous, good, and spiritual in its nature, but the function of the law is another matter.

2. A Portrait of God, Hence, the Testimony of God

In its content the law is also a portrait of God, hence, the testimony of God (Psa. 78:5; 119:88b). The law, the Ten Commandments, is a photo of God. Because it is a photo of God, it is a testimony. This is like saying that our picture is a testimony of ourselves. The psalmists referred to the law as the testimony of God.

D. Its Function

1. To Expose Men in Their Sinful Nature and Evil Deeds

The function of the law is to expose men in their sinful nature and evil deeds (Rom. 3:20b; 4:15b; 5:20b; 7:7b). In this sense, the law works as a mirror. If we do not look in a mirror, we cannot see how dirty our face is. But when we look at the mirror, the dirty condition of our face is exposed. The law works like a mirror to expose our sinful nature and evil deeds.

2. To Guard the Chosen People of God and Escort Them to Christ

Furthermore, in its function the law was used by God to guard His chosen people and escort them to Christ (Gal. 3:23-24). Paul told us in Galatians that before Christ came, God gave His chosen people the law as a guardian to guard them. Then when Christ came, this guardian was used by God to escort and bring them to Christ. By being exposed by the law, subdued by the law, and convinced by the law, God's chosen people would go through the law to Christ.

3. To Subdue Men as Sinners under God's Judgment

The law also functions to subdue men as sinners under God's judgment (Rom. 3:19). We need to see the law in this light. God's purpose in giving the law was to expose man, to subdue man, and to guard or keep God's chosen ones for Christ that they may be led to Christ. If we stayed only in the book of Psalms, we could not receive this kind of light. This light comes altogether from Paul's teaching.

E. Its Weakness

1. Not Able to Give Life

The law is good and spiritual, but it is weak. In its weakness, it is not able to give life (Gal. 3:21b). Regardless of how good, how holy, how righteous, and how spiritual the law is, the law cannot impart life to us. We sinners were not only evil but also dead (Eph. 2:1). The basic thing we need is life. The good law, the righteous law, the holy law, the spiritual law, is good, but it cannot impart life into us.

2. Not Able to Do That Which God Wants Because It Is Weak through the Flesh

Furthermore, the law is not able to do that which God wants because it is weak through the flesh (Rom. 8:3a). The law itself may not be that weak, but the law is given to the flesh, and the flesh is the law's companion. The law is not that weak, but its companion, the flesh, is weak to the uttermost. We need to consider how weak we are. Many of the sisters are easily offended. If you offend them, they will not forget it. To remember another person's faults is not good. The Bible tells us that forgiving means forgetting (Heb. 8:12). As long as we still remember another's fault, this indicates that we have not forgiven him. The proper forgiving is to forget. Forgiving and forgetting seem to be a small thing, but we cannot fully overcome in this matter. This shows that we are weak. Because we are weak, we are the instrument to the law, so the law becomes weak.

Out of the works of the law no flesh will be justified

before God (Rom. 3:20a; Gal. 3:11a). This is repeated by Paul in both Romans and Galatians.

F. Being the Center and Requirement of the Old Covenant

The law was the center and requirement of the old covenant. The law was for the old covenant in God's economy.

G. To Be Performed by Men's Work

The law, as the requirement of the old covenant, is to be performed by men's work (Gal. 3:12b). The law has to be performed. Without man's performance, the law means nothing.

H. Concerning the Personal Benefit of the Saints, Such as Being Blessed in Prosperity

Psalm 1, which is concerning the law in man's appreciation, is for the personal benefit of the saints, such as being blessed in prosperity (vv. 1-3). We need to compare this to Christ's attainments concerning the accomplishment of the economy of God in Psalm 2. Psalm 1 is for the personal benefit of the saints, and Psalm 2 is for the accomplishment of the economy of God. The concept in Psalm 1 is very low compared with the revelation in Psalm 2.

I. Appreciated and Uplifted by Godly Men according to Their Human, Ethical Concept

In Psalm 1 the law was appreciated and uplifted by godly men according to their human, ethical concept (vv. 2-3). Psalm 1 and a number of other psalms show the human, ethical concept of these godly men in uplifting the law. Psalm 1:2-3 says, "His delight is in the law of Jehovah, / And in His law he meditates by day and by night. / And he will be like a tree / Transplanted beside streams of water, / Which yields its fruit in its season, / And whose foliage does not wither; /

And everything he does prospers." The human concept in Psalm 1 is one of appreciating and uplifting the law.

1. The Concept of a Tree Absorbing the Water of the Streams Not Being as High as the Concept of Drinking of the River of God's Pleasures in Psalm 36:8

One concept in Psalm 1:2-3 is that of a tree absorbing the nearby water, and the other concept in Psalm 36:8 is that of drinking of the river of God's pleasures in God's house. The concept of drinking is the highest. All of the one hundred fifty psalms, composed in five books, were arranged in a good sequence. They go progressively up and up, step by step, to the highest level of revelation. Also, the end of each book is higher than its beginning. Book 1 contains forty-one psalms. Psalm 36 is much higher than Psalm 1. In Psalm 36 the psalmist says, "Now I can enjoy the abundance of Your house, Your temple, and I can drink in Your temple the river of Your pleasures" (v. 8). The psalmist here does not talk about the law. He has come up from the first floor to the thirty-sixth floor. When we compare Psalm 1 with Psalm 36, we can see the difference.

2. The New Testament Having Both the Concept of Plants Absorbing Water and the Concept of Drinking the Living Water of the Divine River to Flow Rivers of Living Water

The New Testament has both the concept of plants absorbing water and the concept of drinking the living water of the divine river to flow rivers of living water (1 Cor. 3:6; John 4:10, 14; Rev. 21:6; 22:1, 17b; John 7:38-39). In 1 Corinthians 3:6 Paul said that he planted and Apollos watered. There we can see the concept of plants absorbing water. In John and Revelation, we see that when we drink the river of living water, we flow rivers from within us.

Do we want to absorb a little bit of water from a nearby stream, or will we be "crazy" to drink of the living water and flow rivers out from within us? Are we satisfied to stay in Psalm 1? Where should we go? We should go to Revelation 22!

Revelation 22 is the last "psalm." In Psalm 1 we absorb a little water bit by bit. Sometimes a river may be dry, with no water for the tree to absorb. But in the last "psalm," in the last chapter of Revelation, a river of water of life is flowing for us to drink. This is much higher than absorbing water as a tree.

3. The Concept of Likening the Saints to a Tree Not Being as High as the Concept of Unveiling the New Testament Believers as Branches of the True Vine—Christ—in John 15

Moreover, the concept of likening the saints to a tree is not as high as the concept of unveiling the New Testament believers as branches of the true vine—Christ—in John 15. Today are we merely trees or are we branches? If we are trees, we stand by ourselves. That is poor because Christ is separated from us, and, in a sense, we are competing with Him, since He is a tree and we also are a tree. But the New Testament revelation eventually shows us that we are not actually God's plants by ourselves. We are God's plants by being grafted into Christ to be made branches of Christ as the great true vine. It is higher to be the branches of the true vine than it is to be an individual tree.

The local churches are not many trees. The churches are actually one tree with millions of branches. This one tree is Christ, the great vine tree, and we are the branches of this tree. We are the members of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15a; Rom. 12:5). All the churches are one Body, one tree. All the believers are members of this Body and the branches of this unique tree.

4. The Human Concept in Psalm 1 Being That the Man Who Delights in the Law of God Prospers in Everything, but the Experience of the Psalmist in Psalm 73 Being the Opposite

The human concept in Psalm 1 is that the man who delights in the law of God prospers in everything. But the experience of the psalmist in Psalm 73:1-7, 13-17, and 23-26 is the opposite. He was godly and, no doubt, he delighted in the law of God; yet he suffered a lot and the ungodly prospered. Eventually, he was instructed, in the sanctuary of

God, to take only God Himself as his portion, not anything other than God.

The godly psalmist in Psalm 73 was bothered. He was delighting in the law, but he suffered greatly while the evil ones prospered. He was bothered until he entered into the sanctuary of God, that is, into God's house. Then he became clear. There under God's revelation, he was instructed just to have God Himself as his portion. Eventually he declared that he had no one in the heavens nor anyone on this earth except God, his eternal portion (vv. 25-26).

If the Lord wills, we will study the minor prophets in this upcoming summer training of 1992. Then in the winter we hope to study Job. In the book of Job, there is a big controversy. Job suffered greatly. His family, his property, and his health were destroyed (Job 1:13—2:8). Then Job's three friends came to speak with him. What they spoke was nonsense. They told Job that he must have been wrong in something. Otherwise, God would not punish him in this way. Job contended with them by saying that he was wrong in nothing. These three friends spoke to Job one by one again and again throughout the book of Job. Job, however, would not be subdued by them. Eventually, God came in and stopped everyone's mouth. God's speaking to Job opened his eyes. Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5). Job heard about God, but he never saw God. After passing through his sufferings, he saw God. If someone who loves the Lord is suffering, his suffering is not basically a matter of his being right or wrong. What God is concerned with is our having more of God in our inward being.

About three or four years ago, I went to see my eye doctor for a check-up. He has been taking care of me since 1975, and he performed surgery on my eyes to remove cataracts. I told him that my eyes were bothering me, and I asked him why. He responded by saying, "These are Job's sufferings." By this he indicated to me that my suffering was without any reason and that he could not help me any more. Job's sufferings always come from God's assignment. Every parent expects to have good children, and they may wonder why their children are bad. A brother may wonder why his wife

is not as nice as other wives, and a sister may wonder why her husband is so incapable. These are Job's sufferings. Today I am still experiencing Job's sufferings.

5. The Lord's Teaching in the New Testament Being "Blessed Are Those Who Are Persecuted [Not Prosperous] for the Sake of Righteousness"

The Lord's teaching in the New Testament says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted [not prosperous] for the sake of righteousness" (Matt. 5:10). A brother may be one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness (v. 6), yet he is persecuted. I would not say that this persecution is Job's sufferings, but I would say that it is according to God's economy.

J. People to Whom the Law Was Given Will Be Judged according to the Law

People to whom the law was given will be judged according to the law (Psa. 1:5-6; Rom. 2:12). Paul tells us in Romans 2:12 that all human beings will stand before God to be judged one day. But those who have received the law will be judged by God according to the law. Those who never received the law will be judged by God according to their conscience (vv. 15-16).

K. Ended by Christ

The law has been ended by Christ (Rom. 10:4a). Christ is the end of the law, the close of the law, the replacement of the law. Christ came to fulfill the law (Matt. 5:17) that He might terminate the law and replace it (Rom. 8:3-4). Thus, everyone who believes in Him receives God's righteousness, which is Christ Himself.

L. The New Testament Believers Not Being under the Law

The New Testament believers are not under the law (Rom. 6:14b). Hallelujah! We are no longer under the law, but we are now under grace.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THREE

CHRIST IN GOD'S ECONOMY VERSUS THE LAW IN MAN'S APPRECIATION

(2)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 2:1-12; John 1:41; Matt. 3:16-17; Luke 4:18-19; Heb. 1:9; Acts 10:38; Dan. 9:26a; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5-6; Acts 2:36; 5:31; Rev. 1:5a; 2:26-27; Acts 4:25-29a; Rev. 6:15-17; Acts 17:30; John 3:16; 21:15a

In the previous message, we saw the truth concerning the law in its position, its nature, its content, its function, and its weakness. Psalm 1 is according to the human concept of uplifting and treasuring the law, whereas Psalm 2 is according to the divine concept of exalting Christ as God's central stress.

Perhaps we can receive further help by considering stanza 3 of *Hymns*, #541:

Not philosophy nor
Any element
Can to Christ conform us
As His complement;
But 'tis Christ Himself who
All our nature takes
And in resurrection
Us His members makes.

No philosophy, element, or religion can conform us to Christ. The law of Moses cannot conform us to Christ. Only Christ can conform us to Himself, and nothing else. Some may be bothered that we are belittling religion. They may say, "We are Christians; shouldn't we love Christianity?" But we need to be those who love Christ, not any "anity." Nothing can or should replace Christ.

Christ conforms us to Himself so that we can be His

complement. To be Christ's complement means that we are a part of Him. This is like Eve being a complement to Adam. Only Christ can make us a part of Him as His complement. The law cannot make us members of Christ. Only Christ can make us His members in resurrection.

We need to see Psalm 1 in the light of the economy of God. This psalm says that those who meditate in the law will be like a tree absorbing the water from the streams, but according to the New Testament revelation this is not very high. Eventually, the New Testament tells us that the river of living water gets into us (John 7:38; 4:14). Do we want to be a tree by the side of a river or do we want to have the river flowing within us? Which is better and which is higher? The thought of a river flowing within us is the ultimate concept of the Bible (Rev. 22:1). To be a tree planted by the river to absorb its supply of water is good, but it is not the best. Paul said that he planted and Apollos watered (1 Cor. 3:6). The thought here is the same as that of a tree absorbing water, but this is not as high as the thought of the river of water of life flowing within us. This is God's ultimate thought.

In my youth I was taught that when we study the Bible, we have to get the secret of the Bible. Later, Brother Nee told us that we have to know the spirit of the Bible. The Bible, the written Word, has a spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). This shows us that the Word is the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). Not only is the Spirit in the Word, but also the Word itself is the Spirit. Furthermore, John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word…and the Word was God." The Word is God, and the Word is the Spirit. Thus, God, the Word, and the Spirit are one.

When we come to the Bible, we should not think that we are coming to an ordinary book. We should not read it as we would a magazine or a newspaper. We have to realize that the Bible is God's Word, and the Word is God's embodiment, Christ. Christ is the Word of God. Also, whatever He as the Word of God utters, whatever is spoken out of His mouth, is the Spirit. Psalm 1 is the Word of God. Paul told us that all Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16a). If we take this

position when we read Psalm 1, we will receive the Spirit, we will see the secret, and we will also see the spirit of the Bible.

Does the spirit of the Bible reveal to us the law of Moses, exalting the law given at Mount Sinai? On the mount of transfiguration, Peter put Moses and Elijah on the same level as Christ (Matt. 17:1-13). When Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ, Peter became excited. He said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You are willing, I will make three tents here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah" (v. 4). Then God said, "This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight. Hear Him!" (v. 5). In God's New Testament economy, we should no longer hear Moses (the law) or Elijah (the prophets). The Bible does not exalt the law or the prophets. The spirit of the Bible exalts only one person—Christ.

We must understand why Psalms 1 and 2 were sovereignly arranged in this way. Psalm 1 is concerning the keeping of the law. Immediately after Psalm 1, Christ is in Psalm 2 as the exalted One. The spirit of the Bible, from Genesis 1 through Revelation 22, reveals only Christ as the prominent One, as the first One, as God's centrality and universality. Eventually, the Bible concludes with a new city. The new city, the New Jerusalem, will be a complement of Christ and a complement to Christ. The spirit of the Bible does not exalt anything or anyone other than Christ.

Paul, in his fourteen Epistles, fought a battle to put down everything other than Christ. In his Epistle to the Galatians, Paul put down the law, circumcision, tradition, and religion. To him all things other than Christ were refuse (Phil. 3:8). He exalted only Christ.

In Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, he went to the elders, and the leading elder at that time was James. James told him, "You observe, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews who have believed; and all are zealous for the law" (Acts 21:20). James exalted the law. I believe that he exalted the law higher than David did in Psalm 1. James declared that there were thousands of Jewish Christians who were enthusiastic for the law. The Greek word for *thousands*

means myriads or tens of thousands. Tens of thousands of Jewish brothers were all burning for the law. James was concerned that these ones would dispute with Paul, since they had heard that Paul put down the law. History tells us that James was a man of prayer, a pious, godly, and devoted man. In his Epistle he taught the practical virtues of Christian perfection. But we need to see that James, the elders in Jerusalem, and many thousands of Jewish believers were still in a mixture of the Christian faith and the Mosaic law.

In this message, I want us to check with ourselves. Is our spirit for the law or for Christ? We may say that we are for Christ, but we are also for the law. Our being for Christ is mostly in theory, but our being for the law is very practical. We act mostly according to the law, according to yes and no, right and wrong, and not according to Christ. We even educate and teach our children according to right and wrong. A parent may say to his child, "That is not right; you shouldn't do it." But have we ever said, "That is not Christ; you shouldn't do it"? Who ever tells someone not to do something because that is not Christ? This should help us to realize that we are for Christ in theory, but actually we practice the law. Do we practice Christ or the law? To practice Christ is to get out of the realm of yes and no, right and wrong, good and evil. This means that we get out of the realm of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We may say that our spirit is for Christ, but in practice we live according to the law, according to what is right and wrong, good and evil.

The book of Psalms shows us the contrast between the law and Christ. The first psalm is concerning keeping the law, and the second psalm tells us to kiss Christ. Which is higher? I am not asking which one is right or wrong, but which one is higher. Surely, kissing the Son is higher than keeping the law.

I think that David's devotion to the law in Psalm 1 was higher than our devotion to Christ. This is because he said that he meditated in the law day and night. Do we meditate on Christ day and night? If we meditate on Christ for a short

time, we think this is wonderful, but David meditated in the law day and night.

I am sharing this to show us that we secretly, unconsciously, and subconsciously hold our natural concept in coming to the Bible. This is why we do not receive the revelation from the Bible into us. Instead, we insert our concept into the Bible. We should not exalt the keeping of the law, because the book of Psalms itself does not go along with this. If we are exalting the keeping of the law in Psalm 1, we are then confronted with Psalm 2. Psalm 2 is God's speaking, God's declaration, concerning Christ as the center of His economy. He declares, "I have installed My King / Upon Zion, My holy mountain" (v. 6). This is not ordinary speaking, but a declaration and a proclamation.

God proclaimed to all His people that He had installed His King upon Mount Zion, not Mount Sinai. These two mountains—Mount Zion and Mount Sinai—are very significant. Hebrews 12 says that we have not come to Mount Sinai but to Mount Zion (vv. 18-22). Mount Sinai was the place where the law was given, and Mount Zion is the place where Christ is today in the heavens in His ascension.

Paul speaks of these mountains in Galatians 4. Mount Sinai produces children of slavery, but our mother, the Jerusalem above, is in the heavens, at Mount Zion (vv. 25-26). Revelation 14:1 tells us that there are a hundred and forty-four thousand standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion. These hundred and forty-four thousand are not praising God for the law given at Mount Sinai. Mount Zion is not a place to show us the law, the commandments. It is a place to show us Christ—only Christ. Mount Sinai is in the Bible, but the spirit of the Bible does not exalt it. Instead, the Bible puts Mount Sinai down to a lower place. The spirit of the Bible exalts only Christ.

The sad thing is that many of God's chosen people forget about Christ. They believe in Christ, but they do not know Christ or care for Christ. Instead, they care for the law. Paul said, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21a). We might say, "For to me to live is yes and no, good and evil, right and wrong." What mountain are we on today? Nearly all of us

are on Mount Sinai. We are not disciples of Moses but disciples of Christ. However, we are on the wrong mountain. Christ is on Mount Zion. He is not on Mount Sinai, but we still linger there. Many of us dare not say good-bye to the law. Instead, we want to stay with the law as a follower of David, meditating in the law day and night.

We need to see that the entire revelation of the Bible is progressive. The revelation in the holy Word proceeds higher and higher from Genesis to its peak in Revelation. Genesis 1 speaks of God's creation, but Revelation 22 speaks of the New Jerusalem. God's creation is somewhat easy to understand, but the sign of the New Jerusalem is a great mystery. The revelation of the New Jerusalem is high and profound to the uttermost.

The five books of the Psalms were arranged in the same progressive way as the entire Bible was arranged. From the first book of the Psalms to the fifth book, the revelation proceeds higher and higher. The fifth book is full of the psalmists' praising of God. God is embodied in Christ, Christ is in His Body, and His Body is God's house and God's city for God's kingdom. This is all for God's economy. The central thought of the book of Psalms is Christ and the church as the house of God and the city of God for His kingdom.

II. CHRIST IN GOD'S ECONOMY

We need to see the revelation concerning Christ in God's economy versus the law in man's appreciation in the Psalms. In the previous message, we saw the truth concerning the law in man's appreciation. Now we need to see the divine revelation of Christ in God's economy in Psalm 2 (vv. 2, 6-9, 12).

A. A Declaration of God according to His Divine Concept

Psalm 2 is a declaration of God according to His divine concept. Psalm 1, however, is according to the natural, human concept. David thought that the one who meditated in the law day and night would prosper in everything. This is according to the human concept of doing something for one's

personal benefit and gain. There is no consideration in Psalm 1 for God's economy.

B. Exalting Christ as the Center of the Economy of God

Psalm 2 exalts Christ as the center of the economy of God. Although the word *economy* is not in Psalm 2, the revelation and reality of God's economy are there. In this psalm God declared that He had installed His King (v. 6). For God to have a King is for the fulfilling of His economy. Then God said, "I will give the nations as Your inheritance / And the limits of the earth as Your possession" (v. 8). This is for a kingdom. Of course, the King needs a kingdom, and this kingdom is not small. It is a great kingdom of all the nations, covering the limits of the entire earth. This will be the biggest kingdom in human history. Christ will possess all the continents. His kingdom will be everywhere to include everyone. The King and the kingdom in Psalm 2 show us the economy of God.

1. Anointed in His Divinity in Eternity by God to Be the Messiah—Christ—the Anointed One

Psalm 2 reveals Christ, the Anointed One (v. 2). Among the Brethren, there was a debate concerning when Christ was anointed. Daniel 9:26 says that Messiah would be cut off, crucified. *Messiah* is a Hebrew word, and the Greek equivalent is *Christ*. They both mean the Anointed One. Daniel 9:26 shows that before Christ was incarnated and crucified, He was already the Anointed One. Therefore, Christ was anointed in His divinity in eternity by God to be the Messiah—Christ—the Anointed One. This is also based upon John 1:41, where the Lord's disciple Andrew told Simon, his brother, that he had found the Messiah, the Anointed One. This indicates that Christ was anointed in eternity in His divinity before His incarnation.

2. Anointed in His Humanity in Time at His Baptism

He came as the Anointed One to accomplish God's eternal

plan. He became a man and He was anointed again in His humanity in time at the time of His baptism (Matt. 3:16-17; Luke 4:18-19; Heb. 1:9; Acts 10:38).

3. Cut Off—Crucified

After passing through thirty-three and a half years of human living, Christ was cut off (Dan. 9:26). That means He was crucified.

4. Resurrected to Be Begotten as the Firstborn Son of God

After being cut off, crucified, Christ was resurrected to be begotten as the firstborn Son of God (Psa. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5-6). Psalm 2 shows us Christ's resurrection. The word *resurrection* is not there, but the fact is there. Verse 7 says, "I will recount the decree of Jehovah; / He said to Me: You are My Son; / Today I have begotten You." "Today" is the day of Christ's resurrection. In Acts 13:33 Paul quoted Psalm 2:7, telling us that this refers to Christ's resurrection. In His resurrection, Christ was begotten. Since He was already the Son of God, why did He need to be begotten as the Son of God in resurrection? Christ was the only begotten Son of God in His divinity (John 3:16), but when He became incarnated, He put humanity upon Him. This humanity had nothing to do with the sonship of God, but through His death and resurrection, His humanity was "sonized" to also be the Son of God. By resurrection Christ brought His humanity into the divine sonship and was designated the Son of God with His humanity (Rom. 1:4). Now the Son of God has the divine nature with the human nature. When Christ was merely the only begotten Son of God, He was God's Son only in the divine nature. Now as the firstborn Son of God, He possesses both the divine nature and the human nature.

Christ is the firstborn Son of God, and we are the many sons of God. We believers in Christ are regenerated sons of God, having God's life and God's nature, but we also have our human nature. Our human nature is still in the process of being begotten. We have been regenerated in our spirit, but we still have not been transfigured in our body. When

our body is transfigured, redeemed, glorified, our body will also be "sonized." Our sonship will be completed by that time (Rom. 8:23). The sonship began with the regeneration of our spirit, is continuing with the transformation of our soul, and will be consummated with the redemption of our body. The process of our sonship passes through our regeneration and transformation to our glorification.

In Psalm 2 we can see God's economy with God's kingdom and the resurrection of Christ, in which He was begotten to be God's firstborn Son. The day of resurrection was a great day. Not only was Christ born on that day, but we also were born on that day. First Peter 1:3 says that through Christ's resurrection, God regenerated us. When Christ was born as the firstborn Son of God, we were all born with Him to be His many brothers, the many sons of God (Rom. 8:29). Christ's resurrection was a big delivery, a big birth, of Himself as the firstborn Son of God with His many brothers, the many sons of God.

5. Installed as God's King in the Heavens in His Ascension

Psalm 2 also reveals that Christ was installed as God's King in the heavens in His ascension (v. 6; Acts 2:36; 5:31; Rev. 1:5a). In verse 6, God declared, "I have installed My King / Upon Zion, My holy mountain." This was in Christ's ascension. In His ascension He was made the King in the heavens for God's kingdom.

6. Having Been Given the Nations as His Inheritance and the Limits of the Earth as His Possession for His Kingdom

According to Psalm 2:8, Christ has been given the nations as His inheritance and the limits of the earth as His possession for His kingdom. When the Lord came back to the disciples in His resurrection, He told them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). The Lord's word here covers what is mentioned in Psalm 2:8. God has given all the nations on this earth to Christ as His inheritance. Furthermore, God has given the limits of the

earth to Christ as His possession. Today if you own even a small portion of land in Taiwan, you are a rich man. But the entire earth will be possessed by Christ. This is His land. How rich He is! We cannot see such wonderful things about Christ in Psalm 1. Psalm 1 says, according to the human concept, that the man who meditates in the law will prosper in everything, but Psalm 2 reveals, according to the divine concept, that God has given the limits of the earth to Christ.

7. To Rule the Nations in His Kingdom with an Iron Rod

Eventually, Christ will rule the nations in His kingdom with an iron rod (Psa. 2:9; Rev. 2:26-27). There is a marvelous sequence in Psalm 2 revealing the steps of Christ in God's economy beginning from His being anointed in eternity in His divinity. We may wonder where Christ's death is spoken of in Psalm 2, but we need to realize that Christ's resurrection implies His death. Without death, how could there be resurrection? Thus, in Psalm 2 we see His being anointed in His divinity and humanity, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension with His enthronement. God installed Him as King, enthroning Him to give Him all the nations with the limits of the earth. This is to set up a universal kingdom for Christ. Then Christ will rule the nations with an iron rod.

8. Opposed by the Rulers of the World

Psalm 2 says that Christ is opposed by the rulers of the world. Verses 1-3 say, "Why are the nations in an uproar, / And why do the peoples contemplate a vain thing? / The kings of the earth take their stand, / And the rulers take counsel together, / Against Jehovah and against His Anointed: / Let us break apart their bonds / And cast their ropes away from us." Soon after Christ's ascension, on the earth at Peter's time, Herod and Pilate took their stand against Christ. Acts 4:25-29a records the prayer of the early church, in which they quote from Psalm 2. Acts 4:27 says, "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the

Gentiles and the peoples of Israel." They all were opposing Christ.

C. A Warning to the World

Psalm 2 also gives a warning to the world (vv. 10-12).

1. God and His Christ Being in Wrath to the World

First, God and His Christ will be in wrath to the world (v. 12b; Rev. 6:15-17). Men should not think that there is no God in this universe or that Christ is just a name in religion. The Bible tells us clearly that Christ is waiting for the opportunity to come to execute His judgment in His anger, in His wrath.

The book of Joel speaks of this judgment. The subject of Joel is the day of the Lord (1:15; 2:11, 31; 3:14), but few Christians understand what the day of the Lord is. Paul gave us the definition in 1 Corinthians 4:3-5. In verse 3 he said, "It is a very small thing that I should be examined by you or by man's day." Before the Lord comes, it is man's day, in which man judges. Today is man's day. In man's day, everything is judged by man. But after man's day, there will be a day which will be called the day of the Lord. This day will last about one thousand three and a half years. The day on which the great tribulation begins will be the beginning of the day of the Lord. From that day, the Lord's wrath will be expressed. The day of the Lord is the day of His judgment.

It may seem today that the Lord does not care for the world situation. If people want to settle their problems, they have to go to the police station. Then the police station will transfer them to the law court, where they will be judged and ruled according to the law of man. When people have disputes and grievances today, they do not go to Christ. But when the great tribulation begins, that will be the beginning of the day of the Lord. Christ will come to interfere with the world situation.

Joel reveals that after the three and a half years of the great tribulation, the Lord will judge the living Gentiles (3:12). Matthew 25 tells us that He will separate them, the

sheep from the goats, in His judgment (vv. 32-46). Afterward, He will set up the thousand-year kingdom. In the thousand-year kingdom, He will judge, rule, and control the entire earth. At the end of that thousand years, there will be a rebellion, which He will also judge (Rev. 20:8-9). Then He will have the final judgment on the great white throne to judge the dead unbelievers (vv. 11-15). That will be the end of the day of the Lord. Thus, the day of the Lord will last one thousand three and a half years. After this day, the heavens and the earth will be burned to become the new heavens and new earth. Then the New Jerusalem will come in, and righteousness will fill the new heavens and new earth (2 Pet. 3:13). Everything will be right. There will be no more need for any kind of judgment.

2. Repent

Since God and His Christ will be in wrath to the world, man must repent (Psa. 2:11; Acts 17:30). This is the New Testament gospel.

3. Take Refuge in the Son—Believe into the Son, Christ

Psalm 2:12b says, "Blessed are all those who take refuge in Him." To take refuge in the Son equals to believe into the Son, Christ (John 3:16). Many of us probably have never considered that to believe into Christ is to take refuge in Him. We can see this with the type of Noah's ark. When all the people trusted, or believed in, that ark, they all entered into that ark, to take the ark as their refuge, protection, and hiding place. Today our Christ is our refuge, our protection. We are hiding ourselves in Him.

After getting into bed, I usually pray, "Lord, cover us, our building, and our yard with Your prevailing blood against all the enemy's attack." The next morning I thank the Lord for being our security. Every time I take a trip, I ask the Lord to be my protection. I ask the Lord to cover the car which I will take to the airport and to cover the plane in which I will fly. Even, of course, I take the Lord as my refuge under God's

eternal judgment. These are experiences of taking refuge in Christ.

4. Kiss the Son—Love Christ, the Son of God

Psalm 2:12a says that we need to kiss the Son. The New Testament tells us that we need faith and love. Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:14, "And the grace of our Lord superabounded with faith and love in Christ Jesus." The Lord's grace visited Paul and superabounded in him with faith and love in Christ. One day he received mercy and grace from the Lord, not only to believe in Him but also to love Him. We have been given faith to believe into Christ, taking Him as our refuge. Also, we have been given God's love to love the Lord Jesus.

In the Gospel of John, we are taught that we need to believe into Christ, the Son (1:12), and to love Him (14:23). In the last chapter of John, chapter twenty-one, the very Christ who is our refuge came back to Peter to restore Peter's love toward Him. The Lord asked Peter three times, "Do you love Me?" (vv. 15-17).

Peter failed utterly in denying the Lord three times (18:17, 25, 27), so the Lord came back to ask him three times—"Do you love Me?" I think that this threefold asking reminded Peter of his being defeated three times. This is why Peter responded by saying, "Lord, You know." Peter said, "Lord, You know that I love You" (21:15b, 16b). A young believer may be strong to boldly tell the Lord that he loves Him and will never deny Him. But when he is defeated, his natural confidence in his love toward the Lord will be dealt with. Then he will learn to follow the Lord and to love the Lord without any confidence in his natural strength.

To believe in the Lord is to receive Him; to love the Lord is to enjoy Him. The Gospel of John presents these as the two requirements for us to participate in the Lord. The Lord is within us to be our faith and to be our love. To love Him, according to Psalm 2:12a, is to kiss Him. We should not uplift and treasure the law. Instead, we should kiss Christ, love Christ, day by day.

I read a portion of John Nelson Darby's writings which inspired me to love the Lord. One day when he was over

eighty years old, he was traveling and he stayed overnight in a hotel. Before going to sleep, he said to the Lord, "Lord Jesus, I still love You." That inspired me to the uttermost. After many years, he could still speak such a word to the Lord. We need to ask the Lord to keep us loving Him all the time.

D. Concerning the Accomplishment of the Economy of God

Psalm 2 is concerning the accomplishment of the economy of God, whereas Psalm 1 is concerning the personal benefit of the saints (vv. 1-3). The human concept of Psalm 1 is that the man who delights in the law of God prospers in everything. But according to the New Testament revelation, the law is over and Christ is here (Rom. 10:4a). Christ is the centrality and universality of God's economy. The entire book of Psalms takes these two lines: the law and Christ. Eventually, by the end of the Psalms, the law is over, and we see Christ with His complement, which is His Body, His church, the house and the kingdom of God in God's economy to fulfill God's eternal purpose.

Thus, we have to see that Psalms 1 and 2 show us a comparison of the human concept in exalting the law with its keeper as the one blessed by God in man's interest and the divine revelation in proclaiming Christ as the One anointed of God in God's economy.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE FOUR

DAVID'S CONCEPTS CONCERNING A GODLY LIFE IN COMPARISON WITH HIS INSPIRED PRAISE OF THE EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST

(1)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 3—7

Thus far, we have covered Psalm 1 concerning the law in man's appreciation and Psalm 2 concerning Christ in God's economy. We have seen that it was altogether by the Holy Spirit for the Psalms to be arranged this way. Suppose that we were the arrangers of the one hundred fifty psalms. Which psalm would we place as the first one? The Lord's way is the best way. He put Psalm 1 first, where we see the law in man's appreciation. Then we see Christ in God's economy in Psalm 2. What would be next in Psalms 3—7? It is interesting to see that right after Psalms 1 and 2, there are five psalms which show us David's concepts concerning a godly life.

The title of Psalm 3 says, "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son." Absalom was a rebellious son. The Psalms were arranged in this way to show us that David needed to be corrected and disciplined. David appreciated the law so highly in Psalm 1, but did he keep the law? Did he as a tree stand by the streams steadfastly? He was not planted by the streams in Psalm 3. Instead, he was fleeing from his rebellious son.

From my youth I have loved Psalm 51. This is a psalm of David's repentance after his great sin recorded in 2 Samuel 11. David committed intentional murder, using his power and authority as a king to carry out his conspiracy to kill Uriah, one of his fighters. After that murder, he robbed Uriah of his wife. The last five commandments of the law

prohibit killing, fornication, stealing, lying, and coveting. David broke the last five commandments. He killed Uriah, committed fornication, stole Uriah's wife, lied to Uriah, and coveted Uriah's wife. That offended God to the uttermost (1 Kings 15:5). Right away God sent the prophet Nathan to reprove David, as recorded in 2 Samuel 12. David became subdued, and he repented. Then he wrote Psalm 51. That is a wonderful psalm. The standard in this psalm is high; it is full of life and full of spirit. It even takes care of God's economy. The end of that psalm shows that after his confession of his own sin, he still remembered Zion and Jerusalem. In verse 18 David said, "Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: / Build the walls of Jerusalem."

That psalm is very good and very high. But it is difficult to believe that about three years later, he wrote Psalms 3—7, which are full of the human concept. After David committed murder and fornication, God disciplined him by allowing there to be trouble among his children (2 Sam. 12:11). One of David's sons committed fornication with one of his daughters. Then the fornicator was killed by another son of David, Absalom (2 Sam. 13:1-36). After the killing of his brother, Absalom fled to Geshur and stayed there for three years (vv. 37-39). Then after three years, he came back to David, and a little later he rebelled. Then David fled. In his flight from his rebellious son, he wrote Psalms 3—7. We have to know the history of these psalms in order to see them in the light of God's New Testament economy.

Some Chinese Christians have said that if you want to learn how to pray, you should study the Psalms, but I would say that we should not do this. Psalms 3—7 are all psalms of prayer, but they are the wrong example of how to pray because they are according to David's human concept for his personal interest. The Chinese Christians also say that if you want to learn how to preach, you should study Proverbs. But I would say that if you want to be a good preacher, you should study Paul's fourteen Epistles. Furthermore, if you want to learn to pray, you should go to Paul. Paul gave us two model prayers in one book, the book of Ephesians. In Ephesians 1 he said that he would ask the Father, the God of our Lord

Jesus Christ, to give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation that we may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us (vv. 17-19). Then in Ephesians 3, Paul said, "I bow my knees unto the Father…that He would grant you…to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts…that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God" (vv. 14-19). If we compare these two prayers of the apostle Paul with the prayers in Psalms 3—7, we will realize that the prayers in these psalms should not be the examples of how we should pray.

In this message I would like to paraphrase the main points in these five psalms. We need to evaluate these psalms point by point in the light of God's New Testament economy. The prayers in Psalms 3—7 are all involved in sufferings, in good and evil, and are even involved in avenging, self-righteousness, and accusing of others. There is no point in these psalms indicating life, repentance, self-condemnation, or self-denial. Furthermore, there is no point indicating much fellowship with God, touching God or being touched by God, and being humble and contrite in spirit. As we consider these psalms, we need to see these points.

I. DAVID'S CONCEPTS CONCERNING A GODLY LIFE IN PSALMS 3—7

As we have pointed out, Psalms 3—7 show us David's concepts concerning a godly life. I use the word *godly* because it is my quotation from Psalm 4:3. David's concepts of such a godly life in Psalms 3—7 are in comparison with His inspired praise of the excellency of Christ in Psalm 8.

A. These Five Psalms Being Written by David in His Flight from His Son Absalom's Rebellion

These five psalms were written by David in his flight from his son Absalom's rebellion, which was the outcome of David's sins of murder and robbing another of his wife (Psa. 3 title).

B. David, Who Appreciated the Law with Its Keeper in Psalm 1, Murdering Uriah and Robbing Him of His Wife

David, who appreciated the law with its keeper in Psalm 1, murdered Uriah and robbed him of his wife (2 Sam. 11:14-27). In Psalm 1 he highly uplifted and exalted the law with its keeper. In his great sin, however, he broke all the last five commandments, which require men to have virtues expressing God's divine attributes. Did David, the one who wrote Psalm 1, keep the law? I do not believe that many readers of the Psalms ever thought about this. They agreed with David's exaltation of the law in Psalm 1. They never thought that Psalm 1 was wrong in treasuring and uplifting the law.

The greatest teacher in the New Testament, Paul, told us that no flesh can be justified by keeping the law (Gal. 2:16; 3:11). It is impossible for fallen man to keep the law. Asking man to keep the law is like asking a crippled bird to fly from Los Angeles to New York. Romans 8:3 says that the law cannot do what God requires because it is weak through the flesh. The law is good in its nature (Rom. 7:12), but the law cannot give us life (Gal. 3:21); it cannot impart the very dynamic power, life power, organic power, into us.

David appreciated the law in Psalm 1, but he committed murder, fornication, stealing, lying, and coveting against the law. Eventually, he was fleeing from his rebellious son. Because David committed murder and fornication, God chastised him through his son's rebellion. His children became a mess. Among them, there were also murder and fornication. If we see this picture, we will be convinced not to treasure and uplift the law. We should not appreciate the law. The more we appreciate the law, the more we will commit something against the law.

C. David Repenting and Being Forgiven by God

After Jehovah reproved him through the prophet Nathan (2 Sam. 12:1-12), David repented and was forgiven by God (2 Sam. 12:13; Psa. 51:1-17).

D. The Five Psalms Being Composed according to David's Concepts of a Godly Life

1. Asking God to Deal with His Adversaries and Be a Shield around Him, His Glory and the One Who Lifted Up His Head

Psalms 3—7 were composed according to David's concepts of a godly life. In these psalms David asked God to deal with his adversaries and be a shield around him, his glory and the One who lifted up his head (Psa. 3:1-3, 6-8). Does asking God to deal with his adversaries correspond with the New Testament teaching? Surely, it is against the New Testament teaching. The New Testament teaches us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35; Rom. 12:20).

I have been in the Lord's recovery for sixty years. In these sixty years, I have encountered opposition and even rebellion. How do we react to such opposition? As descendants of Adam, we would ask the Lord to deal with all these opposers for us. But if we are in the reality of the New Testament, we dare not pray this way. We cannot pray this way to the Lord because He told us to love our enemies.

David also asked the Lord to be a shield of protection around him. Is this good or bad? What is wrong with asking God to protect us? I would say that this is neither bad nor good. At that juncture when he was fleeing from his son, David prayed such a prayer. Why did he not pray, "Lord, You know I committed that sin which caused my son to be rebellious. Lord, don't condemn him. Lord, condemn me. I repent. I would like to have a time to say to my son, 'Son, forgive me. The cause of today's trouble is not you, but me.' Lord, deal with my heart." This is a spiritual prayer. Instead, David was asking the Lord to be a shield around him. As a murderer and a fornicator, was David worthy to be protected? He also asked God to be his glory and the One who lifted up his head. Should David not have felt ashamed to ask this of God when he was fleeing from his son, being chastised by God because of his murder and fornication?

2. Calling Out to Jehovah and Believing That He Would Answer Him from His Holy Mountain

David also called out to Jehovah and believed that He would answer him from His holy mountain (Psa. 3:4).

3. Praying in the Night for Jehovah's Sustaining

David was also praying in the night for Jehovah's sustaining (Psa. 3:5). Nearly all the Bible students and teachers call Psalm 3 a psalm of night prayer. Is praying nightly good or bad? It all depends upon how we pray. If David were really in the spirit, he would have considered the situation he was in at that time. He was fleeing from his rebellious son. He should have considered what caused his son to rebel. Then he would pray at night, "God, forgive me. It was I who caused my son to rebel. It was I who murdered Uriah, using my power and position as king to carry out conspiracy and murder. What a shame that even I robbed Uriah of his wife." As he was fleeing from his son, David should have felt shameful and repentant before God.

4. Asking God to Vindicate His Righteousness

David asked God to vindicate his righteousness based upon the past experience of his prayer. He convinced others that he was a godly man whom God set apart for Himself and who called out to Jehovah and whom Jehovah heard when he called out to him. He also admonished others not to sin in anger but to consider in their heart upon their bed and be silent (Psa. 4:1-4). When he was fleeing from his son, he still asked God to vindicate him of his righteousness, but where was his righteousness? David should not have prayed this way. Instead, he should have asked God to enlighten him so that he could see how evil and sinful he was. As a king, he killed one of his fighters by his conspiracy. Then after killing him, he robbed him of his wife. Where was his righteousness?

He also was convincing others that he was a godly man whom God set apart for Himself. He was fleeing, yet he considered that he was set apart by God. This shows that he was in darkness. In considering Psalm 4, we need to

remember that this was a psalm written by David at the time when he was fleeing. At that time, he indicated that he was a godly man whom God had set apart for Himself. Was that the time for him to pray in this way?

This shows that we human beings always are not easily convinced of or subdued in our sinfulness. Even if we murdered someone and committed fornication by robbing, we would not be convinced. We still would think we are good. We might vindicate ourselves by saying, "Yes, maybe I was wrong in certain matters, but I am a godly person whom God has set apart for Himself." I have been touching people for sixty years in the Lord's recovery, but I have nearly never had a time with one who was thoroughly convinced by God of his failures. In the law court, neither the plaintiff nor the defendant think that they are wrong. They cannot be convinced that they are wrong. We all need God's mercy to see our failures, our sinfulness, and our filthiness, to even roll on the floor in confession of our sins. This means that we have received mercy and found grace in the presence of God. As long as we would not be convinced of our sinfulness, we are wrong and in darkness.

In Psalm 4 David even admonished others not to sin in anger but to consider in their heart upon their bed and be silent. This is a good teaching, but why did David not teach himself? Was he the right person to pray this way? If you know his background, you can see that he was not the right person.

5. Advising Others to Offer Sacrifices of Righteousness and Trust in Jehovah

David also advised others to offer sacrifices of righteousness and trust in Jehovah (Psa. 4:5). This word is very good, but for him to write such a thing at that time in his particular situation was not fitting.

6. Asking God to Lift Up upon Him the Light of His Countenance

David asked God to lift up upon him the light of His countenance, thanking God for putting joy in his heart more than others' rejoicing in the abounding of grain and new wine,

and trusting in God to lie down and sleep in peace and dwell in safety (Psa. 4:6-8). By this we can see that David had no feeling concerning his situation and condition of a great failure. He had become numb. How could such a sinful person pray this way to God at the time when he was fleeing from a situation of rebellion caused by his sinfulness? At such a time, he said that he would lie down and sleep in peace and dwell in safety.

7. Praying in the Morning and Watching

David was one who was praying in the morning and watching (Psa. 5:1-3). Many teachers of the Bible call Psalm 5 a morning prayer. Psalm 3 is a night prayer, and Psalm 5 is a morning prayer.

8. Knowing That God Does Not Delight in Wickedness but Hates Iniquity

David knew that God does not delight in wickedness but hates iniquity (Psa. 5:4-6). If David knew this, why did he commit such a great sin? Merely knowing the law does not work out anything. The law and David's knowledge of it did not work for him.

9. Coming into God's House in the Abundance of His Lovingkindness

David said that he came into God's house in the abundance of His lovingkindness and worshipped toward God's holy temple in fear of Him. At that time, David was not worshipping in God's temple, but toward it (Psa. 5:7).

He asked God to lead him in His righteousness and make his ways straight on account of those who lay in wait for him (v. 8). He said that these ones had nothing right in their mouth, whose inward part was corruption and whose throat was an open grave, and who flattered with their tongue (v. 9). This clause was even quoted by Paul in his gospel preaching (Rom. 3:13).

David asked God to hold them guilty, letting them fall by their own counsels and thrusting them out because of their multiplied transgressions and their rebellion against God

(v. 10). This prayer is full of condemnation of others, but there is no condemnation of David himself. It seems that everybody was wrong and sinful except him. We cannot find any hint here that he confessed his sin before God.

10. Asking God to Let All Who Take Refuge in Him Rejoice and Shout for Joy Forever

David asked God to let all who take refuge in Him rejoice and shout for joy forever that God might spread a cover, a canopy, over them to cause those who love God's name to exult in God. He also asked God to bless the righteous man, surrounding him with favor as with a shield (Psa. 5:11-12). I do not know why David prayed all these things here. Instead, he should have prayed, "Lord, forgive me. My sinful conduct caused my son to rebel. Lord, have mercy upon him. Move us all to repent to You." There is no hint in these psalms of David being convicted of his sinfulness.

11. In God's Chastisement Asking God to Be Gracious to Him

In God's chastisement, David asked God to be gracious to him, to heal him, return to him, and save him for the sake of His lovingkindness (Psa. 6:1-5). David realized that he was in God's chastisement, but there was still not much confession about his failure. He said that he was wearied with his groaning, causing his bed to swim all night long, dissolving his couch with his tears. His eye had wasted because of grief and had aged because of his enemies (vv. 6-7). I think that this is David's exaggeration. Can anyone cause his bed to swim by his tears? Do we agree with this kind of prayer? If a brother prayed this way in a prayer meeting, we might admonish him to stop this kind of prayer.

12. Believing That Jehovah Had Heard the Sound of His Weeping and That All His Enemies Would Be Ashamed and Greatly Dismayed

David believed that Jehovah had heard the sound of his weeping and that all his enemies would be ashamed and greatly dismayed (Psa. 6:8-10). David could not forget his

enemies. This is different from the Lord's teaching in the New Testament.

13. Taking Refuge in God and Asking God to Deliver Him from All Who Pursued Him, for He Had Done No Wrong

David took refuge in God and asked God to deliver him from all who pursued him. The enemies, including his son, were chasing after him. David felt that he had done no wrong (Psa. 7:1-5). How can anyone tell God that they have done no wrong?

14. Asking Jehovah to Arise in His Anger against the Overflowing Wrath of His Enemies

David asked Jehovah to arise in His anger against the overflowing wrath of his enemies, and asked Jehovah to judge him according to his righteousness and integrity (Psa. 7:6-8). It is hard to imagine that such a godly man as David would pray such a prayer. He asked God to judge him according to his righteousness and integrity. Where was his integrity? He had committed fornication and murder, issuing in the rebellion of his son. As we consider Psalms 3—7 in this light, we can see how blind we have been in our appreciation of the Psalms.

15. Asking God to Establish the Righteous Man

David asked God to establish the righteous man and believed that his shield was with God, who, as a righteous Judge, saves the upright in heart (Psa. 7:9-13).

16. Believing That the Evil Man Travails in Iniquity and Digs a Pit

David believed that the evil man travails in iniquity and digs a pit, hollowing it out and falling into the hole, his mischief returning upon his own head (Psa. 7:14-16). I say again, suppose that a brother prayed this way in a prayer meeting. The saints might ask him to stop.

17. Giving Thanks to Jehovah according to His Righteousness and Singing Praise to the Name of Jehovah the Most High

David gave thanks to Jehovah according to His righteousness and sang praise to the name of Jehovah the Most High (Psa. 7:17). This is one of the few good points in Psalms 3—7. Thank the Lord that these psalms have a good ending.

However, we can see that there is nothing in Psalms 3—7 concerning God's economy, God's kingdom, and God's interest. There is nothing concerning Christ. There is no real interceding spirit, that is, no intercession for others in the spirit. Also, there is very little life supply to the readers. Instead, these psalms encourage, strengthen, and confirm the readers in asking God to take care of them and their interest. Many readers of the Psalms, who read without the proper discernment of the human concept and the divine concept, have been encouraged to take care of their benefit and their interest.

After considering Psalms 3—7 in the light of God's New Testament economy, we can see that these psalms should not be taken as models for our prayer. In them we see David's sufferings, his desire to be avenged of his adversaries, and his self-righteousness. We do not see any repentance, confession of his fault, or self-condemnation. Psalm 8, however, reveals Christ's incarnation, His death and resurrection, His ascension, and His kingdom. Psalms 3—7 reveal David's concepts concerning a godly life, whereas Psalm 8 is his inspired praise of the excellency of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE FIVE

DAVID'S CONCEPTS CONCERNING A GODLY LIFE IN COMPARISON WITH HIS INSPIRED PRAISE OF THE EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST

(2)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 8

In this message we come to Psalm 8. The more we read this psalm, the more we have to admit that it is altogether heavenly language. No mere human word could express the divine concept in this psalm. The heavenly language in it must come from the divine revelation.

In the previous message, we saw David's concepts concerning a godly life in Psalms 3—7. In this message we want to see his inspired praise of the excellency of Christ in Psalm 8. If we read Psalms 3—7 with much prayer, we can realize that they all are on the same level and in the same category. They describe many bad things, showing that the earth is a messy earth. But when we read Psalm 8, we feel that we are not on this messy earth. When we come to Psalm 8, the tone changes.

I would like to read this psalm so that we can consider it verse by verse. In verse 1 David said, "O Jehovah our Lord, / How excellent is Your name / In all the earth, / You who have set Your splendor above the heavens!" This one verse covers both the earth and the heavens. In Psalms 3—7 the earth is a mess, but in Psalm 8 there is something excellent on the earth. This excellent item is the excellent name of the Lord Jesus. He is not here today physically, but His name is here. This earth today is nothing but a mess. But, thank the Lord, at least on this earth there is something excellent—the name of Jesus! His name is the exalted name, the glorified name.

Verse 1 mentions both the earth and the heavens. We need to realize that this psalm tries the best to link the earth to the heavens and to bring down the heavens to the earth. In verse 1 we can see this linking. Jehovah's name is excellent in all the earth, and He has set His splendor above the heavens. Actually, the heavens are the source of the excellency. The excellency does not initiate from the earth, but from the heavens.

Verse 2 says, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings / You have established strength / Because of Your adversaries, / To stop the enemy and the avenger." This verse shows us three negative categories of persons: the adversaries, the enemy, and the avenger. Above the heavens is God's splendor, and on the earth Jesus' name is excellent. But in this universe, there are still many adversaries, enemies, and avengers. Adversaries are those who are within, enemies are those who are without, and the avengers are those who run back and forth (cf. Job 1:7). Satan can be signified by these three categories. First, Satan was within God's kingdom. Then Satan became an enemy without, outside the kingdom of God. He is also the avenger, running back and forth. Above the heavens there is splendor, and on the earth there is the excellent name. But in between the heavens and the earth, there are the adversaries within, the enemy without, and the avenger running back and forth.

What would God do about this? God does something in a consummate way. He establishes His praises out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, the youngest, smallest, and weakest ones. Babes are a little stronger than sucklings, and sucklings are somewhat smaller than the babes, but both of them are in the category of the smallest and weakest.

In this message I would like to ask if we consider ourselves as babes and sucklings? Perhaps some of us have a doctor's degree, or others are high school seniors. Are we seniors, or are we sucklings? If you would ask me, I would say that I am the smallest suckling. In the kingdom of God, there is no old person. The Lord Jesus told people, "Truly I say to you, Unless you turn and become like little children, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens" (Matt.

18:3). He also said, "Allow the little children and do not prevent them from coming to Me, for of such is the kingdom of the heavens" (19:14). The Lord stressed that to participate in the kingdom of the heavens, we must be like little children. All the people who are in the kingdom of the heavens are as babes. A brother may be over sixty years old, but in God's kingdom, he is a suckling.

Psalm 8 is poetry. Poetic writing should not be understood in a mere physical and literal way. We have to understand the terms according to a poetic way. Babes are not the real babes, and sucklings are not the real sucklings. These are the children of the kingdom of the heavens. All the people who are in the kingdom of the heavens are either babes or sucklings. If we consider that we are people with a high degree or status, that we have a doctor's degree, that we are seniors, we are not in the kingdom. The brothers and sisters who are seniors in high school should not take this standing in the church life. We should not be seniors, but sucklings. The psalmist means that we, the children of God, all are babes and sucklings, yet God could cause us to praise Him.

Psalm 8:2 says that the Lord has established strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. Seemingly, strength does not refer to something that comes out of the mouth. When the Lord quoted this verse in Matthew 21:16, He used the word *praise* instead of *strength*. Weaker ones in themselves cannot praise. To cry or weep does not require strength, but to praise requires strength. When we gossip, argue, or reason with people, that does not require strength. But without strength, we cannot praise the Lord. Some praises may come out of our mouth, but they cannot be considered as perfected praises, because they are not so full of strength. Praises should be full of strength. Many times when the saints are praising the Lord, we can see the strength.

The Septuagint version of the Psalms translated the Hebrew word for *strength* into *praise* in Psalm 8:2. This translation was quoted by the Lord in Matthew 21:16. This means that the Lord admitted that this translation was right. The scholars who translated the Old Testament into Greek for the Septuagint did have some kind of spiritual knowledge.

To praise is to have the strength in our mouth. God can work in His redemption to such an extent that the weakest ones and the smallest ones can have the strength to praise Him. God has established this.

The Hebrew word for *established* is a hard word to translate. In the Lord's quotation in Matthew 21:16, it says that He has "perfected" praise out of the mouths of the babes and sucklings. Psalm 8 says that He established strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, but the Lord Jesus quoted it by saying that He perfected praise. Is our praise perfect? We have to admit that our praise is altogether imperfect. Psalm 8 is not a long psalm, but it is a completed, perfected, and perfect psalm. If we are short of strength, we cannot praise. If we do not have the extra strength, we cannot have a completed, perfected, and perfect praise.

On earth the Lord's name is excellent; above the heavens is the Lord's splendor, His glory. In between there are the adversaries, the enemy, and the avenger, who are stopped by the praise of strength that comes out of the mouths of the smallest ones and the weakest ones. This is God's marvelous consummation. The highest consummation of the Lord's work in His redemption is to perfect the praise to Him out of the mouths of the smallest and the weakest.

The Lord does this because of His adversaries, with the purpose of stopping the enemy and the avenger. The Chinese translation shows that to stop the enemy and the avenger means to shut up their mouths. Today before the Lord and God, Satan's mouth has been shut up. In the whole universe, there are many voices. The adversaries have their voices, the enemy has his voice, and the avenger has his voice. But all these voices have been stopped by the overcoming Christ. He has overcome all of God's enemies in the entire universe, so He can perfect the praise to Him out of the mouths of the smallest and weakest persons, in order to stop the voices of His enemy and His avenger.

Verse 3 says, "When I see Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, / The moon and the stars, which You have ordained." David did not say that he saw *the* heavens, but he saw "*Your* heavens." We have a hymn on this psalm in

our hymnal (*Hymns*, #1097). In the second stanza of that hymn, the writer referred to the sun, the moon, and the stars. The writer added the word *sun*, but this is wrong. In Psalm 8 David saw only the moon and the stars, not the sun. We cannot see the sun, the moon, and the stars at the same time. When we see the moon and the stars, we cannot see the sun.

The moon and the stars in Psalm 8 indicate that it was in the night. In the nighttime, everything is dark. But the psalmist lifted up his eyes to look at our Father's heavens. In the night he saw the moon and the stars which God had ordained. The scientific experts can bear witness to this ordination. The divine ordination of the moon and the stars is truly a wonder.

After the psalmist turned his view from the messy earth to the bright heavens, he said, "What is man, that You remember him, / And the son of man, that You visit him?" (v. 4). He turned his view from the moon and the stars in the heavens back to man on this earth. First, God remembers man. Second, He visits man. We have to understand this in a poetic way. God in the heavens remembered man before He became incarnated. Then He came to visit man by becoming a man through His incarnation. The Triune God came to visit us. Before coming to us, He remembered us. The Triune God was very busy, yet He remembered us. Then according to His remembrance of us, He became incarnated to visit us.

As believers of Jesus, we surely have been visited by Him. Each day when I pray, I experience the Lord's visitation. He comes to me in the way of incarnation; in the way of His human living; in the way of His crucifixion; in the way of His resurrection; in the way of His ascension; and in the way of His descension. The Lord is there in my study room as I spend time with Him in prayer. We all need to enjoy the Lord's visitation day by day. If the Lord Jesus had never gone through all the above processes, how could He be with us today? He is now with us. In order to visit us, the Lord did not simply drop down from the heavens. He took a long journey. The Lord has remembered us and also visited us.

He is with us all the time. If we did not have the visitation of the Lord, we would be pitiful.

Psalm 8:5 says, "You have made him somewhat lower than angels / And have crowned him with glory and honor." The word *angels* in Hebrew is *Elohim*, which is normally translated *God* (Gen. 1:1). The Septuagint translated *Elohim* here into *angels*. In Hebrews 2:7 Paul quoted this verse, not according to the Hebrew version but according to the Septuagint version. God made him somewhat lower than the angels. Who is "him" in this verse? "Him" actually refers to the man Jesus. God has made the man Jesus somewhat lower than the angels. To make Jesus lower than the angels refers to His incarnation with His human living. In the sense of being in the flesh, He was somewhat lower than the angels.

After His human living, He was resurrected, and in His resurrection, He was glorified. Then He ascended to the heavens, and in His ascension, He was honored. "Crowned... with glory and honor" indicates or implies two steps: Christ's resurrection and His ascension. Before His resurrection and ascension, there was the death of Christ. If there is no death, there is no resurrection, and if there is no resurrection, there is no ascension. Furthermore, without His incarnation and human living, He was not qualified to die. He had to become a man and live for thirty-three and a half years. Thus, in Psalm 8:5 we can see all the steps of the Triune God's process: incarnation, human living for thirty-three and a half years, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Verses 6-8 say, "For You have caused him to rule over the works of Your hands; / You have put all things under his feet: / All sheep and oxen, / As well as the beasts of the field, / The birds of heaven and the fish of the sea, / Whatever passes through the paths of the seas." Whatever passes through the paths of the seas are the sea animals other than the fish. These verses refer to the kingdom in which Christ will rule over all the created things and to the restoration in this one-thousand-year kingdom, the millennium.

Psalm 8 is a short psalm, but it comprises and implies Christ's incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, ascension, and His being crowned to be the Lord and Christ

and the King of kings, the unique Ruler of the entire universe. The day will come when He will be in the kingdom for a thousand years to rule over all the creatures. This is the revelation in Psalm 8.

The last verse of this psalm repeats the first part of the first verse by saying, "O Jehovah our Lord, / How excellent is Your name / In all the earth!" At the end of the psalm, David does not say anything further about the heavens, because eventually the earth will be as excellent as the heavens.

Now that we have read through Psalm 8 in an interpretive way, let us consider in more detail the major points in this psalm.

II. DAVID'S INSPIRED PRAISE OF THE EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST

Psalm 8 is David's inspiration, his inspired praise of the excellency of Christ.

A. The Lord's Name Being Excellent (Majestic) in All the Earth, and His Splendor (Glory) Having Been Set above the Heavens

The Lord's name is excellent in all the earth, and His splendor has been set above the heavens. I want to say again that this psalm tries the best to join the earth to the heavens and to bring the heavens down to the earth, making the earth and the heavens one.

In Psalms 3—7 it was a mess on the earth according to David's human concept. Here in Psalm 8, something, that is, the Lord's name, is excellent (majestic) in the earth according to the divine revelation, and the Lord's splendor (glory) is above the heavens in the sight of David. Today the earthly people do not see this revelation. They do not have such a view, but we have such a heavenly view about Jesus. Above David in the heavens was the glory, and with David on this earth was an excellent name. Thus, his view, his vision, brought him away from the view of the messy earth. The news media reports all the bad things that happen on this earth every day. To live anywhere on earth without the church life would be terrible.

B. Out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings the Lord Having Established Strength (Praise) Because of His Adversaries, to Stop the Enemy and the Avenger

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord has established strength (praise—Matt. 21:16) because of His adversaries, to stop the enemy and the avenger (Psa. 8:2). We have seen that babes and sucklings are the youngest, smallest, and weakest among men, indicating the highest consummation of the Lord's work in His redemption. In God's salvation, the top consummation is to perfect the smallest and the weakest to praise God.

When we enjoy Christ's redemption to the uttermost, we will be bold to praise the Lord. When we are discouraged and disappointed, we may sigh and groan. But when we praise the Lord, this is the highest experience of our enjoyment of Christ. The enjoyment of Christ will make us so strong to utter a complete and a perfected praise to the Lord. We all have to learn how to praise. This is the highest consummation that God has completed in His redemption through Christ.

We all need to be the babes and sucklings in the church life. We may not be old in our physical age, but in our Christian experience we may be like tired and fatigued old folks. If we are still young in the Lord, we will praise the Lord on the way to the meetings. When we were in Elden Hall in Los Angeles, a certain brother was shouting praises to the Lord while he was driving to a meeting. A policeman saw him, followed him, and told him to pull over. The policeman asked the brother what happened to him. Then the brother said, "I was praising Jesus!" Then the policeman let him go. This is the right way to come to the meeting. When we drive to the meeting, we should sing, praise, and shout, "Amen! Hallelujah! Amen! Lord Jesus! Amen!" Many of us will not do this because we have become too old. To be old means to be weak. We need to shout more, say "Hallelujah" more, say "Amen" more, praise more. Our meetings should be full of joyful noise.

A number of the sisters among us are still in their early

twenties, but their fatigued attitude makes them seem like they are over one hundred years old. With them there is no freshness and no strength. With them nothing is in the morning; instead, everything is in the sunset. They need to learn to praise the Lord. The weakest among men being perfected to praise the Lord indicates the highest consummation of the Lord's work in His redemption.

The Lord does such a consummate work because of His adversaries. He does this to insult Satan. It is as if God says, "Satan, you have done that much. Let me show you how much I can do. I can do much, much more than what you can do. Look at all My children now. They are all babes and sucklings praising Me." This praising shuts Satan's mouth. The enemy's speaking is stopped by our praising. The Lord establishes strength, perfects praise, out of our mouths because of His adversaries (within), for the stopping of the enemy and the avenger (without).

C. David Seeing the Heavens, the Works of the Lord's Fingers, the Moon and the Stars, Which the Lord Has Ordained

David saw the heavens, the works of the Lord's fingers, the moon and the stars, which the Lord has ordained (Psa. 8:3). This indicates that David had a view turned from looking at the earth to contemplating the heavens, in the night. In the night, if you look at the earth, you will see nothing because of the darkness. But if you look up to contemplate the heavens, you will see the moon and the stars. In this view David had a pure vision to see the pure work in God's creation and ordination. In the universe there is not only God's creation but also God's ordination. David saw the divine order in the universe.

This is the aim in the Lord's redemption—to turn us from the messy earth to the bright heaven. Before we were saved, we were in a messy situation. But after we were saved, our messy earth became a bright heaven. Our view was turned from looking at this messy earth to looking at the bright heaven. When bad news comes to me, I have to exercise to

turn my view to look at the bright heaven. When I turn my view from the bad news and look up to the heavens, I can praise. We must learn to turn our view. The aim in the Lord's redemption is to turn our view from the earth to the heavens. The earth is messy, but the heavens are bright.

D. What is Man, That the Lord Remembers Him, and the Son of Man, That He Visits Him?

In Psalm 8:4 David asked, "What is man, that You remember him, / And the son of man, that You visit him?" In his view in the heavens, David turned his consideration to man on the earth. The ordination of the moon and the stars is marvelous. Then how about man on this earth? We should not forget that the psalmist in this psalm is trying the best to bring the heavens down and to bring the earth up to join with the heavens. He looked at the heavens with the moon and the stars. That is wonderful, but what about man? We may think that man is pitiful, but according to the divine view in this psalm, we are wrong. Man was pitiful in Adam and in the fallen situation, but today man in Christ is not pitiful. The man in Christ is wonderful.

Three portions of the Word speak of the same thing concerning man—Genesis 1, Psalm 8, and Hebrews 2. What is revealed in Psalm 8 was first spoken of in Genesis 1. Genesis 1 says that man was commissioned with the authority to rule over all the created things (vv. 26, 28). Psalm 8 repeats this. Then in Hebrews 2:6-8 Paul quotes Psalm 8. These three portions of the Word show us that man has been in three stages: created in Genesis 1, fallen in Psalm 8, and redeemed in Hebrews 2.

This redeemed man is no longer in a pitiful situation. He is joined to Jesus. Actually, Jesus, the incarnated God, first joined Himself with us. Now in His redemption we are joined to Him. There is an organic union between Him and us. Christ has passed through human living, and He died to solve our problems. Then He resurrected and ascended to be crowned and enthroned with glory and honor. He was breathed into us and poured out upon us. Today He is both in the heavens and also within us and outside of us. What

kind of men are we? We are men who have been mingled with Christ.

Man is the central object of God in His creation for the accomplishment of His economy to fulfill His heart's desire. The first "man" in Psalm 8:4 is *enosh* in Hebrew. *Enosh* means a fragile, weak man. The second "man" in 8:4 is *adam* in Hebrew. Both *enosh* and *adam* in this verse refer to the God-created man in God's creation in Genesis 1:26; the Satan-captured man in man's fall in Psalm 8:4; and Christ as a man in His incarnation for the accomplishment of God's redemption in Hebrews 2:6. We should not forget Genesis 1, Psalm 8, and Hebrews 2. These three portions cover the three stages of man.

Such a man God remembers in His economy and visits in His incarnation (John 1:14; Phil. 2:7). Thank God for His remembrance, and thank God for His incarnation. He remembered us in His economy, and He visited us in His incarnation.

E. The Lord Having Made Man Somewhat Lower Than the Angels

The Lord has made man somewhat lower than the angels (Psa. 8:5a; Heb. 2:7a). This refers to Christ's incarnation (John 1:14). In His incarnation Christ was made somewhat lower than angels in the sense of being in the flesh. In the flesh Christ was lower than the angels.

F. God Having Crowned Man (Christ) with Glory and Honor

God has crowned man (Christ) with glory and honor (Psa. 8:5b; Heb. 2:7b). This refers to Christ's resurrection in His glory. Through resurrection He entered into glory; He was glorified in His resurrection (John 7:39b; Luke 24:26). This also refers to Christ's ascension in His honor (Acts 2:33-36; 5:31a). Christ's resurrection is mainly in His glory, and His ascension is mainly in His honor. Glory refers to the condition. Honor refers to the position. Condition-wise, Christ is in glory. Position-wise, Christ is in honor. He has both glory in condition and honor in position.

This was through His all-inclusive death (Heb. 2:9).

Without death He could have never entered into resurrection, and He could have never reached His ascension.

G. God Having Caused Man (Christ) to Rule over the Works of God's Hands and Having Put All Things under His Feet

God has caused man (Christ) to rule over the works of God's hands and has put all things under His feet: all sheep and oxen, the beasts of the field, the birds of heaven, the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas (Psa. 8:6-8; Heb. 2:7b-8a). This word was fulfilled first in Adam (Gen. 1:26-28). But this word was broken by man's fall. Today nothing is subject to us. Even the mosquitoes still come to defeat us. Nothing today is under us because the order has been fully destroyed by man's fall. But there will be a time, the time of restoration, when everything will be in a good order. This word will be fulfilled in full in Christ in the millennium, the age of restoration (Rev. 20:4-6; Matt. 19:28). Isaiah 11:6-9 and 65:25 speak of the wonderful divine order in the time of restoration. This is because of Christ's redemption.

H. O Jehovah Our Lord, How Excellent (Majestic) Is Your Name in All the Earth

Psalm 8:9 repeats the first part of verse 1 by saying, "O Jehovah our Lord, / How excellent is Your name / In all the earth." This strengthens the thought concerning the excellency of the Lord's name in all the earth. The earth now is full of the excellency of Christ. Now the earth is not a messy earth but an excellent earth because the excellency of the name of Christ fills all the earth. In this verse the psalmist considers that the earth is as excellent as the heavens, as indicated in the first part of the Lord's prayer: "Our Father who is in the heavens, Your name be sanctified; Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth" (Matt. 6:9-10).

I would like to repeat the goal of this psalm once more. The goal is to join the earth to the heavens and to bring down the heavens to the earth, making these two one. If we

are victorious and overcoming every day, this is our reality. Today with us, the earth is joined to the heavens, the heavens are brought down to the earth, and the two are one. But with the unbelieving ones and with the defeated Christians, the heavens are far away and the earth is dark and messy. This is why the unbelievers need all kinds of worldly amusements and sinful pleasures. But we do not need them. We need only Christ and the church life.

When we live Christ and live in the church life, the heavens and the earth are one. With us, our earth is really joined to the heavens. With us, the heavens are always here. Here on earth we have the excellent name of Jesus. On this earth today the only excellency is with the name of Christ. Hallelujah! There is such a name! We have this precious name on earth, and we also have our splendor, our glory, above the heavens.

Eventually, with us, the earth and the heavens will be one in a complete way. In the coming age, in the millennium, in the age of restoration, the heaven is down and the earth is up. There we will enjoy God's salvation to the uttermost. In the millennium all of us will be babes and sucklings. There will be no older ones, no fatigued ones. Everyone will be fresh, young, living, and full of strength.

Today many Christians like power, but the Bible in Psalm 8 speaks of strength. We need to be full of strength to praise the Lord, to express God's consummated work in His redemption.

I. An Additional Word on Psalm 8:2-5

Psalm 8 has nine verses. Verse 1 and verses 6-9 are somewhat easy to understand. Verses 2-5, however, are very puzzling and not easy to understand. Why did the psalmist, after talking about the earth with the excellency of Jehovah's name and the heavens with the glory, turn to the babes and sucklings? We need to see that verses 2-5 show us how the babes and sucklings are produced.

In Psalms 3—7 David thought the earth was messy and full of problems, but in the Lord's view, His name is excellent on this earth. Furthermore, the Lord has set His splendor, His glory, above the heavens. The earth is excellent, and the

heavens are glorious, but the Lord has three categories of opposers. The first is the adversaries, the second is the enemy, and the third is the avenger. On the earth, there is no problem; in the heavens, there is no problem; but what about in the air? In the air there are the adversaries, the enemy, and the avenger. How does God deal with them?

Psalm 8 is all-inclusive. It talks about the earth, the heavens, man, and the coming kingdom. But in addition to the earth, the heavens, man, and the coming kingdom, there are the adversaries, the enemy, and the avenger. Verse 2 says that because of the Lord's adversaries, He has established strength, or perfected praise. The Lord has established strength or perfected praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings for the purpose of stopping His adversaries, the enemy, and the avenger. In this way God kills "three birds with one stone." Because of the adversaries, the enemy, and the avenger, God makes the babes and sucklings to praise Him in a complete way.

Now we need to consider who the babes and sucklings are. The sucklings are even younger than the babes, the infants, because they are still feeding on their mother's milk. They are the youngest. The little babes and sucklings do not do anything. But after growing up, they do many things. To stop a person from doing things is nearly impossible, because all human beings are doers. The whole earth is filled with man's doings. Who can stop this? Only the Lord can. No unregenerated man is a babe or a suckling. We become babes and sucklings by regeneration.

Before I was regenerated, I was very active. One day when I was nineteen years old, I was saved. That made me a quiet person. Regeneration reduced my natural activity. I began to hate my doings, my speaking, and my thinking. I was remade, re-created, by the Lord's regeneration. Every believer who has been genuinely regenerated has experienced the same thing. When a person becomes regenerated, he becomes quiet, not wanting to act or speak in himself. When I was regenerated, I just wanted to read the Bible, to kneel down to pray, to muse on God, and to consider the things of the Lord. I became a real babe and a real suckling. The Lord made me such

through regeneration. We natural beings are always busy, doing a lot of work. The proper, genuine salvation stops our human doing and makes us the babes and sucklings to praise the Lord.

We also have to realize that for the Lord to regenerate us, He had to undergo a number of procedures, or processes. He had to become a man, to live on this earth, to die, to enter into Hades for three days and three nights, and He had to rise up to become the life-giving Spirit. As the Spirit, He comes into us to regenerate us. Thus, regeneration comes out of all the procedures of the Lord.

This is why right after speaking about the babes and sucklings, the psalmist continues by saying, "When I see Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, / The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, / What is man...?" (vv. 3-4a). In this verse *Your heavens, the works,* and *the moon and the stars* are all in apposition. Strictly speaking, the writing here in verses 3-4a is not grammatically complete. From the word *When* to the word *ordained* is a long subordinate clause, but where is the main clause? In this sentence, there is no main clause. There should be a main clause following the subordinate clause. Instead, after the subordinate clause, David asks, "What is man?" This writing is incomplete. David said in a poetic way, "When I see Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, / The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, / What is man?" This is not a complete sentence.

The psalmist may have been wrong grammatically, but the Spirit could never be wrong. The Spirit inspired David to compose it this way, leaving an opening for us to fill in the main clause. After he says, "When I see Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, / The moon and the stars, which You have ordained," what should be said? The main clause can be filled in. I would propose four ways. It could read, "When I see Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, / The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, *I say,* What is man...?" *I say* is the main clause. Or it can read, "When I see Your heavens…*I wonder,*" or "*I consider.*" It could also read, "When I see Your heavens…*I shout.*" The psalmist also could have said, "When I see Your heavens…I weep." This is very meaningful.

After David said, "When I see Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, / The moon and the stars, which You have ordained," there is the need of a "selah," a pause. We have to stop here for a rest to consider what to say. When I see the heavens, the works of God's fingers, the moon and the stars, I have to say and I have to ask and I have to find out—"what is man?" I have to say this; I have to ask this. I have to find out what man is that God remembers him and visits him.

By what way did God visit man? The answer follows in verse 5a—"You have made him somewhat lower than angels." Today we understand that this is incarnation. How did God visit us? He visited us by becoming incarnated. He put on humanity and became a man to be a little lower than the angels. This is the way God visited us.

He was also crowned with glory and honor (v. 5b). Glory refers to His resurrection, implying His death. Without death He could not have entered into resurrection. To be crowned with glory is to be glorified. To be crowned with honor implies the ascension. Therefore in one verse, verse 5, we see Christ's incarnation, His all-inclusive death implied, His resurrection for His glorification, and His ascension for Him to be honored.

God visited man by being incarnated, living on this earth, dying, rising up from the dead, and ascending to the heavens to be crowned with glory and honor. Thus, God visited man through the long journey of His process to become the life-giving Spirit to reach us and to enter into us. Ultimately, He was consummated as the life-giving Spirit. The incarnated One is now the life-giving Spirit. It is this One that can produce the babes and the sucklings.

The babes and sucklings are produced through regeneration in the initial stage. Then they continue to be produced in full through their sanctification, renewing, and transformation. Through transformation they are perfected in praising the Lord. This is the Lord's recovery and the Lord's victory. God overcomes His enemy through these babes and sucklings. The work of Christianity is to produce active ones; they endeavor to produce "giants." Our work is to produce babes and sucklings.

Verses 6-8 say, "You have caused him to rule over the

works of Your hands; / You have put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, / As well as the beasts of the field, / The birds of heaven and the fish of the sea, / Whatever passes through the paths of the seas." These verses refer to the kingdom. All things will be ruled over by Christ with His Body, and all things will be subjected under His feet. This really perfects the praise, completes the praise, in this psalm. This short psalm reveals so much. It speaks of the heavens, the earth, babes and sucklings, man, three categories of enemies, and the Lord's incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, ascension, coming back, and kingdom.

We Christians may praise the Lord, but our praise needs to be perfected. We need to praise Him for His splendor above the heavens and His excellency on earth. Then we can praise Him for His incarnation for Him to come to visit us. Then we should go on to praise Him for His human living, for His death, for His resurrection, for His ascension, and for His kingdom. We have to praise Him with all these matters. Then our praises will be perfected, completed. This praise is the strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. Such perfected praise is the ultimate consummation of the Lord's work of incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming back to rule on this earth.

When we come to the Lord's table, we stop every kind of human speaking and human doing. We stop our work. We are here at the table to do only one thing—to praise Him. In order to praise, we must stop our work. Thus, at the Lord's table, we all are the real babes and sucklings. While we are here being stopped from all of our doings to praise the Lord, the adversaries, the enemy, and the avenger are all defeated. This is a shame to God's enemy.

We need to remain in the condition and spirit of the Lord's table. Our Christian life should be like the Lord's table. When we go home after the Lord's table, we should continue to praise the Lord. We have to learn not to do too much. On the other hand, we should not be lazy. The point is that we should stop our human doings and be those who simply praise the Lord.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

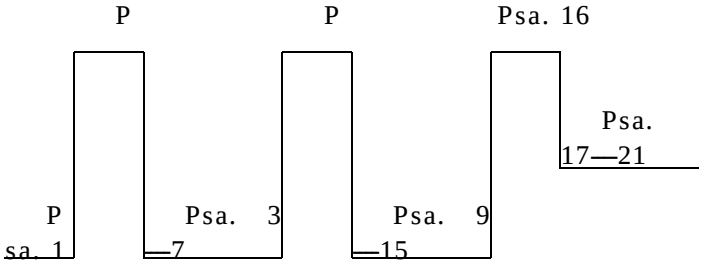
MESSAGE SIX

DAVID'S CONCEPT CONCERNING GOD'S JUDGMENT ON DAVID'S ENEMIES AMONG THE NATIONS AND CONCERNING MAN'S CONDITION BEFORE GOD

Scripture Reading: Psa. 9—14

We have seen that the arrangement of the Psalms was under God's sovereignty. Psalm 1 is apparently an excellent initiation, but actually it is a very negative initiation. Then Psalm 2 comes in to annul what was exalted in Psalm 1. In Psalms 3 through 7, we again see David's human concept. Then Psalm 8 declares, "O Jehovah our Lord, / How excellent is Your name / In all the earth!" This psalm is David's inspired praise of the excellency of Christ. After Psalm 8, Psalms 9—15 go down again to the human concept. Then the revelation goes up to Psalm 16, where we see Christ as the God-man in His human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Psalms 17—21 are down from the level of Psalm 16, but they are not as far down as Psalms 3—7 and 9—15.

Psalms 22—24 rise up to show us Christ once again. Psalm 22:1 says, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" This was what Christ cried out on the cross (Matt. 27:46). Then in Psalm 23 the resurrected Christ becomes our Shepherd (v. 1), and this shepherding One in Psalm 24 becomes our King (vv. 8-10). In 1969 we had a conference on the Psalms, and these messages are in the book entitled *Christ and the Church Revealed and Typified in the Psalms*. In this book there is a diagram of the spiritual level of Psalms 1—21 (p. 40). This diagram, reprinted on the following page, gives us a view of the way the Psalms were written.



In the following message, we will cover Psalms 15 and 16. Psalm 15:1 asks us, "O Jehovah, who may sojourn in Your tent? / Who may dwell on Your holy mountain?" David's answer is—the one who is perfect according to the law (vv. 2-5). But in the whole universe there is only one person who is perfect according to the law—Jesus Christ. There is no one else. Everyone else has broken the law. We have seen that David exalted the law so highly, but by his failure regarding Uriah, he broke the last five commandments (Exo. 20:13-17). He murdered, he committed adultery, he stole by robbing another of his wife, he lied to Uriah, and he coveted Uriah's wife (2 Sam. 11).

The last five commandments prohibiting killing, fornication, stealing, lying, and coveting were given by God with the requirement that man would have the human virtues to express the divine attributes. If there were no killing, fornication, stealing, lying, or coveting in the human race, the kingdom of the heavens would really be on this earth. Today the newspapers, however, report all the evil things that take place on earth day by day. The earth is filled with murder, fornication, stealing, lying, and coveting.

No one is perfect according to the law. Paul said in the New Testament that no flesh can be justified by God based upon man's keeping of the law (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16). The only One who can and did keep the law is the One unveiled in Psalm 16. This One is the very God who became a man and lived a human life (vv. 1-8). In His human life, He kept the law perfectly. He lived a life full of human virtues expressing the divine attributes. Then He died (vv. 9-10) and was resurrected (vv. 10-11a). Now He is in ascension at the

right hand of God (v. 11b & c). This is the One who can sojourn in God's tabernacle and dwell with God on His holy mountain. We will see more concerning Psalms 15 and 16 in the following message.

In this message we want to cover Psalms 9—14. In Psalm 9 we see David's concept concerning God's judgment on David's enemies among the nations. David mentioned clearly that he had many enemies among the nations. Today all of the Arab countries are enemies of Israel. It is regrettable that Israel has not yet turned to God, but the Bible tells us that although Israel has been re-formed as a nation, they will not turn to God until Christ returns (Zech. 12:10). Today Israel, just like David, is surrounded by enemies. In addition to the enemies surrounding David, he had the adversaries from within, even from his house, from his family. His son Absalom became the leading adversary.

In Psalms 10—14 David speaks of man's condition before God. It is hard to find another portion in the Bible which presents us a complete picture of man's condition as in these psalms. When Paul preached the gospel in Romans, he quoted from this portion of the Word (Rom. 3:10-12, 14).

I. ACCORDING TO THE LAW GIVEN BY GOD ALONGSIDE THE CENTRAL LINE OF HIS ECONOMY

David's concept in these psalms is according to the law given by God alongside the central line of His economy. God has an economy, and in God's economy there is a central line. This central line is Christ to be enlarged to have a counterpart, that is, His church. Thus, Christ and the church are the central line of God's economy. But David's concept in Psalms 9—14 was not along this line. David's concept was according to the law, a subsidiary line that goes along with the central line. The law is not the central line. The law is a side line going along with the central line.

II. BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF GOOD AND EVIL—THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

David's concept in these psalms is also based upon the

principle of good and evil—the principle of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9). These psalms show that David was full of the knowledge of good and evil. I would even say that in these psalms David himself was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now I would like us to consider what kind of "tree" we are. We all should be able to declare that we are the tree of life. We should not be those who minister good and evil to others. Instead we should always minister Christ as life. Since I began to minister in the United States in 1962, all of my messages have been in the principle of the tree of life.

III. CONCERNING GOD'S JUDGMENT ON DAVID'S ENEMIES AMONG THE NATIONS

Psalm 9 reveals David's concept concerning God's judgment on David's enemies among all the nations.

A. God Sitting upon the Throne as the King to Judge the World in Righteousness and with Equity

David said that God sits upon the throne as the King to judge the world in righteousness and with equity (Psa. 9:4, 7-8). We may feel that this word is good, but we need to consider it in the light of the New Testament. In the New Testament, we are told that Christ is the King, even the Ruler of all the kings (Rev. 1:5; 19:16), sitting on the throne not to judge but to save. Today we have a saving King. Acts 5:31 says that God uplifted Christ to His right hand that He may be the Leader and the Savior. David's thought is that his God is the King on the throne to judge—not to save the world in mercy and grace but to judge the world in righteousness and with equity. *With equity* simply means with justice. The whole world is neither righteous nor just, so David had a good concept that the One who is sitting on the throne judges in righteousness and with justice. But this concept is according to the law and according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

B. God Having Rebuked the Nations, Destroyed the Wicked, and Uprooted Their Cities

David said that God has rebuked the nations, destroyed the wicked, and uprooted their cities (Psa. 9:5-6).

C. God Having Upheld David's Right and His Cause

David also said that God upheld his right and his cause and destroyed his enemies (Psa. 9:3-4a). This means that God was not good to the world, but God was very good to David. David's thought was that his Judge in the heavens upheld his cause and destroyed his enemies. This is not according to the divine concept of the New Testament.

D. For This, David Giving Thanks to God and Telling Out All God's Wonders and Praises

For this, David gave thanks to God and told out all God's wonders and praises (Psa. 9:1, 14a). Wonders are wonderful doings, and praises here mean virtues. Because David thought that God upheld his right and his cause, destroying all his enemies, he had to thank God and tell out all of His wonderful doings and virtues.

E. God Being a High Refuge for the Oppressed

David said that God is a high refuge for the oppressed, not forsaking His seekers, remembering the slain, and not forgetting the cry of the afflicted (Psa. 9:9, 10b, 12). If God remembers the slain, David should not have forgotten Uriah, the one slain by him according to his conspiracy.

F. David Advising Others to Put Their Trust in God

David advised others to put their trust in God, sing psalms to Him, declare His deeds among the peoples, and exult in God's salvation (Psa. 9:10-11, 14). In a sense, what David wrote in Psalms 9—14 is neither according to the Old or the New Testament. This is David's "testament."

G. The Nations Having Sunk in the Pit That They Made

David said that the nations have sunk in the pit that they made; their own foot is caught in the net that they hid; the wicked have been snared in their own work; and all the nations who forget God will be turned back to Sheol (Psa. 9:15-17). It seems these ones were in Sheol, Hades, already. Now David prayed that God would send them back and not let them out of Sheol. What kind of prayer is this? Is this the New Testament? This is again David's "testament."

H. The Needy Not Always Being Forgotten

David also said that the needy will not always be forgotten by God, nor will the hope of the afflicted perish forever (Psa. 9:18).

I. David Asking God to Look on His Affliction and Not Let Mortal Man Prevail

David asked God to look on his affliction and not let mortal man prevail, but let the nations know that they are mortal (Psa. 9:13a, 19, 20b). It was as if David said, "God, You have to tell the nations that they are mortal men. Since they are mortal, they cannot prevail against me because I am under Your care; so look on my affliction." But what about David's sins? His wife at that time was actually the wife of the one whom he murdered. One thousand years later, when Matthew wrote the genealogy of Christ, he said, "David begot Solomon of her who had been the wife of Uriah" (1:6). David, a man after the heart of God (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), did right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of his life except for this one evil (1 Kings 15:5).

IV. CONCERNING MAN'S CONDITION BEFORE GOD

Psalms 10—14 show us David's concept concerning man's condition before God.

A. David Challenging God

David challenged God, saying, "Why, O Jehovah, do You

stand far off? / Why do You hide Yourself in times of distress?" (10:1). David prayed, but God did not answer absolutely according to what he prayed, so that bothered him. It was as if David asked God, "Why do You hide Yourself when I need You in times of distress? It seems that the more I cry out to You, the more You disappear."

B. The Wicked Man's Sin against People and Arrogance toward God

In Psalm 10:2-11 David describes the wicked man's sin against people and arrogance toward God. The wicked man thinks there is no God, so he can do whatever he likes (v. 4). Verses 2-11 describe the condition of man. Actually, David is accusing all of mankind in these verses.

C. David's Request of God

Psalm 10:12-15 is David's request of God. After he presented the condition of man, he asked God to come to judge the wicked.

D. David's Praise to God

Psalm 10:14b and 16-18 are David's praise to God. The contents of this praise, however, are altogether negative. He said, "Jehovah is King forever and ever; / The nations have perished from His land" (v. 16). He did not praise God for the nations being saved by God's grace, but for the nations perishing. According to the revelation of the New Testament, God is not like this.

E. God Being in His Holy Temple, His Throne Being in Heaven, and His Eyes Discerning the Righteous Man and the Wicked Man

In Psalm 11 David said that God is in His holy temple, His throne is in heaven, and His eyes discern the righteous man and the wicked man. Verse 6 says that Jehovah "will rain down snares upon the wicked; / Fire and brimstone and a scorching wind will be the portion of their cup." If this were the case, the earth would already have been destroyed.

There would be no possibility for billions of human beings to live on this earth. Verse 7 says, "For Jehovah is righteous; / He loves righteous deeds. / The upright man will behold His face." David said this, but he himself was not righteous. Actually, he was in darkness without any sensation about himself. He was not qualified to say this because he murdered a man and robbed that man of his wife.

F. David's Request and Jehovah's Willingness to Deal with the Wicked in Their Tongue and Lips

In Psalm 12 we see David's request and Jehovah's willingness to deal with the wicked in their tongue and lips. In verse 2a David said, "Each man speaks falsehood with his neighbor." But David was no different; he also spoke falsehood. As a whole, his concept was altogether based upon and entangled with the law and with good and evil.

G. David Taking Counsel with God That He Might Overcome His Enemy

Psalm 13 shows that David took counsel with God that he might overcome his enemy. In today's New Testament age, could we go to God and ask Him to put down our enemies, the ones that hate us? We cannot do this because the New Testament tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:14, 20). In Psalm 13:3, David said, "Consider and answer me, O Jehovah my God; / Brighten my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death." David was afraid that he would die while he was sleeping. He was afraid of sleeping a sleep of death.

H. God's Dealing with the Corrupt Fool and His Salvation to His People

In Psalm 14 we see David's concept concerning God's dealing with the corrupt fool and His salvation to His people. Verse 3 says, "Everyone has turned aside; / They are together perverse. / There is none who does good; / There is not even one." This word is quoted by Paul in Romans 3:12. The last verse of Psalm 14 is a good prophecy concerning the return of Israel from captivity—"O that the salvation of Israel might

come forth from Zion! / When Jehovah turns the captivity of His people, / Jacob will exult, Israel will rejoice."

Psalms 9—14 show us a man who was supposedly very godly, yet his thought, his concept, was altogether wrapped up with the law and with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These psalms are David's thought regarding his welfare. In principle, these six psalms are the same as Psalms 3—7. Nothing in them is related to God's economy, to God's interest, to God's kingdom, or to God's plan. But everything is concerning David's personal benefit, personal interest, personal safety, and personal peace. Do you think this should be a model to us? Surely it should not. We have to stay in the line of the tree of life, the line covered in Psalms 2 and 8.

I believe that such a study of the Word, according to the principles of the divine revelation, will help all of us to understand the Holy Bible. The Holy Bible is the writing of God. When we read it, we should not understand it according to our way or our concept. A person may be very scholarly and learned and yet receive nothing of the divine revelation from the Bible. This is because he understands the Bible, interprets it, appreciates it, and teaches it according to his natural understanding.

In the Lord's recovery among us in the past seventy years, since Brother Watchman Nee's time, the proper interpretation of the Bible has always been preserved in the principles of the Bible. People may criticize us, but no one can accuse us of saying anything against the principles of the Word. This is why I am happy to have this life-study to show us the difference between Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 and the difference between Psalms 3—7 and Psalm 8. Now we have considered Psalms 9—14. Based upon what we have seen according to the principles of the Bible, there is not any point in these six psalms that is up to the standard of the divine revelation.

Today in the New Testament principle, God does have a throne, and He is really sitting on the throne. But the throne today is called the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). Furthermore, from eternity past to eternity future, God's intention is to love the world. John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes

into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life." The world in John 3:16 denotes the fallen human race. God loved the fallen human race, so He gave His only begotten Son to come to die for us that we should not perish but have eternal life through our believing into Him. The basic principle of the New Testament is that God loves fallen mankind. If this were not so, none of us could have been saved. We all have been saved based upon the principle that God loves the human race. Even though we, the human race, are fallen and have become the world, God loves us.

Therefore, God's throne today is not a throne of the King of authority. His throne today is the throne of a loving Savior. This throne of authority has become today the throne of grace. Every day and even every moment, we can come to approach this throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help (Heb. 4:16). This is today's dispensation of grace established by God. The Old Testament is the dispensation of the law, but even the Old Testament speaks of God's mercy. In Hosea 6:6 God said, "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice." The Lord Jesus quoted this word in Matthew 9:13. God loves mercy because He is a God of mercy, a God of compassions. God desires to see people favored with His mercy, not judged by His being righteous. This is a principle in the Bible. When we interpret or teach the Bible, we need to take care of the governing principles.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE SEVEN

WHAT KIND OF MAN MAY DWELL WITH GOD FOR HIS HEART'S DESIRE AND GOOD PLEASURE?

Scripture Reading: Psa. 15—16

In this message we come to another pair of psalms, Psalms 15 and 16. We have seen that Psalms 1 and 2 were sovereignly arranged as a pair. Psalm 1 says that the man whose delight is in the law of Jehovah is blessed (vv. 1-2). Psalm 2 says that the man who takes refuge in the Son is blessed (v. 12). Thus, we see the human concept of being blessed by the keeping of the law versus the divine concept of being blessed by taking refuge in the Son. The comparison in Psalms 1 and 2 is between the law and Christ.

Psalms 15 and 16 also present a comparison. The end of Psalm 15 says, "He who does these things will not be shaken forever." *These things* refer to the good things according to the law in the foregoing verses. On the other hand, Psalm 16:8b says, "Because He is at My right hand, I shall not be shaken." Psalm 15 says that if you do all the good things according to the law, you will never be shaken. Then Psalm 16 says concerning Christ that because God is at His right hand, He will not be shaken. No doubt, Psalms 15 and 16 were arranged together to show us a comparison between the keeping of the law and the participating in the Son. Do we keep the law or do we partake of Christ? Do we keep the law or do we enjoy Christ as our portion?

At this point I would like us to read Psalms 15 and 16 together so that we can see the different concepts in these psalms. Afterward, we will cover them in more detail.

At the beginning of Psalm 15, the psalmist asks, "O Jehovah, who may sojourn in Your tent? / Who may dwell on Your holy mountain?" The tent refers to God's house, the

temple. David says that this one is "He who walks in integrity / And does righteousness / And speaks truth from his heart. / He does not slander with his tongue; / He does not do evil to his friend, / Nor does he take up reproach upon his neighbor. / In his eyes a reprobate is despised, / But he honors those who fear Jehovah. / Should he swear to his harm, / He does not change. / He does not lend his money on interest, / Nor accept a bribe against the innocent. / He who does these things will not be shaken forever" (vv. 2-5). This may seem like an excellent psalm, but actually it is a psalm in the line of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Psalm 16, on the other hand, is a psalm revealing the God-man, Christ. Psalm 16:1 does not say, "Preserve Me, O God, for I keep the law, and I meditate in the law day and night." This is absolutely wrong. Psalm 16:1 says, "Preserve Me, O God, for I take refuge in You." It was as if the psalmist said, "I don't care for the law; I care for You and I enjoy You." Then Psalm 16:2 continues, "O My soul, you say to Jehovah, You are My Lord; / No good have I beyond You." When the Lord Jesus was a man on this earth, He always held such an attitude of recognizing God the Father as His Lord. His attitude toward the Father could have been expressed by His saying, "I do not have anything beyond You which is good. I have no blessing, no pleasure, and no enjoyment other than You."

Verse 3 says, "To the saints who are on the earth and to the excellent, / All My delight is in them." The Lord Jesus loved God the Father. He also had His delight in the saints, in the believers, in the members of His Body. He did not delight in the commandments of the law, but in the members of His Body, the saints in God's kingdom.

Verse 4 says, "Sorrows will be multiplied to them who bartered for some other god; / Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, / Nor will I take up their names upon My lips." *Their names* refers to the names of the idols, the names of the other gods.

Verse 5 says, "Jehovah is the portion of My inheritance and of My cup; / You maintain My lot." God is the portion of two things: of the inheritance and of the cup. The inheritance refers to the substance of the lot, and the cup

refers to the enjoyment of God as our blessing. At the Lord's table, we drink the cup of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16a). Stanza 3 of *Hymns*, #223 points out that in this cup God is our portion. Thus, we have God as the portion for our inheritance and for our enjoyment. God the Father was the very portion of these two things to Christ as a man on this earth. Verse 5b says, "You maintain My lot." The lot is the portion of the inheritance.

Verse 6a says, "The measuring lines have fallen on pleasant places for Me." To understand this verse, we have to read Psalm 2:8, which says that God will give to Christ the nations as His inheritance and the limits of the earth as His possession. *The limits* are the measuring lines of God in His divine economy. God has measured the earth. Whatever God has measured will be Christ's possession. The measuring lines have fallen on pleasant places for Christ.

Today the whole earth is not a pleasant place, not a place of pleasure. Even though people are trying to have their amusements, that is not the real pleasure. The earth today is a messy earth, not a pleasant earth. In Genesis 2 the earth was a pleasant garden, but after the fall of man, this pleasant garden became a messy earth. But when the earth will be measured and given to Christ, it will become a pleasant earth. Verse 6b says, "Indeed the inheritance is beautiful to Me." All the nations with the earth will be not only pleasant but also beautiful to Christ as the man who inherited God's inheritance.

Verse 7a says, "I will bless Jehovah, who counsels Me." Do you like to have someone as your counselor? To take others' counsel implies humility. A person is humble who wants to receive counsel from others. The Lord Jesus blessed Jehovah, the One who counseled Him. Isaiah 50:4 tells us the attitude of Christ as the Servant of Jehovah: "The Lord Jehovah has given me / The tongue of the instructed, / That I should know how to sustain the weary with a word. / He awakens me morning by morning; / He awakens my ear / To hear as an instructed one." Christ, in His human living, had the tongue of an instructed One, and He heard as an instructed One. He took God the Father as His counselor.

Psalm 16:7b says, "Indeed in the nights My inward parts

instruct Me." This shows us that when God counseled Christ as a man, Christ's inward parts instructed Him. The inward parts of Christ were one with God. God counsels, and the inward parts instruct. This is our proper experience today. On the one hand, it is God who counsels us. On the other hand, it is our inward parts which instruct us. Our inward parts instruct us mostly in the nights while we are quiet. In the night, from four to six in the morning, I receive many things and many instructions from the Lord. Most of the light I have written down in the outlines for these messages has come during these hours. This is an experience of our inward parts instructing us in the nights.

Verse 8a says, "I have set Jehovah before Me continually." According to David's natural concept, he might have said, "I have set the law before me continually." We may want to say, "I have set the Bible before me continually." But even this is not as good as saying, "I have set Jehovah, the person, before me continually."

Verse 8b says, "Because He is at My right hand, I shall not be shaken." Because the Father was at Christ's right hand, He would not be shaken. Our security is not to keep the law, but to have Jehovah, the person, at our right hand. We shall not be shaken because we have Him as our security.

Verse 9 says, "Therefore My heart rejoices and My glory exults; / Even My flesh dwells securely." *Glory* here refers to our spirit. This verse covers our soul, which is included in our heart; our spirit, which is the glory; and our body, which is the flesh. What is in this verse transpired in the death of Christ. When He was in Hades He said, "My heart rejoices, My spirit exults, and even My body dwells securely." His body dwelt in a secured tomb.

Verse 10 says, "For You will not abandon My soul to Sheol, / Nor let Your Holy One see the pit." Christ was not bothered to be in Hades, in Sheol. *Hades* is from the Greek, and *Sheol* is from the Hebrew. They both refer to the same thing. The Septuagint translates *pit* as *corruption*. This means that Christ's body would not see corruption. It would not be decayed. This is because within three days, His body was resurrected from the tomb, and His soul was raised up from Hades.

Verse 11 says, "You will make known to Me the path of life." The path of life is the way of resurrection. God the Father made known to Christ the way of resurrection. Verse 11 continues, "In Your presence is fullness of joy." This was in Christ's ascension. In God's presence in the heavens is fullness of joy. Finally, verse 11 says, "In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." In God's right hand in ascension, Christ is enjoying pleasures forever.

We need to notice that in this whole psalm, Psalm 16, nothing concerning good and evil is mentioned. The revelation in Psalm 16 is far beyond our natural understanding.

From the day we were born, we were always taught to take care of good and evil. We were taught that we need to do good and abandon evil. In every culture on all the continents, this same thing is taught. We may be people of different colors, but in our thought concerning good and evil, we are absolutely the same. We are "birds of the same feather" in our natural, human concept of good and evil. Psalm 15 is full of the concept of good and evil. In Psalm 16, however, there is no good and evil. Instead what replaces good and evil is the Lord Himself, the very person.

In the following message, I will fellowship concerning the lines, the principles, and the spirit of the Bible. For us to read and study the Bible properly, we have to know the two lines in the Bible, the principles in the Bible, and the spirit of the Bible.

In the Bible there are two lines. Right after God created man, God brought man into the garden and put him in front of two trees. These two trees were not a tree of good and a tree of evil. Good and evil are of one tree. We should not forget this. In the eyes of God, good is the same as evil. They are considered as one unit, as one tree. The other tree is the tree of life. Thus, there are the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life (Gen. 2:8-9).

With the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there are knowledge, good, evil, and death. Thus, knowledge, good, evil, and death are all one family. If you are in the family of good, you are in the family of evil. Where good is, evil is there; where good and evil are, knowledge is there; and where knowledge is, death is there. This family is very complicated

and terrible. It includes the good teachings of Confucius and the evil deeds of bank robbers. What family is this? It is the family of good and evil. But in the family of the tree of life, there is only one thing: life, life, life, life! There is no good, but life; no evil, but life; no knowledge, but life; and no death, but life. This is the tree of life.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life are two sources, which produce two lines. These two lines start from Genesis 2 and go through the entire Old and New Testaments to reach two ends. The one end for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the lake of fire, and the other end for the tree of life is the New Jerusalem. The lake is full of burning fire, but the holy city is full of water, flowing and quenching and watering and saturating. If you are of the source of good and evil and are always going along in the line of good and evil, you will arrive at the lake of fire. There are only two ends in the entire universe: the lake of fire and the city of water.

The divine revelation of the Bible shows us two starts, two sources, two lines, and two ends, two results. If we can see these two lines, they will become governing principles to us in our understanding of the Bible. We will be governed and kept from making any mistakes. Throughout the years, in all the messages we have given, we have been governed by these two principles as the two main lines in the holy Scriptures.

We need to consider the book of Psalms in the light of these two lines. If we are the appreciators of the law, as David was in Psalm 1, we are on the line of good and evil. People may wonder what is wrong with good and evil. But if we trace this line to the end of the Bible, we arrive at the lake of fire. When you "drive" to and arrive at the end of the divine revelation on this line, you know you are wrong. The line of good and evil leads to the lake of fire.

The person in Psalm 2 takes refuge in the Son and kisses the Son, loves the Son (v. 12). This one surely is on the line of life leading to the New Jerusalem. We need to be those who are on the line of life. The person in Psalm 15 is on the line of good and evil. Psalm 16, however, reveals Christ as the God-man. He has been, still is, and always will be on the

line of life. Those of us on the line of life will eventually be in the New Jerusalem, the city of living water.

After the fall of man, the Bible tells us that Adam had two sons. Actually, I believe Adam had more sons, but only two sons are recorded in the Bible because these two sons represent two lines. The first son was Cain, and the second son was Abel. Cain was a representative of good and evil. At first, he was good. He presented the offerings of the labor of his own hands to God. This was good according to Cain's way, but he was rejected. God rejects man's evil. God also rejects man's good as evil. Then when Cain was rejected by God, he immediately turned to kill his brother. This was evil (Gen. 4:1-8). On the one hand, he did something good. On the other hand, he did something evil. Both good and evil are in the same line. Cain was in the line of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Abel, however, was not in this line. He enjoyed Christ as his burnt offering to contact God and to take God as his portion. Abel was in the line of life.

The title of this message is a question. This is the question David asks in Psalm 15—"What kind of man may dwell with God for His heart's desire and good pleasure?" We may think that the man of good can dwell with God, but not the man of evil. Good and evil are our two lines. Teachers of philosophy and those of many religions would all say that if there is a God, only a good man, not an evil man, could dwell with Him. All of them would hold the same concept. But thank the Lord, in the Bible, which is His divine revelation, we have a pair of psalms, Psalms 15 and 16, to show us what kind of man God wants. God does not want an evil man or a good man. God rejects the good man as the evil man. They are of the same source, in the same nature, and in the same entity. They are in the same line and will arrive at the same end. Only a God-man can satisfy God's desire and fulfill His good pleasure.

I. DAVID'S CONCEPT—PSALM 15

A. According to the Law Given by God at Sinai alongside the Central Line of God's Economy

In Psalm 15, David's concept was according to the law

given by God at Sinai alongside the central line of God's economy. His concept in this psalm was not at Zion in the central line of God's economy. It was at Sinai. Do you love the name Sinai? According to Galatians 4, Sinai symbolizes a source that produced slaves, who are rejected by the grace of God (vv. 24-31). The law given by God at Sinai goes alongside the central line of God's economy. This side line always goes in parallel with the central line.

Satan is always where God is. The book of Job shows that Satan even went to the sanctuary in the heavens where God was (1:6-7). Before we are going to have a meeting, I pray desperately, asking the Lord to chase away all the darkness, all the demons, and all the evil spirits. This is because where God is, Satan is. Where the central line goes, the side line will come along to bother and distract you.

B. The Perfect Man according to the Law

Psalm 15:2-5 shows that David's concept in this psalm was that the perfect man according to the law could dwell with God for His heart's desire and good pleasure. Thus, verse 5 says that he who does these good things will not be shaken forever.

II. THE DIVINE REVELATION—PSALM 16

Following Psalm 15, we see the divine revelation in Psalm 16.

A. According to the Economy of God

The divine revelation in Psalm 16 is according to the economy of God with Christ as its centrality and universality, ordained by God in eternity (Eph. 3:9, 11).

B. The God-man, Christ

Psalm 16 reveals the God-man, Christ, not the good man. God does not desire a good man, but a God-man. He does not desire a man with two "o's" as in the word *good*, but a man with one "o" as in the word *God*. Psalm 16 shows us Christ in His four stages: the stages of human living, death, resurrection, and ascension. Only God with His Spirit could

write such a psalm. The human mind could never compose such a writing.

1. In His Human Living

Psalm 16:1-8 reveals the God-man, Christ, in His human living. He is not merely a good man, but a God-man. God became a man and lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years. He lived in Nazareth until the age of thirty. Then He ministered for three and a half years. He was the very God living a human life in a small geographical area. The land of Palestine in the time of Jesus was a very small and narrow strip of land. He grew up in the small village of Nazareth in the despised place of Galilee for thirty years. What patience He had! Then He came out to travel in His ministry. Of course, there was not the modern means of transportation which we enjoy today. Jesus had to travel mostly by foot within the land of Palestine.

The four Gospels show us the marvelous human living of this God-man. No biography can compare with Jesus' life. Millions of readers of these four Gospels have been inspired by the way in which Jesus Christ lived on earth. After His human living, He entered into death for three days and three nights. Then He came out of death and entered into resurrection. Finally, He ascended to the heavens where God the Father is. Today He is in ascension at the right hand of God the Father. Psalm 16 is a short psalm, but it covers such a wonderful Person in His four stages: His human living, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension.

a. Implying His Incarnation

His human living spontaneously implies His incarnation. If He had not been incarnated and did not have the human nature with a human body, He could not have lived on earth. Because He was altogether in humanity, He did not threaten anyone. Even the small children could come to Him (Luke 18:15-16). He was so wonderful—because He was God born to be a man. God, in this man, in this humanity, lived on earth.

His human living implies His incarnation in which He became a man and brought divinity into humanity (John

1:14a). Formerly, before the incarnation, divinity was separate from humanity. But when Jesus was born, divinity was brought into humanity, and divinity and humanity were mingled together to produce a God-man.

b. Taking Refuge in God and Trusting in God's Preservation

Christ took refuge in God and trusted in God's preservation (Psa. 16:1). We may pray, "Lord Jesus, protect us; preserve us." When Christ was a man on this earth, the very God in whom He trusted was also His preservation.

c. Taking God as His Lord and Having No Good beyond God

Christ took God as His Lord and had no good beyond God (Psa. 16:2). Today on earth everyone, even the most sinful person, is claiming his rights. But the Lord Jesus, while He was a man on this earth, did not claim any right for Himself. He took God as His Lord. Every man needs God as his Lord. Without the Lord, we do not know who our Possessor is. Our parents or our wives are not our possessors. Christ the Lord is the One who owns us. He is our Possessor. Christ in His human living had no good beyond God. His good was uniquely God Himself as His portion.

d. Having Delight in the Saints, the Excellent on the Earth

Christ has delight in the saints, the excellent people on the earth (Psa. 16:3). *The saints* implies the church, the Body of Christ. Why does Christ delight in the saints? It is because the saints are the members that constitute His Body, the church. While we are gathered together in the meetings, many other people are gathered together to engage in worldly entertainment and sinful pleasures. Who is the excellent group in God's eyes? By the Lord's mercy, we are the excellent group. In Christ's view, we are a particular and excellent people. Christ delights in God's people, and He has made us excellent.

e. Having Nothing to Do with Other Gods and Their Offerings, nor Taking Up Their Names upon His Lips

Christ in His human living had nothing to do with other gods and their offerings, nor did He take up their names

upon His lips (Psa. 16:4). He would not mention the names of any idols. He even would not mention the names of the idol worshippers. That would contaminate His lips.

f. Taking God as the Portion of His Inheritance and of His Cup, and Trusting in God to Maintain His Lot

Christ took God as the portion of His inheritance and of His cup (Psa. 16:5). *Inheritance* refers to a possession, and *cup* refers to enjoyment. In Christ's human living, God became His possession and also His enjoyment. God was His inheritance and His cup. With the inheritance, there is a portion, and with the cup, there is also a portion. The portion of our inheritance and of our cup today is Christ. Furthermore, Christ trusted in God to maintain His lot (v. 5). Today the whole earth is a mess. Seemingly there is no hope for this earth. We may think the earth is hopeless, but God still maintains it for Christ. Eventually, Christ will inherit the earth as His possession.

g. Appreciating the Possession Given by God to Him under the Measuring Lines on Pleasant Places and the Beautiful Inheritance Given to Him by God

Christ appreciated the possession given by God to Him under the measuring lines on pleasant places and the beautiful inheritance given to Him by God (Psa. 16:6; 2:8; Rev. 11:15). This messy earth will become a pleasant globe to Christ when He comes back to inherit it.

h. Blessing God Who Counsels Him, and Being Instructed by His Inward Parts in the Nights (through His Contact with God)

Christ blessed God who counseled Him and was instructed by His inward parts in the nights through His contact with God (Psa. 16:7; Luke 6:12).

i. Setting God before Him Continually and Not Being Shaken Because God Is at His Right Hand

Christ set God before Him continually and was not shaken

(cf. Psa. 15:5b) because God was at His right hand (Psa. 16:8; Acts 2:25). In John 8:29 the Lord said that while He was on this earth, He was never alone, because God the Father was always with Him. In Jesus' human living, God the Father was with Him.

2. In His Death

In Psalm 16:9-10 we see the revelation of the God-man, Christ, in His death (Acts 2:26-27).

a. His Heart Rejoicing and His Spirit with His Tongue Exulting

Psalm 16:9a says that Christ's heart was rejoicing and His glory was exulting. This means His heart was rejoicing in Hades. The Hebrew word for *glory* in verse 9 can be interpreted as *spirit* or *tongue*. The Hebrew word means glory, but the Greek Septuagint translated the Hebrew word for *glory* into *tongue*. When Peter quoted Psalm 16:9 from the Septuagint in Acts 2, he said, "My tongue exulted" (v. 26). Some other versions translate the Hebrew word for glory as *mouth*. Thus, three things are referred to by the word *glory:* our spirit, our tongue, and our mouth. In Christ's death His heart was rejoicing, and His spirit with His tongue was exulting.

We have to exercise our spirit, our mouth, and our tongue in the meetings. This is the way to prophesy. Many saints come to the meetings and sit quietly. They are like the "marble Mary" outside some Catholic cathedrals. I would like to ask them, "Where is your spirit? Where is your mouth? Where is your tongue?" In the meetings their spirit is not exercised, their mouth is not exercised, and their tongue is not exercised. When we are in the meetings, we should exercise our spirit, our mouth, and our tongue to speak for the Lord. Then we will be glorious; we will be in glory. When we do not exercise in such a way, we are in a low condition. We need to exercise our spirit, our mouth, and our tongue to speak Christ to one another in the meetings. Then we are glorious because we are exercising the three parts of our glory: the spirit, the mouth, and the tongue.

Christ's heart rejoicing and His glory, His spirit with His

tongue, exulting indicate that Christ was obedient to God even unto death, and that the death of a cross (Phil. 2:8). He was obedient unto death, not an ordinary death but a particular death, the death of the cross. This also indicates that Christ was willing and happy to die for the accomplishment of God's economy. He told us in John 10:17-18 that no one took His life away, but He laid it down. He also had the authority to take His life back. He died for the accomplishment of God's economy.

b. His Flesh (His Physical Body) Dwelling Securely

In His death, Christ's flesh (His physical body) dwelt securely (Psa. 16:9b). This indicates that Christ's body was buried in a secured tomb (Matt. 27:59-60). This also indicates that Christ was resting physically in His burial waiting to be resurrected.

c. His Soul Having Gone to Sheol (Hades) and Remaining There for Three Days

His soul went to Sheol (Hades) and remained there for three days (Psa. 16:10a; Eph. 4:9).

d. Not to See Corruption (Decay) in His Physical Body

He did not see corruption (decay) in His physical body (Psa. 16:10b). This indicates His death and burial.

3. In His Resurrection

Now we come to the third stage of Christ in Psalm 16—His resurrection (Psa. 16:10-11a; Acts 2:27-28a).

a. God Not to Abandon Christ's Soul to Sheol

God would not abandon Christ's soul to Sheol, nor let Him as God's Holy One see corruption, decay (Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:31). This indicates that Christ's soul would be raised up from Hades and also that Christ's physical body would be resurrected from the tomb (Matt. 28:6; John 20:5-9).

b. God to Make Known to Christ the Path of Life—Resurrection

God would make known to Christ the path of life—resurrection (Psa. 16:11a; Matt. 28:6). In His incarnation

Christ brought divinity into humanity; in His resurrection He brought humanity into divinity. In His incarnation Christ made something divine, human; in His resurrection He made something human, divine.

In resurrection Christ was also begotten of God to be the firstborn Son of God (Psa. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Rom. 8:29). Through His incarnation Christ put on humanity. In His resurrection He brought His human part into divinity to be begotten of God that He could be the firstborn Son of God. In eternity past and before His resurrection, He was the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16). But in resurrection the only begotten Son became the firstborn Son of God by having His humanity begotten of God.

In Christ's resurrection the believers were regenerated to be the many sons of God and the many brothers of Christ (1 Pet. 1:3; Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:29). First Peter 1:3 says that through the resurrection of Christ, God regenerated us, all the believers. Actually, we were not regenerated at the time when we believed. That is merely according to our estimation. According to the divine fact, we all were regenerated together nearly two thousand years ago. When Christ in His humanity was begotten of God to be God's firstborn Son, all His believers were also begotten of God to be God's many sons. Thus, now through the resurrection of Christ, God has a group of sons, a corporate sonship. As sons of God, we need to realize that divinity was brought into our humanity and now our humanity is being brought into Christ's divinity. Christ was divinely human, and we are humanly divine. Thus, we are the same as He is in life and in nature, but not in the Godhead.

4. In His Ascension

Psalm 16 finally reveals the God-man, Christ, in His ascension (v. 11b & c; Acts 2:28b).

a. In God's Presence Participating in Fullness of Joy

Christ is in God's presence participating in fullness of joy, indicating that Christ has ascended to the heavens for His attainments and His obtainments (Psa. 16:11b; Acts 1:11; Phil. 2:9-11). In His ascension, among many other things, He

attained to the kingship, to the lordship, and to the ruling leadership and the qualification of being a Savior to save others (Acts 5:31). He also obtained many things in His ascension.

b. In God's Right Hand Enjoying Pleasures Forever

In His ascension Christ is enjoying pleasures forever in God's right hand, indicating that Christ is also at the right hand of God in His ascension to surpass all for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy concerning the church, the Body of Christ (Psa. 16:11c; Eph. 1:20b-23). This is the wonderful God-man portrayed in Psalm 16.

We need to see the divine revelation of this wonderful person in the Psalms. We may be like the blind man who was healed by the Lord in Mark 8. After the Lord laid His hands on him, He asked this man if he saw anything. The blind man responded that he saw men as trees, walking. The Lord had to lay His hands upon this man again so that he could see clearly (vv. 22-25). We may be like this man because our eyes are not fully open yet. But as we get into the Psalms week by week, our eyes are becoming more open, and we are seeing more and more.

Our eyes need to be opened until we have a full vision, a full revelation, concerning this wonderful person. He is the Word of God, even God Himself. In eternity past, He was full of divinity without any humanity. But one day in time He came to be incarnated and put on humanity. He became a God-man with a human body and lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years. Then He entered into death to accomplish God's redemption according to God's eternal plan, God's economy.

Christ came out of death and entered into resurrection. In this resurrection He brought His humanity into divinity to be begotten of God to become God's firstborn Son, and God regenerated all His believers to be God's many sons. Furthermore, in resurrection, He became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). As the life-giving Spirit, He is now within His believers as their life and their life supply.

He ascended to the heavens to attain many positions and

to obtain many qualifications. In His ascension He became the Lord, the King, the Ruler, the Savior, and even the Christ for the accomplishment of God's economy that God could produce an organism, that is, the Body of Christ in resurrection as the church.

This is the Christ revealed in Psalm 16. This is the man that can sojourn in God's temple and dwell on God's holy mountain. Such a man is not a good man according to the law, but a God-man according to God Himself as the life and life supply.

III. THE HISTORY OF PSALMS 1—16

From Psalm 1 to Psalm 16, there is a history which we need to see. The history begins in Psalm 1 with a man appreciating the law, treasuring the keeping of the law, and highly appraising the keeper of the law. Then in Psalm 2, God came in to declare that Christ was His Anointed. God anointed Him and installed Him to be the King. God also begot Him in His humanity to be the firstborn Son of God. Thus, we all have to take refuge in Him, to believe into Him. We also have to kiss Him, to love Him. This is the second step of the history.

After Psalm 2 was written, David, the appreciator of the law, committed the most "rough and tough" sin. He committed adultery with Uriah's wife and murdered Uriah (2 Sam. 11). We have seen previously that by that terrible sin, he broke the last five commandments (Exo. 20:13-17). He murdered Uriah, committed fornication, robbed Uriah of his wife, lied to Uriah, and coveted Uriah's wife.

The title of Psalm 3 says that this psalm was written when David was fleeing from his son Absalom. David fled from his son because his son rebelled against him. This rebellion was the issue of David's sin of fornication and murder. Because of this sin, God allowed fornication and murder to occur in David's family among his children. One of David's sons committed fornication with his daughter, and then Absalom killed the son who did this (2 Sam. 13). Eventually, Absalom rebelled against David (2 Sam. 15).

I would like to add something here for us to see. At the

time that David committed his terrible sin, God took away His sustaining hand from David. If God had so desired, He could have arranged the situation so that David would have never seen Uriah's wife. There was a kind of circumstance that gave David the opportunity to sin. God allowed this to happen to David. We need to consider why God allowed this. David appreciated the law and even appraised himself so highly. Therefore, God took His sustaining hand away from David so that David could be fully exposed, not only to himself but also to all the Lord's children throughout the generations until today.

David was exposed to the uttermost. I do not believe that any of us have been fully exposed or convicted of our sinfulness. This is because God in His mercy has not exposed us to the extent that He exposed David. It is hard to believe that such a godly servant of God as David could commit such a terrible sin. He conspired to murder one of his soldiers, and then he robbed this one of his wife! Who could believe that such a godly king like David could do this? God allowed that to happen. God kept His preserving, protecting, and sustaining hand away from David for a time. David thought he kept the law, but God arranged an environment to show him that he could not keep the law. An environment was there that fit David's sinful flesh, allowing his flesh to come out and fully expose him.

David committed this great sin about one thousand years before Christ. Many years later the New Testament still refers to this sin. Even in the genealogy of Christ, Matthew 1:6 says, "David begot Solomon of her who had been the wife of Uriah." What an ugly record! How could someone beget a son of another's wife? David is exposed even today.

He was exposed, and later he was on the test with Absalom's rebellion. When Absalom was pursuing him, David prayed the prayers recorded in Psalms 3—7. After considering Psalms 3—7 in the light of God's New Testament economy, we have seen that these psalms should not be taken as models for our prayer. In them we see David's sufferings, his desire to be avenged of his adversaries, and his self-righteousness. We do not see any repentance, confession of his fault, or

self-condemnation. This is the history of the one who appreciated the law and who was exposed. There is no hint or indication that he was humbled, that he was full of self-denial, or that he was self-condemned. He was on the test during Absalom's rebellion, and the testing did not bring out anything positive in these psalms.

Then in Psalm 8, God came in to inspire David. This psalm is David's inspired praise of the excellency of Christ. After Psalm 8, the history goes on with Psalms 9—14, which show us David's human concept concerning God's judgment on his enemies and his concept concerning man's condition before God. Then Psalm 15 speaks of David's concept of a perfect man according to the law being able to dwell with God for God's heart's desire. But in Psalm 16, there is the divine revelation that the only one who can dwell with God for God's heart's desire is the God-man, Christ. The God-man Christ in His human living, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension is the centrality and universality of the economy of God, the man who may dwell with God for His heart's desire and good pleasure. I hope that we can keep in mind the history of these sixteen psalms. Then we can understand their real significance.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE EIGHT

THE LINES, THE PRINCIPLES, AND THE SPIRIT OF THE BIBLE CONCERNING CHRIST AND THE LAW

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:15-19; Rom. 5:20a; 10:4a; 6:14

In order to help us understand the book of Psalms and even the entire Bible, we need to see the lines, the principles, and the spirit of the Bible concerning Christ and the law. The spirit of the Bible does not refer to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, directly. The Bible as an entity has its own spirit.

The book of Psalms, composed of one hundred fifty psalms, is the longest book among the sixty-six books of the Bible. Furthermore, each psalm is not just a story, a history, or a kind of teaching, exhortation, or instruction. Each psalm is man's speaking to God. In the Psalms we see prayers, thanksgivings, or praises to God. Thus, it is not an ordinary book. Many Bible readers spontaneously and naturally love this book, but they do not know why it is so lovable. The Psalms are very sweet to us because they are man's talk to God. The title of Psalm 18 says that it is a psalm which David "spoke to Jehovah." This psalm was not just David's prayer, thanksgiving, or praise, but his speaking to God. When we pray, that is the sweetest time because we are speaking to God.

Even in our sweet talk to God, however, we make mistakes. We may be mistaken, but our talk to God is still very sweet. A husband and a wife may speak to each other in a way that is full of mistakes, but their talk to each other can still be very sweet. In order for us to understand such a sweet book as the Psalms which is full of both the divine concept and the human concept with human mistakes, we need to see the

way to understand the Bible. In order to understand the Bible, we need to see the lines, the principles, and the spirit of the Bible.

I. THE TWO LINES CONCERNING GOD'S ETERNAL ECONOMY IN THE PSALMS AS IN THE ENTIRE SCRIPTURES

A. The Line of Life versus the Line of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

In order to see the two lines of the Bible, we need to go back to the very beginning of the divine revelation at the creation of man. The book of Genesis reveals that God created man in His image so that He could have a vessel to contain Him for His expression (1:26-28; 2:7-9). After God created man, He did not give man a long list of instructions. He did not say to man, "Man, you have to know that I am your God. You have to fear Me, love Me, and obey Me. Furthermore, I will make you a wife, and you have to love her. After you have a wife, you will produce children, and you have to listen to Me so that you can pick up the best way to raise them." God did not do this.

After God created man in His own image and after His own likeness, He did not tell man what to do and what not to do. Instead, God brought man into a garden, signifying that God's intention with man for the accomplishment of His economy needs a pleasant situation, a pleasant environment. Even to carry out the church life, we need a pleasant situation. If there is much complaining, arguing, debating, gossiping, and reasoning among us, the church life cannot be carried out. The garden on this earth today is the place where God's people are gathered into the Lord's name.

God brought Adam into a garden, into a pleasant environment, and put him in front of two trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9). God told Adam that he could freely eat of every tree in the garden, including the tree of life, but He warned Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (vv. 16-17). In telling Adam that all the trees in the garden were good for food, God was very wise. His intention was to stress to Adam

that the tree of life was good for food. Then God warned Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, telling Adam that if he ate of it, he would surely die.

We need to realize that the entire Bible was written according to these two trees. The entire divine revelation is the development of the notion of these two trees. Genesis shows us man in a pleasant garden with the tree of life before him. Then in Revelation at the end of the divine revelation, we see the tree of life again (22:2). The tree of life not only was in the garden but also will be in the eternal city, the New Jerusalem. The line of the tree of life runs through the entire Bible from Genesis to reach the last chapter of the book of Revelation.

Someone may ask, "What does the Bible teach?" This question can be answered in many ways. We can say that the Bible teaches God's economy or that it teaches Christ. In this message, I would say that the Bible teaches the tree of life. The Bible is a book which defines the tree of life. Along with the main line of the tree of life, there is another line, the line of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When I was very young, I thought that God made a mistake in allowing Satan to exist. If He had not allowed Satan to exist, everything would be fine. Furthermore, after God created man, He did not put man in front of one tree. If there were only one tree, the tree of life, Adam would not have been able to fall even if he had wanted to fall. Why did God allow there to be two trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? We might say that if we were God, we would have had only one tree in the garden. We probably think, "How good it would be if in this whole universe, there were only God, but not Satan." We might think this, but this is not according to God's thought. Without Satan, the excellency, the majesty, the wisdom, and the marvelous, wonderful points of God could never be exhibited. God and Satan are two sources in the universe.

The two trees set before man after man's creation signify God and God's enemy, His opposite. God is positive, and Satan is negative. From these two sources, there are two flows, and these two flows become two lines. A line is also a way. The

tree of life is a way, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is also a way. The tree that you live by is the way that you live. To live by the tree of life is to live by the way of life. To live by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is to live by the way of the knowledge of good and evil.

About six thousand years have passed since the time of Adam, and the entire world today is taking the way of the knowledge of good and evil. Families, societies, and nations of the world are formed not by the way of life but by the way of the knowledge of good and evil. But thank the Lord that we are a group of people who have been called out of the group of those who live by the way of the knowledge of good and evil, the way of complication.

Much of the time, however, instead of living by the way of life, we live by the way of the knowledge of good and evil. Day by day we parents raise our children to deal with three things—knowledge, good, and evil. The mothers teach their children with the knowledge of what is good and what is evil. The children are taught in their homes and schools to pick up the proper knowledge to do good and hate evil. The law courts and human governments are set up according to the concept of the knowledge of good and evil. Even Christianity and many other religions have fallen into the same "cage" of the way of the knowledge of good and evil. But we need to be those who are outside of this cage. We do not care for the knowledge of good and of evil. We care only for life.

Cain and Abel are representatives of these two lines, which are two ways. I believe that Adam brought forth many sons, but the Bible in Genesis 4:1-2 records only two sons of Adam—Cain and Abel. Both Cain and Abel came to worship God by offering something to God. Cain was a farmer. His labor produced a crop, so he offered the fruit of his crop to God. It seems that Cain worked for God and respected God by offering something to God. God, however, rejected Cain's offering. When I was young, I could not understand why God did this. Abel was a shepherd who offered the firstlings of his flock to God. God was pleased with Abel's offering.

These two brothers of the same parents represent the two lines of the Bible. The first one, Cain, chose the way of the

knowledge of good and evil, and the second one, Abel, chose the way of life. Adam's race became two groups. One group was of Cain, and the other group was of Abel. In Abel's group there were Enosh, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who eventually became Israel. This is the positive line in the Old Testament. In Cain's group there were all the evil ones. Eventually Nimrod was raised up in this evil group. He was a mighty man who built Babel (Gen. 10:8-10a). He also built Assyria with Nineveh as the capital (vv. 11-12; cf. Micah 5:6).

The history of mankind in the Old Testament is of two groups, two lines, which are out of two sources. To what group did David belong—the group of Cain or the group of Abel? According to the revelation we have seen thus far, David was in both groups. In Psalms 1, 3—7, and 9—15, he was in the group of Cain. In these psalms, he was praying to God, praising God, and thanking God in the group of Cain. He was fearing God, loving God, and worshipping God, but in the wrong way.

We have seen that in these psalms he justifies himself and mentions his righteousness frequently. He asks the Lord to hear him and remember him because of his righteousness. We need to ask whether David's righteousness as an offering to God is from the crop, as from Cain, or from the flock, as from Abel. David's prayer, thanksgiving, and praise in Psalms 1, 3—7, and 9—15 may be good, but they are of the knowledge of good and evil. There are two kinds of fruit of the same tree—good fruit and evil fruit. It is possible to pray to God, love God, praise God, and work for God according to the line of the knowledge of good and evil. Cain was a God-worshipper who offered something to God, but what he offered according to his way was not acceptable to God. David offered his righteousness to God, but we know that man's righteousness is as a soiled garment in the sight of God (Isa. 64:6).

In Psalms 2, 8, and 16, however, David was in the group of Abel in the line of life. We may say that at times David was a "Cain," a good Cain, a positive Cain, not an evil Cain. He was a Cain of good, not a Cain of evil. But sometimes, David was turned to another group, to the group of Abel. In this group he did not mention his righteousness or what he

could do. He spoke of taking refuge in the Son (Psa. 2:12) and of God hiding him under the wings of God (Psa. 17:8). In Psalm 27 David was on the line of life, saying that he desired to dwell in the house of Jehovah to behold the loveliness of Jehovah (v. 4). In Psalm 36 David said that in God's house, there is the fatness, the river of God's pleasures, the fountain of life, and light (vv. 8-9). This is God as our enjoyment. Therefore, we can see that at times David was with the group of Cain in the line of the knowledge of good and evil, but at other times God turned him to be with the group of Abel in the line of life.

Now we need to ask, "To what group do we belong?" Do we belong to the group of Cain or the group of Abel? Are we companions of Cain or companions of Abel? At times we may be with Abel, and at other times we may leave Abel and join Cain. When we endeavor to do things in ourselves, by ourselves, with ourselves, and for ourselves, we are companions of Cain. We have to confess that today we are mostly "Cains" in the line of the knowledge of good and evil. Very rarely are we "Abels" in the line of life. We live mostly by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, not by the tree of life.

Now I would like us to consider whether Abraham was with Cain or with Abel. Actually, Abraham was sometimes with Cain and sometimes with Abel. God had promised Abraham a son, but Abraham and his wife Sarah became very old, and they had lost the human capacity to produce children. Sarah then urged Abraham to take her handmaid, Hagar, so that they could have a son (Gen. 16). Before taking Hagar to produce Ishmael, Abraham was with Abel. But when Abraham took Hagar, he became a companion of Cain, and that offended God. God did not appear to Abraham for thirteen years after Ishmael was born (Gen. 16:16—17:1).

Abraham was walking with God in the line of the tree of life, but he was under God's test. God promised him a son, but by the time he was very old, he still did not have a son. His wife was very concerned about this and gave Hagar to Abraham to produce a son named Ishmael. God's desire, however, was not with this son. Ishmael was born when Abraham was eighty-six years old (Gen. 16:16). Thirteen

years later, when Abraham was ninety-nine, God appeared to him again (Gen. 17:1), and Isaac, the child of God's promise, was born when Abraham was one hundred years old (Gen. 21:5). Abraham returned again to the line of life. Ishmael was produced according to the line of the knowledge of good and evil. Isaac was produced according to the line of life.

When the descendants of Abraham became the race of Israel, God brought them to Mount Sinai. At Mount Sinai God's intention was to train them to be His people to serve Him with a tabernacle, with a priesthood, and with all kinds of offerings. The tabernacle, the priesthood, and the offerings are of the line of the tree of life. But the people of Israel did not know themselves. Their thought was always with Cain.

God, before the making of the tabernacle, decreed the law, and the law is in the line of good and evil. We have seen that the law was a side line. The main line is the line of the tree of life with the tabernacle, with the priesthood, and with the offerings. But the people of Israel desired to take another way, the way of the law, the way of good and evil. They promised God that they would do whatever He said (Exo. 19:8; 24:3). God knew, of course, that they were talking in a foolish way. While Moses was on the mountain with God receiving the commandments of the law, they made a golden calf to break the law. Later, Moses went up to the mountain again. This time God gave him the pattern of the tabernacle. He also showed Moses the priesthood with all the offerings. The tabernacle, the priesthood, and all the offerings typify Christ. This is the way of life. Throughout the entire history of Israel in the Old Testament from Moses' time, we can see these two lines—the line of the law and the line of the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the offerings, which are the line of life.

David treasured the law and tried to keep it, but he failed to the uttermost. He killed Uriah and robbed Uriah of his wife. He needed the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the offerings. Through the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the offerings, David was forgiven. Psalm 51 shows us that when

David repented, he was a strong "Abel." Psalm 51, a psalm of David's repentance and confession, is the most spiritual psalm. At the end of his confession, he asked God to do good to Zion and to build the walls of Jerusalem (v. 18). Later, however, when he was fleeing from Absalom, David turned back again to the group of Cain, as we saw in Psalms 3—7.

Now we can see that in the book of Psalms, as in the entire Bible, there are two lines. At the end of the Psalms, the psalmists are fully in the line of life. The concluding psalms are full of praises, full of "Hallelujahs." The psalmists by that time were not praising the law, but Christ. We have to see the two lines in the book of Psalms. In reading the Psalms, we should not agree with David when he is "Cain-David." We need to stay with "Abel-David." We need to stand with "Abel-David" in Psalm 51. We should treasure all the psalms concerning Christ in the line of life. We need to come out of the group of Cain and enter into and stay with the group of Abel.

When we study the book of Job, we can see many "Cains" there and also some "Abels." My burden is to help us know the two lines, the two ways, in the Bible. Among the Jews in the Old Testament, there was the wonderful way of the tabernacle, the priesthood, and all the offerings. There was also the way of the law. The people of Israel could not meet God by keeping the law; they met God in the tabernacle.

Whenever we try to accomplish something in ourselves like Cain, we do not have the inner anointing. We need to pray, "Lord, I can do nothing and I do not want to do anything. I just want to enjoy You, to partake of You, to experience You, to live You, and to express You." When we pray in this way, we are like Abel, and we are full of the inner anointing. Thus, we can see two sources, two lines, and two ways with two kinds of results. One result is the absence of God, and the other result is the presence of God.

B. The Main Line as the Central Line of God's Economy concerning Christ and the Church

The main line of the Bible is the central line of God's

economy concerning Christ and the church. This is the line of life. Christ is the centrality and universality of God's eternal economy. The church is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), the counterpart of Christ, the complement of Christ, to be God's dwelling on the earth, typified by the tabernacle (Exo. 25:8-9; Josh. 18:1; 1 Sam. 1:3) and the temple (1 Kings 6:1), both of which are considered as the house of God (Judg. 18:31b; Psa. 5:7). The main line is of Mount Zion in the heavens (Psa. 2:6; Rev. 14:1), signified by Mount Zion on the earth (Psa. 3:4; 9:11, 14; 14:7; 15:1b); and the New Testament believers have come to Mount Zion in the heavens (Heb. 12:22) in the main line of God's economy.

C. The Side Line concerning the Law

The other line in the Scriptures is the side line concerning the law. This is the line of the knowledge of good and evil. The law was added alongside the main line of the economy of God (Rom. 5:20a). The side line is of Mount Sinai, where the law was given. The Old Testament saints, who were for the law, were slaves of this Mount Sinai (Gal. 4:24).

The psalmists, who were for the law, stayed ignorantly at Mount Sinai of this side line. Occasionally and unconsciously they turned to Mount Zion of the main line, as unveiled in Psalms 3:4; 9:11, 14; 14:7; and 15:1b. In Mount Zion they enjoyed the house, the temple of God, as unveiled in Psalms 5:7 and 11:4. This is an unconscious progression in the psalmists' seeking after God.

The psalmist in Psalm 15 was questioning as to who may sojourn in God's tent and who may dwell on God's holy mountain. The answer according to David's concept is the perfect man in the side line of the law (Psa. 15:2-5). But the answer according to the divine revelation is the God-man Christ (Psa. 16:1-11) as the firstborn Son of God with His many brothers as the many sons of God in the main line of God's economy (Rom. 6:14).

II. THE PRINCIPLES

There are many principles in the Bible and of the Bible which can help us to understand the Bible in a proper way.

It is very difficult for many students of the Bible to understand the Bible because they do not know the principles of the Bible. In order to understand what these principles are, I want to present a few illustrations.

During Martin Luther's time, the Catholic Church taught that to be saved and justified by God, one had to do good works and keep the law. Then Luther stood up to say that justification is by faith. Faith is a principle in the New Testament. Genesis 15 says that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness (v. 6). God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness. This shows that we do not need to do anything to build up our own righteousness. We simply need to believe in Christ.

The book of Habakkuk talks about the Babylonians coming to devastate the entire country of Israel. In this book there is a verse which says, "The righteous one will live by his faith" (2:4). Faith is a big principle in the Bible. According to the entire Bible, faith is to stop our work, to stop our doing—on the negative side. Then on the positive side, faith is to trust in the Lord. Faith is to stop our doing and to trust in His doing.

The principle of faith is related to the principle of the Sabbath. The principle of the Sabbath is this: you have to cease your work because God is everything to you. If you need something to be worked out, God works for you. That is what it means to enjoy the Sabbath. The Sabbath is in the same principle as faith. The real believing, the real faith, means to stop your doing. Whatever you do is an insult to God. In the principle of the Sabbath and in the principle of faith, you do not need to work or to do anything, because God does everything and works out everything for your enjoyment. You just trust in Him and trust in His doing, in His working. This is faith.

Psalm 1 says that if you keep the law, you will be blessed (vv. 1-2), but Psalm 2 says that the one who takes refuge in the Son is blessed (v. 12). The only way that we can take refuge in the Son is to stop our doing. We need to take refuge in Jesus, to believe into Him. This is the principle of faith. According to the teaching of Catholicism, you have to work,

to labor, and to suffer to be justified by God. Then Martin Luther found out that God's principle of His salvation is not by doing, not by working, but by believing in God and in all that He has done and is going to do. This is to take refuge in the working God and to stop our work. This principle of faith should govern our entire Christian life.

On the one hand, we need to stop our work. On the other hand, we still need to labor, but this labor is not in ourselves and by ourselves. Paul said, "I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God which is with me" (1 Cor. 15:10). The grace of God is Christ. Paul said, "Yet not I but the grace of God." This is similar to Galatians 2:20, where Paul said that he had been crucified with Christ and that it was no longer he who lived, but Christ lived in him. This is to rest, to keep the Sabbath, to take refuge in the Son, to believe into Him. Our entire Christian life should be according to this principle of the Sabbath and of faith.

Faith is one of the many principles in the Bible. Paul defined the principle of faith thoroughly in his Epistles. He said that no flesh can be justified by the works of the law (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16; 3:11). There are many other principles of the Bible.

The Bible is in two testaments—the Old Testament and the New Testament. To understand the Old Testament, you need to keep one principle; and to understand the New Testament, you need to keep another principle. Today, the Pentecostals, like those in Catholicism, understand the Bible in a mixed-up way. They do not keep the principle of the Old Testament and of the New Testament. When you apply anything of the Old Testament, you must find out the principle of applying it in a spiritual way, not in a physical way.

This is the difference between the practice of Judaism and the practice of God's New Testament economy. The Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, has become an idol to the religious Jews. They do not really care for God in reality but for the letter of their Torah. Even the ark became a superstitious thing to the children of Israel. When they were fighting the Philistines, they brought out the ark to go

with them. Eventually, they were defeated and the ark was captured (1 Sam. 4:3-5, 10-11). The children of Israel also built the temple, and the temple eventually became an idol to them. They trusted in the temple rather than in God Himself. Later, the Babylonians came to destroy the temple.

The two lines of the Bible are the line of life and the line of the knowledge of good and evil. With these two lines, there are the principles of the Bible. As long as it is something other than God, whether good or evil, that is not life. Only God Himself is the tree of life.

Today people are claiming their rights, but they are violating the God-ordained principles. Paul spoke of the distinctions between male and female in his Epistles (1 Cor. 11:2-15; 1 Tim. 2:9-15). Deuteronomy 22:5 says, "A woman shall not put on a man's belongings, nor shall a man wear a woman's garment; for everyone who does these things is an abomination to Jehovah your God." For a woman to wear a man's clothing or for a man to wear a woman's clothing breaks God's principle. We have to keep the principles. Every part, chapter, paragraph, sentence, and clause of the Bible must be interpreted according to the proper principles.

According to the principle in the Old Testament, the Old Testament saints had to keep the Sabbath, the seventh day. But when the Lord Jesus came, He ended the Old Testament time. *To end* means to conclude and to consummate. Christ consummated, concluded, ended, the Old Testament. Now according to the book of Hebrews, Christ is everything. In the New Testament, Christ is our Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28; Col. 2:16-17).

Now that we are in the New Testament age, we have to keep this principle concerning Christ. The principle in the Old Testament was to keep the Sabbath day. The principle in the New Testament concerning the Sabbath is to believe in the Lord, to rest in the Lord, and to enjoy the Lord. The Seventh-Day Adventists mix up the Old Testament principle with that of the New Testament. They keep the Old Testament Sabbath in the New Testament age. They are wrong in principle. Their intention might be good, but their principle is wrong.

A. The Principles in the Old Testament

We need to see the principles of the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. The tabernacle (Exo. 25:8-9; 40:1-2) as the precursor of the temple (1 Kings 6:1), the priesthood (Exo. 28:1), and the offerings (Lev. 1—7), all as types of Christ, were ordained by God to be the main line for God's chosen people to worship God, serve God, contact God, and partake of God until Christ as the fulfillment of all the types came (Heb. 9:8-12).

The law as the testimony of God (Psa. 78:5) was given by God to be the side line alongside the main line to guard the chosen people of God until Christ as the end of the law (Rom. 10:4a) came (Gal. 3:23-25).

B. The Principles in the New Testament

God has ordained Christ to be the centrality and universality of His economy to fulfill His good pleasure (Eph. 3:8-11; 1:9-11). The law as the alongside factor has been ended by Christ (Rom. 10:4a), and the believers are no longer under the law (Rom. 6:14).

III. THE SPIRIT OF THE BIBLE

Colossians 1:15-19 shows that the spirit of the Bible exalts Christ. These five verses are unique in the Bible in exalting Christ. Christ must have the first place; He must have the preeminence. Christ has the preeminence in the Godhead because in the Godhead, He is the image of God, the embodiment of God, and the expression of God. He is in the first place, even in the Godhead. Then in the old creation, He was the first creature, the Firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15). In the new creation, in resurrection, He is also the first. He is the preeminent One. Furthermore, in the Body of Christ, in the church, Christ is the first. In the Godhead, Christ is the first; in the old creation, Christ is the first; in the new creation, Christ is the first; and in the church as the Body of Christ, Christ is the first. He is first in everything.

Since He has the first place in all things, we must give

Him the first place in our being and in all that we do. He must be first in our marriage, in our spending of money, and in our demeanor. In the way that we dress, we must give Christ the preeminence. The spirit of the Bible is just to exalt Christ. When we come to study the Psalms, we must realize this. We must realize that we cannot exalt anything higher than Christ. If we exalt anyone or anything other than Christ, we break the spirit of the Bible. If we are going to interpret any types or explain any parables, we must take care of this spirit. The spirit of the Bible is to exalt Christ.

The spirit of the Bible exalts the Christ ordained by God to have the preeminence (the first place) in the old creation, in the new creation, in the Body of Christ, and in everything (Col. 1:15-19). Also the spirit of the Bible does not give any orthodox position to the law (Gal. 4:21-25) given by God alongside His economy (Rom. 5:20a).

Many teachings in Christianity today are off the mark because they do not take care of the lines, the principles, and the spirit of the Bible. We have to stay on the line of the tree of life. Whether or not we speak with the oracle of God depends upon what we speak. A prophet is one who has received the word from God. Then he speaks the word in the line of the tree of life, in the proper principles, and in the spirit of exalting Christ. In whatever we speak, we must have a spirit to exalt Christ.

In the past two years, we have released messages on Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, and Jeremiah. It is not easy to see Christ in these four books. How many people see God's economy in these four books with Christ as the centrality and universality? Whenever we study a book of the Bible, we must keep the lines, the principles, and the spirit of the Bible. Then the light comes. If we read the Bible without seeing the lines, the principles, and the spirit of the Bible, we will not know what it is talking about.

When we study the Psalms in the light of the lines, the principles, and the spirit of the Bible, we can see the human concept and the divine concept. We can see Christ in God's economy versus the law in man's appreciation. We may think that all of the psalms are good psalms, since they are psalms

of prayer, psalms of thanksgiving, and psalms of praise. But when we see the lines, the principles, and the spirit of the Bible, we will see that many of the psalms may be good, but they are good in a wrong way.

David said that because of his righteousness, God heard him. This is not just wrong, but terribly wrong. This is against the principle of the Bible. How could God hear us because of our righteousness? The Bible says that even our best righteousness is as a soiled garment (Isa. 64:6). No flesh can be justified before God by the works of the law. This is the principle. We cannot be justified and please God by our righteousness.

Cain offered the fruit of his labor to God. It seemed that this was a kind of worship to God, but actually this was an insult to God. This was an insult to God because God does not need us to do something for Him. We need Him to do everything for us. He wants us to stop our doing, rest in Him, and take refuge in Him. By doing this, we honor God. This is the principle.

We may love people and help people, but our love and help can be an insult to God. Do we love people and help people by ourselves or by Christ? If it is by ourselves, this is the good of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If we hate people, this is the evil of the same tree. The fruits are different, but the source and the result are the same. We may say that we do everything with the best knowledge. This means that our doing is according to the tree of knowledge, not the tree of life.

We should have the attitude that even though we can do something by ourselves, we would not do it. We do not like to act by ourselves because God hates this. God hates anything out of us, anything by us, and anything through us. We need to stop our doing and rest in Him, trusting in His doing. This honors God and brings in His blessing.

Many times good things can be a real temptation, a snare, and a trap to us. When we are doing good things, we have to check who is doing them. Are we doing them or is Christ doing them? Even the best thing done merely by man is an insult to God. Only the things done by Christ as our life and

only the things accomplished by God as our enjoyment are in the line of the tree of life. When we act in the line of the tree of life, this is in the proper line, in the keeping of the proper principle, and in the spirit of exalting Christ.

When we see the lines, the principles, and the spirit of the Bible, we have the boldness to say which psalms are of the tree of life and which psalms are not. Regardless of how good something is, God only cares for who does it. God wants us to live Him, but not by ourselves. God wants us to express Him, but not by ourselves. We have to stop our expression. We have to put our trust in Him and let Him live in us and out of us. Then whatever we do will be an honor and a glory to God. Otherwise, whatever we do, even though it may be good, is an insult to God.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE NINE

DAVID'S CONCEPT CONCERNING A MAN AND CONCERNING DAVID'S KINGSHIP BEFORE GOD BASED UPON THE KEEPING OF THE LAW AND THE PRINCIPLE OF GOOD AND EVIL

Scripture Reading: Psa. 17—21

In this message we come to Psalms 17—21. We may say that these five psalms are five "birds of the same feather." The taste, the flavor, the spirit, and the attitude are all the same in these psalms.

In the previous message, we saw the lines, the principles, and the spirit of the Bible. The two lines of the Bible are the line of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the line of the tree of life. We saw that Cain was in the line of knowledge and that Abel was in the line of life. We can either be in the group of Cain or in the group of Abel.

In Psalm 1 there is not any hint that David was with Abel. In this psalm every aspect and every point indicate that David stayed with Cain in the line of knowledge. But there are also three stations in the first sixteen psalms in which David was with Abel in the line of life. These three stations are Psalm 2, Psalm 8, and Psalm 16. These psalms are extraordinary and great in unveiling the secret concerning the centrality and universality of Christ in God's economy. After the first sixteen psalms, we can see that David made some progress and improved in his concept.

In Psalms 17—21 David jumped out of the line of knowledge a number of times. David at least had a little taste in these psalms of the line of life. Psalms 22—24 are the fourth station of the line of life in the Psalms. These

three psalms unveil Christ to us. Psalm 22 reveals Christ's death, Psalm 23 unveils Christ's shepherding in His resurrection, and Psalm 24 shows that Christ will be the overcoming and upcoming King in the age of restoration.

Psalms 17—21 show us David's concept concerning two things—concerning a man before God and concerning David's kingship before God. His concept was based upon the keeping of the law and the principle of good and evil. We can see this in light of the divine revelation in the Bible, particularly in the New Testament.

The divine revelation in the Bible is progressive. In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." In Philippians 1:21a Paul said, "For to me, to live is Christ." These verses reveal a great step forward in the progression of the divine revelation. In the entire thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, we cannot find any word concerning Christ's living in us and our living Christ. David's concept in Psalm 1 was that the one who meditates in the law is blessed, but Paul said, "For to me, to live is Christ." If we desire the blessing in Psalm 1, we are very primitive and backward. Our understanding of the divine revelation of the Bible must be progressive.

In the Old Testament, we cannot find all the mysterious expressions by Paul. This is because Paul's ministry was to complete the word of God, the mystery concerning Christ and the church (Col. 1:25-26). If Paul's fourteen Epistles were taken away from the Bible, we would not know God's economy (1 Tim. 1:4), the mystery of God, Christ (Col. 2:2), and the mystery of Christ, the church (Eph. 3:4; 5:32). There is no word in the Old Testament which says, "To me, to live is Christ." When we come to the Psalms, we must see them in the light of the full revelation of God's New Testament economy.

I. DAVID'S CONCEPT CONCERNING A MAN BEFORE GOD

In Psalms 17—19 we see David's concept concerning a man before God.

A. The Improvement of David's Concept

Psalm 17 shows us the improvement of David's concept. David's concept improved from his righteousness (vv. 1-6) to God's wondrous lovingkindness and God's hiding him in the shadow of His wings (vv. 7-9).

In verse 3 David said, "You have tried me: You have found nothing. / My thoughts do not pass through my mouth." David said that his thoughts did not pass through his mouth and that his prayer was not made with "lips of deceit" (v. 1). James, in the New Testament, said that the hardest thing for us to control is our mouth (James 3:1-12). But in Psalm 17, David told God that he had success in controlling his mouth. In verse 5 David said, "My steps have held fast to Your tracks; / My footsteps have not slipped." David said that he was still on God's track, like a locomotive which is still on the rails.

In verses 7-9 David's concept turned from his righteousness to God's wondrous lovingkindness and God's hiding him in the shadow of His wings. In verse 8 he prayed, "Guard me like the apple of Your eye; / In the shadow of Your wings hide me." David enjoyed the shadow of God's wings, and he even enjoyed being guarded like the apple of God's eye.

In the first six verses he was in his righteousness. He was boasting of his righteousness. James said that no one can control his mouth, but David said that God examined him and found nothing. In verses 7-9, however, he came out of his righteousness. He entered into God's eye and came under God's wings to enjoy the shadow. His boasting in his righteousness was in the line of the tree of knowledge, but God's eye and God's wings are in the line of the tree of life. This shows an improvement in David's concept.

Right after this, however, David turned his attention to his enemies. Verses 10-14 are his accusation of his enemies. After the mentioning of his enjoyment in God's eye and under God's wings, he could not forget his enemies. To accuse our enemies and to ask God to bring them down (v. 13a) is not a prayer according to God's economy. In God's economy, God tells us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44).

At the end of Psalm 17, we can see David's improvement

in the satisfaction with God's likeness (presence), yet he was still remaining in his righteousness before God (v. 15). How could David boast of his righteousness when he committed such a sinful act by taking Bathsheba and murdering her husband, Uriah? God forgave David of this great sin, but He did not forget what David did. First Kings 15:5 says that David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite. Much later, in the New Testament, the genealogy of Christ in the book of Matthew says, "David begot Solomon of her who had been the wife of Uriah" (1:6).

The Bible tells us that in the new covenant, God forgives our sins and does not remember them (Heb. 8:12). Why then did God record David's failure in the genealogy of Christ? This shows us that the Bible is not easy to understand. Psalm 51 shows that God forgave David, but in Matthew 1 God still mentioned Uriah, meaning that God did not forget. Uriah was a Hittite, a heathen. Matthew 1:6 says that David begot Solomon "of her who had been the wife of Uriah" to emphasize David's great sin, thus showing that Christ as the kingly Savior is related not only to the heathen but also to sinners.

In spite of David's great sin, he said in Psalm 17:15, "As for me, in righteousness will I look into Your face." He still remained in his righteousness before God, but at least in one sense, he was not in righteousness. James said, "Whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles in one point has become guilty of all" (James 2:10). We have seen previously that David, by his one transgression, directly broke the last five commandments because he murdered, committed adultery, stole, lied, and coveted (Exo. 20:13-17). David should have said that he would look into God's face because of God's mercy and lovingkindness. God's lovingkindness is versus David's righteousness. What is trustworthy—David's righteousness or God's lovingkindness? If God would examine us to the uttermost, how could we stand? We could not stand before God's face in our righteousness. We have to hide ourselves under the shadow of His wings.

In Psalm 17 we see David's human concept, but we also

see the improvement of his concept. We see his improving from being "Cain-David" to being "Abel-David."

B. A Psalm of David Expressing His Concept

Psalm 18 is a psalm of David expressing his concept. The title of this psalm says that David talked to Jehovah with the words of this song after God delivered him from all his enemies and from Saul. This psalm is not merely a prayer or praise but a talk with God.

I would like to ask if we have had times to talk with the Lord. To talk means to open yourself up and release all your opinions. Have we ever had such a talk with the Lord Jesus? Psalm 18 is a human talk with the divine God. This is wonderful. Just to have the opportunity and the privilege to talk to God is a very great blessing. To talk with someone implies intimacy. We must be face to face, having eye contact with the one to whom we are talking. We need such an intimate, human talk with the divine God. In David's talk to God, he begins by saying, "I love You, O Jehovah, my strength" (v. 1). This is a very sweet talk.

Psalm 18 reveals the improvement of David's concept in his enjoyment of the saving God as his strength, his crag, his fortress, his Deliverer, his God, his rock, his shield, his salvation's horn, and his high tower in whom he took refuge (vv. 1-5). A crag is a steep, rugged rock. David said that Jehovah was his crag and his rock, in whom he took refuge. David loved Jehovah because Jehovah was so much to him. He enjoyed Jehovah as his saving God.

In verse 6, David realized that God heard his voice from His temple, not because of his righteousness. This is an improvement from David's relying on what he was and what he had to what God is and what God has.

Even though David realized that God heard his voice from His temple, he portrayed God not as in His temple but as in His fury and His terrifying majesty (vv. 7-15). This shows that David improved in his concept, but then he went back to his natural concept.

In verses 16-28 David turned to his righteousness and cleanness because of which God delivered him from his enemies.

Do you believe that God delivered David from his enemies because of his righteousness and cleanness? David was wrong to think this. God is not good to us because of our righteousness. He is good to us because of His compassion. We need not only His mercy but also His far-reaching compassion to preserve us.

Anyhow, David recognized that God was the One who strengthened him, shielded him, supported him, and enabled him to war, who had made his feet like hinds' feet, and whose condescending gentleness had made him great (vv. 29-36). God is transcending, but God's gentleness is condescending. God is on the throne, but He shows us His gentleness by coming down to us. Thus, David testified that it was by such a God that he overtook his enemies and defeated those who hated him (vv. 27-42). This shows us again the mixture in David's concept.

Eventually, David praised God that God had rescued him from the strivings of the people and had made him the head of the nations, who served him, obeyed him, and came cringing to him; and he blessed God his rock and exalted the God of his salvation, who had exalted him above his enemies (vv. 43-49). On the one hand, we see much improvement in David's concept here. On the other hand, we see the mixture in his concept.

The conclusion of Psalm 18 is that God magnified salvation to David as God's king and executed lovingkindness to him as God's anointed and to his seed forever (v. 50). God's magnifying salvation to David was not just to save him but to save him for making him the king. He was not worthy by his righteousness to be God's anointed. But God anointed him because of His lovingkindness. Christ is the seed of David to inherit God's covenant made to David.

C. David's Praise of the Testimony of the Speaking of the Universe and His Appraisal of the Law Leading Him to a Deeper Seeking after Perfection before Jehovah

Psalm 19 is David's praise of the testimony of the speaking

of the universe and his appraisal of the law leading him to a deeper seeking after perfection before Jehovah.

Verses 1-6 are David's praise concerning the speaking of the universe created by God. No doubt, in these verses, David was in the line of life. The entire universe speaks every day and even every moment. "The heavens declare the glory of God, / And the firmament proclaims the work of His hands" (v. 1). In verses 4b-5, the sun signifies Christ as a bridegroom and as a mighty man. We know that Christ is typified by the sun because David refers to the sun as a bridegroom. Christ is the Bridegroom with the bride. Christ's rising, as typified by the sun, is a circuit around the globe, and nothing is hidden from His heat (v. 6). The word *circuit* here indicates that the earth is round.

After David's praise concerning the speaking of the universe in verses 1-6, he highly appraises the law in verses 7-11. In verses 1-6, he was "Abel"; in verses 7-11, he was "Cain." We have to give David the credit in the line of life and the debit in the line of the knowledge of good and evil.

David's appraisal of the law was very high. Verse 7 says, "The law of Jehovah is perfect, / Restoring the soul; / The testimony of Jehovah is faithful, / Making the simple wise." The law of God is God's testimony (Exo. 31:18; 32:15). In verse 11 David said there is much reward in the keeping of God's commandments. This concept is not according to the divine concept of the New Testament economy of God.

David said in Psalm 1 that the one who delighted in the law would be like a tree planted beside streams of water (vv. 2-3). But in the Gospels, John the Baptist said, "Already the axe is laid at the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not produce good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:10). In Luke 13:6-9, the Lord told a parable indicating that God came in the Son to seek fruit from the Jewish people, who were likened to a fig tree. If they would not repent and produce fruit, they would be cut down. Israel was like a tree planted by the law as the waters, but God would cut them down if they did not repent and receive Christ. We have seen that the spirit of the Bible does not exalt the

law. It only exalts Christ. In the whole Bible there is no other portion which uplifts the law as highly as Psalm 19:7-11.

After David's uplifting of the law, he offered a prayer to Jehovah as his rock and as his Redeemer (vv. 12-14). In verse 12 he asked God to deal with his secret faults. All of us have some secret faults which only we know. David also prayed to be kept from presumptuous sins (v. 13). To be presumptuous is to be too bold without consideration.

David prayed that he would be acceptable before Jehovah in his words outwardly and in his meditation inwardly (v. 14). Sometimes you may be acceptable outwardly just in your words, but what about your inward meditation? Such a prayer indicates that David was endeavoring to keep the law to such an extent that he would be dealt with in his secret faults, in his presumptuous sins, in the words of his mouth, and in the meditation of his heart. He wanted to be perfect and clean.

Whether or not David could arrive at such perfection is not the issue. Even if he could be perfect, would this make God happy? In considering this, we must take care of the entire principle of the Bible. The entire principle of the Bible tells us that God does not want anything from man. Regardless of how good it is, as long as it is human, God will put it aside. What God wants is not a good man, but a God-man. God's desire was to be incarnated as a man by the name of Jesus, to die on the cross, to be resurrected, and in resurrection to become a life-giving Spirit to indwell us, to live in us, and to live Himself out of us. When Christ lives through us, our conduct is not our goodness but Christ. "To me, to live is Christ." We have to interpret Psalm 19 in view of the entire principle of the Bible.

If David could have been a perfect person, he would have been highly exalted. But the Bible does not exalt anyone but Christ. Christ must have the preeminence in everything. This is why Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20a). According to the divine concept, we can see that David was wrong. Abel was accepted by God, not because his secret faults and his presumptuous sins were dealt with, but because he realized that he was a sinner. He

needed Christ to be his offering. He offered to God not what he was, but Christ. Thus, he was accepted in Christ. He was accepted by God, not in himself, in what he did, or in what he raised up, but altogether in Christ. At the end of Psalm 19, however, David was not in the line of Abel but in the line of Cain.

We may not have agreed with what Cain did in Genesis 4, but we surely have agreed with David's prayer at the end of Psalm 19. This is a very deep prayer. Over fifty years ago, I prayed David's prayer in Psalm 19 every morning over a long period of time. We can pray this prayer, but no one can attain the standard of this prayer. In verses 12-14, David prays, "Who can discern his errors? / Clear me of my secret faults. / Keep Your servant from presumptuous sins; / Do not let them have dominion over me; / Then I will be blameless and cleared / Of great transgression. / May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart / Be acceptable before You, / O Jehovah, my rock and my Redeemer." This prayer seems marvelous, but actually David was in the line of Cain here. Like Cain, he was trying his best to bring the produce of his harvest to God. In other words, he was bringing his doing, his working out, and his result to God, while putting Christ aside. In Psalm 51, however, David applied Christ to the uttermost because he realized that he had sinned greatly and that he needed Christ.

II. DAVID'S CONCEPT CONCERNING HIS KINGSHIP BEFORE GOD

Psalms 20 and 21 reveal David's concept concerning his kingship before God.

A. David's Blessing in His Kingship

Psalm 20 shows us David's blessing in his kingship. In verses 1-9, David blessed his people. According to the principle of the Bible, the greater blesses the lesser (Heb. 7:7).

David blessed his people with Jehovah's answering, exalting, help from the sanctuary, strengthening from Zion, remembering all their meal offerings, and accepting their burnt offering (vv. 1-3). This was so that Jehovah might give

them their heart's desire and fulfill their every intention and that they might shout victoriously in His salvation and raise the banner in the name of their God (vv. 4-5). David had the assurance that Jehovah saves His anointed (King David) and will answer him from His holy heaven with the mighty salvation from His right hand (v. 6).

David continues by saying that we boast in the name of Jehovah our God instead of in chariots and in horses, and we, not our enemies, are risen and stand upright (vv. 7-8). The conclusion of his blessing is verse 9, which says, "Save, O Jehovah! / May the king answer us when we call." The king in this verse refers to David.

Most of David's blessing is all right, but we can still see that he was somewhat remaining in his old concept. Psalm 20, however, still shows us that David has improved and progressed in his concept beyond the three foregoing psalms. To bless is higher than to pray. A person who blesses people needs a higher status, a higher stature in life. No small children can bless others. A little girl cannot say to her father, "Daddy, I will bless you," but she can say, "Daddy, I will pray for you." Children can pray and do pray for their parents. But a child cannot bless his or her parents, because blessing requires some stature in life.

We must grow in life to arrive at the stature of being able to bless others. The fact that David could bless his people means that he had the stature in life. After Jacob became Israel and was in his old age, he went down to Egypt and blessed people. His hands were not working hands but blessing hands (Gen. 47:7, 10; 48:15, 20). The older you are, the more you can bless others. But being able to bless others needs not only age but also the stature in life. Blessing is also higher than thanking or praising. A little boy can praise God, but he cannot bless others.

David's blessing in Psalm 20 involved himself, God, and his people. This means that in Psalm 20, he is higher, deeper, and richer than in the previous psalms. David's concept concerning his kingship has improved from his righteousness to God's sanctuary, Mount Zion, the meal offerings and the burnt offering to God, God's mighty salvation, and God's

name. His blessing does not say anything about his righteousness. If we stand on our righteousness, we may be able to pray, but we cannot bless. To bless others, we must stand on all that God is. We cannot bless people with our righteousness. We have to bless people with what God is and has.

B. David's Praise to Jehovah for His Kingship and God's Furious Dealing with His Enemies

In Psalm 21, David praises Jehovah for his kingship and speaks of God's furious dealing with his enemies. David praised Jehovah for his kingship through His strengthening, salvation, blessings, crowning, lengthening of life, great glory, splendor and honor, and lovingkindness (vv. 1-7). David did not mention his righteousness here. If we depend upon our righteousness, our kingship can never be built up. Endeavoring to keep the law makes us slaves, not kings. According to Galatians 4, all the children brought forth by the law are slaves (vv. 24-25). But the children brought forth by grace become kings. To depend upon God's lovingkindness builds up the kingship.

In verses 8-12, David spoke of God's furious dealing with David's enemies by devouring them and destroying their descendants. This is David's concept. For his kingship he depended upon God's lovingkindness. For his enemies, however, he applied God's furious dealing.

In verse 13 David blessed Jehovah that He may be exalted in His strength that David as the king with his people will sing and psalm His might. This verse shows us a man who not only blesses his people but also blesses God. As a king, he blessed his people. As the one anointed by God, he blessed the anointing God. The conclusion of Psalm 21 is very good.

We can see much improvement with David in these five psalms. He has been improving gradually from Psalm 17 to the end of Psalm 21. This leads us to Psalm 22 concerning Christ's death, Psalm 23 concerning Christ's shepherding in His resurrection, and Psalm 24 concerning Christ's reigning as the coming King.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TEN

THE CHRIST WHO HAS PASSED THROUGH THE REDEEMING DEATH AND ENTERED INTO THE CHURCH-PRODUCING RESURRECTION

Scripture Reading: Psa. 22

In the book of Psalms, there are certain highlight psalms. The top psalms we have seen thus far are Psalm 2, Psalm 8, and Psalm 16. Now we come to the fourth top psalm, Psalm 22.

Generally speaking, we love every psalm because every psalm is full of an aspiration to seek after God, to pray to Him, to contact Him, and to receive the spiritual help from Him. Even Psalm 1 does this. We have seen that Psalm 1 uplifts the law instead of Christ, but we should not condemn Psalm 1 to the extent that we give it up. That is wrong. We have to love every psalm because every psalm as the Word of God is eatable (Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4). If you are weak or down, you can read one psalm a number of times with some amount of prayer. Then you will be nourished. Every psalm can be a spiritual supply to us.

But often we receive this spiritual supply in a wrong way. Eating is not that simple. We need the proper groceries and the proper way to cook them. This is why we need to enter into the right way to understand all of the psalms one by one. My burden is mainly to show us that the book of Psalms, in the proper understanding, is centered on Christ. The Psalms are fully Christ-centered. Christ is not only the centrality but also the universality of the Psalms. I believe that the Lord has given us the proper and particular way to study, to know, and to interpret the Psalms. In this message we want to see that Christ is particularly revealed in Psalm 22.

I. THE HIND OF THE DAWN BEING A TYPE OF CHRIST IN RESURRECTION

The title of Psalm 22 says, "To the choir director: according to the hind of the dawn." This title of the melody of this psalm is very meaningful. The hind of the dawn here refers to the Christ in resurrection. There was such a teaching in the church, in the Body of Christ, in the past. I received this light through Brother Watchman Nee. This title of Psalm 22 shows that it is a psalm concerning Christ in resurrection. Christ is a hind. He is a leaping, jumping, active, living deer. A hind is a fast animal. When a hind runs, it leaps; it jumps. Christ in resurrection is the leaping One (S.S. 2:8-9).

Our going to Russia for the spread of the Lord's recovery has been a "leaping" move. Even a year ago, we did not have the idea to go to Russia. The decision to follow the Lord to "leap" for His move in Russia was on Memorial Day of last year, 1991. This move is surely the move of the Christ in resurrection. Psalm 22 is on Christ as the hind of the dawn, the resurrected Christ in the early morning.

Of course, without death, there is no resurrection. The resurrection follows the crucifixion. The first twenty-one verses of Psalm 22 cover the death of Christ, the crucifixion of Christ, and the last ten verses cover His resurrection. Isaiah 53 is a particular chapter on Christ's death in detail. Psalm 22 is another chapter of the Bible in the Old Testament on the death of Christ which is full of details. We need these two chapters in order to see a thorough, detailed picture of Christ's death.

The subject of Psalm 22 is the Christ who has passed through the redeeming death and entered into the church-producing resurrection. His death is for redeeming, and His resurrection is for producing the church.

II. CHRIST PASSING THROUGH THE REDEEMING DEATH

Verses 1-21 show us Christ passing through the redeeming death.

A. David's Groaning Cry to God

Verses 1b-5 are David's groaning cry to God. David was

complaining to God. He asked God why He had forsaken him, saying that he called out to God, but God did not answer him. Our God is loving and is also very patient with us. David was groaning before God. Have we ever groaned before God? We all may have prayed, but not many of us have groaned before God.

Our God is surely a loving God, but sometimes it seems that He is not so loving. Instead of being promoted, a brother may be laid off. Another brother may not be healed of his illness, even though he has prayed for three months. God surely hears our prayers, but many times He does not answer our prayers which are not according to His desire, His economy, His plan. When our prayer does not work, we have to learn to come to God to complain to Him. We should not be those who merely praise or pray to God. We need to realize that God likes to hear our complaints.

Verse 1 says, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" This word was spoken by David in his suffering. Actually, it became a prophecy concerning Christ in His suffering of His redeeming death. It was quoted by the Lord Jesus while He was suffering the crucifixion (Matt. 27:46).

Verses 2-5 are the continuation of David's groaning prayer, which turned from groaning to praising. After this, Christ continued to speak. Beginning from verse six, the voice changes to another person, to Christ. This is the way the Psalms were written. While David was speaking, eventually Christ came in to speak in his speaking.

B. The Suffering David Typifying Christ Passing through His Death

In Psalm 22 we see the suffering David typifying Christ passing through His death (vv. 1a, 6-21). David and Solomon were both types of Christ. David typifies the suffering Christ, and Solomon typifies the reigning and ruling Christ in His kingship.

1. Through Men's Reproach, Despising, Deriding, Sneering, Head Shaking, and Mocking

The suffering of Christ unto death was through men's

reproach, despising, deriding, sneering, head shaking, and mocking (vv. 6-8; Heb. 13:13b; Isa. 53:3; Luke 23:11; Mark 15:29-32; Matt. 27:39-44). I hope that some, especially the young people, would remember these words which describe the Lord's suffering. Each of them has a particular meaning to describe what the Lord suffered on the cross. We may have never considered the significance of each of these words. This shows that when we read the Bible, we have a tendency to take everything for granted.

The word *reproach* is also used in Hebrews 13:13, which says, "Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach." This indicates that we need to come outside the camp of religion to follow the suffering Jesus. To bear the Lord's reproach is to bear His disgrace or shame. To despise is to look down on with contempt and scorn. To deride is to make fun of or laugh at in contempt. To sneer is to smile or laugh with facial contortions that express scorn or contempt. When Christ was on the cross, the ridiculers also shook, or wagged, their heads (Psa. 22:7b; Matt. 27:39; Mark 15:29), saying, "He committed himself to Jehovah; let Him rescue him" (Psa. 22:8a). To mock is to hold up to scorn or contempt and to imitate or mimic in derision. All these things were suffered by the Lord Jesus Christ while He was nailed on the cross. Groups of people reproached Him, despised Him, derided Him, sneered at Him, shook their heads at Him, and mocked Him.

2. Trusting in God for Deliverance

Psalm 22:9-11 shows that Christ trusted in God for deliverance. While people were mocking Him and deriding Him, He was trusting in God. Deliverance here is resurrection. He intended definitely to die and expected to be delivered from death, that is, to be resurrected from the dead.

3. Through the Suffering of Crucifixion

Psalm 22:12-18 shows how Christ passed through the suffering of crucifixion. The Jewish people did not have the practice of crucifying criminals. This was a practice of the heathen (Ezra 6:11) adopted by the Romans for the execution

of slaves and heinous criminals. As the Lamb of God, Christ was crucified for our redemption (John 1:29; Heb. 9:12).

Years ago, I read an article describing how the children of Israel slew the lamb during the Passover. They took two wooden bars and formed a cross. They tied two legs of the lamb at the foot of the cross and fastened the other outstretched legs to the crossbar. Then they slew the lamb so that all its blood was shed, for they needed all of the blood to sprinkle on their doorframes (Exo. 12:7). The way the Passover lamb was killed is a picture of Christ's crucifixion on the cross as the Lamb of God.

While Christ was being crucified on the cross, many fierce men, signified by mighty bulls, encompassed Him (Psa. 22:12). They opened their mouth at Him like a ravening and roaring lion (v. 13). Evil men, signified by dogs, surrounded Him, and a congregation of evildoers enclosed Him (v. 16a-b).

Psalm 22:16c says that they pierced His hands and feet (Zech. 12:10; John 19:37; Rev. 1:7). Charles Wesley in one of his hymns spoke of the "five bleeding wounds" which Christ received on Calvary (*Hymns*, #300). His two hands, His two feet, and His side (John 19:34) were pierced by the Roman soldiers who executed Him.

They divided His garments to themselves, and for His clothing they cast lots (Psa. 22:18; John 19:23-24). In His crucifixion, the Lord's right to be clothed was stripped from Him, along with His life. They made the Lord Jesus altogether naked in order to have a public, shameful display.

Psalm 22:17b says that they looked, they stared at Him. The evildoers were staring at the Lord Jesus with contempt and hatred while He was on the cross.

On the cross, He was poured out like water (v. 14a). Isaiah 53:12 says that He poured out His soul. We cannot fully realize the tremendous amount of suffering which the Lord experienced on the cross.

Psalm 22:14b says that all His bones were out of joint. This was because He could not hold up the weight of His body hanging on the cross. His bones being out of joint caused Him great agony and pain.

Also, He counted all His bones (v. 17a). His heart was like

wax melted within Him (v. 14c-d). His strength was dried up like a shard (v. 15a; John 19:28), a piece of broken pottery. His tongue was stuck to His jaws (Psa. 22:15b). God had put Him in the dust of death (v. 15c; Phil. 2:8b). He was put to death by God. On the one hand, it was man crucifying Him, killing Him, but eventually it was God who put Him into death. Actually, God killed Jesus. If Jesus had been killed only by man, He could never have been our Redeemer. He would have been merely a martyr. But God judged Him and put Him into death for our redemption (Isa. 53:4, 10).

4. Asking God to Deliver Him from Death

Christ asked God to deliver Him from death (Psa. 22:19-21). Hebrews 5:7 says that Christ cried to God for God's deliverance, that is, for God to raise Him up from the dead.

5. Forsaken by God

Psalm 22:1 shows that on the cross Christ was forsaken by God (v. 1a; Matt. 27:45-46). The beginning of Psalm 22 speaks of this, but in the sequence of events on the cross, Christ cried out "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" at about the ninth hour, or 3:00 P.M. (Matt. 27:46). This was at the end of His crucifixion. Christ was hanging on the cross for six hours, from the third hour, 9:00 A.M. (Mark 15:25), to the ninth hour, 3:00 P.M. In the first three hours, He was persecuted by men for doing God's will; in the last three hours, He was judged by God to accomplish our redemption. It was during the last three hours that God counted Him as our Substitute who suffered for our sin (Isa. 53:10).

Darkness fell over all the land (Matt. 27:45) because our sin and sins and all negative things were being dealt with on the cross. Isaiah 53:6 says that God laid all of our sins upon Christ. He was forsaken by God for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), becoming sin on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21) to be judged by God as our Substitute.

While He was on the earth, God the Father was with Him all the time (John 8:29), but at a certain point in His crucifixion, God left Him. God's leaving Him was economical, not essential. Essentially speaking, God could never leave

Christ. But economically speaking, God did leave Him for a while. Thus, He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

First Peter 3:18 reveals that He was forsaken by God in a vicarious death. This verse says that as the Righteous One, Christ died on behalf of the unrighteous. The modernists say that Christ's death was not for redemption but was merely a martyrdom for the good of the people. This is heresy. John 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." All the sin of the world was laid upon Christ on the cross. He died a vicarious death for us to redeem us from our sins, from God's judgment, and from eternal perdition.

III. CHRIST ENTERING INTO THE CHURCH-PRODUCING RESURRECTION

After passing through His redeeming death, Christ entered into the church-producing resurrection (Psa. 22:22-31).

A. In Resurrection, Christ Calling His Disciples His Brothers

It was in His resurrection that Christ called His disciples His brothers. Psalm 22:22 says, "I will declare Your name to my brothers; / In the midst of the assembly I will praise You." In this verse "I" is the resurrected Christ who declares the Father's name to His brothers. If He had remained in death, He could not have declared God the Father's name to His brothers.

Christ was on the earth with His disciples for the three and a half years of His earthly ministry, but He never called them His brothers until the morning of the day He resurrected. On that day, the Lord told 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). This means that the disciples became God's sons in Christ's resurrection. Before His resurrection the disciples were not His brothers because they had not been regenerated. But when Christ was resurrected, all the believers, including you and me, were resurrected with Him and in Him (Eph. 2:6). Through His resurrection, we were regenerated (1 Pet. 1:3). Resurrection

was a big delivery, a big birth. Acts 13:33 says that resurrection was a birth to Christ. Christ was the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16), but in resurrection He was begotten as the firstborn Son of God with many brothers (Rom. 8:29), many sons of God.

First Peter 1:3 says that through Christ's resurrection, God regenerated all of us believers. Some may think that they were regenerated at a certain point in time a few years ago. But actually we all were regenerated at the same time before we were born. I once read of a certain woman who brought forth seven children in one delivery, but this cannot compare with the great delivery of children through Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of Christ was a delivery of millions of sons of God at the same time. He was the firstborn Son of God in resurrection, and we followed Him to be the many sons of God. On the day of His resurrection, He could say that His Father is our Father because He and we were all born of the same Father. We, His believers, His disciples, became His brothers.

B. His Brothers Constituting the Church

The second half of Psalm 22:22 is very meaningful. It says, "In the midst of the assembly I will praise You." "The assembly" is the church, and "You" is the Father God. At the Lord's table we follow the Lord's pattern in praising the Father. After we remember the Lord by taking the bread and the wine, we follow the Lord to praise the Father, to worship the Father. According to logic, verse 22b should say, "In the midst of *them* I will praise You." But the Lord changed the pronoun *them* to *the assembly*. "My brothers" became the church, the assembly. The Lord's brothers constitute the church (Heb. 2:11-12).

C. Declaring the Father's Name to His Brothers and Praising the Father in the Church

In resurrection Christ declared the Father's name to His brothers and praised the Father in the church. His resurrection is the church-producing resurrection. Hebrews 2:11-12 says, "For both He who sanctifies and those who are being

sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, 'I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You.'" He who sanctifies is Christ, and those who are being sanctified are we believers. We are both of One, that is, out of one Father. Hebrews 2:12 is a quotation of Psalm 22:22.

D. His Church Ushering In His Kingdom for Him to Rule over the Nations

Christ's church ushers in His kingdom for Him to rule over the nations. Psalm 22:27-28 says, "All the ends of the earth / Will remember and return to Jehovah, / And all families of the nations / Will worship before You; / For the kingdom is Jehovah's, / And He rules among the nations." Christ has the kingdom, and He will rule among the nations.

The church ushers in the kingdom. Actually, the church is the reality of the kingdom and a precursor of the manifestation of the kingdom. Today the church is the kingdom. Romans 14:17 says the church life is the kingdom life, the kingdom of God. But this is a precursor of the coming kingdom, just as the tabernacle was a precursor of the temple. Today's church life is a miniature, a precursor, of the coming kingdom of one thousand years. The church is produced by the resurrection of Christ, and the kingdom will be ushered in by the church.

E. Following Christ's Praise to God in the Church, David Advising God's People to Praise Jehovah and All the Earth to Worship Him

Following Christ's praise to God in the church, David advised God's people to praise Jehovah and all the earth to worship Him (Psa. 22:23-26, 29-31). Psalm 22:23 says, "You who fear Jehovah, praise Him! / All you seed of Jacob, glorify Him! / And stand in awe of Him, all you seed of Israel!" This means that Christ advised the Jews to learn of the church. Christ took the lead in praising God in the church, and the church follows Him to praise God. Now the seed of Jacob should follow Christ and the church. Thus far, Israel has not

followed, but when Jesus comes back, all Israel will repent and be saved (Rom. 11:26-27; Zech. 12:10). Then they will join us to praise God. In David's advice at the end of Psalm 22, we see the church as the kingdom and all the people worshipping God and praising the Father.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE ELEVEN

CHRIST AS THE SHEPHERD IN HIS RESURRECTION AND CHRIST AS THE KING IN GOD'S KINGDOM

Scripture Reading: Psa. 23—24

Psalms 22—24 are a group of psalms revealing Christ from His crucifixion to His kingship in the coming age. In Psalm 22 we see Christ's death, His resurrection, and His many brothers produced in His resurrection to form His church. Psalm 23 is concerning Christ as the Shepherd. This Shepherd today is in His resurrection. Psalm 24 is concerning Christ as the coming King in God's kingdom. Thus, in these three psalms, we have Christ crucified, Christ resurrected, Christ producing the church, Christ being the Shepherd and shepherding His flock, the church, and Christ coming back to be the King.

I. CHRIST AS THE SHEPHERD IN HIS RESURRECTION

Psalm 23:1 says, "Jehovah is my Shepherd." Christ is our Shepherd and we are His flock. The church in the Bible is called a flock. In John 10 the Lord said that He was the good Shepherd who would collect the sheep from Israel and from the Gentiles to form them into one flock (vv. 14-16), which is the church (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28).

Jehovah, of course, is the divine God, and we are mere humans. How can God, the divine One, approach us human beings to be our Shepherd? If God would come to us in a direct way, that might frighten us to the uttermost. The Bible tells us that this happened when God appeared to various people (Rev. 1:17; Gen. 17:3; Dan. 8:17; Matt. 17:6). The Bible also tells us that no one can see God (1 Tim. 6:16; John 1:18; Exo. 33:20). How can the divine Triune God be so close to us, just as a shepherd is to his flock? Furthermore, how can

we sinners, the fallen people, be the flock of the divine Shepherd? According to our fallen nature we are snakes, vipers (Matt. 23:33), and "scorpions."

Psalm 23 implies that this Shepherd is the One who became a man, who died for us to redeem us and wash away our sins, and who entered into resurrection to become a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) to regenerate us. As such a One, He can change our nature. Since He has taken these three steps—1) incarnation; 2) crucifixion for redemption; and 3) resurrection for regenerating—He is altogether qualified, equipped, and suitable to be our Shepherd. He is not only God but also a man. He is not only divine but also human. He died for our sins, He was resurrected, and in His resurrection He became a life-giving Spirit.

The Lord Jesus today is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). As the life-giving Spirit, He is our Shepherd inwardly. He is not only with us but also within us. We were snakes and scorpions, but we have been redeemed, we have been washed in His blood, and we have been resurrected (Eph. 2:6) and regenerated. As those who have been redeemed, washed, resurrected, and regenerated, we are the sheep of God's flock, the church. By Jehovah, the Triune God, being incarnated, crucified, and resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit, He is qualified to be our Shepherd. By His redeeming, washing, resurrecting, and regenerating us, we are qualified to be His flock. He is qualified to be our Shepherd, and we are also qualified to be His flock. Psalm 23 is altogether a psalm on Christ as the Shepherd in His resurrection.

We can also see Jehovah as the Triune God in this psalm. Verse 2 says, "He makes me lie down in green pastures." The color green signifies the riches of life. When we see the green trees and pastures, we see the riches of life. If the trees are yellow and dried up and the grass is brown, this indicates death.

The green pastures signify the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus spoke concerning this in John 10. He said that His sheep would hear His voice and follow Him out of the fold to enjoy the green pastures as the flock (vv. 9, 16). In John 10, Christ is the door (v. 9), the Shepherd (v. 11), and the pasture (v. 9).

Christ Himself is our pasture, our nourishment. He is the feeding place for all the sheep. In John 6 Christ said that He is the bread of life (v. 35) to nourish us (v. 57). The "bread" for the sheep is the green pasture, so the green pasture is Christ. Christ can be our green pasture through His incarnation, death, and resurrection. After His incarnation, death, and resurrection, He is growing here as the green pasture for our nourishment.

Psalm 23:2b says that Christ as our Shepherd leads us to waters of rest. The waters of rest are the Spirit. The Spirit is the water, and Christ is the pasture. Verse 5 says, "You anoint my head with oil." Hebrews 1:9 refers to the oil of exultant joy. This oil signifies the Spirit. John 7:39 says that before Christ's resurrection, the Spirit was not yet. This means that the Spirit was not yet consummated. The Spirit of God has been consummated through Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. In Christ's resurrection, the Spirit of God became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). Now He is available to us because He has been consummated. In Psalm 23, the Spirit as typified by the waters and the oil signifies the consummated Spirit after Christ's resurrection.

This psalm also tells us that Christ's shepherding of us is in five stages. The first stage is of the pastures and the waters of rest (v. 2). Pasture and waters are for our nourishment, including cherishing and enjoyment. The second stage is the stage of the paths of righteousness (v. 3). The paths of righteousness indicate our walk. After we enjoy Christ, are filled up with Christ, and are nourished by Christ, we walk on the paths of righteousness. The third stage is the valley of the shadow of death (v. 4). The valley, the shadow, and death are not pleasant. Christ's shepherding leads us through the valley of the shadow of death. The fourth stage is the battlefield (v. 5), where we are fighting against the adversaries. At the battlefield a table, a feast, is spread for us. Finally, the last stage is to dwell in the house of God all the days of our life (v. 6).

I would like us to consider what stage we are in among these five stages of Christ's shepherding. The first stage is the initial stage of enjoyment. This is just like elementary school.

In our educational system there are five stages—elementary, junior high, high school, college, and graduate school. This is comparable to the five stages of Christ's shepherding in Psalm 23. Many of us are in "elementary school" while others are in "high school" in their experience of Christ. A brother who is more mature in the Lord and who has been a seeking Christian for many years may have passed through all five stages of Christ's shepherding. Now in his present experience, he may say that he experiences all five stages at various times.

A. The Initial Stage of the Enjoyment in Green Pastures and at Waters of Rest

The resurrected Christ shepherds us first in the initial stage of enjoyment in green pastures and at waters of rest (Psa. 23:1-2). Because He is our Shepherd, we will lack nothing (Phil. 1:19b). Right after we were saved, we entered into this first stage of enjoyment. In John 21 the Lord Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. When Peter said that he did love the Lord, the Lord charged him to feed His lambs (v. 15). We need to be like nursing mothers to cherish and feed the little ones under our care (1 Thes. 2:7). Right after a child is delivered, a mother feeds the child so he can grow.

In the initial stage of the enjoyment of Christ, the lambs, the infants, feed on Christ as the green pasture (John 10:9). Infants do not have table manners. All the little lambs lie down to eat the pasture without any thought of manners. Christ makes us to lie down, not sit down in a mannerly way, in green pastures. This kind of eating, without the thought for proper manners, is more enjoyable. The little lamb lying down in the pasture and eating the grass does not have to worry about proper table manners. This is just like an infant lying in the bosom of his nursing mother. No table manners are necessary.

We have been feeding the little lambs, the new ones in the Lord, for many years. They do not have any "manners" in their enjoyment of Christ. It seems that they can say everything. A new one may say, "Yes, I have been saved, but I don't feel much that the Lord is so good." This is not polite.

We may be feeding this new one, but he is without "manners." This is because he is a lamb who is "lying down," not "sitting," to enjoy the Lord as the green pastures.

He also leads us to waters of rest (Psa. 23:2b; 1 Cor. 12:13b). The green pastures are Christ, and the waters of rest are the Spirit. The Spirit is the restful waters. When we go to take care of the new ones, we must not only feed them with Christ but also help them to drink of the Spirit. We must help them to call on the name of the Lord and to pray. This is to help them to drink the Spirit by exercising their spirit.

In partaking of a meal, drinking should always go along with eating. When I eat a meal I usually have two glasses of water. Then I have a comfortable and restful time of eating. The waters we drink are very restful. If someone served us food without anything to drink, this would not be so pleasant or restful. We would not have a comfortable feeling. This is why we need Christ as the pasture and the Spirit as the waters of rest. Actually, the pastures and the waters refer to the same person. In one aspect, He is our pasture, our food, to feed us. In another aspect, He is the life-giving Spirit as waters to bring us the proper rest. Both the pastures and the waters are the resurrected pneumatic Christ as the life-giving Spirit.

B. The Second Stage of Revival and Transformation on the Paths of Righteousness

Psalm 23:3 says, "He restores my soul; / He guides me on the paths of righteousness / For His name's sake." This is the second stage of revival and transformation on the paths of righteousness. To restore our soul is to revive us. Restoring also includes renewing and transforming. This corresponds with the New Testament teaching in Romans 12:2 which says that we need to be transformed by the renewing of the mind, which is the leading part of our soul. Christ in His shepherding restores—revives and transforms—our soul.

He restores us—revives and transforms us—in our soul to make us take His way, to walk on the paths of righteousness. Both the paths and righteousness are Christ. The resurrected

Christ today is our paths. In order to be a proper sister or a proper brother, we need Christ as our paths, as our way. A sister who does not behave and walk as a female does not have Christ as her paths. A brother who acts foolishly does not have Christ as his paths. Some brothers need a particular path to be an elder. Others need a path to be a co-worker. We also need a path to act as Christians and another path to work in God's economy. We need many paths, the paths of righteousness, in our Christian life and work.

John 7 says that when we drink of the life-giving Spirit as the living water, we will flow out, not just one river but many rivers (v. 38). There is a river of the proper humanity, a river of kindness, a river of love, a river of patience, etc. We need many rivers. In the same way, we need a path of humility, a path of loving, a path of patience, etc. These are the paths of righteousness.

Righteousness is to be right with people before God according to His righteous and strict requirements. We must admit that we are short of the paths to be right. We have to take the paths of righteousness by being restored—revived and transformed—in our soul, which comprises our mind, our emotion, and our will. We must be proper and balanced in our mind, our emotion, and our will. Otherwise, we cannot be righteous; we cannot be right with man and with God.

Christ shepherds us on the paths of righteousness. A shepherd has a staff to guide and instruct the sheep. Sheep have a tendency to go astray. The shepherd uses his staff to correct the sheep and keep them on the right way with the flock. Quite often our behavior goes astray, so we need Christ's correction.

To be a lady or a gentleman may be difficult, but to be a Christian is much more difficult. Christians should be the highest class of people. Sometimes the sisters do not cut their hair properly, so their hair is not right. If we do not buy the proper pair of shoes befitting a Christian, this shows that we are wrong in our person. We need to be right in everything. The brothers need to be right in the way that they cut their hair and in the kind of necktie they wear.

We have to be right not only ethically, morally, but also

materially. Some young brothers who came into the church life in Los Angeles in the late sixties dressed in a wild way. After being in the church life for a period of time, however, the way in which they dressed became proper, and their long hair and beards were cut. One brother came to the meeting and sat on the front row with his bare feet. Within a short period of time, this brother began to wear shoes and later he wore shoes and socks. This was evidence of the Lord's transforming work from within him. These young people changed without any outward correction or adjustment from others.

This shows us that we have to be right not only ethically, morally, but also physically, materially. We Christians are high-class people. In order to minister the Word, the inner law of life requires me to dress in a proper way. Then I appear as a very ordinary, proper person. We all have to be under the Lord's shepherding in all that we do. His shepherding is a kind of balancing, correcting, and adjusting.

He guides us (to walk according to the spirit) on the paths of righteousness (to fulfill the requirement of righteousness—Rom. 8:4). Righteousness can be fulfilled only by those who walk according to their spirit. We have three parts—body, soul, and spirit (1 Thes. 5:23). We should not do things according to our body, because it is full of lusts. We should not do things according to our soul, because it is full of opinions. Instead, we should do things according to our spirit. When we walk according to the spirit, we fulfill the righteous requirement of the law.

Christ as our Shepherd leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake—in the person of the resurrected pneumatic Christ. Matthew 28:19 says that we are to baptize people into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The name indicates the person. For His name's sake is for His person's sake. Today Jesus Christ as a living Person is the pneumatic Christ in His resurrection. He is the life-giving Spirit. He leads us inwardly to walk in the paths of righteousness in Himself as the Person. He is such a Shepherd in us.

C. The Third Stage of the Experience of the Presence of the Resurrected Pneumatic Christ through the Valley of the Shadow of Death

The third stage is the stage of the experience of the presence of the resurrected pneumatic Christ through the valley of the shadow of death (Psa. 23:4). Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we do not fear evil, for the pneumatic Christ is with us (2 Tim. 4:22). This means that we experience His presence. For Him to be with us is for us to enjoy His presence. His presence is a comfort, a rescue, and a sustaining power to us when we are walking in the valley of the shadow of death.

We human beings cannot avoid having troubles as we live on this earth. A husband's wife who takes care of him and the children may suddenly become so ill that she is unable to walk. Then this brother gets into the valley, which is under a shadow and full of death. Some saints may have children who are crippled. This brings these saints into the valley. A brother may be an elder in a locality, and the Lord may suddenly bring in another elder, with whom it is difficult for this brother to coordinate. This other elder then becomes the valley of the shadow of death to the first elder. He cannot quarrel with this other elder, or he will offend his spirit. He has to keep the one accord with him. Also, his spirit will not allow him to withdraw. He has to stay in the valley to suffer. These are examples of the valley of the shadow of death.

About five years ago, I was put into a valley. In 1987 I was working in Taipei, laboring day and night on the Chinese Recovery Version of the New Testament. Then at the end of 1987, I returned to the United States and realized that there was turmoil present among us. During this rebellious turmoil, I was put into a valley. When we are in the valley, the best way for us to deal with it is to rest. The tests in the valley always tempt us to do something so that we can come out of the valley. But the more we do, the more the valley extends. We just need to be quiet, to rest.

Our resting in the Lord will shorten the valley, reduce the shadow, and remove the death. We should not talk about our

being in the valley. The more we talk, the wider the valley becomes. The best way is for us to forget that we are in the valley, because we have the Lord with us. We do not fear evil, because He is with us. Second Timothy 4:22 says that the Lord is with our spirit. The Lord is not merely within us in a general way, but He is in our spirit in a particular way. If we have had the proper experience in the valley, we can testify that it was a place for us to enjoy the Lord's presence in such a close way.

In 1943 there was a big revival in the church in Chefoo, my hometown in mainland China. At that time we were under the invasion of the Japanese army. They were wondering how I could draw so many people. They studied me secretly for a few months, and then in May of 1943, they came to get me. They brought me to their military police headquarters, and I was put into prison for thirty days. That was a real valley to me. The Japanese invading army killed thousands of Chinese during the war, so I could have been killed by them at any time. I was under their threatening and torture for two three-hour sessions a day.

One day they put a young Greek man into the prison cell with me. He and I both spoke a little English, so we could communicate with each other. The Japanese did not know this. One day they purposely decided not to give me any food. One of them came to me and, not being able to speak Chinese, he pointed up to the heavens, indicating that I should ask my God to give me food. The young Greek man, however, insisted on sharing his food with me. He and I became intimate friends.

After a few weeks, he was taken away, and I was left alone in my imprisonment. One day when I was alone, as I was praying, I had a deep sense that the Lord was there with me in a special, intimate way. I was in the valley, and the Lord caused me not to fear any evil. Eventually, I was preserved and protected by the Lord from being harmed. After thirty days, the Japanese released me. That was a real experience and enjoyment of the Lord's presence in the deep valley of the shadow of death.

In the valley of the shadow of death, the Lord's rod and

His staff—His protection, His guidance, and His sustenance—comfort us. The rod is for protection. If a wolf comes, the shepherd uses his rod to protect the flock. The staff is for training, for direction, for guidance, and also for sustenance. The Lord has the rod to protect us, and He has the staff to train us, to instruct us, to guide us, and to sustain us. We experience the Lord's protection and guiding in the valley of the shadow of death.

D. The Fourth Stage of the Deeper and Higher Enjoyment of the Resurrected Christ

Now we come to the fourth stage of the deeper and higher enjoyment of the resurrected Christ (Psa. 23:5). The Lord spreads a table—a feast—before us in the presence of our adversaries (1 Cor. 10:21). The Lord's table is a feast. Every Lord's Day when we come to His table to take the feast, it is always in the presence of our adversaries. Every day is a fighting day to us. We Christians have to fight. Otherwise, we will be defeated. There may be adversaries in our business, in our home, and even in the church. On the one hand, we enjoy the feast of the Lord, and on the other hand, we should fight for the victory. If we are defeated during the week, it will be difficult for us to enjoy the Lord's table that much. We need to fight the battle in the Lord all week long before we come to the Lord's table. Then we will be able to have a rich enjoyment of the Lord as our feast at His table.

In the fourth stage of the deeper and higher enjoyment of the resurrected Christ, the Lord anoints our head with oil (of exultant joy—Heb. 1:9); our cup (of blessing—1 Cor. 10:16a) runs over. To anoint the head is to anoint the whole body. Psalm 133 speaks of the ointment upon the head spreading down to the skirts of the garments. No doubt, this is the anointing of the compound, life-giving Spirit in Christ's resurrection. All the riches of Christ's being and doing are compounded together in this anointing compound ointment.

The Bible uses the word *cup* to indicate blessing. The cup of blessing runs over. Psalm 23:5 speaks of the table, the feast, which is Christ with His riches for our enjoyment. Then there is the anointing oil, which is the Spirit. Then there is

the cup of blessing, which refers to the Father. The Father is the blessing, even the source of blessing. Thus, in verse five there is the Triune God—the Son as the feast, the Spirit as the anointing oil, and the Father as the source of blessing.

E. The Fifth Stage of the Lifelong Enjoyment of the Divine Goodness and Kindness in the House of Jehovah

Psalm 23:6 speaks of the fifth stage of the lifelong enjoyment of the divine goodness and kindness in the house of Jehovah. Surely goodness and kindness will follow us (the grace of Christ and the love of God will be with us—2 Cor. 13:14) all the days of our life (in the present age). *Goodness* refers to the grace of Christ, *kindness* refers to the love of the Father, and *follow* refers to the fellowship of the Spirit. Second Corinthians 13:14 reveals the move of the Triune God for us to enjoy all His riches. The grace of the Son, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Spirit are with us. This is the fifth stage of our enjoyment of the Triune God in Psalm 23.

Eventually, this enjoyment will usher us into the house of God. We will dwell in the house of Jehovah (the church and the New Jerusalem—1 Tim. 3:15-16; Rev. 21:2-3, 22) for the length of our days (in the present age and in the coming age and in eternity). Our days are not only in the present age but also in the coming age and in eternity. We will live for eternity; our days will be that long. Today we are in the church. If we are overcomers, we will be in the kingdom of one thousand years in the New Jerusalem. Eventually, in eternity we will be in the New Jerusalem with all of the chosen and redeemed saints. God's house is our dwelling place where we enjoy the Triune God—the Son's grace, the Father's love, and the Spirit's fellowship. Today we enjoy the Triune God in the church, and in the future we will enjoy Him in the New Jerusalem.

If we are not in the church, we lose the shepherding of Christ. Outside of the church, without the church, there is no way for Christ to shepherd us. This is because He is the Shepherd of the flock, and the flock is the church. To get out

of the church is to get out of the flock, and the Shepherd is always with the flock.

To be in the church is an enjoyment. Without the church, I would not like to live on this earth. Without the church, I would not have any enjoyment. Many people like sinful and worldly amusements, so they have parties and go to clubs. We do not do this because the church is our "club," the church is our "party," the church is our amusement. The best place for our amusement is the church life. If we decide to stay home in the evening instead of coming to the church meeting, we will suffer loss. To avoid this suffering, we need to come to the church meetings. In the church meetings, in God's house, we can enjoy the divine goodness (the grace of Christ) and the divine kindness (the love of God) following us (in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit) all the days of our life.

We human beings have to be social. If we are socializing in the wrong place, we will have trouble. The best place for us to be social is the church. The church is the proper society. Eventually, the church will consummate in the New Jerusalem where we will meet together for eternity.

II. CHRIST AS THE KING IN GOD'S KINGDOM

Psalm 24 reveals Christ as the King in God's kingdom. This will be in the coming age.

A. The Realization of the Earth and the Fullness Thereof as God's Kingdom

In Psalm 24:1-2 we see the realization of the earth and the fullness thereof, and the world and those who dwell in it, founded by God upon the seas and established by Him upon the streams, as God's kingdom. The thought in these two verses is very good.

B. The Mixtures of David's Concept

In verses 3-6 we again see the mixtures of David's concept. In these verses, his natural concept returns again. David said, "Who may ascend the mountain of Jehovah, / And who may stand in His holy place? / He who has clean hands and a pure heart, / Who has not engaged his soul in falsehood / Or sworn

deceitfully. / He will receive blessing from Jehovah, / And righteousness from the God of his salvation. / This is the generation of those who seek Him; / Those who seek Your face are Jacob." These verses have nothing to do with the kingdom and are absolutely like Psalm 15.

We should not blame David too much for his natural concept because we are the same as he was. We have to remember that David was still living in the flesh. This is why there are two kinds of concepts in the Psalms—the human concept and the divine concept.

C. The Victorious Christ to Be the Coming King in God's Eternal Kingdom

Verses 7-10 are surely a proper continuation of verse 2. These verses show us the victorious Christ as the coming King in God's eternal kingdom. Verse 7 says, "Lift up your heads, O gates; / And be lifted up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in." The gates are of the cities of the nations. The doors are of the houses of the people. The long enduring doors indicate waiting and expecting with long endurance (Phil. 3:20; 1 Cor. 1:7). This indicates that the people of the earth have been waiting and expecting Christ's second coming. In Haggai 2:7 we are told that Christ is the desire of all the nations. All the nations, in a general way, are expecting Christ to come, but Christ would not come that quickly according to our human concept. Thus, we need to wait and expect His coming with long endurance.

Because we must wait for His coming with long endurance, we have a tendency to drop our heads in discouragement. This is why the psalmist says, "Lift up your heads." If we expected someone dear to us to come and he does not come, we would drop our heads. But if we received a phone call from him, telling us that he is coming, we would lift up our heads, that is, we would be encouraged to expect his coming.

We have to lift up our heads, because the King of glory will come in (vv. 7, 9; Luke 21:27; Matt. 25:31). We must get ready to welcome Him. Psalm 24:8 asks, "Who is the King of glory?" The King of glory is "Jehovah strong and mighty! / Jehovah mighty in battle!" Jehovah is Jesus, and Jesus is the

embodiment of the Triune God in resurrection. He is the One who is strong in fighting and victorious.

Verse 9 says, "Lift up your heads, O gates; / And lift up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in." Verse 7 says, "Be lifted up," but verse 9 says, "Lift up." To be lifted up means that we are still weak, needing someone to move us. But to lift up means we have become stronger. We can act to lift up ourselves. The King of glory, whom we welcome, is Jehovah of hosts. *Hosts* means armies. He is Jehovah of the armies. Jehovah is the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Triune God. He is the One in His resurrection coming back to possess the entire earth, to take it as His kingdom. The King of glory is Jehovah of hosts, the consummated Triune God embodied in the victorious and coming Christ (v. 10).

We have seen that Psalm 23 reveals Christ as the Shepherd in His resurrection, and that Psalm 24 reveals Christ as the King in God's kingdom. Hallelujah for the shepherding Christ, and hallelujah for the reigning Christ! Hallelujah for our Christ being our Shepherd today and our King in the future!

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWELVE

THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Psa. 5:7; 11:4; 18:6; 20:2; 23:6; 26:8; 27:4-6; 34:8; 36:7-9

In this message we want to see the revelation of the enjoyment of God in the house of God in Book One of the Psalms, which includes Psalms 1—41. Thus far in our fellowship, we have seen four major stations concerning Christ—Psalms 2, 8, 16, and 22—24. We all need to see the particular aspects of Christ revealed in these psalms. Psalm 2 tells us that Christ is God's anointed One. Psalm 8 reveals Christ as the incarnated and crowned One, the excellent One in all the earth. Psalm 16 reveals Christ in His human living. It shows that Christ lived on this earth as a God-man, died on the cross, resurrected, and then ascended to the right hand of God. Psalm 22 shows us Christ crucified and resurrected to produce His brothers to constitute His Body, the church. Then in resurrection in Psalm 23, He became our Shepherd, shepherding us through five stages of enjoyment. Eventually, He will come back to be the King of glory, as revealed in Psalm 24. These psalms present us a completed Christ.

After these first four stations concerning Christ in the Psalms, Psalms 25—41 follow as a group of psalms showing us the mixed expressions in the psalmist's sentiment in his enjoyment of God in God's house. In these seventeen psalms, the main point, the major point, the crucial point, is the enjoyment of God in the house of God.

We have to realize that God is located! On the one hand, He is not a wandering God, but on the other hand, He is omnipresent. He is everywhere. Thus, He is the universal God, yet the universal God today is located! The house in which we live has an address, which indicates that we are

located. People can write us letters if they know our street address and the city in which we live. Because we are located, people can contact us. Today our God is located. He has an address, and we can contact Him. In Psalms 25—41 we can see the location of God. This location is also mentioned in the foregoing psalms. The universal God is located in His house, His dwelling place.

I. THE REVELATION OF THE PSALMS BEGINNING WITH THE PSALMIST STRESSING THE LAW AND WITH THE SPIRIT TURNING THE PSALMIST TO CHRIST

The revelation of the Psalms begins with the psalmist stressing the law and with the Spirit turning the psalmist to Christ (Psa. 1—2). When the psalmist began in Psalm 1 by stressing the law, he was going in the wrong direction. In the first psalm, the psalmist seeking after God was driving on the wrong highway, so the Spirit came in to turn him to the right way.

In Psalm 2 the psalmist began to enjoy Christ—to take refuge in this Christ and to kiss this Christ (v. 12). The highest and best enjoyment of human life is kissing. When a child is born, the parents and grandparents enjoy kissing this child. If a person had no one whom he could kiss, he would surely be one of the most miserable people on earth. Psalm 2:12 commands us to "kiss the Son." Kissing Christ is the enjoyment of Christ.

Some may wonder where the word *enjoyment* is in the Bible concerning our relationship with Christ. Although this word is not in the Bible, the fact of the enjoyment of Christ is there. It is the same with the words *trinity* and *triune*. Although these words are not in the Bible, the early church fathers discovered the fact in the Bible that our God is triune, that He is the Divine Trinity. In like manner, the word *enjoyment* is not found in the Scriptures, but the fact is there. In Psalm 2 we are told to kiss the Son. *The Son* is a pleasant title. Kissing the Son is enjoying the Son.

The enjoyment of Christ in the Psalms begins with kissing the Son in Psalm 2. This enjoyment continues in Psalm 8, in which the psalmist declares, "How excellent is Your name /

In all the earth!" (vv. 1, 9). Psalm 16 is also full of enjoyment. Verse 11 of this psalm says, "You will make known to Me the path of life; / In Your presence is fullness of joy; / In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." Psalm 22 gives us a very vivid picture of Christ's death on the cross. It also shows us His church-producing resurrection (v. 22). In Christ's resurrection His God is our God, His Father is our Father (John 20:17), and we are His brothers. The apostle Paul quoted Psalm 22:22 in Hebrews 2:12, pointing out that the Lord's brothers are the church.

Psalm 23 is full of the enjoyment of Christ as our Shepherd. Many Christians love Psalm 23, but not many have the realization that in this psalm they need to kiss Christ as the Shepherd. We saw in the previous message that Christ as the Shepherd leads us through five stages of enjoyment. The first stage is that of the green pastures and the waters of rest (v. 2). The second stage is the paths of righteousness (v. 3), and the third stage is the experience of Christ's presence through the valley of the shadow of death (v. 4). The fourth stage is the deeper and higher enjoyment of the resurrected Christ, in which we enjoy the Lord's table in the presence of our adversaries (v. 5). This implies that we are enjoying the Lord on the battlefield. The fifth and final stage is the lifelong enjoyment of the divine goodness and kindness in the house of Jehovah (v. 6). Psalm 24 goes on to show that the victorious Christ as the King of glory is coming to reign as the King in God's kingdom. All these points in the Psalms indicate that Christ is enjoyable.

II. THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST LEADING THE PSALMIST TO THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

The enjoyment of Christ leads the psalmist to another state of enjoyment—the enjoyment of God in the house of God (Psa. 25—41). God Himself is enjoyable, and His dwelling place is also enjoyable. Psalm 27:4 says, "One thing I have asked from Jehovah; / That do I seek: / To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the loveliness of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple." The one thing that David asked from God and sought was to dwell in the house

of God to behold His beauty. Psalm 27:4 shows us that our God is a lovable person with a lovely dwelling. Psalm 36 also tells us that we can be abundantly satisfied with the fatness, the abundance, of God's house (v. 8).

A. The Universal God Being Located in His House—His Dwelling Place

The universal God is located in His house—His dwelling place. The Scriptures reveal that God is located! Outside of Christ, we cannot find God (Col. 2:9). Christ is God's location, and the address of God is just one word—*Christ*. Christ is the street address and the city of God. If we say, "O God, where are You?" He will say, "I am in Christ." If we come to Christ, we will meet God. Whenever we call, "Lord Jesus," we have the sensation that God is present with us.

The revelation of God's house, His dwelling place, is not that simple. In the Old Testament time, God had His residence in the heavens (1 Kings 8:30b, 39a, 43a), and He also had a "retreat place" on Mount Zion in the center of Jerusalem in Palestine (Psa. 76:2b; 135:21; Isa. 8:18). In the center of Jerusalem, there was a temple, which could be considered as God's retreat place. A number of rich people have a residence and a retreat place. The residence is quite common, whereas the retreat place is very particular. If the weather is too hot or too cold, a person will go to his retreat place. The temple on Mount Zion within Jerusalem was God's retreat place.

It seems that our God did not feel satisfied with remaining in the heavens, so He came down to His temple on Mount Zion to have a retreat. He desired to leave the millions of angels in the heavens and come down to earth to stay with human beings for awhile. The end of Exodus tells us that when the tabernacle was raised up, the glory of God filled the tabernacle (40:33-35). Later, when Solomon built the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). God was very happy when the tabernacle and temple were built. When a rich man gets his retreat place prepared, he is happy to go there. This retreat place may be a little smaller than his residence, but that smaller place is more

pleasant to him. God felt pleasant when He came down to stay in the temple in Jerusalem.

1. The Incarnated Christ Being God's Tabernacle and God's Temple

In the Old Testament, both God's residence in the heavens and His retreat place on Mount Zion in Jerusalem were physical. But in the New Testament, God's residence is spiritual. In the New Testament, Christ is the tabernacle of God and the temple of God (John 1:14; 2:21).

2. The Church as the Enlargement of Christ Being God's Enlarged Temple—His Dwelling Place

Christ has been enlarged, and the enlarged Christ is the church as God's enlarged temple. The church as the enlargement of Christ is God's enlarged temple, His dwelling place. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul said that the believers corporately are the temple of God; in Ephesians 2:22 he said that we are being built together into a spiritual dwelling place of God; and in 1 Timothy 3:15 he said that the church is the house of the living God. First, God is in Christ. When we call on the name of Christ, we get God. Furthermore, God is in the church. The church, of course, is not a physical building. We believers are the church.

When we are meeting together, we are the church in practicality, and God is dwelling in and among us. Often when I am in a meeting, I do not want to be dismissed. I am happy and feel so pleasant when I am with the saints in a meeting. When we are at home and not in the meetings, we may not feel that pleasant. There is no comparison between how we feel at home and how we feel in the meetings. Some of the saints have to drive a long distance to get to the meetings. Why do they do this? They are not crazy. They do this because they want to enjoy God in the house of God, the church. God is in Christ and in the church.

Sometimes we have problems and become puzzled, not knowing what to do. We may pray in our desire to know God's will, but it seems that our prayer is to no avail. Then we may come to the church meeting, and in the meeting we receive

the light, and everything becomes clear to us. This is because God is in the church.

3. In the Ultimate Consummation, the New Jerusalem Being God's Redeemed People to Be the Tabernacle to God for Him to Enjoy His Redeemed People, and the Redeeming Triune God to Be the Temple to God's Redeemed People for Them to Enjoy Their Redeeming Triune God in Eternity

In the ultimate consummation, the New Jerusalem will be God's redeemed people to be the tabernacle to God for Him to enjoy His redeemed people, and the redeeming Triune God to be the temple to God's redeemed people for them to enjoy their redeeming Triune God in eternity. Revelation 21:2 and 3 tell us that in eternity future we, God's redeemed people, will be a tabernacle to God for God to enjoy us. Then verse 22 says that the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are the temple. This indicates that the Triune God will be the temple to us for us to enjoy Him as our redeeming Triune God in eternity. Therefore, the New Jerusalem is a mutual dwelling of both God and man for their mutual enjoyment. The New Jerusalem will be a composition of God and of us. To God, we will be the New Jerusalem as the tabernacle for Him to dwell in and enjoy. To us, God will be the New Jerusalem as the temple for us to dwell in and enjoy. The enjoyment in the New Jerusalem is both God's enjoyment and our enjoyment.

We need to see the enjoyment in the New Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem there is a flowing river, which is the river of water of life. This river is bright as crystal (Rev. 22:1). In this crystal clear river, the tree of life grows and produces twelve fruits yearly (v. 2). In the New Jerusalem, there is new fruit every month. The fruits of the tree of life will be the food of God's redeemed for eternity. Eating the fruits of the tree of life will be our enjoyment.

Today God's location is in Christ and in the church. In the coming age and in eternity, God will be located in the New Jerusalem. Do we want to see God, to find God, to meet God, and to visit God? We need to go to Christ, the church,

and the New Jerusalem. To enjoy God in His house means that we must be in Christ, in the church, and eventually in the New Jerusalem. Otherwise, we will miss God.

B. The Psalmist's Initial Experience of the Enjoyment of God's House

At the beginning of the Psalms we see the psalmist's initial experience of the enjoyment of God's house.

1. Worshipping toward God's Holy Temple in Fear of Him

In Psalm 5:7, the psalmist said to God, "I will bow down toward Your holy temple / In fear of You." This was his experience outside of God's house.

2. Entering into God's House in the Abundance of His Lovingkindness

Then the psalmist spoke of entering into God's house in the abundance of His lovingkindness (Psa. 5:7). If someone had the privilege of entering into the temple on Mount Zion, he had to be under the abundance of God's lovingkindness. Actually, to enter into the temple in itself was an enjoyment of the abundance of God's lovingkindness. When we enter into God's house, we might say, "What love, what kindness, and what grace it is for me to be here in God's dwelling!" This is the enjoyment of God in His house.

3. Realizing That God Is in His Holy Temple on His Throne in Heaven

Psalm 11:4 says that God is in His holy temple on His throne in heaven discerning with His eyes and trying the sons of men. He tries the sons of men just as people put gold into the furnace to try it and purify it. The sufferings and trials of mankind are in God's sovereignty to try people. Psalm 11:4 says that His eyelids try the sons of men. When we are gazing at something, we are exercising our eyelids. God's gaze tries the sons of men.

4. Appreciating That God from His Temple Heard His Cry in His Distress

In Psalm 18:6 the psalmist appreciated that God from His temple heard his cry in his distress. It is difficult to say whether the temple here refers to the residence of God in the heavens, or the physical temple on Mount Zion, His retreat place on earth. At any rate, this verse describes the initial, elementary, enjoyment of God related to His house.

5. Blessing Others with God's Sending Them His Help from His Sanctuary and His Strengthening from Zion

The psalmist enjoyed God in His house, so he blessed others with his experience. He blessed others with God's sending them His help from His sanctuary and His strengthening from Zion (Psa. 20:2). The word *Zion* here refers to the temple in Jerusalem. When God came and stayed in His retreat place, the temple on Mount Zion, He sent help and strength to those who trusted in Him.

6. With the Wrong Concept concerning Who May Be in God's Holy Sanctuary on His Holy Mountain

The psalmist as the one who enjoyed God in His temple, in His house, made a big mistake in understanding in Psalm 15:1-5 and Psalm 24:3-6. Both times he asked concerning who could be in God's holy sanctuary on His holy mountain. According to his concept, this one was the perfect man according to the law, who had clean hands and a pure heart. This is a wrong concept. This shows that David was like us in making mistakes.

C. The Psalmist's Improved Experience of the Enjoyment of God's House with the Enjoyment of God

Now we come to the psalmist's improved experience of the enjoyment of God's house with the enjoyment of God. We may illustrate the enjoyment of God in God's house by considering the enjoyment in a wedding room. In traditional Chinese

weddings, a wedding room is decorated and prepared for the bride and groom in order to make that room a very pleasant place. However, that pleasant room without the bride would be vanity. The enjoyment of the wedding room must be with the enjoyment of the bride. In the same way, the enjoyment of God's house must be with the enjoyment of God.

1. Dwelling in the House of God for the Length of His Days

In Psalm 23:6 the psalmist spoke of dwelling in the house of God for the length of his days. We have seen that in Psalm 23 Christ as the Shepherd leads the church as His flock through five stages of enjoyment. Eventually, the sheep enjoy the Triune God as their goodness and kindness. Verse 6 says, "Surely goodness and kindness will follow me / All the days of my life, / And I will dwell in the house of Jehovah / For the length of my days." This includes the coming age, the age of the kingdom, and also eternity, the age of the new heaven and new earth.

2. Loving the Habitation of God's House and the Place Where God's Glory Abides (Is Manifested)

In Psalm 26:8 the psalmist said, "O Jehovah, I love the habitation of Your house, / And the place where Your glory abides." To abide means to remain for manifestation. When the people of Israel raised up the tabernacle and when they built up the temple, the glory of God descended upon the tabernacle and the temple to abide there, to remain there, to be manifested to the people. The psalmist told the Lord that he loved the habitation of His house and the place where His glory abode, remained, to be manifested to His people.

We have to say, "O Lord, I love Your church, and Your church is Your habitation. Your church is the place where Your glory abides to be manifested today." Psalm 84 expresses the psalmist's love for the house of God, which is the kind of love we should have for the church today. We have a hymn in our hymnal based on the psalmist's expression in Psalm 84 of his love for God's dwelling place (see *Hymns*, #851).

3. Seeking to Dwell in the House of God All the Days of His Life

David said that he sought to dwell in the house of God all the days of his life (Psa. 27:4-6).

a. To Behold the Beauty (Loveliness, Pleasantness, Delightfulness) of God

In Psalm 27:4 David said that he desired to behold the beauty of Jehovah in His house. The Hebrew word for *beauty* implies loveliness, pleasantness, and delightfulness. When we are beholding God's beauty, we are in a very pleasant atmosphere. Second Corinthians 3:18 says that we can have an unveiled face to behold the glorious face of the Lord in glory. In our time with the Lord in the morning, it is best to have short prayers with a number of "selahs" so that we can behold the Lord, look at the Lord.

b. To Inquire of God

The psalmist also inquired of God in His temple (Psa. 27:4b). This means that we can check with God about everything in our daily life.

c. To Be Concealed in God's Shelter

In Psalm 27:5 David said, "For He will conceal me in His shelter / In the evil day." God conceals His saints in His shelter in the evil day.

d. To Hide Himself in the Hiding Place of God's Tent

The psalmist also said that God would hide him in the hiding place of God's tent. We need to differentiate between the notions of concealing and hiding. When evils, calamities, are taking place, we can be concealed in God's shelter, and the evils cannot "see" us, cannot affect us. When someone is trying to capture us, there is a hiding place in God's tent where no one can find us. To be concealed is for getting away from the damage of calamities. To hide is for getting away from the ones who want to get us. The house of God is both a shelter and a hiding place.

I can testify that throughout the years, I have been concealed in God's shelter in the evil day and hidden in the hiding place of God's tent. According to my experience, I should have died at least three times. But on the one hand, the Lord concealed me, and on the other hand, the Lord hid me from the ones who were trying to get me.

e. To Be Raised Up and Have His Head Lifted Up by God

David also said that God would raise him up upon a rock and that he would have his head lifted up by God (27:5c, 6a). Most of the time, we drop our heads. We do not have our heads lifted up. When we walk, we mostly walk with our heads down. We need to be raised up and have our heads uplifted. We are earthly people, always looking upon the earth. It seems that we have lost something valuable and that we are looking on the ground for it. But when Abraham heard God's promise in the night, God told him to look toward heaven at the stars. Then God told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars (Gen. 15:5). We need to forget about all of the earthly things. Instead, we need to look up. We need to lift up our heads and say, "Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!" This is a glory to Him.

Psalm 24:7 says, "Lift up your heads, O gates; / And be lifted up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in." The gates are of the cities of the nations. The doors are of the houses of the people. We need to lift up our heads because our King is coming. We lift up our heads when we dwell in Christ and in the church, praising God and enjoying Him. Then we are raised up persons, and we have our heads lifted up by God.

f. To Offer Sacrifices of Shouts of Joy with Singing and Psalming to God

Psalm 27:6b says, "And I will offer in His tent / Sacrifices of shouts of joy: / I will sing and psalm to Jehovah." This all should be experienced by us in the house of God—in Christ and in the church. Surely we will also be like this in the New Jerusalem. We will behold God's beauty in the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will be our shelter for us to be concealed

and our hiding place for us to be hid. We will be raised up with our heads lifted up, praising, singing, psalming, and offering Christ to God. This is the enjoyment of God in the house of God.

4. Lifting Up His Hands unto the Innermost Sanctuary

In Psalm 28:2 the psalmist said that he lifted up his hands unto the innermost sanctuary.

5. Praising God in His Temple by Saying, "Glory"

The psalmist also said that in Jehovah's temple all say, "Glory!" (29:9).

6. Tasting and Seeing That God Is Good

Psalm 34:8 says, "Taste and see that Jehovah is good." I did not see before that this verse is in the portion of the Psalms which reveals the enjoyment of God in God's house. This kind of tasting and seeing must be in the house of God. God is in His house. If we are not in His house, how can we taste Him and see Him? We taste and see that God is good in His house, that is, in Christ, in the church, and eventually in the New Jerusalem.

7. Enjoying the Riches in God's House

Psalm 36:7-9 reveals the psalmist's enjoyment of the riches in God's house.

a. Taking Refuge in the Shadow of God's Wings under His Lovingkindness

The psalmist took refuge in the shadow of God's wings under His lovingkindness (36:7). I experienced taking refuge in the shadow of God's wings in 1938, after Japan had invaded China. I was arrested by the Japanese and placed in prison for one night, and the Lord did a marvelous thing to rescue me. Then five years later, in 1943, they arrested me again and put me into prison for thirty days. When I was in prison at that time, I took refuge in the shadow of God's wings.

b. Saturated with the Fatness (the Abundance, the Riches) of God's House

Psalm 36:8 says that those who enjoy the riches in God's house are saturated with the fatness (the abundance, the riches) of God's house. God's house is full of the riches of God, the fatness. I have been in this house for over sixty years, and I have enjoyed many riches.

c. Drinking of the River of God's Pleasures

Psalm 36:8 also says that we can drink of the river of God's pleasures—not just one kind of pleasure, but many pleasures. In God's house, there is a river. The end of the Bible reveals that there is a river flowing in the New Jerusalem, the holy city, and that river spirals from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the whole city (Rev. 22:1).

d. Sharing of the Fountain of the Life of God

In God's house, we also share of the fountain of the life of God (Psa. 36:9a). Psalm 36 speaks of the river of God's pleasures and of the fountain of life. In the New Jerusalem, the tree of life is growing in the river of water of life. Thus, the fountain of life in Psalm 36 implies the tree of life growing in the river of the life of God.

e. Seeing Light in God's Light

Psalm 36:9b says, "In Your light we see light." Thus, in the house of God, we enjoy the river of life, the tree of life, and the light of life. These three things are strongly stressed in the New Jerusalem. Revelation 21 and 22 reveal that the light of the New Jerusalem is God in Christ. Christ is the lamp (Rev. 21:23), and God is the light in the lamp (22:5). The lamp with the light is in the New Jerusalem. This shows us again that God is located. God is located in Christ, and Christ is located in the New Jerusalem, where the Triune God will be the light. In that light, we see light.

It is amazing that in the ancient time, the psalmist, David, could utter such wonderful things in Psalm 36 according to the revelation of the Spirit, not according to his human,

natural concept. Psalm 36 reveals the fatness for us to be saturated, the river of life for us to drink, the tree of life for us to share, and the light of life for our living and walking.

This is the enjoyment of God in His house, which is Christ, the church, and the New Jerusalem. Our God is located in these three persons: in Christ, in the church as a corporate person, and in the New Jerusalem as a corporate person. In these three persons, we can enjoy the located God as the fatness to saturate us, the river of life to quench our thirst, to satisfy us; the tree of life to feed us; and the light of life to enlighten us.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THIRTEEN

THE MIXED EXPRESSIONS OF THE PSALMIST'S SENTIMENT IN HIS ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN GOD'S HOUSE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 25—27

Thus far, we have seen four stations concerning Christ in the Psalms. These four stations are Psalm 2, Psalm 8, Psalm 16, and Psalms 22—24. Now we have come to the final part of Book One of the Psalms, Psalms 25—41. The general title of Psalms 25—41 is "The Mixed Expressions of the Psalmist's Sentiment in His Enjoyment of God in God's House." We need to consider the meaning of the word *sentiment*. A person's sentiment is the condition of his inward situation. When David was writing these psalms, there was a certain inward situation with him. He wrote these psalms according to an "inward scenery."

David was not a superficial, shallow person. He was extremely thoughtful. When he was writing these psalms, there was much feeling, thought, and consideration within him. Psalms 25—41 are David's mixed expressions of his inward sentiment, his inward situation, his inward scenery, in his enjoyment of God in God's house. Expressions are outward; sentiment is inward. In David's enjoyment of God in God's house, he had many inward feelings and thoughts, so he expressed them.

These seventeen psalms contain many mixed expressions. Some are spiritual, some are divine, some are very natural, and some should be condemned. Some of his expressions should be put under our feet, whereas others should be

uplifted to the uttermost. The expressions in these psalms are either divine, good, or bad. We need the proper discernment concerning whether these expressions belong to the tree of life or to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

I. IN SEEKING GOD'S GUIDANCE AND TEACHING IN HIS WAYS AND PATHS

In Psalm 25, David expressed his sentiment in seeking God's guidance and teaching in His ways and paths. A way is a main road, and a path is a lane or a trail, a small road. In the divine things of God, in His divine revelation, there are ways, main roads, and there are paths. We need to seek God's guidance and teaching in His ways and in His paths.

A. Begging God Not to Let Him Be Put to Shame and Not to Let His Enemies Exult over Him, but to Let the Treacherous Ones Be Ashamed because of His Lifting Up His Soul to God, His Trusting (Confiding) in God, and His Waiting on God

David begged God not to let him be put to shame and not to let his enemies exult over him. To exult is to rejoice greatly in a jubilant way. David also wanted the treacherous ones to be ashamed because of his lifting up his soul to God, his trusting (confiding) in God, and his waiting on God (vv. 1-3). David's soul was down, so he lifted his soul upward to God. That means he looked to God.

David's begging God not to let him be put to shame and not to let his enemies exult over him belongs to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, not to the tree of life. His asking God to let the treacherous ones be ashamed also belongs to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now we need to consider David's lifting up his soul to God, his trusting in God, and his waiting on God according to the context of Psalm 25. Does this belong to the tree of life or to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? We cannot answer this question in a definite way because David sought God according to and in the age of the old covenant under the law. Today we are in the new covenant under grace.

In the old covenant age, David's lifting up his soul to God, trusting in God, and waiting on God were very good, but they are not up to the standard of the new covenant. The standard of the new covenant is much higher than that of the old covenant.

B. Asking God, as the God of His Salvation, to Teach and Guide Him through His Compassions and Acts of Kindness

David also asked God, as the God of his salvation, to teach and guide him through His compassions and acts of kindness (vv. 4-6).

C. Asking God Not to Remember but to Forgive His Sins, Transgressions, and Great Iniquity

David asked God not to remember but to forgive his sins, transgressions, and great iniquity (vv. 7, 11, 18b). This surely belongs to the tree of life because at the beginning of the New Testament there was a man telling people to repent (Matt. 3:1-2). The way for us to enter into the New Testament age is by our confession of sins plus God's forgiveness of our sins. This is the threshold of the New Testament age. We confessed and God forgave; then we entered into the New Testament age.

D. Being Assured That God, Being Good and Upright, Instructs Sinners concerning the Way

David was assured that God, being good and upright, instructs sinners concerning the way (Psa. 25:8). David does not say what "the way" is. I believe that this refers to God's instructing sinners concerning the way of confessing their sins and concerning the way of God's forgiveness. Be assured that God, being good and upright, instructs us sinners concerning how to confess and how to receive His forgiveness.

David also said that God guides and teaches the lowly His way in justice and treats those who observe His covenant and testimonies in lovingkindness and truth (vv. 9-10). The word *testimonies* in the Psalms refers to the law with the Ten

Commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances. In addition to the Ten Commandments, the law of Moses has many statutes. Then when the statutes are accompanied by judgments, they become ordinances. Ordinances are statutes with judgments. These are the three categories of the law—the Ten Commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances. In total, the law is God's testimony. In David's expressions we can see that he was in the sphere, the atmosphere, and even the element of the law, because he was born and living in the age of the law.

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus did not teach people to keep the Old Testament law. According to the teaching of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5—7, His inner law, the law of the kingdom of the heavens, is much higher and much deeper than the Ten Commandments. The law of the old covenant deals with the act of murder (Matt. 5:21), but the new law of the kingdom deals with anger, the motive of murder (v. 22). Anger produces murder, so in the New Testament, anger is equal to murder.

David goes on to say that God instructs the man who fears Him concerning the way that he should choose (Psa. 25:12). If you are such a person, David says that you will be one whose soul will dwell in prosperity and whose seed will possess the land (v. 13). This concept is according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. To follow the Lord in the New Testament, we must forsake everything. Did the apostle Paul enjoy any kind of outward prosperity? He did not even have a family. He forsook all and lost everything in his pursuit of Christ.

David also said that God makes known to those who fear Him His intimate counsel and His covenant. Verse 14 says, "The intimate counsel of Jehovah belongs to those who fear Him, / And His covenant will He make known to them." David put the covenant, the law, together with God's intimate counsel. This is a mixed expression.

I would like us to consider whether we have ever experienced God's intimate counsel. Many Christians love the Psalms because it is filled with sweet terms such as *intimate counsel*. I experienced God's intimate counsel in a very real

way when I was imprisoned by the Japanese invading army about fifty years ago in mainland China. The Japanese military police put me into prison twice, the second time for thirty days. I passed through many sufferings during that time, but God preserved me. Furthermore, through a dream God gave me the assurance that my life would be preserved. Even today this dream is still being fulfilled. The Lord also gave me other dreams during this period of imprisonment. All of these dreams were the very intimate counsel of God to me in my time of suffering. In one sense, I was suffering in prison, but the Lord was within me in an intimate way to give me His intimate counsel. I can also testify that I have enjoyed God's intimate counsel throughout the many years of my Christian life.

David speaks of God's intimate counsel, but he mixes this up with the old covenant, the law. The divine concept according to the tree of life and the human concept according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are seen in David's mixed expressions.

E. Turning His Eyes Continually to God

David said that he turned his eyes continually to God that God might bring his feet out of the net and would turn toward him, be gracious to him, relieve the troubles of his heart, bring him out of his distresses, and look on his affliction and suffering (vv. 15-18a). There is also a mixture here of the divine concept according to the tree of life and the human concept according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

F. Asking God to Look on His Many Enemies, Who Hate Him with a Violent Hatred

David asked God to look on his many enemies, who hated him with a violent hatred (v. 19). This belongs to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Surely David returned hatred to his enemies. This is completely against the principle of the New Testament, which tells us to love our enemies and pray for them (Matt. 5:43-44).

David also asked God to deliver him by keeping his soul

and not letting him be put to shame, for he took refuge in God (Psa. 25:20). Then he asked God to preserve him, not because of God's redemption and compassions but because of his integrity and uprightness, for he waited on God (v. 21). He said that he walked in integrity, walked in uprightness, and waited on God. This is also a mixed expression. During his age, there was nothing wrong with waiting on God, but for him to ask God to preserve him because of his integrity is according to the human concept. *Integrity* means absolute purity plus absolute perfection. David surely was not absolutely pure, perfect, or upright. He should not have asked God to preserve him because of his integrity and uprightness. This kind of thought belongs with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

G. Asking God to Redeem Israel out of All His Troubles

In verse 22 David asked God to redeem Israel out of all his troubles.

II. IN ASKING GOD TO JUDGE HIM, EXAMINE HIM, TRY HIM, AND TEST HIM

Psalm 26 reveals the mixed expressions of David's sentiment in his asking God to judge him, examine him, try him, and test him. Asking God to examine us, is like asking someone to come and examine a corpse. What is within us worthwhile for God to examine? We are like a corpse full of rottenness, corruption, and filthiness. But many readers of the Psalms love David's expressions in asking God to judge him, examine him, try him, and test him. The New Testament term is this—"I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20a). This means that we have been terminated. In this sense we are a corpse, unworthy of any kind of examination. Who has the boldness to ask God to come and examine him? I dare not do this.

When I was imprisoned by the invading Japanese army, I did not ask God, as David did, to judge me to see that I had walked in integrity or to examine me because I conducted

myself in His truth (Psa. 26:1-3). Instead, I confessed my sins, shortcomings, wrongdoings, and defects to Him every day. We should tell the Lord, "Lord, I am good for nothing but death. But thank You that You have crucified me on the cross, and in baptism I have been buried. Now it should not be I who live, but You who live in me." What a great difference there is between this expression according to the revelation of the New Testament and David's expressions in Psalm 26!

Who dares to pray, "God, come and judge me, examine me, try me, and test me"? Are we worthy for God to try us? Within us are defects, shortcomings, wrongdoings, offenses, transgressions, trespasses, evils, iniquity, sin, sins, and defilement. Many times we are not right in our inward attitude toward others. For this reason, each day I have to make confession to the Lord. Even before I speak in the meeting, I frequently pray, "Lord, forgive us and cleanse us with Your precious blood." If I do not confess my sins and my defilement, I cannot have a pure conscience with a strong spirit to speak for the Lord.

A. Standing on His Walk in Integrity and in Truth to Be in the Favor of God's Lovingkindness

David was standing on his walk in integrity and in truth to be in the favor of God's lovingkindness (Psa. 26:1, 3, 11a). This concept belongs to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

B. Standing on His Not Being in Company with the Wicked

David stood on his not being in company with the wicked (vv. 4-5, 9-10). In Psalm 26 David spoke of his adversaries within and his enemies without. He felt that he was holy, separated, and that they were wicked. In the eyes of God, however, he and his adversaries and enemies were the same. What is better about us than others? All men are sinful.

We need to be delivered from our human concept and be filled with the divine concept of the New Testament. According to the divine concept, we have been crucified and buried with Christ (Gal. 2:20a; Rom. 6:4). Now it should not be we

who live but Christ who lives in us. This is according to the tree of life.

C. Washing His Hands in Innocence to Go around God's Altar, Giving Thanks to God and Telling Out His Wonderful Deeds

David said that he washed his hands in innocence to go around God's altar (Psa. 26:6). As he went around the altar, he made himself heard with the voice of thanksgiving and the telling out of God's wonderful deeds (v. 7). David felt that he was innocent and clean. This is a wrong concept. I respect David very much, and I believe that he was a great man in the hand of God. He was very spiritual in a sense, but not in all senses. We can see that many times he was not that much up to the standard of God's economy.

The standard of the law is not the standard of God's economy. The standard of God's economy is the standard of the New Testament. God's economy is not for making us a good man but a God-man. Regardless of how good a person is, as long as he is not a God-man, he is not up to the standard of God's economy. Regretfully, however, nearly all the Christian readers of the Psalms keep the standard of being a good man. They have not seen the standard of being a God-man. God wants us to be a God-man, not merely a good man. We should have only one *o* as in *God*, not two *o*'s as in *good*.

D. Walking in His Integrity and Asking God to Redeem Him and Be Gracious to Him

David indicated that God should redeem him and be gracious to him because of his integrity (v. 11). This is an insult to God. If we are walking in integrity, being absolutely pure and absolutely perfect, we do not need redemption. God would surely not redeem us because of our integrity. Instead, a man should pray, "O God, redeem me because I am a great sinner." Paul said that Christ came into the world to save sinners and that he was the foremost sinner among all the sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). The proper prayer is: "Lord Jesus, I need Your redemption because I am a sinful person."

This is the right attitude. Surely this is according to the tree of life.

In verse 12 David said, "My foot stands on level ground; / In the assemblies I will bless Jehovah." To say that we walk in our integrity and that our foot stands on level ground is being too boastful and proud.

III. IN TRUSTING IN GOD FOR HIS PROTECTION AND DELIVERANCE FROM HIS ENEMIES

Psalm 27 is the mixed expressions of David's sentiment in his trusting in God for His protection and deliverance from his enemies. He spoke much in this psalm about his enemies, and he believed that he would be delivered because he trusted in God.

A. Taking God as His Light, His Salvation, and the Strength and Stronghold of His Life, So That He Does Not Dread His Adversaries and Enemies

David took God as his light, as his salvation, and the strength and stronghold of his life, so that he would not dread his adversaries and enemies (vv. 1-3). The thought in these verses belongs to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In them we again see David's pride.

B. Seeking the Face of God and Asking God Not to Abandon or Forsake Him

David also said that he sought the face of God and asked God, the God of his salvation, not to abandon or forsake him, but to take him up more than his father and his mother (vv. 7-10).

C. Asking God to Teach Him His Way and Lead Him on a Level Path because of His Enemies Who Lie in Wait for Him

David asked God to teach him His way and lead him on a level path because of his enemies who lay in wait for him, having believed that he would see the goodness of God in the land of the living (vv. 11-13).

We need to see that God did not preserve and deliver David because of his integrity. Instead, God preserved David and delivered him for God's purpose. In the Old Testament economy, God needed a man like David, but David was not a great man of integrity. He was not that pure. God said in 1 Kings 15:5 that David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. David murdered Uriah and robbed him of his wife, Bathsheba. Even the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1 records that David begot a son of the wife of Uriah (v. 6). This is not a nice expression. To say that a man begot a son of someone else's wife is a black spot on his record. This shows that David was not absolutely pure and absolutely perfect. He did not have this qualification, and none among us has this qualification. No one except the Lord Jesus has ever walked in an absolutely pure and perfect way. Eventually, due to David's failure, his family became a corrupted mess. Among his children there was also fornication and murder (2 Sam. 13).

D. Advising and Encouraging Others to Wait on God and to Be Strong and Encouraged in Their Heart

At the end of Psalm 27, David advised and encouraged others to wait on God and to be strong and encouraged in their heart (v. 14). This is good, but it is altogether human activity which is not according to the standard of God's economy. According to Paul's word in Galatians 2:20 and Philippians 1:21a, every one of God's elect should confess, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no more I who live but Christ lives within me. Even now I live not by my faith but by the faith of Jesus Christ. I live by Him as my faith. I am altogether finished. I am nothing but a dead and buried corpse. I do not know what it is to be encouraged and strong. I only know that I have been crucified and that Christ now lives in me. For me to live is Christ." If we Christians had such a view, such a revelation, held within us, our attitude toward and our appreciation of the Psalms would be absolutely different.

The chorus of #539 in *Hymns* says: "O Lord, Thou art the

Spirit! / How dear and near to me! / How I admire Thy marvelous / Availability!" The Lord today is not only approachable but also available. If food is only approachable to us, this is not sufficient. The food has to be available for us to eat so that we can become one with the food. Approachability is not so good as availability. Today in God's New Testament economy, God is not only approachable but also available to us. The Lord said, "I am the bread of life.... he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (John 6:35, 57). To eat is to take Him, the available One, as our food. He also said that we need to drink of Him as the living water (John 4:10, 14). In the book of John, all the items concerning Christ are not just approachable. All of them are available—good for us to enjoy, that is, good for us to eat and drink.

A FURTHER WORD ON THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

Now I would like to say a further word on the enjoyment of God in the house of God as seen in Book One of the Psalms, comprising Psalms 1—41. A number of items of David's enjoyment are good, but many of them are objective and not available. David said that he lifted up his hands unto the innermost sanctuary (Psa. 28:2). This is altogether objective. David also said that those in God's temple all said, "Glory!" (29:9). If God is merely the glory outside of us, He has nothing to do with us. Objective glory does not help us, but our being subjectively mingled with the Triune God works. The chorus of *Hymns*, #1199 says, "Mingle, mingle, hallelujah... Yes, mingling is the way!" In God's New Testament economy, subjective mingling is the way.

In Psalm 36:7-9, David's enjoyment of God in God's house is very subjective. These verses show us the subjective enjoyment of the available riches in God's house. The psalmist said that we could be saturated with the fatness, the abundance, the riches, of God's house (v. 8a). We can be saturated with all the fullness of God within God's house by eating Him. I want to say again that we should pay attention to the revelation in the Gospel of John. In this Gospel, the two crucial words are *eat* and *drink*. As the bread from

heaven, Jesus is eatable. He is also drinkable as the living water. If we drink of the living water, it will become in us a spring of water, gushing up into eternal life. Eating and drinking the Lord to enjoy Him as our spiritual life supply is so crucial, but this is missed in today's Christianity.

In God's house we can drink of the river of God's pleasures (Psa. 36:8b). This is not just one pleasure but many pleasures. We Christians do not need worldly amusements, entertainment, parties, or clubs. Our "club" is the church life. The church is the best club on this earth. We have our pleasures here in the church. Our amusement is the river of God's pleasures. We can see a picture of this flowing river in Genesis 2, and this river, the river of water of life in Revelation 22, will be flowing forever.

Psalm 36:9a says that we can be those sharing of the fountain of the life of God. In the book of Jeremiah, God condemned Israel because Israel forsook Him as the fountain of living waters (2:13). But in God's house we can share of the fountain of the life of God. Eventually, we can see light in God's light (Psa. 36:9b).

In God's house we have the food, the river, the fountain of life, and the light. These four things are altogether not objective. Food is for eating, the river is for drinking, the fountain is for sharing of, and the light is for us to participate in by seeing. What an enjoyment this is! This enjoyment in Psalm 36 is much deeper, much higher, and much more profound than the enjoyment of God's house in Psalm 27. In Psalm 36 everything is available. The food is available, the river is available, the fountain of life is available, and the light is available. We have the availability of the riches in God's house for our enjoyment.

This enjoyment will eventually lead us to the New Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem, we will be saturated with the fruit of the tree of life; we will drink of the river of the water of life; we will share of the fountain of God's life; and we will also see light in God's divine light (Rev. 22:1-2, 5). This is the consummate enjoyment of God in the house of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE FOURTEEN

THE MIXED EXPRESSIONS OF THE PSALMIST'S SENTIMENT IN HIS ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN GOD'S HOUSE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 28—30

In this message we want to see the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in his enjoyment of God in God's house in Psalms 28—30. When we put these three psalms under the "microscope" of God's New Testament economy, it is difficult to find anything in them that is up to the divine standard. The only point that might be worthwhile for us New Testament believers to consider is that David said his heart trusted in God (Psa. 28:7). Of course, when David said this, he did not have the realization that we have today in the New Testament.

It is somewhat easy to understand what is written in many of the psalms. In the New Testament, however, there are sayings which are very mysterious and difficult to understand. The Lord Jesus said, "Abide in Me and I in you" (John 15:4a). This is a very simple word, but who can fully understand it? When I was a young Christian, I tried to find a book to help me understand what it meant to abide in Christ. Eventually, I found a book by Andrew Murray concerning abiding in Christ, but all he said was that consecrating ourselves is to abide in Christ. This book did not help me understand what it means to abide in Christ. The truth concerning abiding in Christ is very mysterious and deep.

There are many things in the New Testament that are

simple in terminology but deep and mysterious in their significance. The New Testament frequently uses the expression *in Christ* or *in the Lord*. When some missionaries translated the Bible into Chinese, they thought that the Chinese would not be able to understand the usage of the preposition *in*. Therefore, they translated "in the Lord" as "trust in the Lord" or "rely upon the Lord." This translation, however, brings in a wrong concept. Noah and his family had to get into the ark in order to be saved by the ark from God's judgment. In order to be saved they could not merely rely upon the ark; they had to be in the ark.

The New Testament terms are deep because the New Testament was written based upon the principle of the New Testament economy, which is the manifestation of God in the flesh. The great mystery of godliness is the manifestation of God in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). No one can fully comprehend this. No one can understand what Paul meant when he said, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20a). Who can understand what Paul meant when he said, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21a)? He also said that he labored more abundantly than all the apostles, yet it was not he but the grace of God which was with him (1 Cor. 15:10). He spoke of the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit being with us all (2 Cor. 13:14). In Philippians he spoke of the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ being our salvation (1:19). We may read these expressions in the Bible, but who can understand them? It is easy for us to understand many of the psalms because they were written according to our human concept. The New Testament, however, was written altogether according to another concept on another "planet." This is why it is so difficult to understand.

The New Testament charges us to believe *into* Christ, the Son. Many will not translate this Greek word as *into,* because they say that this is not good English. They maintain that *into* should be translated as *in*. In other words, we are to believe in Christ. The word *in,* however, should actually be translated as *into.* We do not merely believe in Christ; we believe *into* Christ. To believe *into* Christ is to receive Him

and be united with Him as one. The word *into* conveys this divine revelation.

The writer of a book entitled *Bone of His Bone* quotes Jessie Penn-Lewis as saying that the Greek text of John 3:16 conveys a different meaning from our English versions. It is not he who believes *in* Christ but he who believes *into* Him who shall have eternal life. Then the author goes on to say that the Christian life is not an imitation of Christ but a participation in Christ. To believe into Christ is to be united with Christ as one. This shows that in speaking of the divine things in God's economy, we should not be bound by language. Language should be managed by us to serve our purpose in the culture.

The New Testament says that we should believe *into* Christ. Noah and his family could not have been saved if they had merely relied upon the ark outwardly. They had to enter into the ark. This is a picture of our believing into Christ. We were once outside of Christ. We were born in Adam, but we were outside of Christ. We needed to take a step to get into Him. The first step was our believing into Christ, and the following step was our being baptized into Christ. Through our believing and being baptized, we have been transferred out of Adam into Christ. Now we are in Christ.

This brief fellowship should help us to see the standard of God's New Testament economy in comparison with the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in Psalms 25—41. While the psalmist was enjoying God in God's house, he expressed his sentiment, and his expressions were a mixture. In this message we want to see these mixed expressions in Psalms 28—30.

IV. IN CALLING GOD TO HEAR THE VOICE OF HIS SUPPLICATIONS

Psalm 28 shows us the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in calling God to hear the voice of his supplications.

A. Asking God, His Rock, Not to Be Deaf and Silent to Him When He Cried Out to Him

The psalmist asked God, his rock, not to be deaf and silent

to him when he cried out to Him (vv. 1-2). We cannot say that this belongs to the tree of life, because there is no indication of life here. Is it proper to ask God not to be deaf to us? If we asked someone not to be deaf to us, he might not be happy with us.

We have seen that many portions of the Psalms contain David's words according to his human concept, not God's words according to the divine concept. We believe that all of the Scripture is God's breath and each book of the Bible is God's revelation with every line and word coming from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). Every line and word of the Scripture is inspired by God, but there are many words in the Bible that are not God's words. The Bible even contains the words of Satan. Genesis 3 records the serpent's words to Eve (vv. 1, 4-5). These words are a part of the Bible, but they are Satan's words, not God's words. This shows that although the entire Bible is God-breathed, not all of the words in the Bible are God's words.

B. Asking God Not to Drag Him Away with the Wicked, but to Repay Them according to Their Evildoings

David asked God not to drag him away with the wicked but to repay them according to their evildoings because they did not regard the deeds and the works of God. Then he said that God would tear them down and not rebuild them (vv. 3-5). Surely this speaking is according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As those in the New Testament age, we cannot ask God to repay the wicked ones. In the New Testament, we are charged to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44).

C. Blessing God as His Strength and His Shield

David blessed God as his strength and his shield, for God had heard the voice of his supplications (v. 6). Furthermore, his heart trusted in God and exulted with songs and thanks to Him (v. 7). He was blessing God, considering God as his strength within and also as his shield without.

D. Asking God, as the Strength of His People and the Stronghold of Salvation to His Anointed, to Save His People, Bless His Inheritance, Shepherd Them, and Carry Them Forever

David also asked God, as the strength of His people and as the stronghold of salvation to His anointed, to save His people, bless His inheritance, shepherd them, and carry them forever (vv. 8-9). Psalm 28 does not reveal anything that is up to the standard of God's New Testament economy.

V. IN PRAISING GOD FOR HIS GLORY AND MAJESTY

Psalm 29 reveals the mixed expressions of David's sentiment in his praising God for His glory and majesty.

A. Exhorting the Sons of God, the Mighty One, to Ascribe to God Glory and Strength and Worship Him in Holy Splendor

David exhorted the sons of God, the Mighty One, to ascribe to God glory and strength and worship Him in holy splendor (vv. 1-2).

B. The Powerful and Majestic Voice of God—the Thunder of the God of Glory

In verses 3-9 David speaks of the powerful and majestic voice of God—the thunder of the God of glory. According to David, God's powerful and majestic voice is like thunder. He said that the voice of Jehovah was over the waters (v. 3), breaking the cedars of Lebanon, making them to skip like a calf, like a young wild ox (vv. 5-6). He also said the voice of Jehovah cleaves out flames of fire (v. 7) and shakes the wilderness, even the wilderness of Kadesh (v. 8). Furthermore, according to David, Jehovah's voice causes the hinds to calve and strips the forests bare, and "in His temple all say, Glory!" (v. 9).

As God's people in the New Testament, do we need this kind of prayer and praise to the Lord? We should be able to see that the standard, the level, on which this psalm was written is low. There is no comparison between David's praise

and blessing in this psalm and the utterance in Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1 and 3. The New Testament does not have any prayer or praise according to David's way in Psalm 29. This psalm is too much in the material and physical realm.

C. Admiring God as the One Enthroned at the Flood and Sitting as King Forever

David also admired God as the One enthroned at the Flood and sitting as King forever (v. 10).

D. Blessing the People of God with God's Giving Strength to Them and His Blessing Them in Peace

At the end of Psalm 29, David blessed the people of God with God's giving strength to them and His blessing them in peace (v. 11).

VI. IN HIS SONG AT THE DEDICATION OF THE HOUSE OF GOD

Psalm 30 shows us the mixed expressions of David's sentiment in his song at the dedication of the house of God. The house of God, the temple, was built and dedicated after David's death.

A. Extolling God for His Lifting Him Up over His Enemies, for His Healing, and for His Deliverance of His Soul from Sheol

David extolled God for His lifting him up over his enemies, for His healing, and for His deliverance of his soul from Sheol (vv. 1-3).

B. Exhorting God's Saints to Psalm to Him and Praise His Holy Name

David also exhorted God's saints to psalm to God and to praise God's holy name (v. 4). God's holy name is His memorial. Then he said that God's anger lasts but a moment, but His favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may linger in the evening, but a ringing shout goes up in the morning (v. 5).

C. Prospering and Never Being Shaken

In verse 6 David said, "As for me, I said in my prosperity, / I will never be shaken." Although David said this in Psalm 30, he surely was not prospering when he was being chased by his rebellious son, Absalom. In verse 7 David said that God made his mountain strong. His mountain refers to his empire, his kingdom.

D. Calling Out to God and Making Supplication to Him

David called out to God and made supplication to Him (v. 8). He said that there was no profit to God if he went down into the pit. He also said that there was no praise and no declaring of God's faithfulness from the dust (v. 9). David was calling out to God, making prayers to God, and reminding God that if he died and went into the pit, there would be no praise to God and no declaration of God's faithfulness. For this reason he said that God should keep him alive. According to David's concept, it seemed that God owed him something.

E. Asking God to Hear Him and Be Gracious to Him to Be His Help

David asked God to hear him and be gracious to him to be his help. He also thanked God for turning his mourning into dancing and loosening his sackcloth to gird him with rejoicing, that his glory (spirit) might sing psalms to God without silence and praise God forever (vv. 10-12).

I hope that by reading these psalms we can see that there is no comparison between the Old Testament economy and God's New Testament economy. The Old Testament is the old covenant, and the old covenant was based upon the law. The psalmists were very pious. They loved the law, uplifted the law, and treasured the keeping of the law to the uttermost. Many of the psalms were based upon the principle of keeping the law. The keeping of the law was the basic factor and structure of their composition.

But in Jeremiah 31 God told His fallen, degraded elect, the children of Israel, that He would make another covenant,

a new covenant, which would not be based upon the law of letters, but upon a living law which God would write into their being (vv. 31-34). We are enjoying this new covenant today. The living law, the law of life, being written into the New Testament believers is to have God imparted into them. Thus, God in them is the law of life. In the new covenant, we who were once dead have been enlivened, resurrected from the dead, and regenerated to become a new person. After our regeneration, God continues to renew us, to sanctify us, to transform us, to conform us, and eventually to glorify us at the second coming of Christ.

There is no comparison between the old covenant of the Old Testament and the new covenant of the New Testament. The Psalms, therefore, are full of expressions that are not uttered in the New Testament, especially in the apostle Paul's Epistles. In 1 Corinthians 1:9, Paul said that God called us into the fellowship, the participation, of His Son. We have been called by God to partake of Christ, to enjoy Him. Thus, Christ becomes our life, our nature, and even our person. By God's salvation in the New Testament, we have been made one with Christ. According to the Lord's speaking in John 15, we believers and Christ are one tree. He is the vine tree, and we are the branches. Thus, all of us are one with Him, and we grow together with Him. Christ and we are all one person because He is the Head and we are the Body. The Head and the Body are not separate but are one person. We Christians are one with Christ.

Stanza four of *Hymns*, #152 says:

> What from Thee can separate me?
> Thou wilt love me to the end!
> Oh! Thy love is so prevailing,
> E'en Thyself with me to blend!
> We two one will be for ever;
> I am Thine and Thou art mine!
> This will be my testimony:
> In Thy love we'll ever twine!

This hymn says that the Lord's love has blended us with Him and made us one with Him. This is the highest plane

of love. The real blessing in God's New Testament economy is that Christ has made Himself one with us and has made us one with Him. First Timothy 3:16 speaks of the great mystery of godliness, which is the manifestation of God in the flesh. We are the flesh, yet God made us, the flesh, His expression. The church is the Body of Christ, and the Body of Christ is the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:22b-23). This fullness is Christ's expression. What a wonder it is that God made us men of flesh His expression!

We have to remember that the Word who was God became flesh (John 1:14) and lived in this flesh for thirty-three and a half years. He died in the flesh (1 Pet. 3:18; Col. 1:22). If He had not died in the flesh, we would have no share in His death. Because He died in the flesh, that indicates He died with us (Gal. 2:20a). He died in union with us. We are the flesh, and He became flesh. This is a part of the history of Christ. His history has become our story. God became a man, and by dispensing Himself into us He made us God-men, men who are one with God, having God within us as our life and nature (Col. 3:4a; 2 Pet. 1:4).

I thank God that we live in such an age, the age of the great mystery of godliness, the age of God manifesting Himself in our flesh. In this age we do not need to keep the law. We have Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, and Christ today is realized as the life-giving Spirit, the consummated, compounded Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). Today we are one with this compound Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). Many in today's Christianity still remain in the Old Testament economy. They do not understand the Lord's words in John 14—17, and they do not understand Paul's fourteen Epistles. Furthermore, they do not understand the significance of our being in Christ. We have believed and have been baptized into Christ, and now we are in Him. In Christ everything is okay; outside of Him everything is a mess. We all need to be turned from the human concept of uplifting the law to the divine concept of exalting Christ according to the divine revelation.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE FIFTEEN

THE MIXED EXPRESSIONS OF THE PSALMIST'S SENTIMENT IN HIS ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN GOD'S HOUSE

(3)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 31—33

When we come to the Psalms with a clear view concerning the entire Bible with its principles, we can realize that the book of Psalms bears two burdens. It takes care of two responsibilities. First, it shows us Christ. Second, it shows us Christ in comparison with the law.

Beginning in the book of Genesis, Christ is revealed as the tree of life. One Bible teacher has said that the tree of life is over today, but the tree of life in Genesis 2 is a central item. If the tree of life is taken away from Genesis 2, Genesis 2 means nothing and becomes nothing. It is wrong to say that the tree of life is over today. In Revelation 2:7 the Lord Jesus said that to the overcomer He would give to eat of the tree of life. Jesus came to feed us with Himself as the tree of life. The first responsibility the written word of God bears is to show us Christ.

God's desire in eternity past was not concerning the law. The law came in at Mount Sinai. Mount Sinai is mentioned by Paul in Galatians 4, not in a positive sense but in a negative sense (vv. 24-25). In the eyes of both God and the apostle Paul, Mount Sinai is a very negative term. Sinai produces slaves, and is signified by a concubine, Hagar. The proper wife was Sarah. The concubine was Hagar. Whatever comes out of this concubine is a slave. All the Jews who treasure, uplift, and try to obey the law are slaves under the law.

Besides Mount Sinai there is another mount, Mount Zion. Hebrews 12 says that in the New Testament we have come, not to Mount Sinai but to Mount Zion (v. 22). Here we are not slaves, but we are sons of the free woman. That means we are sons of grace. The grace of God is signified by the free woman, Sarah. The law is signified by a concubine. We are not for the law, but as the sons of the free woman, we are exalting Christ. The first responsibility of the Psalms is to show us Christ.

The second responsibility of the Psalms is to give us a comparison between Christ and the law. In message eight we saw the lines, the principles, and the spirit of the Bible. In the Bible God shows us only two lines. One is the proper line and the other is the negative line. The proper line is of Christ from God, and the negative line is of Satan. This is why there are two trees in Genesis 2, and those two trees signify two sources. The tree of life signifies God as the source of life. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil signifies Satan as the source of death. Then out of these two sources there are two lines. One line is the line of the day, and the other line is the line of the night. The negative line of darkness is the line of satanic chaos. The positive line of the day is the line of the divine economy.

In addition to these two lines, there is also the line of the law. Christ is the main line, and the law is a side line. If you do not handle the side line properly, the side line becomes a part of the negative line, which is the line of chaos, the line of death, the line of the knowledge of good and evil. Since the day the law was given, God's people have very rarely handled the law properly. I believe that Moses knew something about the position of the law because when he became old he wrote Psalm 90. In verse 1 he said, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." According to Moses' realization, God is our dwelling place, and we are living in God. This is absolutely not according to the law.

The Psalms' second responsibility is to show us the difference between Christ and the law. However, most of the readers of the Psalms do not understand this. They think

that everything in the Psalms is positive. But we have seen that many expressions in the Psalms are according to the human concept of uplifting the law, not according to the divine concept of exalting Christ. We saw in the previous message that it is difficult to find anything in Psalms 28—30 that is up to the divine standard of God's New Testament economy.

In this message we want to see the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in Psalms 31—33. Much of David's speaking in these psalms is according to the natural concept. Regretfully, when most readers of the Bible come to the Psalms, they do not see much of Christ. They may see the good points in the Psalms which are according to the human concept. The Psalms exhort and advise us to fear God. Then they tell us to take refuge in God. As persons under all kinds of attack, we need a refuge, a place to hide. We can take refuge in our God. The Psalms also speak of trusting in God, waiting on God, and hoping in God. Then the Psalms speak of praising God, thanking God, and worshipping God. These are the points based upon which all the psalms are composed: to fear God, to take refuge in God, to trust in God, to wait on God, to hope in God, to praise God, to thank God, and to worship God. These are the main points in many of the psalms, especially in Psalms 31—33.

VII. IN EXPERIENCING AND ENJOYING GOD'S SALVATION FROM HIS DISTRESS

Psalm 31 shows us the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in experiencing and enjoying God's salvation from his distress. In Psalm 31 David does not speak of God's salvation from eternal perdition and from God's judgment but of salvation from his distress. In Psalm 31 he lists the items of his distress.

A. Taking Refuge in God as a Rock of Protection and a Fortress to Save Him out of the Net Secretly Laid for Him by His Enemies

David said that he took refuge in God as a rock of protection and a fortress to save him out of the net secretly laid for him by his enemies (vv. 1-4). The Lord Jesus said

that He as the rock is for building the church (Matt. 16:18), but David said that God as the rock was for his protection to save him from his distress. God's desire is to save people mainly from eternal perdition and judgment, not from their distress. Once we are saved from eternal perdition, God wants to continue to be our salvation so that we can live and magnify Christ (Phil. 1:19-21a). Perhaps the wife wants to be saved from her husband's bad temper, and the husband wants to be saved from his wife's disapproval. In other words, they want to be saved from their distress. But God's salvation for the New Testament believers is for them to be sustained and strengthened to live and magnify Christ.

David also exulted in God's kindness that He had not delivered him into the hand of his enemies but had made his feet stand in a place broad and free (vv. 5-8). These expressions indicate that David was too self-centered even in seeking God's salvation.

B. Enumerating to God His Afflictions and Distresses

In verses 9-13 David enumerated to God his afflictions and distresses: "Be gracious to me, O Jehovah, for I am in distress. / My eye is wasted with grief, / Indeed my soul and body" (v. 9). It is very good for David to ask God to be gracious to him, that is, to have grace upon him. This sounds somewhat like the New Testament. David also said that his eye was wasted with grief, even his soul and his body. To be wasted means to be dried up. David said that he had become a dried up person through his grief, which to him was distress.

In verses 10-13 he said, "For my life has been consumed in sorrow, / And my years, in sighing. / My strength fails because of my iniquity, / And my bones have wasted away. / Because of all my adversaries, / I have become a reproach, / And especially so to my neighbors, / And something dreaded to my acquaintances; / Those who see me on the street flee from me. / I am forgotten, like a dead man out of mind; / I am like a destroyed vessel. / For I hear the slander of many; / Terror is on every side. / When they take counsel together against me, / They scheme to take my life." All of these items

in these verses were considered by David as his distresses. David's word concerning others' taking counsel against him and scheming to take his life was actually the experience of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 27:1). In this point, David bore the responsibility to show Jesus to us.

David's distresses included his grief, sorrow, and the reproach of his opposers. We Christians today who follow the Lord also suffer much distress, including persecution. The New Testament, however, shows us that the apostle Paul did not complain about this. In the book of Romans, Paul said that all things worked together for his good that he could be transformed as one of God's many sons into the image of the firstborn Son of God (8:28-29). Paul did not complain about his distress. Instead, he realized that all things worked together for his good that he could be transformed and conformed to the image of Christ.

C. Trusting in God for His Saving and Shining upon Him

David said, "But I trust in You, O Jehovah; / I say, You are my God. / My times are in Your hand" (vv. 14-15a). This is a very good word, but the New Testament revelation is higher than this. David's times were in the hand of God, but our entire being is in Jesus. David's times were in God's hand, but we are now in Christ, the embodiment of God (1 Cor. 1:30a; 2 Cor. 5:17). It is much higher to be in Christ.

Verse 16a says, "Cause Your face to shine upon Your servant." David was seeking God's face to shine upon him. He wanted to be pleasant to God, and he wanted God to be happy with him. This verse is in the context of his desire to be delivered from his enemies and for them to be put to shame (vv. 15b, 17). Thus, the shining which David sought in Psalm 31 is not the kind of shining for which we are seeking. The kind of shining which we need to seek is the shining that exposes us. When we are under God's shining, we will see that we are ugly, not pleasant. When we get into the shining of God, we will prostrate ourselves on the ground to confess.

D. Blessing God and Exhorting His Godly Ones to Love Him and to Be Strong and Encouraged

In verses 21-24 David blessed God and exhorted His godly ones to love God and to be strong and encouraged.

VIII. IN EXPERIENCING GOD'S FORGIVENESS

In Psalm 32 David expressed his sentiment in his experience of God's forgiveness.

A. Experiencing His Confession and God's Forgiveness of Sin

Verses 1-2a say, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; / Whose sin is covered. / Blessed is the man to whom / Jehovah does not impute iniquity." This implies a lot. If there were no Redeemer, how could the righteous God not impute our iniquity to us? If God did this without a Redeemer, God would be unrighteous. God's not imputing our iniquity to us is based upon Christ's redemption.

David said that the blessed man is the one to whom Jehovah does not impute iniquity and "in whose spirit there is no deceit" (v. 2b). On the one hand, David indicated that he had been forgiven of his sins, yet on the other hand, he indicated that in his spirit there was no deceit. This is altogether unscriptural. If there were no deceit within man, he would not be a sinner in need of God's forgiveness. Since you need God's forgiveness, you must realize that you are full of deceit. Who is the one that does not have any deceit in his spirit yet should confess his sins? This is not logical.

Verses 3-4a say, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away / Through my groaning all day long. / For day and night Your hand / Was heavy upon me." David's expression here is good in showing us that God was dealing with him concerning his sins. He continued by saying, "My life sap was dried up / As in the drought of summer. Selah. / I acknowledged my sin to You, / And I did not cover my iniquity. / I said, I will confess my transgressions to Jehovah. / Then You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah" (vv. 4b-5). The iniquity of his sin refers to the effectiveness of sin. God forgave not only our

sin but also the effectiveness of our sin which was deserving of His punishment.

B. Exhorting the Godly Ones to Pray with Confession at a Time When God May Be Found

Verse 6 says, "Because of this let everyone who is godly / Pray to You at a time when You may be found; / Surely when great waters overflow, / They will not reach him." This shows that although David confessed his sin and realized the iniquity of his sin, he considered himself as a godly one. Is he sinful or is he godly? This is a psalm on confession, but in this confession there is self-justification. He confessed his sin, but he also indicated that he did not have any deceit in his spirit, that he was a godly one, and that he was seeking God at the time when God might be found.

In verse 7 David said, "You are my hiding place; / You preserve me from trouble; / You surround me with the ringing shouts of deliverance. Selah."

C. God's Instruction and Teaching

Then God came in to instruct and teach David. Verses 8-10 say, "I will instruct you and teach you concerning the way you should go; / I will counsel you; My eye is upon you. / Do not be like a horse or like a mule, without understanding; / Whose trappings consist of bit and bridle to constrain them, / Else they do not come near you. / Many are the sorrows that the wicked have; / But he who trusts in Jehovah is encompassed by lovingkindness." David said that the wicked have many sorrows, but that the one who trusts in Jehovah is encompassed by lovingkindness. Was David a person with many sorrows, or was he the one trusting in Jehovah? It is difficult to say which category David was in. This shows that his speaking here is according to the natural concept.

Verse 11 says, "Rejoice in Jehovah and exult, O righteous ones; / And give a ringing shout, all you who are upright in heart." Who are the righteous ones and who is upright in heart? We do not have the boldness to say that we are such ones. Thus, this is a psalm with a good beginning but a poor ending. The beginning is confessing, and the ending is

self-justification. Basically speaking, Psalms 31 and 32 show us a person trying to keep the law without Christ.

IX. IN PRAISING AND GIVING THANKS TO GOD

Psalm 33 is the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in praising and giving thanks to God.

A. Encouraging the Righteous to Praise God and Give Thanks to God

The psalmist encouraged the righteous to praise God and give thanks to God (vv. 1-5).

B. Praising God in His Restoring of the Heavens and the Earth

In verses 6-9 the psalmist praised God in His restoring of the heavens and the earth. Verse 9 says, "For He spoke, and it was; / He commanded, and it stood." When God said, "Let there be light," there was light (Gen. 1:3). When God commanded, something came out and stood. This is good, but we need to see that Paul's teaching is not concerning the restoration of the chaotic universe, but of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

We were once dead, but one day the Lord made us alive and raised us from the dead (Eph. 2:1, 5-6). Today we are living in resurrection. We are not restored people but resurrected people! We may be impressed with God's restoring of the heavens and of the earth, but the New Testament is concerning the new creation in resurrection. Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 refers to the resurrection (v. 20). Regardless of how much restoration the heavens and the earth undergo, they are still the old creation, but we are the new creation. We are not merely restored; we are resurrected. There is nothing in the New Testament which asks us to praise God for the restoration of the heavens and the earth. Instead, Paul spoke of his desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10).

I want to point out again that the Psalms show us the inferiority of the law and the superiority of Christ. It is good to praise God for His restoration of the heavens and the

earth, but this is not as high as praising Him for the resurrection of Christ. In His resurrection, Christ raised us from the dead (Eph. 2:6). This is much higher than the restoration of the heavens and the earth.

C. Praising God in His Relationship with the Sons of Men on Earth

In verses 10-15 the psalmist praised God in His relationship with the sons of men on earth.

D. Praising God in His Deliverance and Preservation

The psalmist praised God in His deliverance and preservation, which are stronger than those by a great army, by a mighty man of great strength, and by a horse with its great power (vv. 16-19). He compared God's saving power and God's preserving strength to a great army, a mighty man, and a horse. When I was a young Christian, I felt that this was wonderful, but today I do not feel the same. The New Testament does not compare our God with a horse. This shows again that we should not trust in our natural understanding when we read the Psalms. We need to have a change from our natural concept to the divine concept.

E. Waiting on God as His Help and His Shield, Trusting in His Holy Name, and Having Hoped in Him

At the conclusion of Psalm 33, the psalmist said that he was waiting on God as his help and his shield and trusting in His holy name, having hoped in Him (vv. 20-22).

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE LAW

Now I would like to speak a word concerning the difference between Christ and the law. The difference between Christ and the law is the difference between the Old Testament economy and the New Testament economy. Under the law in the Old Testament, man was always striving to arrive at the standard of the law. Man realized that he was weak and sinful, so he asked for God's mercy, God's lovingkindness, and

he put his trust in God. He also took refuge in God, waited on God, hoped in God, praised God, thanked God, and worshipped God. This was all man's doing because in the Old Testament God was apart from man, and man was apart from God. Man and God were separate.

Then in the New Testament economy, God came into man to become incarnated and be born as a God-man. When Christ lived on this earth, that was God living on this earth in man. Through His redemption, He solved all the problems for man and paved the way so that He could enter into man. In His incarnation He entered into the womb of a virgin, but through His death and resurrection He entered into thousands of men. In order to enter into man, He was resurrected. In resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) and the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29) who brought men into God. In His incarnation He brought God into man; in His resurrection He brought man into God. By this He accomplished the mingling of God and man. He mingled God and man into one.

Now we believers are in Him and He is in us. He and we have become one person. He has the divine life and the divine nature, and so do we. We have the human life and the human nature, and so does He. He has become us, and we have become Him. We need to recognize that we have been crucified with Him. Now it is no more we who live, but it is Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20).

In the New Testament economy, we have to do something, but not the things done by the Old Testament saints. In the New Testament economy, we have to believe into Christ (John 3:16, 36). Then we have to love Him (John 14:21, 23). We also have to live Him that we may magnify Him (Phil. 1:19-21a). In the New Testament, we are not doing something out of ourselves in our natural strength. We are enjoying Him. To believe into Him is to receive Him; to love Him is to enjoy Him; and to live Him is to magnify Him. This is not our doing in ourselves. Whatever we are doing in the New Testament is an enjoyment.

God does not want us to do good. He wants us only to live Christ. To live Christ implies many things. To live Christ

implies being holy and overcoming. To live Christ implies not losing our temper and being enduring and full of patience. We just need to live Christ, and this living implies everything in the Christian life. It implies our faithfulness and our honesty. To live Christ means everything. This is why the New Testament charges us to live Christ that we may magnify Christ. We need to live, move, and walk by the spirit, having our entire being according to the mingled spirit (Rom. 8:4). This is the New Testament economy.

Much of the terminology in the Old Testament psalms is good, but it is good in a natural realm. It has nothing to do with the Spirit. The New Testament is altogether in another field, in another world. It is altogether in the Spirit, who is the consummation of the Triune God. Thus, everything in the New Testament is altogether a matter in the Triune God. Our honesty, faithfulness, patience, endurance, kindness, and everything we are and do involves the Triune God. All of our virtues should be the expression of the Triune God, not of ourselves. The Christian life in the New Testament is not our doing, but is altogether a matter of our living Christ. To live Him in order to magnify Him is to enjoy Him. Thus, every day we should not do anything but enjoy Christ. Christ is our enjoyment.

This thought is in *Hymns*, #499, #501, and #841. These three songs were written absolutely according to the New Testament economy. Hymn #841 is concerning the building up of the church. Many Christians, however, still exalt the law, remaining in the Old Testament economy.

We need to have the proper discernment to see the difference between the Old Testament economy and the New Testament economy. On the one hand, the psalms are lovely because they are the aspiration of the sentiment of the ones who were seeking after God. On the other hand, many portions of the Psalms are not according to the New Testament economy. The New Testament economy includes first, incarnation; second, resurrection; and third, mingling. God came into us and He brought us into Him. He has accomplished a mingling of divinity and humanity. We and He are living as one person in the same one life and with

the same one nature. We should not endeavor to keep the law. Instead, we live only one person—Christ. We live Christ that He may be magnified.

I hope we can see this revelation. When we come to any psalm, we have to weigh it with this scale of God's New Testament economy. Then we can realize what belongs to Mount Sinai and what belongs to Mount Zion. We are here on Mount Zion where we have the church, the Body of Christ, and God's economy for God's testimony.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE SIXTEEN

THE MIXED EXPRESSIONS OF THE PSALMIST'S SENTIMENT IN HIS ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN GOD'S HOUSE

(4)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 34—36

In this message we want to continue our fellowship on the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in his enjoyment of God in God's house. If we do not have a deep hunger to seek after the Lord with His Word, these messages may disappoint us. This is because what we may like according to our natural concept is exposed. What we see in the Bible and what the Bible is to us depend upon what kind of person we are. Our understanding of the Bible is always according to what we are. This is why we need to be adjusted and brought into the divine concept.

In this message we want to see the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in Psalms 34—36. The title of Psalm 34 says that this was a psalm of David "when he disguised his sanity before Abimelech, who drove him out, and he departed." We can see from this that the situation in which Psalm 34 was written was not an honorable one. David was not normal; he disguised himself as being insane because he was before a king who had the power to kill him. As a result of disguising himself, David was delivered from Abimelech (1 Sam. 21:10—22:1a). Afterward, he wrote Psalm 34. In this psalm he gave all the credit to God, but actually he delivered himself by disguising himself. To disguise oneself is a kind of falsehood.

In Psalm 35 David asked God to fight against his enemies

with weapons (vv. 1-8). Then in Psalm 36 he asked God to deal with the wicked (vv. 1-4) and even gave God instructions as to how to deal with them (vv. 11-12).

We need to remember that the book of Psalms needs to be interpreted according to the divine concept of the divine revelation in the entire Bible. The Psalms is the longest book of the Bible, but it is not the only book. It must be interpreted in the light of the divine concept of God as the divine revelation concerning His eternal economy in Christ, taking Christ as its centrality and universality.

We need to be adjusted from our human concept to the divine concept. At the beginning of my Christian life, I came to the Bible with much of my own thought. Throughout the years I have been adjusted, and the adjustment which I have received in studying the Bible has taken away layer upon layer of my human concept.

Our understanding of the Bible depends upon the measure of our growth in the spiritual life. Even today in our human life, our knowledge depends upon the measure of our growth in the human life. When someone is a child, we cannot expect him to understand that much. As this child grows, he is able to understand more and more. Eventually, when he becomes a full-grown man, he can understand things properly. It is difficult to understand the book of Psalms properly according to the divine concept. We have seen that at times David spoke things in the Psalms which were very wonderful. Then he spoke something which was altogether according to the human, natural concept.

In order to understand the Bible, we must exercise one principle. This principle is that God planned in His economy to make Himself one with man. The basic principle, the main principle, of Christ's birth is that God came to join Himself to man, to be a man, and to be one with man. This is the basic principle of the Bible.

When we read the Bible, we need to keep the principle of God's being one with man. We should keep the principle that the Word of God as the divine revelation shows us that God's main purpose is to make Himself one with man and to make man one with Him. In John 15 the Lord said, "I am the vine;

you are the branches.…abide in Me and I in you" (vv. 5, 4). This shows us that God and the believers in Christ are one. We and God were once separate, but one day we, the wild branches, were grafted into Him in Christ (Rom. 11:24). We have been grafted into Christ as the tree, and this grafting has made us one with Him. What is needed now is for us to abide in Him that He may abide in us. Then He and we will be one, having one life, one nature, and one living.

If we see this, we will be fully adjusted in our understanding of the Bible. We need to hold the divine concept in John 15 where the Lord said that He is the vine, that we are His branches, and that we should abide in Him that He may abide in us. In Psalms 34—36, we can see that David was not acting as a branch who was one with God.

In our understanding of the Bible, we have to pick up the proper principles. The main principle is that God desires to be one with His chosen people. Eventually, the oneness between God and man will be completed, consummated. All of God's chosen people will be consummated to be fully one with God to become the constituents of the holy city, the New Jerusalem. Whenever we come to the Psalms, we need to hold this concept; otherwise, we can be misled.

X. IN BLESSING AND PRAISING GOD

Psalm 34 shows us the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in his enjoyment of God in God's house in blessing and praising God. To bless God is to speak well about God, to talk about God in a good way. To praise God is to give the honor and the glory to God.

A. Written After David Disguised Himself as Being Insane before Abimelech

It is good to bless and praise God, but we should not forget that such a wonderful psalm was written after David put on a "mask." He wrote this psalm after he disguised himself as being insane before Abimelech. This story is recorded in 1 Samuel 21:10-15. There David disguised himself before this Philistine king in order to escape from being killed.

B. Because of God's Answer and Deliverance

David blessed and praised God because of God's answer and deliverance (vv. 1-6). In verse 1 he said, "I will bless Jehovah at all times; / His praise will continually be in my mouth." This is good, but we have to remember the situation in which David said this. When he disguised himself before Abimelech, he surely was not blessing God at that time. Instead, 1 Samuel 21:13 says that David scrabbled on the doors of the gate and let his spittle fall down upon his beard to make Abimelech think that he was insane.

Verses 2-6 say, "My soul makes its boast in Jehovah; / The lowly hear and they rejoice. / Magnify Jehovah with me, / And let us exalt His name together. / I sought Jehovah, and He answered me; / And He delivered me from all that terrified me. / They looked to Him and were radiant; / And their faces will never be abashed. / This poor man called out, and Jehovah heard; / And He saved him out of all his troubles."

David said that Jehovah delivered him. But I would like to ask whether he was delivered out of the hand of Abimelech by Jehovah or whether he delivered himself. People may pray for a number of things, and then give all the credit to God when they are done. Actually, however, God did not do any one of them. Instead, they prayed according to their own desire, and they did it on their own. Sometimes they might have even done something in a way to cheat people, but God surely did not cheat people for them. We may pray for something, get what we prayed for, and then give the credit to God. This is an insult to God. In this case the credit should not go to God but to us to become a debit.

C. Advising and Teaching Others to Fear God and Take Refuge in Him

Verses 7-22 show us David's advising and teaching others to fear God and take refuge in Him. In verse 8 David said, "Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him." However, when David disguised himself in front of that king, he did not take refuge in Jehovah but in his "mask," in his disguising himself. In verse 11 David said, "Come, children; hear me. / I will

teach you the fear of Jehovah." Do we want David to teach us to disguise ourselves, to put on a mask? This shows that on the one hand, we may trust in the Lord; on the other hand, we may put on a mask to deliver ourselves. Eventually, who saved us—the Lord or our mask?

1. The Goodness of Fearing God and Taking Refuge in Him

In Psalm 34 David spoke of the goodness of fearing God and taking refuge in Him (vv. 7-10, 17-22). Verse 10 says, "The young lions hunger and starve, / But those who seek Jehovah will not lack any good thing." People may quote these verses for their personal benefit but eventually end up lacking the material things they desire. Second Corinthians tells us that Paul passed through much suffering and deprivation, even to the extent that he was lacking food and clothing (11:27).

2. The Way to Fear God

In Psalm 34 David spoke of the way to fear God (vv. 11-16; 1 Pet. 3:10-12). Verses 12-16 say, "Who is the man who desires life, / Who loves having days in order to see good? / Guard your tongue from evil, / And your lips from speaking deceit. / Turn away from evil and do good; / Seek peace and pursue it. / The eyes of Jehovah are set toward the righteous, / And His ears, toward their cry. / The face of Jehovah is against those who do evil, / To cut off the memory of them from the earth." These verses were quoted by Peter in 1 Peter 3:10-12, but Paul did not quote such a word. Paul's vision of the New Testament economy was clearer than that of all the other apostles.

When David asked, "Who is the man who desires life, / Who loves having days in order to see good?" he was not talking about the eternal life but about the physical life. David was a great saint in the Old Testament, and Peter was one of the great apostles in the New Testament, but I do not believe that what David said here is spiritual. Even among us, who dares ask the Lord to give him long days that he may enjoy many good things?

David said that if we love having days in order to see good, we should guard our tongue from evil and our lips from speaking deceit. But who has ever succeeded in guarding his tongue from evil? What David spoke here was according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Verse 15 says, "The eyes of Jehovah are set toward the righteous, / And His ears, toward their cry." But who is righteous on this earth? Paul said that not one is righteous (Rom. 3:10), and Isaiah said that our righteousnesses are like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). If we depend upon our righteousness to enjoy God's eyes and ears being set toward us, we will enjoy nothing, because we have no righteousness of our own.

Concerning the righteous man, David said, "He keeps all his bones; / Not one of them is broken" (v. 20). This is a verse concerning Christ because David was a type of the suffering Christ. When Christ was on the cross, the soldiers did not break His legs when they saw that He had already died (John 19:33). John said, "These things happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled: 'No bone of His shall be broken'" (v. 36). There were times in describing his sufferings that David typified Christ.

When we look at Psalm 34, we can see the mixed expressions of David's sentiment. Verse 20 refers to Christ, but most of this psalm is not according to the tree of life. Our concept needs to be changed to the divine concept according to the tree of life. As we grow in Christ, our concept will be changed.

XI. IN ASKING GOD TO DEAL WITH HIS ENEMIES

In Psalm 35 David asked God to deal with his enemies.

A. Begging God to Fight His Enemies with Weapons

First, he begged God to fight his enemies with weapons (vv. 1-8). Verse 1 says, "Strive, O Jehovah, with those who strive with me; / Battle against those who battle against me." Do you believe that God desires such a prayer? This is not according to the Lord's teaching in the New Testament, which

tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44).

Verses 2-3 say, "Take hold of shield and buckler, / And rise up as my help. / Draw out also the spear, and close up the way / Against those who pursue me; / Say to my soul, / I am your salvation." Instead of asking God for something, David here is teaching God how to deliver him by fighting against his enemies with weapons.

Verses 4-8 say, "Let those who seek my life / Be put to shame and humiliated; / Let those who devise evil for me / Be turned back and confounded. / Let them be like chaff before the wind, / With the angel of Jehovah driving them on. / Let their way be darkness and slipperiness itself, / With the angel of Jehovah pursuing them. / For without cause they hid their net for me in a pit; / Without cause they dug a hole for me. / Let destruction come upon them unawares, / And let his net, which he hid, catch him; / Let him fall into it, into destruction." Is this a spiritual prayer? Surely this prayer comes out of a man who is fully in himself. In the New Testament economy, a spiritual person could never ask God to come with a shield, with a buckler, and with a spear to fight against his enemies.

B. Boasting in His Trusting in God and in His Well-dealing with Those Who Mistreated Him

In verses 9-16 David boasted in his trusting in God and in his well-dealing with those who mistreated him. These verses say, "Then my soul will exult in Jehovah; / It will rejoice in His salvation. / All my bones will say, / Jehovah, who is like You, / Who delivers an afflicted one from him who is too strong for him, / And an afflicted and needy one from him who robs him? / Malicious witnesses rise up; / They ask me about things I know nothing of. / They repay me evil for good; / I am bereaved in soul. / But I, when they were sick, / Had sackcloth as my clothing; / I afflicted my soul with fasting, / And my prayer returned to my own bosom. / I conducted myself as if it had been my friend or my brother; / Like one mourning for his mother, I bowed down gloomily. /

But at my stumbling they rejoice and gather together; / The dregs whom I had not known / Gather together against me; / They tear at me and do not cease. / As profane mocking parasites, / They gnash their teeth at me."

The above verses show that in David's consideration his enemies were very bad, whereas he was very good. His expressions in these verses display too much self-righteousness.

C. Urging God to Deliver Him by Instructing God according to His Natural Knowledge of Good and Evil

In verses 17-28 David urged God to deliver him by instructing God according to his natural knowledge of good and evil.

XII. IN ASKING GOD TO DEAL WITH THE WICKED

In Psalm 35 David asked God to deal with his enemies, and in Psalm 36 he asked God to deal with the wicked.

A. His Accusation of the Wicked

Verses 1-4 are his accusation of the wicked: "Transgression speaks to the wicked / Within his heart; / There is no dread of God / Before his eyes. / For he flatters himself in his own eyes, / Until his iniquity is found out and hated. / The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; / He has ceased being wise and doing good. / He plans iniquity on his bed; / He sets himself on a path that is not good; / He does not reject evil." Here David did not have the heart or the intention to ask God to be merciful to the wicked. Instead, he accused them.

B. His Praising of God's Lovingkindness, Faithfulness, and Righteousness Mixed with the Enjoyment of God in His House

Verses 5-10 are his praising of God's lovingkindness, faithfulness, and righteousness mixed with the enjoyment of God in His house. Verses 7-9 are a top portion of the Psalms concerning the enjoyment of God in His house, but such a portion is in a psalm in which David asked God to deal with

the wicked. This again shows us the mixed expressions of David's sentiment.

C. Entreating God to Deal with the Wicked according to His Way

Verses 11-12 say, "Do not let the foot of the arrogant come upon me, / Nor let the hand of the wicked drive me away. / There those who do iniquity are fallen; / They are cast down and unable to rise." In these verses David entreated God to deal with the wicked not according to God's way but according to his way.

OUR NEED TO BE RELEASED FROM OUR HUMAN CONCEPT AND TO BE BROUGHT INTO THE CENTRAL LINE OF GOD'S ECONOMY

In reading the Psalms, we should see the contrast between the human concept and the divine concept. Most of the saints do not see such a contrast. Instead, they highly appraise everything in the Psalms. In a sense, it seems that they received the help from reading the Psalms, but actually they did not receive the real help. Instead, they were misled.

I am burdened for us to see the contrast between the human concept in the Psalms and the divine concept in the New Testament. According to our concept, we may feel that the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, tells us mainly that we have to fear God, to take refuge in Him, to trust in Him, to wait on Him, to hope in Him, to praise Him, to thank Him, and to worship Him. This concept, however, is not the divine concept in the New Testament. What the New Testament shows us is God's economy.

In God's economy, God has only one intention—to gain an organism for Himself. In eternity past God decided to do one thing in His economy—to create for Himself an organism, the Body of Christ. He created the universe and man for this purpose. Then man became fallen, but God promised man that He would come through a woman to be a man, to join Himself with man, and to become one with man (Gen. 3:15). Eventually, He became a man and lived a life on this earth to show people the life of a God-man. Afterward, He went to

the cross and died not only for our sins but also to deal with every problem in the universe. Then He was resurrected. In His incarnation He brought God into man, and in His resurrection He brought man into God so that God and man could be one.

Although this is the revelation of the New Testament, not many see this revelation. Instead, most Christians still hold a natural and religious concept of trying to do good. Most Christians would say that they need to improve their conduct. Because they know that they are weak and the temptations are strong, they ask God to help them and try to trust in God. But they do not see the central line of God's economy to make God and man, man and God, one entity, with the two having one living by one life with one nature. Such a revelation is missing among Christians today.

Many do not have an ear to hear this central teaching of God's economy. Paul solemnly charged Timothy before God and before Christ by His appearing and His kingdom to proclaim the word (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Paul was being poured out as a drink offering (v. 6), so he charged Timothy to be faithful to proclaim the healthy word. Then he said, "For the time will come when they will not tolerate the healthy teaching; but according to their own lusts they will heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (v. 3). People who have itching ears are those who seek pleasant speaking for their own pleasure. According to Paul's word to Timothy, the itching and turned-away ear is the main factor in the worsening decline in the churches. We have to be faithful to speak the healthy words of God's economy, not the words that satisfy people's itching ears.

In the Lord's recovery, we have been enlightened to see what God wants. God wants us to be one with Him. God lives in us, and He wants us to live Him. The writings of the apostle Paul are crystal clear on this point, with no ambiguity. The main item in Paul's fourteen Epistles is stated in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." These words

are divine. They have nothing to do with anything natural, religious, or superstitious.

God created Adam almost six thousand years ago. From Adam to Abraham was two thousand years, from Abraham to Christ was two thousand years, and from the time of Christ until now has been also almost two thousand years. In the first two thousand years, God visited people to help them to realize that they needed Him. In the second two thousand years, God told Abraham that in his seed all of the nations would be blessed (Gen. 22:18; 26:4). They would be blessed by God's being one with them and by their being one with God. This is altogether mysterious and divine.

Christ as the seed of Abraham came to fulfill God's promise. When Christ came, the Jews had their religious way of worshipping God according to their kind of thought. Later, the apostles had to encounter two problems—the Jewish religion and Greek philosophy. This earth today is full of different philosophies from different cultures and religions. In addition to all of these philosophies, there is the philosophy and the logic in today's Christianity. Many Christians today understand the Bible according to their natural concept, not the divine concept.

In the Lord's ministry we have spoken concerning God's economy, God's dispensing, and the life-giving Spirit, the processed, consummated Spirit. We have seen that this Spirit is the compound Spirit, and this compound Spirit is the consummation of the processed Triune God. These things cannot be heard in the theology of today's Christianity.

Because of the opposition, I published an article in 1977 entitled *What a Heresy—Two Divine Fathers, Two Life-giving Spirits, and Three Gods!* Many of those opposing us teach that there are three Gods. This is the teaching of tritheism. They also teach that there are two divine Fathers. One is the Father in the Godhead and the other is the Father in Isaiah 9:6, whom they say is the Father of eternity. They also mistakenly say that there are two life-giving Spirits. One is the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, and the other is the life-giving Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:45b. All of these teachings, of course, are heretical.

I have been speaking in the United States for thirty years with the burden to release the central line of the divine revelation according to God's economy. But according to my realization, not many of us appreciate this central line. Before I came to the United States, I had not seen that the Spirit was the consummation of the Triune God. I began to say mainly in Hong Kong in the summer of 1954 that the death and resurrection of Christ are in the Spirit. From that year the light concerning the all-inclusive Spirit came in and has been shining brighter and brighter.

Eventually, we saw the type of the compound ointment in Exodus 30:23-25. The compound ointment takes olive oil as a base compounded with four kinds of spices—myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. These five elements compounded together become one ointment. The one hin of olive oil refers to God as the Spirit, and this divine Spirit is compounded with Christ's death, with the effectiveness of Christ's death, with Christ's resurrection, and with the power of Christ's resurrection. This compound Spirit is the consummation of the Triune God. The Father is embodied in the Son, and the Son is realized as the Spirit. In other words, the Spirit is the realization of the Son, and the Son is the embodiment of the Father. Thus, the Three of the Godhead are not three Gods; they are just one divine being.

The Bible reveals all of these things to let us know how God can be one with man and how man can be one with God. Eventually, we Christians should live a life of God and man, the life of a God-man. Today we live as a man, yet we also live as God in His life and in His nature but not in His Godhead. His Godhead is unique. We have His life and His nature, just as the children of a father have their father's life and nature. But none of the children have the fatherhood. Only the father of a family has the fatherhood. In the same way, God is unique and His Godhead is unique. We cannot share in His Godhead, but we do have the divine life and the divine nature. We are participating in this divine life and divine nature so that we can live God, live Christ. If we see this, our view concerning the Psalms will be changed.

My burden is to try the best to help the saints in the

Lord's recovery come out of the misled concept concerning the Psalms. We need to be released from being misled and be brought into the central line of God's economy, which is to live Christ as the embodiment of God by the realization of the Spirit. Today we are here as a man, but we are living the Triune God in our manhood. Many today, however, would oppose us for saying that we live God. But Paul said, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21a). Paul was a man, but he told us that he lived Christ, and Christ is God. To live Christ is to live God. We all have to see this. The Christian life is not a kind of improvement of our human life. The Christian life is a transformed life, a life that transforms us into a God-man. I hope that this fellowship helps us to seek after God according to the proper revelation in the holy Word.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE SEVENTEEN

THE MIXED EXPRESSIONS OF THE PSALMIST'S SENTIMENT IN HIS ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN GOD'S HOUSE

(5)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 37—39

In this message we want to see the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in Psalms 37—39. Psalm 37 reveals the psalmist's sentiment in his logic concerning God's dealing with the righteous and with the wicked based upon the principle of law-keeping. David could not stay away from the principle of keeping the law. Psalm 37 is essentially a lengthened repetition of Psalm 1. We may say that it is the enlarged, lengthened, and expounded Psalm 1. Psalm 38 reveals the psalmist's sentiment in his suffering of God's dealing, and Psalm 39 shows us that the psalmist realized the vanity of his life.

XIII. IN HIS LOGIC CONCERNING GOD'S DEALING WITH THE RIGHTEOUS AND WITH THE WICKED BASED UPON THE PRINCIPLE OF LAW-KEEPING

A. Not Being Incensed because of Evildoers, for They Soon Wither like Grass and Fade Away like Green Herbage

In Psalm 37:1-2 David said, "Do not be incensed because of evildoers.... For they soon wither like grass / And fade away like green herbage." Verses 7 and 8 say, "Be still before Jehovah, and wait on Him; / Do not be incensed because of him who enjoys prosperity on his way, / Because of the man

who performs his evil schemes. / Cease from anger and forsake wrath; / Do not be incensed; it only leads to evil."

B. Trusting in Jehovah, Doing Good, Feeding on His Faithfulness, Delighting Yourself in Jehovah, and Committing Your Way to Jehovah

David also said that you should trust in Jehovah, do good, feed on His faithfulness, delight yourself in Jehovah, and commit your way to Jehovah. Then He will give you the requests of your heart and cause your righteousness to go forth like light and your justness like noonday (vv. 3-6).

C. The Evildoers Being Cut Off but Those Who Wait on Jehovah Possessing the Land

Verses 9-40 point out that according to David's concept, the evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait on Jehovah will possess the land. David said, "For the evildoers will be cut off; / But those who wait on Jehovah, / They will possess the land. / And in a little while longer there will be no wicked man; / Indeed, you will look diligently for his place, and he will not be there" (vv. 9-10). According to David's logic, in a little while there would be no wicked man. If there were no wicked man, we would not need the police, the law courts, or the government. But there is not such a thing on this earth today.

Again and again throughout Psalm 37, David said that the righteous would inherit the land and the wicked would be cut off. This is a principle set up by David's logic according to the principle of law-keeping. This logic, however, is altogether wrong. Such good logic belongs to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

In the following message we will be on Psalms 40 and 41. Psalm 40 says that Christ will come to do the will of God (vv. 6-8), and the will of God is that Christ has to replace everyone, everything, and every matter. In the whole universe, God does not want anything except Christ. God wants only one person—Christ. He wants Christ to replace all the offerings, to replace all things, to replace all matters, and to replace all men.

Paul said in Galatians 2:20a, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." Paul said that he had been terminated and that there was someone else to replace him—Christ. He had been crucified and replaced by Christ. Christ lived in him. Paul spoke Galatians 2:20 in the context of his speaking concerning Christ replacing the law (vv. 11-21). He told the Galatians that they were foolish for trying to keep the law (3:1-3). David encouraged people to keep the law, but Christ crucifies, terminates, every law-keeper. Christ does not want to see anyone endeavoring to keep the law. He wants to see every law-keeper terminated by the cross.

XIV. IN HIS SUFFERING OF GOD'S DEALING

A. David's Concept in This Psalm Contradicting His Logic in Psalm 37

The concept in Psalm 37 is on one pole, and the concept in Psalm 38 is on the other pole. David's concept in Psalm 38 contradicts his logic in Psalm 37.

B. God's Chastening Forcing Him to Confess His Sins and Iniquities

In Psalm 38:1-8 we see that God's chastening forced David to confess his sins and iniquities. David said that in his flesh there was no soundness because of God's indignation, and there was no wholeness in his bones due to his sin (v. 3). There was indignation on God's side, and sin on David's side.

Verse 4 says, "For my iniquities have passed over my head; / Like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me." If we do not like this verse, we are wrong. We have to love this verse to the uttermost.

Verses 5-8 say, "My wounds are odious and festering / Due to my foolishness. / I am bent down and bowed utterly; / I go about all day long mourning. / For my loins are filled with burning, / And there is no soundness in my flesh. / I am benumbed and crushed utterly; / I cry out due to the groaning of my heart." Groaning indicates that you have a burden to pray, yet you do not know what to say. In Psalm 37 it seems

that David was so clear about everything and had the utterance to pray for everything. But in Psalm 38 all he could do was cry out due to the groaning of his heart. At times we may have some burden and some feeling, but we do not know how to utter them. We have no knowledge about how to utter our prayer. Thus, all we can do is groan and say, "O Lord Jesus. O Lord Jesus."

In Romans 8:26 Paul said, "Moreover, in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The weakness here is our ignorance of how we should pray. We do not know the kind of prayer God desires, and we are not clear how to pray, according to the burden we feel, for our being conformed to the image of God's Son; hence, we groan (v. 23). In our groaning the Spirit groans also, interceding for us. His interceding is mainly that we may experience the transformation in life for growth into the maturity of sonship that we may be fully conformed to the image of God's Son (v. 29).

C. His Environment Compelling Him to Groan before God and Declare His Iniquity and Sin

Psalm 38:9-20 shows that David's environment compelled him to groan before God and declare his iniquity and sin. In verse 18 David said, "For I declare my iniquity; / I am anxious because of my sin." This is a good verse, which we all should love. We always have to say, "I declare my iniquity; / I am anxious because of my sin." This thought is altogether in contrast with David's logic in Psalm 37. Psalm 37 says that as long as you are righteous, not wicked, you will be all right. But in Psalm 38 David said that he was suffering, and he declared his iniquity. Psalm 38 is much higher than Psalm 37. It would be good to read Psalm 38 in a prayerful way again and again, even on our knees.

D. Begging God Not to Abandon Him but to Hasten to Help and Save Him

In Psalm 38:21-22 David said, "Do not abandon me, O

Jehovah; / O my God, do not be far from me. / Hasten to help me, / O Lord, my salvation." In Psalm 37 it seems that David did not need God to come to save him. He thought that he was righteous and that because of this he would be all right. But in Psalm 38 all he could do was cry out due to the groaning of his heart. At the end he cried out for the Lord's help as his salvation. He begged God not to abandon him but to hasten to help and save him.

I would like to ask how God would answer David's cry to help him. When the apostle Paul asked the Lord to remove the thorn from his flesh, the Lord's response was, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9). The Lord might tell David, "I will not answer your prayer for help in your way. Instead, I will allow you to suffer because the more you suffer, the more you know your sin. The more you are under suffering, the more you will declare your iniquity, not your righteousness as you did in Psalm 37."

Which psalm would you take for your prayer—Psalm 37 or Psalm 38? We all have to learn not to pray in our natural way. David's logic in Psalm 37 is very natural. We should abandon our natural logic. Instead, we must learn to pray in the revelation of God. We must learn to pray when we are under God's dealing, under God's compelling, in a kind of odious situation (Psa. 38:5). Then we will be blessed, and we will become a blessing.

XV. IN HIS REALIZING THE VANITY OF HIS LIFE

We may say that the title of Psalm 38 could be "Sin and Iniquity," and the title of Psalm 39 could be "Nothing and Vanity." Psalm 39 reveals the psalmist's sentiment in his realizing the vanity of his life. This psalm shows us that we are nothing and vanity.

A. Keeping His Ways by Muzzling His Mouth

In verses 1-3 David said that he kept his ways by muzzling his mouth.

B. Realizing the Nothingness and Vanity of His Life

David realized the nothingness and vanity of his life and asked God to remove His chastening (for his transgressions) from him and look away from him as a stranger and sojourner (vv. 4-13). We always think that we are something and somebody, but David was brought by the Lord into a situation to realize that actually he was nothing and vanity. David said that every man at his best is altogether vanity (v. 5). He said that his days were as handbreadths. A handbreadth is very short, that is, only about four inches. David said that man goes about as a semblance, an empty show, and that people are bustling about in vain. They heap up riches, but they do not know who will come to gather them (v. 6).

At the end of Psalm 39, David asked Jehovah to hearken to his cry (v. 12). But I do not believe that God would answer him right away. God would keep David in his situation for a while so that David would be compelled to realize his real situation and his real condition. We need to realize that our condition is sinful, and our situation is one of vanity.

In Psalm 37 David had much to say. It seems that in this psalm he knew everything and could say everything. But in Psalm 38 he realized that his condition was sinful, and in Psalm 39 he realized that his situation was full of vanity. Many of us are still remaining in Psalm 37. In one meeting a brother prayed a long prayer. It seemed that in his prayer he knew everything, understood everything, and could say everything. Such a long prayer, however, kills everyone. Instead, we should be those who pray, "O Lord, I don't know what to say, and I don't know what to do. I even don't know what I am. My lifetime is as nothing before You. Lord, have mercy upon me."

David eventually said that he was a stranger with God, a sojourner, just as all of his fathers were (Psa. 39:12). A stranger is one who does not know anything about the place where he is. In the New Testament, all the believers should be heavenly strangers and sojourners (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11), sojourning as foreigners on this earth. This means that we all have been replaced by Christ. We all have been crucified with Him.

Then it is a fact that it is no longer we who live, but it is Christ who lives in us. We need to see the human concept in the Psalms so that we can jump out of this concept into the divine concept in Paul's Epistles.

The Bible tells us that the word of the Lord is the truth, the reality (John 17:17), and also the light (Psa. 119:105). Through the truth and light released in these messages, I hope that we can see what God wants us to be. God wants us to be nothing. God wants us to be replaced by Christ. Therefore, what God wants was expressed by Paul when he said, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20a). Christ has crucified me, and Christ has come into me to replace me. Now I have an organic union with Him. He lives and works, and I live and work with Him. Christ replaces me to live Himself through me. This is the divine concept of God according to the divine revelation of the New Testament.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE EIGHTEEN

THE MIXED EXPRESSIONS OF THE PSALMIST'S SENTIMENT IN HIS ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN GOD'S HOUSE

(6)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 40—41

In this message we have come to Psalms 40 and 41, the final two psalms in Book One of the Psalms. In these psalms we can again see the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in his enjoyment of God in God's house.

XVI. IN HIS SUFFERING OF HIS ENEMIES AND THE RECOMPENSE WHICH HE EXPECTED FOR THEM

Psalms 40 and 41 show us the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in his suffering of his enemies and the recompense which he expected for them. No doubt, when David wrote these two psalms he was under the persecution and mistreatment of his enemies. Because of his suffering, he wanted to see his enemies recompensed. In the New Testament, however, the Lord Jesus told us that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). This shows that David's prayer to recompense his enemies is not according to the divine concept.

A. Waiting on Jehovah for His Deliverance

David waited on Jehovah for His deliverance (Psa. 40:1-5, 11, 13, 16-17; 41:1-2, 10-12). In 41:10 David said, "But You, O Jehovah, be gracious to me and raise me up / That I may recompense them." David was praising God for God's deliverance and looking to God for His salvation. This is not wrong,

but it was wrong to ask Jehovah to raise him up that he might recompense his enemies. I hope that all of us can see this. Do you believe God is happy to see His children ask Him to raise them up that they might recompense their enemies? This is absolutely wrong. This is why we say that what is written in many of the psalms is a mixture.

In verses 11-12 David said, "By this I know that You delight in me, / That my enemy has not shouted in triumph over me. / And as for me, You uphold me in my integrity, / And You set me before Your face forever." David indicated that he would know that Jehovah delighted in him if Jehovah raised him up so that he could recompense his enemies. He also asked God not to let his enemies shout over him triumphantly. In the light of the New Testament revelation, we can see that this is absolutely according to the flesh. David also said that God upheld him in his integrity. He should have said that he was upheld in God's mercy, in God's compassions. Actually, we do not have any integrity before God.

B. Appreciating God's Care for Him—Sustaining Him on His Sickbed and Making All His Bed in His Illness

David also appreciated God's care for him—sustaining him on his sickbed and making all his bed in his illness (41:3). Of course, this is poetic writing. But do you believe that when David was sick, God came to take care of him just like a nurse, making all his bed? Surely God takes care of us, but the apostle Paul did not write anything in his Epistles to tell us that God took care of him like a nurse to sustain him on his sickbed and to make his bed in every way. For David to speak in this way indicates that he was too much in the self.

C. Referring to His Righteousness and Integrity Again

David referred to his righteousness and integrity again in 40:9-10 and 41:12.

D. Realizing and Confessing His Iniquities and Sins

David realized and confessed his iniquities and sins. Psalm 40:12 says, "For evils encompass me until they cannot be counted; / My iniquities have so overtaken me / That I cannot see; / They are more numerous than the hairs of my head; / Thus my heart fails me." Psalm 41:4 says, "I said, O Jehovah, be gracious to me; / Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You." To make confession of our sins is very good.

When David was writing Psalms 40 and 41, he was surrounded by his enemies. He indicated that all his enemies encompassing him were evils which had become so numerous that they could not be counted. Furthermore, his iniquities were so numerous that he could not see. He was overtaken and bent over by the weight of his iniquities, and the number of his iniquities surpassed the number of the hairs on his head. This shows us that he was altogether in a very desperate situation. Enemies were surrounding him, and iniquities were suppressing him.

E. Referring to God the Mistreatment of His Enemies

David referred to God the mistreatment of his enemies. Psalm 41:5-9 says, "My enemies speak evil against me: / When will he die and his name perish? / And if he comes to see me, he speaks falsehood. / His heart gathers iniquity to itself; / When he goes out, he speaks it. / All who hate me whisper together against me; / Against me they devise my misfortune. / Some evil illness, they say, is cast upon him; / And when he lies down, he will not rise again. / Even my familiar friend, in whom I trusted, / Who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me." David told God in detail concerning how his enemies had mistreated him.

David's enemies pretended that they were his friends. This is why they could come to see him and speak falsehood. Today many people are like this. They are so nice to a person in a way of pretense when they are with him, but when they leave his presence, they speak what they really feel about him.

This is falsehood. David's enemies even said that some evil illness was cast upon him.

In the midst of these mixed expressions of David's sentiment, David spoke a word which became a prophecy concerning Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord Jesus. Verse 9 says, "Even my familiar friend, in whom I trusted, / Who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me." This word was quoted by the Lord in John 13:18 in reference to Judas.

F. Expecting That His Enemies Would Be Desolate and Put to Shame

David expected his enemies to be desolate and put to shame (Psa. 40:14-15; 41:10-11).

G. Prophesying concerning Christ in Such Mixed Expressions of His Sentiment

In such mixed expressions of his sentiment, David prophesied concerning Christ. The prophecy in Psalm 40:6-8 is a great prophecy concerning Christ, and the prophecy in Psalm 41:9 is a small prophecy concerning Judas betraying Christ.

1. In Psalm 40:6-8

Seemingly Psalm 40:6-8 was the word of David, but actually it is the word of Christ. Christ said to God, "You do not delight in sacrifice and offering; / You have bored My ears; / You do not require burnt offering and sin offering. / Then I said, / Behold, I have come; / In the scroll of the book / It is written concerning Me. / I delight in doing Your will, O My God; / Indeed Your law is within My inward parts" (lit.).

This prophecy was fully quoted and defined by the apostle Paul in Hebrews 10. Christ delighted in doing God's will, which was the will of God to replace the Old Testament sacrifices and offerings (vv. 5-10). Many Christians apply the doing of God's will in Hebrews 10 to their daily affairs. Actually, however, the doing of God's will in Hebrews 10 refers to Christ coming to replace the Old Testament sacrifices and offerings. In the old dispensation, God commanded His people to offer to Him sacrifices and offerings. But when Jesus came and lived on this earth, God no longer

delighted in those Old Testament offerings. Instead, it was God's will to replace them with Christ Himself. Christ came to be the real sacrifice, the real offering, the living sacrifice, the living offering, who offered Himself on the cross as the reality of all the offerings. He is the reality of the sin offering, the trespass offering, the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering.

Actually, Christ came to replace all the Old Testament types. In other words, by Christ's first coming, the entire Old Testament has been terminated and replaced. Now our offering and sacrifice are Christ. Day and night we offer Christ to God as all kinds of offerings. Whenever we sin, we ask God to forgive us, taking Christ, God's Son, as our sin offering and trespass offering. He is the real offering for our sin and transgressions. When we need peace toward God, we can take Christ as our peace offering. We can also take Him as our burnt offering and meal offering. Christ is everything to us because He fulfilled all the Old Testament types and has taken them away. Today He is the reality of all the types in the Old Testament.

The revelation in Psalm 40:6-8 is one of the greatest revelations concerning Christ in His commission of His incarnation. Verse 6 says, "You do not delight in sacrifice and offering," and again, "You do not require burnt offering and sin offering." This indicates that God was intending to give up His Old Testament economy. Just by reading Psalm 40:6-8 alone, we cannot understand this much. But this portion was quoted and expounded by the apostle Paul in Hebrews 10. He indicated that to stop the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament is to replace the Old Testament for the establishment of the New Testament.

Sacrifice (for sin and sins before God) and offering (for fellowship with God) were the elements based upon which the old testament (covenant) was established, and the old testament (covenant) was the centrality and universality of God's economy in the Old Testament. God not delighting in and not requiring the sacrifice and offering means to terminate His economy in the Old Testament. This is the importance and the greatness of this prophecy in Psalm 40.

Verse 6 also says, "You have bored My ears." This was quoted by the apostle Paul in Hebrews 10:5 as "a body You have prepared for Me," from the Septuagint, a Greek version of the Old Testament translated about three hundred years before Christ. To bore the ears of a slave's body indicates the master's requirement of the slave's obedience (Exo. 21:6). This signifies that God required obedience of Christ as His Slave in Christ's humanity. This obedience was spoken of by Paul in Philippians 2:8, which says that Christ became "obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross." This obedience was for Him to do the will of God by being the sacrifice and offering in His crucifixion in the flesh, the body (Col. 1:22). Based upon this the Septuagint interprets the boring of the ears into the preparing of a body, in which Christ offered Himself to God as the sacrifice and the offering to replace the sacrifice and the offering of the animals in the Old Testament.

I believe that the translators of the Septuagint realized that to bore the ears was to require the obedience of Christ, and Christ's obedience was mainly for Him to die on the cross. For Him to die on the cross, He needed a human body. Hebrews 2:14 says that because Christ was going to destroy Satan, He needed to partake of blood and flesh, that is, He needed a body. I believe that the Septuagint translators may have realized that "You have bored My ears" in Psalm 40:6 would not be understood by most readers so they translated it as "a body You have prepared for Me." To bore the ears was for Christ's obedience to die on the cross, and to prepare a body was also for His dying on the cross. Thus, both translations are with the same purpose. God prepared a body for Christ to come to do God's will to be God's unique sacrifice on the cross.

Psalm 40:7 says, "Behold, I have come," indicating Christ's first coming through His incarnation for the establishment of the new testament by Himself as the enacting sacrifice and offering.

Verse 7 also says, "In the scroll of the book / It is written concerning Me." This indicates that Christ was prophesied in the Scriptures of the Old Testament and that Christ will do

God's will for the accomplishment of God's New Testament economy according to the Old Testament prophecies concerning Him.

When the Lord appeared to His disciples in resurrection, He told them all the things that were written concerning Him in the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). In Luke 24:44-45 He told the disciples, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning Me must be fulfilled. Then He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures." The Lord's word here unveils that the entire Old Testament is a revelation of Him and that He is its center and content. Our life-study of the Old Testament is full of interpretations and definitions of the types concerning Christ.

Psalm 40:8 says, "I delight in doing Your will." This indicates that Christ was willing to do God's will in His commission of His incarnation to fulfill and replace all the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament for the termination of God's Old Testament economy, so that He could initiate and establish God's New Testament economy (Matt. 26:26-28) for the producing and building of the church to be His organic Body, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem. When the Lord established His table, He indicated that His blood shed through His death was the enacting factor of the new covenant.

In Hebrews 10:5-9, after quoting this prophecy concerning Christ in Psalm 40:6-8, Paul commented that Christ coming to do God's will is to take away the first that He may establish the second (Heb. 10:9). "The first" in Paul's comment refers to the sacrifices and offerings of the first covenant, the old covenant; and "the second" refers to the sacrifice of the second covenant, the new covenant, which sacrifice is Christ. The commission which God committed to Christ in His first coming through incarnation was to put away the animal sacrifices of the old covenant and to establish Himself, in His body, as the sacrifice of the new covenant. This is to terminate God's Old Testament economy and to initiate God's New Testament economy, thus making

the prophecy in Psalm 40:6-8 one of the greatest prophecies concerning the all-inclusive Christ.

The prophecy in Psalm 40 concerning Christ should be considered the fifth station of all the prophecies concerning Christ in Book One of the Psalms. Psalms 2, 8, 16, and 22—24 are the first four stations. In the fifth station, Christ came through His incarnation to terminate God's old economy and initiate God's new economy, His New Testament economy, by replacing the animal sacrifices and establishing Himself as the unique sacrifice of the new covenant. As the unique sacrifice of the new covenant, Christ was the enacting factor of the New Testament economy to be the centrality and universality of God's New Testament economy. Hence, Christ is great in the prophecy in Psalm 40:6-8. He has changed the age for the consummation of God's new creation out of God's old creation. His changing of the age is greater than the creation of the universe mentioned in Genesis 1.

The prophecy concerning Christ in Psalm 40:6-8 is the goal and the destination of the revelation of Christ in Psalm 2, Psalm 8, Psalm 16, and Psalms 22—24. All Christians know that Christ came in His incarnation, but if we want to know what kind of Christ came, we have to know Psalm 2, Psalm 8, Psalm 16, and Psalms 22—24. These psalms are descriptions of the very Christ who came in His incarnation to carry out God's will as God's commission to turn the age, to terminate everything old and to replace the old things with Himself as everything new. We all were included in the old creation, but the old creation was terminated and replaced by Christ. Today in Christ we are no longer old; we are new (2 Cor. 5:17).

The prophecy concerning Christ in Psalm 40:6-8 was spoken in the context of the mixed expressions of David's sentiment. David's speaking in the Psalms reminds me to a certain extent of Peter's speaking in the Gospels. Peter frequently said the wrong thing, but one day he told the Lord that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16). Then the Lord Jesus told Peter that he was blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to him, but the

Father in the heavens (v. 17). The Lord went further to tell the disciples that He was going to the cross (v. 21), but Peter began to rebuke Him, telling Him, "God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!" (v. 22). When Peter said this, the Lord said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan!" (v. 23). At one moment Peter was blessed to receive a heavenly revelation of Christ from the Father, but in the next moment he was one with Satan. At one moment he was Peter; in the next moment he was Satan.

Peter's situation may be compared to David's situation in the Psalms. In the Psalms, David's speaking is according to two concepts—the human concept and the divine concept. At one time David is speaking, but suddenly his mouth becomes the mouth which reveals the divine revelation concerning Christ. Peter's case in the Gospels was similar to this.

Matthew 17 says that the Lord Jesus brought Peter, James, and John with Him to the mount of His transfiguration. When Peter saw the Lord transfigured and speaking with Moses and Elijah, he became very excited. He spoke foolishly by saying, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You are willing, I will make three tents here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah" (v. 4). In his absurd proposal, Peter put Moses and Elijah on the same level as Christ. He was on the mount of Christ's transfiguration, but he spoke nonsense. David's speaking in the Psalms was in the same principle. In his speaking we can see both the divine concept and the human concept. In the Old Testament, there is a talkative David. In the New Testament, there is a talkative Peter.

David wrote many psalms, and in these psalms we can see both his natural concept and the divine concept of God according to the divine revelation. In Psalms 40 and 41, the only portions which are according to the divine concept are 40:6-8 and 41:9. These portions speak concerning Christ. However, we need all the verses in the psalms so that we can have a comparison to show us the divine revelation and the human expressions of the human sentiment.

2. In Psalm 41:9

As we have pointed out, Psalm 41:9 is a prophecy concerning Judas Iscariot betraying Christ. This verse says, "Even my familiar friend, in whom I trusted, / Who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me." The familiar friend in this verse is Judas Iscariot (John 6:70-71). Judas Iscariot was one who ate with the Lord (John 13:18, 23-27; Luke 22:21-22) and lifted up his heel against Christ, betraying Christ. However, Judas did not partake of the Lord's table (Mark 14:17-25; John 13:26-30).

H. Blessing God for Eternity

In Psalm 41:13 David blessed God for eternity—"Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, / From eternity to eternity! / Amen and Amen!"

XVII. ANOTHER THREE POINTS OF THE PROPHECIES CONCERNING CHRIST

Psalms 25—41 are a section of psalms showing us the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in his enjoyment of God in God's house. In this long section, we have seen that there is one of the greatest prophecies concerning Christ in His coming to replace the Old Testament sacrifices and offerings. In this section there are another three points of the prophecies concerning Christ.

A. Taking Counsel Together against Him and Scheming to Take His Life

Psalm 31:13b says, "When they take counsel together against me, / They scheme to take my life." This prophecy was fulfilled in the New Testament with the Lord Jesus. Matthew 26:4 says that the chief priests and the elders took counsel together to seize Jesus by craftiness and kill Him.

B. Committing His Spirit into God's Hand

Psalm 31:5a says, "Into Your [God's] hand I [Christ] commit my spirit." This was quoted by Christ when He was crucified on the cross. At the end of His crucifixion, He said,

"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46; cf. John 19:30).

C. God Keeping All His Bones and Not One of Them Being Broken

Psalm 34:20 says, "He [God] keeps all his [Christ's] bones; / Not one of them is broken." This verse was fulfilled at the time of the Lord's death. When the Roman soldiers who crucified Him saw that He had already died, they did not break His legs. John 19:36 says, "For these things happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled: 'No bone of His shall be broken.'" Christ was also typified in Exodus by the Passover lamb, whose bones were not to be broken (12:46).

These are the minor prophecies concerning Christ unveiled in Psalms 25—41.

XVIII. A CONCLUDING WORD CONCERNING CHRIST IN THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE FIRST BOOK OF THE PSALMS

The first book of the Psalms comprises Psalms 1—41. We should not forget that in this first book there are seven psalms which speak concerning Christ: Psalm 2, Psalm 8, Psalm 16, Psalms 22—24, and Psalm 40.

A. In the Mixed Expressions of the Sentiment of God's Lovers and Seekers, Christ Being Revealed as the Centrality and Universality of God's Economy

In the mixed expressions of the sentiment of God's lovers and seekers, Christ is revealed as the centrality and universality of God's economy. David was surely a lover of God and a seeker of God just as Peter was in the New Testament. Peter made mistakes, but he loved the Lord and sought after the Lord. This is why the Lord came to him and asked him, "Simon…do you love Me?" (John 21:17). Christ would not ask someone this question if he did not love Him. For Christ to ask Peter if he loved Him is precious. David was also a lover and a seeker of God. In the mixed expressions of his

sentiment, Christ is revealed as the centrality and universality of God's economy.

1. Having Been Anointed to Be God's Messiah

Psalm 2 reveals that Christ has been anointed to be God's Messiah, resurrected to be the firstborn Son of God, and installed to be God's King; He has also been given the nations as His inheritance and the earth as His possession for His kingdom.

2. Bringing God into Man in His Incarnation and Man into God in His Resurrection

Psalm 8 reveals that as the embodiment of God, Christ has brought God into man in His incarnation and man into God in His resurrection, thus bringing heaven to the earth and joining the earth to heaven to be the excellent One in all the earth.

3. As the God-man, Mingled with Divinity and Humanity

Psalm 16 reveals that as the God-man, mingled with divinity and humanity, Christ took God as His portion, being obedient to God unto death, resurrecting into glory, ascending to His heavenly attainments and obtainments, and sitting at the right hand of God for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy concerning the church, the Body of Christ.

4. Dying an All-inclusive Vicarious Death and Entering into the Church-producing Resurrection

Psalms 22—24 reveal that Christ died an all-inclusive vicarious death and entered into the church-producing resurrection. In resurrection He became the Shepherd of God's flock, leading the sheep of God to participate in the church as the house of God in this age, consummating in the New Jerusalem in the coming age and in the eternal age; and He will be God's triumphant King of glory to reign in God's eternal kingdom.

5. Coming to Do the Will of God to Fulfill and Replace All the Old Testament Sacrifices and Offerings

Psalm 40:6-8 reveals that Christ came to do the will of God to fulfill and replace all the Old Testament sacrifices and offerings according to what is written in the Old Testament concerning Him.

B. Bringing God's Chosen People into the Enjoyment of God Firstly in the Church and Ultimately in the New Jerusalem

Such a Christ brings God's chosen people into the enjoyment of God firstly in the church in this age and ultimately in the New Jerusalem in the millennium and in eternity (Psa. 27; 36).

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE NINETEEN

THE PSALMISTS' INTENSIFIED ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HIS HOUSE AND CITY THROUGH THE SUFFERING, EXALTED, AND REIGNING CHRIST

(1)

THE PSALMISTS PANTING AFTER GOD

Scripture Reading: Psa. 42—44

The Psalms are composed of five books. Thus far in our fellowship, we have covered Book One of the Psalms, composed of the first forty-one psalms. In this message we will begin our fellowship on Book Two of the Psalms. In this book we see the psalmists' intensified enjoyment of God in His house and city through the suffering, exalted, and reigning Christ.

The psalms in Book One were written mainly by David. Book Two, however, contains eight psalms that were composed by the sons of Korah, Psalms 42—49. David is a glorious name among the nation of Israel, but Korah is an infamous name because Korah rebelled against Moses and God (Num. 16:1-3). In spite of this, some of the descendants of Korah became composers of the Psalms. This indicates that among the five books of the Psalms, the revelation is progressive. The five books of the Psalms are not on the same level. The Psalms is like a stairway with five steps, that takes us higher in its revelation in a progressive way.

Book Two of the Psalms begins in Psalm 42:1 in a very good way. The psalmist said, "As the hart pants / After the streams of water, / So my soul pants / For You, O God." We can sense the Lord's freshness in the desire and aspiration of the psalmist here. This is much different from what is expressed by the psalmist in Psalm 1. The human concept of

Psalm 1 is that the man who delights in the law of God prospers in everything. The psalmist said that the one who delighted and meditated in the law would be like a tree transplanted beside streams of water (vv. 2-3). A tree drinks water by absorbing it.

In Psalm 42, however, the psalmist said that his soul panted for God, just as the hart pants after the streams of water. Then he said, "My soul thirsts for God, / For the living God. / When will I come and appear / Before God?" (v. 2). Psalm 1, the opening word of Book One, begins with the law. But Book Two begins with God. What do we prefer—the law or God? Do we want to be like a tree transplanted by the streams of water by delighting in the law or like a hart panting after God? Surely there is no comparison between God and the law. This shows us that Book Two of the Psalms is higher than Book One.

Thus, we have to realize that the psalms progressively become higher in their revelation from Book One through Book Five. Book Five is the high peak of the Psalms. The high peak of this book is expressed in the word *Hallelujah! Hallelujah* means praise Jehovah, praise God. Thus, Book Two begins with God, and Book Five ends with "Praise God."

When we get into the New Jerusalem, we will all say, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" Some have asked me what language we will use in the New Jerusalem. I do not know what language we will speak, but we will probably say—"Hallelujah! Hallelujah!"—all the time. What other things will we need to talk about by that time? When we study the book of Psalms, we should reach some points where we sing "hallelujah" spontaneously. Even when we read Psalm 1 we can say, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! I don't need to love the law anymore."

It is very striking that Book Two begins with the psalmist's panting after God. Panting after God is different from worshipping God in a formal, religious way. God is our living water for us to drink. Do we need to bow down to worship the water? We need to pant after this water and then drink it. In verse 1 the word *pants* is used. In verse 2 the word *thirsts* is used. My soul *pants* for God and *thirsts* for God. I

love these predicates. We need to have times with the Lord in which we pant after Him and thirst for Him.

I. BOOK TWO OF THE PSALMS UNVEILING THE PSALMISTS' INTENSIFIED ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HIS HOUSE, AND EVEN THE MORE IN HIS CITY, THROUGH THE SUFFERING, EXALTED, AND REIGNING CHRIST

Book One of the Psalms has turned the psalmists from the law to Christ, and Christ has brought them to the enjoyment of God in His house and in His city. We should come to God through Christ. Christ is the real stairway to God. Christ told us that He is the way. Thomas said, "Lord, we do not know where You are going; how can we know the way?" (John 14:5). Then Jesus said, "I am the way" (v. 6). He is the real stairway to God.

Thus, Book One of the Psalms turned the psalmists to the right direction, to Christ. Then Christ brought them to the enjoyment of God in His house and in His city. I say this because of the first two verses of Book Two, which say, "As the hart pants / After the streams of water, / So my soul pants / For You, O God. / My soul thirsts for God, / For the living God" (42:1-2). This is the enjoyment of God. Book Two begins with the direct enjoyment of God.

Book Two unveils the psalmists' intensified enjoyment of God in His house, and even the more in His city, through the suffering, exalted, and reigning Christ. Book One does not speak of the enjoyment of God in the house of God and the city of God as strongly as Book Two does. We may say, in a sense, that God was homeless at the beginning of Book One. The law is not God's home. Who is God's home? We have seen that God's home is firstly Christ as the tabernacle and the temple (John 1:14; 2:21). The first part of the New Testament, the Gospels, tells us clearly that God's home was Christ. He was the tabernacle of God. Actually, this tabernacle was a portable home. Christ was God's tabernacle, God's tent, and also God's temple.

Later, Christ became mingled with His believers, and His believers became His extension, His enlargement. Thus, the

church is God's home in the second step (Eph. 2:22). It is difficult to find a verse in Book One of the Psalms which speaks of the city of God. The city of God signifies God's kingdom. Christ as the tabernacle of God eventually became a kingdom. Christ cannot be a king without a "dom." When the tabernacle becomes enlarged it becomes the temple, and the temple is the church (1 Cor. 3:16). The church is also the kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 14:17), the King with the "dom." The kingdom is signified in the Psalms by the city.

Zion was a peak of the mountain range on which the city of Jerusalem was built. Jerusalem was built on a mountain range, that mountain range had a high peak, and on top of that high peak was the temple. That high peak was called Zion. On Zion a temple was built, and the temple was God's house. Around that temple was the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem as the city signifies God's kingdom. In Book Two the psalmist begins to speak about the city. Thus, we have the enjoyment of God in His house and in His city.

The universal God is located in His house, His dwelling place. God's house is both Christ as God's tabernacle and temple and the church as the enlargement of Christ, the enlarged temple. On the one hand, God in Christ is our home, our dwelling place (Psa. 90:1), and on the other hand, we as the church are His home, His dwelling place. All the unbelieving sinners need to realize that because they are homeless, God is also homeless. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, we come back home. When we get into this home, into Christ, God is also home in us. When I was younger, we preached the gospel by telling the unbelievers that they were homeless, not having any rest. Because they are restless, homeless, God is also homeless. But when we believe in the Lord Jesus, we come back home. Then we are home, and God is also home. We are no longer restless and neither is God.

Many believed in the Lord through this kind of preaching. We should not just tell people that they are sinners and that Jesus died for them. Many people have heard this kind of word, and they are not open to receive it. They would be open, however, to realize that as human beings they are

homeless apart from God. In Book Two of the Psalms, God is home. We enjoy God in His home. This means that we enjoy God in Christ and in the church. Ephesians 3:21 says that God is glorified in Christ and in the church. God is glorified in His house and in His city, in Christ and in the church.

The psalmists enjoyed God through the suffering, exalted, and reigning Christ. Such a Christ is the way for us sinners to enter into God. Now we enjoy God as our God in Christ as the home and in the church as the city. Our enjoyment of God is through a stairway, and this stairway is Christ—the suffering One, the exalted One, and the reigning One. In Book Two of the Psalms, Christ's suffering, Christ's being exalted, and Christ's reigning are stressed.

II. PSALMS 42—49, 84, 85, 87, AND 88 BEING THE HOLY WRITINGS OF THE SONS OF KORAH

Psalms 42—49, 84, 85, 87, and 88 are the holy writings of the sons of Korah. Korah was the leader of the rebellion against Moses and God (Num. 16:1-3). After about four hundred seventy years, Samuel the prophet, Heman the singer, and some other psalmists came out of Korah the rebel's descendants at the time of David (1 Chron. 6:31-39). Even the descendants of a leading rebel became the godly writers of psalms, praising God in their holy writings as a record existing for generations. What a grace this was!

It is marvelous that the descendants of Korah wrote something that became a part of the Holy Bible. Their holy writings have become a record existing for generations. They were also faithful to tell people that they were the sons of Korah, the one who rebelled against God. This shows us that all the psalms were written based upon the infinite grace of God. The sons of Korah were the descendants, the sons, of that great sinner and rebel, Korah, yet they became holy people writing psalms to praise God. Today we are like the sons of Korah. In a sense, we are still poor sinners and rebels, yet we poor sinners can be those who are speakers of the holy Word!

III. PANTING AFTER GOD

The crucial point of Psalms 42—44 is the psalmist's panting after God.

A. After Being Stripped by God

The psalmist was panting after God at a time when he and his people had been stripped and defeated by the neighboring nations.

B. As the Hart Panting after the Streams of Water

He panted after God as the hart pants after the streams of water (Psa. 42:1-2).

C. Under the Adversaries' Reproaching and Oppression

The psalmist was also under the adversaries' reproaching and oppression (42:3, 9b-10). Psalm 42:3 says, "My tears have been my food / Day and night, / While they say to me all day long, / Where is your God?"

D. Recalling the Glorious and Pleasant Past in the Leading of the Festal Multitude to Enjoy God in His House with His People

On the one hand, the psalmist was panting after God. On the other hand, he was recalling the glorious and pleasant past in the leading of the festal multitude to enjoy God in His house with His people. Psalm 42:4 says, "These things I remember, / And I pour out my soul within me: / That I passed through with the throng; / I led them to the house of God / With the voice of a joyous shout and praise, / The festal multitude."

This is a very pleasant recounting of the past. But I would like us to consider whether or not this was the right thing to do. In the psalmist's captivity, he was panting after God. But at least in his thought, in his consideration, he left the panting after God and went to something else—the recounting of his past. How good that was, how glorious that was, and how pleasant that was! He remembered how wonderful it was

when he was leading a multitude to ascend to the peak of Zion to enjoy God with God's people by feasting together with God.

This was a pleasant picture from the past, but should he have recounted his past in this way while he was panting after God? Actually, this was a departure from his panting after God. He should have remained in the state of panting after God. We may be having a time with the Lord in which we are panting after God, but then some consideration within us will take us away from our panting after God. We might remember how wonderful and pleasant the church life was many years ago. This consideration and remembrance of our past distracts us from enjoying the Lord.

Psalm 42:4 is a good verse, but it shows that there is a mixture within the sentiment of the writer of this psalm. There should be no mixture. Instead, there should be only panting after God and singing "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!" Our considerations and thinking should not take us away from the panting after God. We should not be distracted from God to the treasuring of our past. Because the psalmist departed from his panting after God, the thoughts constituting his sentiment were expressed.

E. Encouraged by the Hope in God for the Salvation of His Countenance

Verse 5 says, "Why are you bowed down, O my soul? / And why are you disquieted within me? / Hope in God, for I will yet praise Him / For the salvation of His countenance." The psalmist was encouraged by the hope in God for the salvation of His countenance. The psalmist encouraged his soul, himself. He told his soul not to be cast down but to hope in God. He said that he would still praise God for the salvation of His countenance.

At that time the psalmist had been stripped of almost everything. He had lost his home and was in captivity. What could he enjoy? He could enjoy the countenance of God. He lost his home, his country, and he had been stripped of his earthly enjoyment. Now he was in captivity, but he could enjoy God's presence, God's countenance. God's countenance

became his enjoyment in his captivity. However, while he was enjoying God's presence by panting after God, he became distracted by different thoughts. We are also like this. In our time with the Lord, we may be panting after Him, but then we are taken away from God by distracting thoughts.

F. Remembering God from a Distance

The psalmist remembered God from a distance—from the land of the Jordan and the Hermons, from Mount Mizar, quite far from Zion and Jerusalem, where God's house and city were. Psalm 42:6 says, "O my God, my soul is bowed down within me; / Therefore I remember You / From the land of the Jordan and the Hermons, / From Mount Mizar." This indicates that the psalmist was away from his home, from his country, from his nation. He remembered the Lord not from the door of the temple or from the gate of Jerusalem but from far away. This is because he was in captivity. This was during the time when the people of Israel, including those serving in the temple, had been defeated and captured by their invading enemies. This psalmist was such a serving one. The sons of Korah were Levites. Korah was a leader of the Levites who served the temple (Num. 16:8-10). The invaders defeated Israel and captured the people. Thus, the psalmist here was in a far away country.

G. Recognizing God's Sovereignty in Their Environment

Psalm 42:7-9a shows that the psalmist recognized God's sovereignty in his environment. Verse 7 says, "Deep calls unto deep / At the sound of Your water spouts; / All Your waves and Your billows / Pass over me." Some versions render "water spouts" as "waterfalls." This poetic expression describes the sufferings through which the psalmist passed.

Verse 8 says, "By day Jehovah commands / His lovingkindness, / And by night His song is with me, / A prayer to the God of my life." Of course, while he was passing through such a deep suffering, all the psalmist could do was to pray. In the day he enjoyed God's lovingkindness; in the night he

enjoyed Jehovah's song being with him, a prayer to the God of his life.

Verses 9 and 10 say, "I say to God my rock, / Why have You forgotten me? / Why do I go mourning / Because of the oppression of the enemy? / As with a shattering in my bones, / My adversaries reproach me, / While they say to me all day long, / Where is your God?" His adversaries asked him where his God was since he was in captivity.

All of these thoughts came in to distract the psalmist from panting after God. Here we see the mixed expressions of the sentiment of the writer. When he was writing such a psalm, all kinds of distracting thoughts came to his mind, distracting him from panting after God and from the salvation of God's countenance. In verse 11 he said, "Why are you bowed down, O my soul? / And why are you disquieted within me? / Hope in God; for I will yet praise Him, / The salvation of my countenance and my God."

H. The Mixed Expressions of the Psalmists' Sentiment in Their Enjoyment of God in His House and City

While the psalmist was enjoying God in His house and His city, a lot of things came into his thoughts to distract him. That constituted a kind of sentiment, which he poured out in his expressions. Psalm 43:1-2 shows us the mixed expressions of the psalmist's sentiment in his enjoyment of God in His house and city.

To pant after God and to thirst for God are marvelous, wonderful, and good. In this we should remain, but we lack control. Thoughts come in as darts to distract us. These thoughts constitute our sentiment, which we utter in expressions. Mixed expressions such as these are the contents of many of the psalms.

I. Asking God to Give Them Light and Truth That Will Lead Them and Bring Them to God's Holy Mountain

The psalmist asked God to give him light and truth that

would lead him and bring him to God's holy mountain and to His tabernacles that he might go to the altar of God, to the God of his exultation's rejoicing (43:3-4). This means that he was away from the holy mountain and from the temple. He asked God to send forth light and truth. When we have light and truth, we have the way, but at that time the people of Israel did not have a way to get out of their captivity. They did not have the way, the leading, to get back to Mount Zion, the holy mountain, so that they could return to God's house.

The psalmists who wrote Psalms 42—44 were really lovers of God. They were panting after God, thirsting for God, and desiring to go back to Jerusalem, to get to Mount Zion to reach the altar. Then they could enter into the temple to meet the God of their exultation's rejoicing. This is why they prayed that God would give them the light and the truth that they might know how to get out of their captivity and get back to God's dwelling place.

J. The Mixed Expressions of the Psalmists' Sentiment in Their Enjoyment of God in His House and City

Psalm 44 shows us the mixed expressions of the psalmists' sentiment in their enjoyment of God in His house and city.

1. Treasuring the Past

In verses 1-8 the psalmists were treasuring their forefathers' past history. Verse 1 says, "O God, we have heard with our ears; / Our fathers have recounted it to us, / The work You did in their days, / In the days of old." Their treasuring the past was a distraction as a part of their mixed sentiment.

2. Sighing for the Present

In addition to treasuring the past, the psalmists were sighing for the present (Psa. 44:9-26). Psalm 44:9 says, "Nevertheless You have rejected us and humiliated us, / And You have not gone forth with our armies." This verse begins with the word *nevertheless*. The psalmists were saying that

even though God was so good and kind to their forefathers, He had rejected them now. Thus, they blamed God.

Verse 17 says, "All this has come upon us; but we have not forgotten You, / Nor have we been false to Your covenant." The psalmists maintained that even though all these bad things such as their defeat and captivity had come upon them, they had not forgotten God nor had they been false to His covenant. Was this true? In the Old Testament, especially in the Prophets, God told His people frequently that they had forsaken Him (Jer. 2:13) and had broken His covenant (Jer. 11:10; Hosea 6:7). Thus, it was false for the psalmists to say that they had not forgotten God or been false to His covenant.

Psalm 44:18 says, "Our heart has not turned back, / Nor have our steps slipped from Your way." God said in the Prophets that the people of Israel turned their hearts away from Him. Whose word is right—God's word or the psalmists'? In the Prophets God also said clearly that the people of Israel had left His way. In spite of this, the seeking psalmists argued with God in this way. This shows us that we should not think that every psalm is so wonderful. Again we need to realize that in the Psalms there are both the human concept and the divine concept.

We can see again that the psalmists' panting after God was disturbed, and their thirsting for God was taken away by all these different thoughts. The psalmists spoke of how good God was to their forefathers, but of how bad He was to them. They told God that even though He had rejected them, they had not rejected Him. They were vindicating themselves, but where was their panting after God and their thirsting for God? They were gone. All of us have had similar experiences. Often we may have been panting after God, but then we became distracted by many thoughts. Often we are distracted from panting after God, from enjoying God.

I hope that we are being helped to understand how to study the book of Psalms. Verses 1-2 and 5 of Psalm 42 are very good because they are according to the divine concept. Verses 1 and 2 speak of panting after God and thirsting for God, and verse 5 speaks of the salvation of God's countenance. Like the psalmists, we may have lost everything, having been

stripped of everything, yet we have not lost God. Even though we may have rejected Him, we have not lost Him. His presence is with us, and that presence is His countenance. His countenance is our salvation.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWENTY

THE PSALMISTS' INTENSIFIED ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HIS HOUSE AND CITY THROUGH THE SUFFERING, EXALTED, AND REIGNING CHRIST

(2)

PRAISING CHRIST AS THE KING

(1)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 45:1-8

In this message we will begin to consider Psalm 45, the highest and the greatest of the one hundred fifty psalms. To enter into the significance of such a psalm is not easy. All seventeen verses of Psalm 45 are quite common, but the way this psalm presents Christ is very peculiar.

The title of this psalm tells us that it is a song of love. The word *love* in the title refers not to a father's love for his son but to the love between a male and a female. This is indicated by the fact that the Hebrew word for love here is in the feminine gender. Thus, the love in Psalm 45 is a feminine love.

In order to understand this psalm, we need to turn to the particular book in the Bible which is concerned with love—the Song of Songs. Psalm 45 is a psalm of love, and Song of Songs is a book of love. In that book the word love is used in both the masculine and the feminine gender. According to the English translation of Song of Songs, the Lord Jesus is called "the Beloved"; however, the Hebrew word is simply the word for love in the masculine gender. Likewise, when the Lord calls His seeker "My love," the Hebrew word for love is in the feminine gender. Moreover, Psalm 45:2a says, "You are fairer than the sons of men." This is similar to Song of Songs

5:10, where the seeker speaks of her beloved as "the chiefest among ten thousand." This is a further indication that Song of Songs helps us to understand Psalm 45.

In one of the life-study messages on Hosea 11—14, we pointed out that throughout Hosea Israel is depicted as the wife of Jehovah. However, when God's everlasting love is touched, Israel is called God's son (Hosea 11:1), indicating that Israel has the Father's life. God's everlasting love is not a love in affection, like the love of a husband toward a wife, but a love in life, like the love of a father toward a son. Love in affection does not transform, but love in life transforms people. It is in the Father's love, the love in life, that Israel is transformed. A husband who loves his wife in affection may spoil her, but a father who loves his son in life never spoils his son. Rather, a father's love in life perfects his son.

I am not suggesting that Christ's love for us as virgins, as those who are females in relation to Him (2 Cor. 11:2), is a love that can spoil us. According to the biblical truth, Christ's love does not spoil His believers. Nominal Christians, false Christians, do not know Christ's love. Genuine Christians, those who have a heart for the Lord, enjoy Christ's love, but they may enjoy it according to their own concept or feeling. As a result they are spoiled not by Christ's love itself but by their wrong application of Christ's love. For instance, if you speak to them concerning the kingdom truth, dispensational punishment, and the casting of certain believers into the outer darkness (Matt. 22:13; 25:30), they may say, "You are teaching heresy. Jesus loves me. He is not cruel, and He would not put me into outer darkness. As long as Jesus loves me, everything is all right." This indicates that even genuine believers have been spoiled by their mistaken application of the love of Christ.

Such believers need to consider the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is a book not on Christ's love but on the kingdom. Regarding the kingdom, Hebrews gives us five warnings, and each of these warnings concerns either reward or punishment. Furthermore, in Hebrews we have two kinds of words. The first is the good word of God (6:5), the word of the beginning of Christ (v. 1), which is the milk the believers taste when

they believe in the Lord (5:13). The second kind of word is the word of righteousness (v. 13), which is solid food (v. 14), embodying the thought of God's justice and righteousness in His dispensational and governmental dealings with His people. In Hebrews 12:5 through 7 we have such a word of righteousness. "You have completely forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with sons, 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when reproved by Him; for whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.' It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons." Today many believers do not want to hear such a word of righteousness. Instead, they prefer sugar-coated messages.

Psalm 45 is not on the Father's love; that is, it is not on love in life but on love in affection. This is why this psalm is called a song of love.

In this message we will cover the first eight verses of this psalm. These verses are on the praise of Christ as the King from four directions: His fairness, His victory, His kingdom, and His virtues. First, the psalmist praises the King in His fairness (v. 2a), in His handsomeness. Christ is truly fair; He is really handsome.

Christ's fairness, however, is balanced by His victory (vv. 3-5). Many husbands who love their wives have fairness, but they do not have victory. Instead, they have defeat after defeat. Thus, they are not balanced. But Christ, having both fairness and victory, is balanced. Yes, He loves us, but, as the four Gospels reveal, He also exercises His victory with its requirements. Because of His victory, He has high requirements.

We see Christ's victory and His requirements not only in the Gospel of Matthew but even in the Gospel of John. For example, in John 15, a chapter which speaks about abiding in Christ, the Lord Jesus tells us that if we do not bear fruit, we will be cut off and lose the enjoyment of Christ (vv. 2, 6). Whereas all believers love Matthew 1:21 and 23, they may not appreciate 5:20, a verse which says that unless our righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, we will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

Likewise, today's believers may not pay attention to the parable for faithfulness in Matthew 25:14-30. Verse 30 says, "Cast out the useless slave into the outer darkness. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." The point here is that Christ's fairness is balanced by His victory with its requirements. Hence, in Psalm 45 fairness and victory are a pair.

A second pair in this psalm involves Christ's kingdom (vv. 6-7) and His virtues (v. 8). The kingdom is higher than the victory. Christ's kingdom is the issue of His victory. If there were no victory, there would be no kingdom. Victory produces the kingdom. Because Christ has won the victory, the kingdom belongs to Him. The matter of His kingdom, however, is balanced by the sweetness of His virtues. Therefore, in the praise of Christ as the King in Psalm 45, there are two balanced pairs: fairness and victory, kingdom and virtues.

Let us now go on to consider this psalm in more detail.

I. A SONG OF LOVE ACCORDING TO THE MELODY OF LILIES

The superscription of this psalm calls it "a Song of Love," and this love is feminine. It is the love between us and the Lord. This love makes us His love. This means that if we are those who love the Lord, we eventually become His love, His favorite. Just as He is our love, so we become His love.

The subject of this psalm is love, and the tune, the melody, is called "lilies." Here both love and lilies refer to the saints. Every lover of the Lord Jesus is feminine and is also a lily. A lily denotes a pure, simple, single life of trusting in God. Our love for the Lord Jesus should be a love full of affection. We should not only have a life of purity and simplicity as signified by the lily, but we should always have an affectionate feeling toward the Lord. According to Psalm 45, we all need to have a pure life with an affectionate love for the Lord.

John Nelson Darby, who lived to be eighty-four and never married, had such a love full of affection. One night in his old age, he was staying alone in a hotel, and at bedtime he said, "Lord, I still love You." When I read about this, I was

deeply touched, desiring to have such an affectionate love for the Lord Jesus. Now I can testify that, as an elderly person, I love Him much more than I did when I was young. Recently I had a time of intimate, affectionate prayer to the Lord regarding a certain matter, and in my prayer I told Him, "Lord Jesus, I love You." As I was praying, I fell in love with the Lord Jesus once again.

II. A PSALM OVERFLOWING WITH A GOOD MATTER CONCERNING THE KING BY THE TONGUE AS THE PEN OF A READY WRITER

Verse 1 says, "My heart overflows with a good matter; / I speak what I have composed concerning the King. / My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." This verse says that the psalmist's heart overflows; we may also say the psalm overflows. The two are actually the same thing.

For the psalmist's tongue to be the pen of a ready writer means that the psalmist does not need to write a draft of what will be spoken concerning the King. Real love for the King makes a draft unnecessary. Regarding many things we may need to write a draft, but to write a draft of what we want to say to someone we love would be altogether mechanical; it would not be real. If we have an affectionate love for the Lord Jesus, we will have the tongue of a ready writer. Instead of needing to write a draft, we will be ready to write our love and our praise.

III. PRAISING THE KING IN HIS FAIRNESS

In verse 2 the psalmist praises the King (signifying Christ) in His fairness. When the Lord Jesus comes to us, He comes first in the aspect of His fairness. This is why, when we preach the gospel, we need to preach mainly Christ's fairness, telling others how good and loving Christ is. We may say that this kind of gospel preaching is a "hook" with a tasty "bait." Everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus and loves Him has been "hooked" by Him. Blessed are they who have been hooked by Christ! As one who has been hooked by the Lord, I often say to Him, "Lord Jesus, You have caught me. You have

captured me. If I had not been captured by You, I would be a different person living a different life."

Now the One who has come to us in His fairness, the One who has caught us and who loves us, wants us to love Him in return. We need to love Him and even become His love. This is the issue of Christ's showing us His fairness and of our enjoyment of Christ in His fairness. It is impossible for us to speak in full concerning Christ's fairness.

A. Fairer than the Sons of Men

According to verse 2a, as the King Christ is fairer than the sons of men.

B. Grace Being Poured upon His Lips

Verse 2b says, "Grace is poured upon Your lips." This indicates that grace continually proceeds out of His mouth. Concerning this, Luke 4:22 tells us that the people marveled at the words of grace proceeding out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus.

C. God Having Blessed Him Forever

In Psalm 45:2c the psalmist continues the praise of the King, saying, "Therefore God has blessed You forever." Because the man Jesus is fair, sweet, and full of grace, God has been moved to bless Him forever. Thus, Romans 9:5 speaks of Christ as "God blessed forever."

IV. PRAISING THE KING IN HIS VICTORY

In Psalm 45:3-5 we have the psalmist's praising the King in His victory. Adam and all his descendants, including us, have been defeated. Only Christ is the Victor. The Gospels reveal that He has overcome everything and has gained the victory.

A. As the Mighty One Girding His Sword upon His Thigh in His Majesty and Splendor

Verse 3 says, "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O mighty One, / In Your majesty and Your splendor." In the eyes of

Satan and of all the fallen angels, Christ is the mighty One who has girded His sword upon His thigh, the One with majesty and splendor. Both His majesty and His splendor are signs of His victory.

B. In His Splendor Riding On Victoriously Because of Truth, Meekness, and Righteousness

Verse 4a continues, "And in Your splendor ride on victoriously / Because of truth and meekness and righteousness." Splendor is the expression of glory. While Christ was on earth, the only time He showed His splendor was when He was transfigured on the mountain (Matt. 17:1-2). But after His resurrection and ascension, He showed Himself in His splendor and majesty to Paul (Acts 26:13-15) and to John (Rev. 1:9-20).

C. His Right Hand Performing Awesome Deeds

Psalm 45:4b says, "Let Your right hand teach You awesome deeds." Here we understand the word *teach* to mean perform. Christ has performed many awesome deeds, including His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. The most awesome deed performed by Christ was His crucifixion. Christ's crucifixion was a great event that threatened Satan, the demons, and the fallen angels, the powers of darkness in the air. The cross of Christ is the most awesome thing in the universe. Whereas we appreciate the cross, Satan flees from it.

The Lord Jesus did many awesome things during His life and ministry on earth. Actually, everything He did was awesome. For example, His boldness in rejecting His natural relationship with His mother was awesome (Matt. 12:46-50). Likewise, His way of dealing with Peter in Matthew 17:24-27 was awesome. Peter spoke presumptuously concerning Christ's paying the temple tax, which was equal to a half-shekel (vv. 24-25a). After Peter did this, the Lord corrected him. Eventually, as part of His correction of Peter, He said to him, "Go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up. And when you open its mouth, you will find a stater [equal to one shekel]; take that and give it to them for Me and you" (v. 27). Because Christ is the Creator, He could

do such an awesome thing. Everything the Lord Jesus does, whether great or small, is awesome.

D. His Arrows Being Sharp in the Heart of His Enemies

Psalm 45:5 goes on to say that the King's arrows are sharp and that the peoples fall under Him. His arrows are in the heart of His enemies.

V. PRAISING THE KING IN HIS KINGDOM

In verses 6 and 7 the psalmist praises the King in His kingdom. We have pointed out that the kingdom is the issue of the victory. Hence, before one can be a king, he must first be a victor. According to the ancient custom, the person who was victorious over the enemies became the king.

A. As God His Throne Being Forever and Ever

As God Christ's throne is forever and ever (v. 6a; Heb. 1:8a).

B. The Scepter of His Kingdom Being Upright

"The scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom" (Psa. 45:6b). The scepter signifies authority. The authority of many of today's high officials is not upright, but Christ's authority is altogether upright.

C. Loving Righteousness and Hating Wickedness

As the King Christ has loved righteousness and hated wickedness (v. 7a; Heb. 1:9a). The more righteous we are, the more authority we have. However, the more we are involved with wickedness, the more we lose our authority.

D. God, His God, Having Anointed Him with the Oil of Gladness above His Companions

Psalm 45:7b continues, "Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You / With the oil of gladness above Your companions." The oil of gladness signifies the Spirit of God, and the companions signify the believers of Christ. God the Father has anointed Christ with the Holy Spirit above all His

companions, above all His believers. This indicates that Christ's authority and kingdom are altogether a spiritual matter. He has been anointed for the purpose of the kingdom. Christ's authority, throne, scepter, and everything related to the kingdom are under the anointing of the Spirit and therefore are spiritual.

VI. PRAISING THE KING IN THE SWEETNESS OF HIS VIRTUES

In verse 8 the psalmist praises the King in the sweetness of His virtues. Regarding Christ's virtues, 1 Peter 2:9 speaks of telling out "the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." When we preach the gospel, we tell others what Christ has done for us and what He is doing for us today. To preach the gospel is actually to tell forth the many virtues of Christ, including His love, kindness, and forgiveness.

Christ's virtues are the expression of the divine attributes. For instance, with God the Father the divine love is an attribute of the Godhead. This attribute is in the divine life. As Christ lives out the divine life, He lives out the divine attribute of love. In Christ's living there is the virtue of love, and this virtue is the expression of the divine attribute of love. As we preach the gospel, we should tell others about the attributes of God expressed in the virtues of Christ.

A. All His Garments Smelling of Myrrh and Aloes and of Cassia

Psalm 45:8a says of Christ the King, "All Your garments smell of myrrh and aloes, of cassia." A person's garments signify the virtues of that person, because the way we dress is an expression of the kind of person we are and indicates our attitude and demeanor. For this reason, we can know something about a person by the way he dresses. Actually, as human beings we are under two kinds of covering—our clothing and dwelling place, both of which express what kind of person we are. Here in Psalm 45 garments signify Christ's virtues; myrrh and aloes signify the sweetness of

Christ's death; and cassia signifies the fragrance of Christ's resurrection.

B. From Palaces of Ivory Harpstrings Having Made Him Glad

Verse 8b says, "From palaces of ivory harpstrings have made You glad." In this verse palaces signify local churches; ivory signifies the resurrection life of Christ (John 19:36); and harpstrings signify praises. The local churches, which are beautiful in the eyes of the Lord and which are His expression, are built with the resurrection life of Christ, and from the local churches are the praises that make Him glad. As we praise the Lord, we need to appreciate what He is in His virtues and what He has done to produce the church to be His expression. In a very real sense, Christ's garments, His virtues, have produced the church as His expression, and both His garments and the church are full of sweetness. May we all learn to praise Him more, especially at the Lord's table.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWENTY-ONE

THE PSALMISTS' INTENSIFIED ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HIS HOUSE AND CITY THROUGH THE SUFFERING, EXALTED, AND REIGNING CHRIST

(3)

PRAISING CHRIST AS THE KING

(2)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 45:9-17

Psalm 45 can be considered the sixth station in the unveiling of Christ in the Psalms. The first station is Psalm 2; the second is Psalm 8; the third is Psalm 16; the fourth is Psalms 22—24; and the fifth is Psalm 40. In this message on Psalm 45 we will consider verses 9 through 17. Before we come to these verses, however, I would like to say a word concerning the Bible and the way to understand it.

The Bible is a very particular, special, strange, and wonderful book. Because the Bible is such a book, it cannot be understood by the natural human mind. If we try to understand the Bible according to our natural mind, we will not have the proper understanding. Of course, in order to understand the Bible, we must exercise our mind. However, we should exercise not the natural mind but the renewed, enlightened mind. If we would understand the Bible, we must have a mind that is renewed and enlightened, that is, a mind whose understanding is under the divine light. Therefore, when we study the Bible, we should pray that the Lord will renew our mind and enlighten it.

If we do not have a renewed and enlightened mind, we will have trouble when studying Psalm 45, especially verses 9 through 15, which are about praising the king in the praising

of the queen with the daughters of kings and with the virgins. We may be bothered by the fact that this king has so many women with him. The Bible teaches us that a man should have only one wife, and in the New Testament Paul tells us that an elder should be "the husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2). But the king in Psalm 45 seems to be like a heathen king who has a great many wives and concubines. As we will see, what we have in this psalm is a matter not of ethics but of typology, and to understand this type we need a renewed, enlightened mind.

Regarding the interpretation of the Bible, especially the book of Revelation, there are two schools. According to the first school, the book of Revelation should be understood literally. Those who follow this school say the New Jerusalem is a physical city. According to the second school, Revelation should be understood symbolically, since some items of its content are revealed by "signs" (1:1b). Those who follow this school say that as the golden lampstands are symbols of the churches, so the New Jerusalem is also a symbol, a sign.

The Bible contains many symbols and types. We may regard these symbols and types as pictures or "photographs." The reason for the photographs in the Bible is that the Bible unveils many heavenly, spiritual things, and these things are invisible and mysterious. The photographs in the Bible help us to understand such things.

An example of a biblical symbol or photograph is the tree of life in Genesis 2 and 3. What is the tree of life? In the Bible the tree of life is not actually a literal tree. Rather, the tree of life is a symbol of God as the source and reality of life. This means that the tree of life is a symbol of God as life.

Other symbols in the Old Testament are types of the church. The first of these types is Eve, the wife of Adam (Gen. 2:18-23). From Ephesians 5 we know that the relationship between husband and wife portrays the great mystery—Christ and the church. Without the picture of Eve as the counterpart, increase, and enlargement of Adam, we would not realize that the church is the counterpart, increase, and

enlargement of Christ. Thus, we need the type of Eve to symbolize what the church is to Christ.

The Old Testament also uses the tabernacle and the temple as symbols to unveil another aspect of the church. Eve, the tabernacle, and the temple are all photographs of the church. The church is not only Christ's counterpart, symbolized by Eve, but also God's house, God's dwelling place, symbolized first by the tabernacle and then by the temple. If we did not have these two symbols, we would not understand many of the details concerning the church being God's dwelling place. From this we see that the biblical way is to use symbols to portray spiritual things, and we need to keep this in mind as we come to Psalm 45.

Psalm 45 was written in praise of King Solomon, who was a symbol, a type, of Christ with a wife composed of many "daughters," of many believers. If God had no need of a king to symbolize Christ in this way, Solomon would not have been created. The Bible clearly reveals that God's intention is that a man have only one wife, yet Solomon had hundreds of wives (1 Kings 11:1, 3). As far as Psalm 45 is concerned, we should understand this not ethically but typically. Ethically, Solomon should not have had many wives. Typically speaking, however, there was the need for a man with hundreds of wives so that God would have a particular type of the church composed of many believers from many nations. Solomon with his wives is a type of Christ with His corporate wife, a wife composed of believers from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Rev. 5:9).

Solomon did not follow God's regulation about having only one wife, and many readers of the Bible would condemn him for this. Nevertheless, in Psalm 45, written in praise of Solomon, Solomon is a type of Christ as the One with a corporate wife. If we would understand this, we need a mind that is renewed and enlightened with spiritual understanding. This is the reason I have pointed out that we should not come to this psalm with our natural mind. The natural mind is of no avail in understanding Psalm 45.

If we are enlightened and renewed, we will realize that Psalm 45 is lovable. First, in verses 2 through 7, this psalm praises the king, Solomon, in his fairness, in his victory, in

his kingdom, and in the sweetness of his virtues. After this, the psalmist continues by praising the king in the praising of his queen. The queen is not alone but is accompanied by the daughters of kings (v. 9) and by the virgins, her friends (v. 14). If we view this as a type, we will see that the king typifies Christ, that the queen typifies the church, and that those around the queen typify the believers. In type, this queen is not a single, individual person—she is corporate. The believers are the constituents, the components, of this corporate queen. Actually, the believers are both the constituents of the queen and the honorable and beautiful women.

The situation is the same in Revelation 19:7 and 9a. Verse 7 says, "Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." This verse speaks of the wife of the Lamb. However, verse 9a says, "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb." This verse speaks of those who are invited to the Lamb's marriage dinner. When I was young I was troubled by this, believing that the wife is the church but not understanding much about the overcomers. Actually, the wife, the bride of Christ, here is not the church but the overcomers. Then who are the invited ones, the guests? The guests also are the overcomers. This means that, on the one hand, the overcomers are the bride and that, on the other hand, they are the guests. We may say that the bride is composed of the guests. First the overcomers are the corporate bride, and then they are also the guests. In Psalm 45 the bride of Christ is typified by the queen, and His overcoming guests are typified by the honorable women around the queen. The bride of Christ, therefore, is actually the group of overcomers. We need to have this understanding as we study Psalm 45.

In this psalm we see the praise to Solomon as a type of Christ, the King appointed by God to rule over His people and over the entire universe. The praise here is marvelous. It praises Christ not only concerning the things that are of Him directly—His fairness, victory, majesty, kingdom, and sweetness—but also concerning the things that are of Him indirectly through His church and His overcomers. Since the

overcomers are Christ's members, whatever is of them directly is of Him indirectly and is His glory. Thus, the fairness of Christ in this psalm is of two layers: the first layer, the layer that is of Himself directly, and the second layer, the layer that is of His Body, His members, directly and of Him indirectly.

With such an understanding as a foundation, we come now to verses 9 through 17 of Psalm 45.

VII. PRAISING THE KING IN THE PRAISING OF THE QUEEN WITH THE DAUGHTERS OF KINGS AMONG THE KING'S MOST HONORABLE WOMEN AND THE VIRGINS, THE QUEEN'S COMPANIONS

In verses 9 through 15 we have the praising of the king in the praising of the queen with the daughters of kings among the king's most honorable women and the virgins, the queen's companions.

A. The Daughters of Kings Being among the King's Most Honorable Women

Verse 9a says, "The daughters of kings are among your most prized [honorable]." The daughters of the kings signify the believers of Christ in their royalty, and the king's most honorable (or, glorious) women signify the believers of Christ in their honor and majesty. Not only does the king have honor and majesty, but the queen and the women around her also have honor and majesty. This is a type, a picture, of the church with the believers.

In the New Testament we have a clear word concerning the church and the believers. Paul exhorted us to behave in a way that matches our status. For instance, in Ephesians 4:1 he beseeches us to walk worthily of the calling with which we were called. However, Paul's word of exhortation cannot compare with the revelation regarding our status as believers given in the type in Psalm 45. Do you realize that, as a believer, you are one of "the daughters of kings"? We all, males and females, are daughters of kings because we have been born of the King and thus are of the royal family. We need to realize that Psalm 45 speaks about us. If we have

this realization, we will say, "Lord, I am one of the daughters of the King, one of the honorable women. I have royalty, honor, and majesty. I am not an ordinary person." This is our status as believers.

If we are conscious of our royal status, our behavior will be changed and our character will be uplifted. We will not sell ourselves cheaply and we will not fight or quarrel with others, but will behave ourselves more honorably. Then, as a husband and wife, will we argue, behaving like "scorpions"? If we realize that we are royal people, our behavior will surely be affected by our understanding of the mysterious, spiritual, and heavenly things, the things which are related to the invisible scene in the universe.

In Psalm 45 we have some features of the spiritual scene that are not found in the New Testament. This is why we need the types, the symbols. I wish to emphasize the fact that in this psalm we have a strange and wonderful type of Christ—the type of a man with hundreds of wives. Remember, this symbol is a matter not of ethics but of typology. With respect to typology, there was the need for Solomon and his many wives. For this reason, God created Solomon and appointed him to be the king above all the kings. God even created the princesses who were to come from Egypt and other nations to be Solomon's wives. God did all this so that in the Bible there would be this particular type of the church composed of the believers to be the corporate wife of Christ.

From this Old Testament type we see that the believers are Christ's counterpart. In one sense, He is the King and we are the queen, His wife. In another sense, we are the components of the queen. These components are signified by the many virgins, the queen's companions. Since in verse 14 the words "virgins" and "friends" are in apposition, they refer to the same persons. According to the type, this signifies that the queen here is not an individual; rather, she is corporate, and all her companions are her components, with whom she is constituted and composed to be the wife of Christ the King.

The proper way to understand Psalm 45 is to understand it according to typology. If we understand the type, we have the key to understanding the entire psalm. However, apart

from understanding the type, we have no way to understand this psalm, and the more we read it, the more we will be led into a "forest."

Understanding Psalm 45 according to typology, we see that the King is Christ. Christ has only one queen, a corporate queen composed of the overcomers. The components of this queen are believers, but these believers are not the defeated ones. If they were defeated ones and not overcoming ones, they would not be honorable or majestic. I hope that we all will be among the overcomers and thus be components of the bride of Christ.

B. The Queen Standing at the King's Right Hand in the Gold of Ophir

Verse 9b says, "The queen stands at your right hand in the gold of Ophir." The queen signifies the church, and her being covered with gold signifies the church's appearing in the divine nature. This gold that covers her is Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:30 we are told that God has made Christ to be righteousness to us for our justification, for us to be justified by God. As our righteousness, Christ is our covering. This covering is altogether divine. Christ is pure gold, "the gold of Ophir." This is the first layer of our covering.

C. The Daughter Hearing and Seeing and Forgetting Her People and Her Father's House, and the King Desiring Her Beauty

Verse 10 goes on to say, "Hear, O daughter, and see; and incline your ear; / And forget your people and your father's house." The daughter is the queen, who signifies the church, and her father's house signifies the natural relationships of the church. This word about the daughter's forgetting her people and her father's house corresponds to the Lord's word about denying the natural relationships (Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26) and caring for the church. Throughout the centuries, many believers have been persecuted by their family.

Psalm 45:11a continues, "Thus the king will desire your beauty." The queen's beauty here signifies the virtues of

Christ expressed through the church. The beauty of the church, her beauty in the presence of Christ, is Christ's virtues lived out of us.

D. Worshipping the Lord

"Because he is your lord, / Worship him" (v. 11b). This signifies that as the Lord of the church Christ is worthy not only of her love but also of her worship.

E. The Daughter of Tyre Coming with a Gift, and the Rich among the People Entreating Her Favor

"The daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; / The rich among the people will entreat your favor" (v. 12). Tyre, a seaport, was a flourishing, commercial center known for its riches. Here the daughter of Tyre signifies the people of the flourishing world. The rich among the people signify the high class. The rich have great wealth, but they do not have what this verse calls "favor." The favor they entreat of the queen signifies the grace of God enjoyed by the church. The grace of God which we have in the church is the real favor. As indicated by this verse, the rich will come to the church to obtain the grace of God.

F. The King's Daughter Being All Glorious within the Royal Abode

Verse 13a says, "The king's daughter is all glorious within the royal abode." The king's daughter is the queen signifying the church, and her being all glorious within the royal abode signifies the glorious church taking Christ as her royal abode.

The word "abode" here refers to the church's taking Christ as her abode. First we, the believers of Christ, take Christ as our abode, and then we become His abode. This means that the abode becomes the abode. Christ becomes an abode when we take Him as our abode, abiding in Him, and thus become His abode in Him. Concerning this, the Lord Jesus said, "Abide in Me and I in you" (John 15:4a). This indicates that if we take Him as our abode, we become His abode. In this way the abode becomes the abode.

This abode is a matter of experiencing Christ through the church. Christ, as the Son, is an abode to the Father and the Spirit, and His being such an abode involves the coinherence among the three of the Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. But when we believe in Christ, we enter into Him and take Him as our abode. Then, being in Him as our abode, we, the church, become His abode.

G. Her Garment Being of Woven Work Inwrought with Gold

"Her garment is a woven work inwrought with gold" (Psa. 45:13b). This signifies that the Christ who has been dealt with through death and resurrection is the righteousness of the church to meet the righteous requirement of God for her to be justified before God. Thus "woven work inwrought with gold" again refers to the first layer of her covering—Christ as our righteousness through whom we are justified—signified by the gold of Ophir.

H. She Being Led to the King in Embroidered Clothing

"She will be led to the king in embroidered clothing" (v. 14a). This embroidered clothing, another garment, the second layer of her covering, signifies that the church will be led to Christ at their marriage clothed with the righteousnesses of the saints to meet the requirement of Christ for their marriage.

Regarding this, Revelation 19:8 says, "It was given to her [the overcomers as the Lamb's wife] that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." The word "righteousnesses" refers to Christ as our subjective righteousness, Christ lived out of us. The righteousness (Christ) that we received for our salvation (1 Cor. 1:30) is objective and enables us to meet the requirement of the righteous God, whereas the righteousnesses of the overcoming believers are subjective (Phil. 3:9) and enable them to meet the requirement of the overcoming Christ. If we would have these righteousnesses, we must have Christ Himself lived out of us to be our subjective

righteousnesses. Thus, the queen in Psalm 45 has two garments. The first garment, the gold of Ophir, the woven work inwrought with gold, corresponds to Christ as our objective righteousness, which is for our salvation. The second garment, the embroidered clothing, corresponds to Christ as our subjective righteousnesses, which are for our victory.

I. The Virgins behind Her, Her Friends, Being Led to the King

Psalm 45:14b says, "The virgins behind her, her friends, / Will be led to you." This signifies that the overcoming saints will be invited to the marriage dinner of Christ (Rev. 19:9).

J. The Virgins Being Led with Rejoicing and Exultation and Entering the King's Palace

"They will be led with rejoicing and exultation; / They will enter the king's palace" (Psa. 45:15). This signifies that the overcoming saints will enter, with rejoicing and exultation, the New Jerusalem as Christ's palace (Rev. 3:12).

As we read this psalm, we need to pay attention to the crucial points concerning Christ and the church. One crucial point is the matter of the abode and the palace. First we have the abode and then the palace. When Christ becomes our abode, we become His abode—a mutual abode. Because Christ is the King and we are the queen, eventually this mutual abode becomes the palace, which signifies the New Jerusalem.

What is the New Jerusalem? In brief, the New Jerusalem is the redeeming God wrought into the believers and mingled with them to be one entity. The church today is such an entity, for, like the New Jerusalem, the church is actually the redeeming God wrought into the believers and mingled with them to be a single entity. Today the church is a miniature of the coming New Jerusalem. In eternity in the new heaven and new earth, the New Jerusalem will be the consummation of the church. Therefore, both the church and the New Jerusalem are the Triune God Himself wrought into us and mingled with us to be one entity. This entity is a mutual abode; it is both our dwelling place and God's dwelling place.

In the New Jerusalem, a mutual abode, God will dwell with His redeemed people for eternity.

VIII. PRAISING THE KING IN THE PRAISING OF HIS SONS

Thus far in Psalm 45 we have seen the praising of Christ in Himself and the praising of Christ in the praising of His church, of His redeemed. Now, in verses 16 and 17, we have the praising of the king in the praising of his sons, his descendants. Here, the sons of the king signify the members of Christ. On the one hand, as believers, we are the members of Christ; on the other hand, we are the sons, the descendants, of Christ.

A. The King's Sons Being in the Palace of His Fathers, and the King Making Them Princes in All the Earth

"In the place of your fathers will be your sons; / You will make them princes in all the earth" (v. 16). Here "fathers" signifies Christ's forefathers in the flesh, and "sons" signifies the overcomers of Christ. The word "princes" signifies the overcomers of Christ reigning with Christ over the nations.

No one can solve the problems of today's world. Only Christ the King can solve these problems. When Christ reigns on earth, the overcomers will be His helpers in the kingship, His co-kings. The sons of Christ, the overcomers, will be the princes reigning with Christ over the nations.

We need to see not only the beauty of Christ that is in Christ Himself and the beauty of Christ that is in the church but also the beauty of Christ that is in all His descendants, all His members, as the princes. If we see Christ's beauty in these three ways, we will have a complete view, the full picture, of His beauty.

B. His Name Being Remembered in All Generations, and the Peoples Praising Him Forever and Ever

Finally, in verse 17 the psalmist says, "I will cause your

name to be remembered in all generations; / Therefore the peoples will praise you forever and ever." This reveals that Christ's name will be remembered in all generations through the overcoming saints and that Christ will be praised by the nations through His overcoming and co-reigning saints.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWENTY-TWO

THE PSALMISTS' INTENSIFIED ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HIS HOUSE AND CITY THROUGH THE SUFFERING, EXALTED, AND REIGNING CHRIST

(4)

PRAISING GOD IN HIS GREATNESS AND EXALTATION PARTICULARLY IN HIS CITY

Scripture Reading: Psa. 46—48

In our study of the Bible, we need to learn to ask questions of the Lord, and we should do this as we come now to Psalms 46—48. We should ask why these three psalms are placed immediately after Psalm 45, a psalm praising king Solomon (typifying Christ) with his queen (typifying the church). If you were the compiler of the Psalms, would you have put these psalms right after Psalm 45?

Psalm 46 does not seem to be a continuation of Psalm 45. However, there is definitely a continuation here. Psalm 45 is on the king, and Psalm 46 is on the city. Surely the king has much to do with the city. If a king did not have a city, what kind of king would he be? A king must have a city. The king in Psalm 45 typifies Christ, but what is the city mentioned in Psalm 46? This city is Jerusalem.

In the previous message we pointed out that in studying the Bible, we need an enlightened and renewed mind. When we study a psalm such as Psalm 45, we should not have any trust in our natural understanding or our natural concept. Instead of relying on our natural mind, we need to exercise our renewed and enlightened mind.

In addition, if we would understand the Bible, we also need to know the spiritual, divine, and heavenly significance

of the things in the Bible and the significance of the things concerning Christ. As we study Psalm 45, for instance, we must find out the spiritual significance of the king, the queen, the daughters, and the sons. Likewise, as we study Psalm 46, we must find out the spiritual significance of the city.

The Bible was written not only in letters, and it not only contains many types, but it is a book filled with matters that have a spiritual significance. Consider the first two chapters of Genesis. If we read Genesis 1 and 2 only according to the letters without caring for the spiritual significance, we will not understand these chapters. As we study chapter one, we need to learn the significance of the heavens, the earth, the light, the land emerging from the water, the vegetable life, the animal life, the human life, the divine life, and the matters of image and dominion. If we know the significance of the items in Genesis 1, we will see that man was created according to God's kind to bear God's image and to represent Him.

As we go on to Genesis 2, we see that the man created by God is tripartite. He has a body, made from the dust of the ground; he has a spirit, the issue of the breath of God; and he has a soul (v. 7). The man thus formed by God was put in a garden in Eden and placed before two trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This chapter also speaks of the river that went out of Eden and of gold, bdellium, and onyx stone. Furthermore, in Genesis 2 we are told that God took a rib out of the man and used it to make a woman. All these things have a spiritual significance, and we need to know this spiritual significance.

The city in Psalm 46 has a spiritual, divine, and heavenly significance. In the Bible as a whole and in this psalm in particular, a city signifies a kingdom. The primary city in the Bible is Jerusalem, and a city that stands in opposition to Jerusalem is Babylon. If we would understand the Bible, we need to understand the significance of both Jerusalem and Babylon.

The Psalms are full of matters that have a spiritual, divine, and heavenly significance. The first matter of significance is

the law in Psalm 1. Although the law was exalted according to the human concept of the psalmist, the Spirit came in to correct the psalmist and, in Psalm 2, to turn him from the law to Christ. Psalm 2 is the first station of the unveiling of Christ in the Psalms. Other stations are Psalm 8, Psalm 16, Psalms 22—24, Psalm 40, and Psalm 45.

Through Christ and by Christ we experience the house of God, another matter of spiritual significance in the Psalms. The house of God signifies the church. According to Psalm 23, as we experience Christ in His shepherding, we are brought into the house of God to dwell there forever. The house of God is also emphasized in Psalm 27 and again in Psalm 36. In Psalm 27:4 the psalmist aspires to dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of his life. In Psalm 36:8 the psalmist speaks of the fatness (signifying the abundance) of God's house, where there is the fountain of life and where we see light in God's light.

In Psalm 31 we have a word concerning the city, and in Psalm 24, a word concerning the mountain, which implies the city. Psalm 31:21 says, "Blessed be Jehovah, / For He displayed His lovingkindness wondrously / To me in a fortified city." Psalm 24:3 speaks about the mountain of Jehovah. In Matthew 5:14b the Lord Jesus says, "It is impossible for a city situated upon a mountain to be hidden." This indicates that, according to the Bible, the mountain is for the city. Book One of the Psalms has turned the psalmists from the law to Christ, and Christ has brought them to the enjoyment of God in His house and city.

In my opinion, Psalm 45 is the greatest and highest psalm concerning Christ. In this psalm Christ, typified by Solomon, is unveiled and praised as the King. Immediately afterward, Psalm 46 goes on to speak not of the house but of the city. The house is a place of dwelling, but a city is a kingdom for ruling. As the One unveiled as the King in Psalm 45, Christ needs a city in which to rule and reign, and we see this city in Psalm 46. We may enjoy Christ as the King, and this King reigns in the city, which is His kingdom. If we are clear regarding this, we may now consider, from Psalms 46—48,

the matter of praising God in His greatness and exaltation, particularly in His city.

I. A RIVER GLADDENING THE CITY OF GOD

Psalm 46 speaks concerning a river gladdening the city of God.

A. God Being Our Refuge, Strength, and Help

God is our refuge, strength, and a help in distress; He is most readily found (v. 1). God is all this to us in the city. Therefore, even though the earth changes and the mountains slip into the heart of the sea, we will not fear (v. 2). In verse 3 the psalmist says, "Let the waters of the sea roar and foam; / Let the mountains shake at its swelling."

B. There Being a River Whose Streams Gladden the City of God, the Holy Place of the Tabernacle of the Most High

"There is a river whose streams gladden the city of God, / The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High" (v. 4). This river signifies the flowing of the Triune God as life to us, as mentioned in Revelation 22. The streams of this river gladden the city of God, which is the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.

C. God Being in the Midst of the City to Be Our High Retreat

God is in the midst of the city to be our high retreat (Psa. 46:7b, 11b). The city will not be moved; God helps her at the dawn of morning (v. 5b). In verses 6 and 7 the psalmist says, "The nations rage; the kingdoms are moved. / He utters His voice; the earth melts. / Jehovah of hosts is with us; / The God of Jacob is our high retreat." In the city we enjoy God as our place of retreat.

D. God Making Desolations on Earth

God has made desolations on earth, and He makes wars cease unto the ends of the earth (vv. 8-9). Throughout the

centuries, God has made many desolations on earth. For example, He made Hitler a desolation.

E. God Being Exalted among the Nations on Earth

"Be still and know that I am God. / I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted on earth" (v. 10). This is a word to the nations. Today the nations are raging, but one day God, who rules and reigns in the city, will command them to be still and know that He is God.

II. A GREAT KING OVER ALL THE EARTH

In Psalm 47 the psalmist speaks concerning God as a great King over all the earth.

A. The Peoples Clapping Their Hands and Shouting to God with the Voice of a Triumphant Sound

In verse 1 the peoples are told to clap their hands and shout to God with the voice of a triumphant sound. For Jehovah Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth (v. 2).

B. God Subduing Peoples under Israel and Choosing an Inheritance for Them

Jehovah subdues peoples under Israel and nations under their feet. He also has chosen an inheritance for them as the excellency (glory) of Jacob, whom He loved (vv. 3-4).

C. God Arising amidst Shouting at the Sound of a Trumpet

"God arises amidst shouting; / Jehovah, at the sound of a trumpet" (v. 5). When we shout, God arises. If we do not shout, God may not arise.

D. Singing Psalms to Our King

Next, the psalmist charges us to sing psalms to God our King. He is the King of all the earth, reigning over the nations and sitting upon His holy throne (vv. 6-8).

E. Those Who Are Noble among the Peoples Being Gathered with the People of the God of Abraham

Verse 9 goes on to say that those who are noble among the peoples have been gathered with the people of the God of Abraham. The shields of the earth belong to God; He is greatly exalted.

III. THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING

Psalm 48 is about the city of the great King.

A. Jehovah Being Great and Much to Be Praised in the City of Our God, in His Holy Mountain

"Great is Jehovah, / And much to be praised / In the city of our God, / In His holy mountain" (v. 1). In this verse "city of our God" and "His holy mountain" are in apposition. This indicates that the city is the mountain and that the mountain is the city.

B. Mount Zion Being Beautiful in Elevation

Mount Zion, the sides of the north, the city of the great King, is beautiful in elevation. It is the joy of the whole earth (v. 2).

Verse 3 says, "God has made Himself known / In her palaces as a high retreat." The city signifies the church, the universal church, but the palaces in the city signify the local churches. God has made Himself known in the palaces, in the local churches. Thus, if we want to know God, we need to come to the local churches, which are a high retreat. First, God Himself is a retreat, and then the local churches become a retreat. The local churches today are a retreat. If you need a retreat, come to the local churches.

C. The Kings, Having Assembled Themselves to Pass by the City Together, Seeing It and Being Astounded and Dismayed

"Behold, the kings have assembled themselves; / They passed by together. / They saw; therefore they were astounded. / They were dismayed; they hurried off in alarm"

(vv. 4-5). The kings here are the enemies, who are astounded and dismayed at seeing the city and who hurry off in alarm. They are seized by trembling and writhing, like that of a woman in labor (v. 6).

D. God Establishing the City Forever

"As we have heard, / So we have seen / In the city of Jehovah of hosts, / In the city of our God. / God will establish it forever" (v. 8). God will establish the city forever.

E. Considering God's Lovingkindness in the Midst of His Temple

The psalmist continues by saying that we consider God's lovingkindness in the midst of His temple. As His name is, so is His praise unto the ends of the earth (vv. 9-10). "Let Mount Zion rejoice; / Let the daughters of Judah [the people of Judah] exult / Because of Your judgments" (v. 11).

F. God Being Our God Forever and Being Our Guide Even unto Death

"Walk about Zion, and go around her; / Count her towers. / Consider carefully her bulwarks; / Pass between her palaces; / That you may recount it to the generation following" (vv. 12-13). Towers and bulwarks are for fighting the enemies to protect the city, and palaces are for the king's dwelling. All these indicate the functions of the church. We should walk around the church, count her "towers," consider carefully her "bulwarks," and pass between her "palaces" that we may recount it to the following generation.

"For this God is our God forever and ever. / He will guide us even unto death" (v. 14). Here we see that God is our guide, even our tour guide. Our human life is a tour, and we are tourists who do not know where to go or how to get to our destination. We need a guide, and our guide is God Himself. He will continue to guide us until we die and go to Paradise.

Where do we experience God's being our guide? He is our guide in the church, both in the universal church, the Body of Christ, and in the local churches. We do not know what

our next step should be, but He is directing our steps. We do not know where to go, but He is guiding us, the tourists, on our tour of human life. Since God will continue to guide us even unto death, there is no need for us to worry. Instead, we should simply enjoy His presence, guidance, and direction.

God's guidance is an aspect of the enjoyment of God in the city. This enjoyment of God is through Christ, in Christ, and with Christ, and it is in the church and in the local churches—in the universal church as the Body of Christ and in the local churches as the expressions of the Body.

In Psalms 46—48 God is our refuge, our retreat, and our guide. The God whom we enjoy through Christ, in Christ, and with Christ in the church and the local churches is our refuge, retreat, and guide. Have you experienced and enjoyed Him in this way? At present, our experience may be limited, but we thank the Lord for the new "shoots" and "branches" of such an experience of God in Christ that are springing forth. May we all learn to enjoy God in Christ in the church and in the local churches.

Thus far in our life-study, we have covered forty-eight psalms. In which psalm do you intend to linger? Will you stay in Psalm 1 or go to enjoy Christ in Psalm 2, Psalm 8, Psalm 16, and Psalms 22—24? The Christ we enjoy in Psalm 23 is the Shepherd, the One who is shepherding us into the house of God, the local church. Eventually, when we are built up, strengthened, and enlarged, the church becomes the city, the kingdom of God, where the King rules and reigns.

The Psalms indicate that we first need to experience Christ. Then Christ will lead us to the local church to enjoy God. As the house, the church is God's home, the place of His dwelling. As the city, the church is God's kingdom, the place of His ruling. When the church, the house, is enlarged it becomes the city—the kingdom for God's ruling and reigning. In the church as the house, we enjoy God in the aspect of His dwelling. In the church as the city, we enjoy God in the aspect of His ruling and reigning. This is the enjoyment of God in Christ in the church and in the churches.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWENTY-THREE

THREE CATEGORIES OF PERSONS REGARDING THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Psa. 49—51

In studying the Psalms, we need to pay attention to the sequence of the psalms and also to how the psalms are arranged in groups. We have seen that Psalm 45 is a psalm concerning the king and that Psalms 46—48 are a group of psalms concerning the city of the king, Jerusalem. In this message we will consider another group of three psalms—Psalms 49—51.

Psalms 49—51 cover three categories of persons regarding the enjoyment of God in Christ. The first category (Psa. 49) consists of those who trust in their wealth (that is, in anything other than Christ). In the second category (Psa. 50) are those who call upon the Lord according to His covenant. The third category (Psa. 51) is a single person, King David, repenting, confessing his sins to God, and asking God for His purging. Those in the first category have no share in the enjoyment of God in Christ; those in the second category participate in the enjoyment of God; and the one in the third category has a full portion of the enjoyment of God in Christ. We need to ask ourselves where we are. Are we in Psalm 49, Psalm 50, or Psalm 51? If we want to have the full enjoyment of God in Christ, we must be like the one in Psalm 51, the one who thoroughly repented and confessed his sins to God.

I. THOSE TRUSTING IN THEIR WEALTH

Psalm 49 is about those who trust in their wealth (anything other than Christ). According to the Lord's word, in this age wealth, which is mammon, represents the entire

world (Matt. 6:24). Some people think that money can do anything; they believe that as long as they have money, they do not need anything else. Instead of trusting in God, they trust in money. They are the ones in Psalm 49.

The word in Psalm 49 should be a warning to us. To trust in money—to trust in anything other than Christ—is to be in Psalm 49. Things such as our education or car may be a kind of wealth, or treasure, to us. If we trust in such things, we have no share in the enjoyment of God in Christ.

A. A Word of Wisdom

Psalm 49 is a word of wisdom, the meditation of understanding (vv. 1-5). In verse 3 the psalmist says, "My mouth will speak wisdom, / And the meditation of my heart will be that of understanding." The Hebrew word translated "meditation" may also be rendered "utterance."

To love money is to be foolish. A person who is lacking in money may be very sober, clear, and full of understanding. However, a person who has a great deal of money is likely to be foolish and use his money to do foolish things. Likewise, those who are greedy and covetous also are foolish. Such persons do not have the wisdom and understanding found in Psalm 49.

B. Unable to Redeem Their Brothers

Those who trust in their wealth are unable to redeem their brothers, needless to say themselves (vv. 6-9).

C. Appointed to Die and Perish

The ones who trust in their wealth are appointed to die and perish (vv. 10-14). They will leave their wealth to others (vv. 16-20). The psalmist, on the contrary, has the assurance that God will redeem his soul from the power of Sheol, for God will receive him (v. 15).

Those who trust in their wealth are not only foolish and senseless (v. 10) but are also likened to animals, even to beasts. Verse 12 says, "But man in honor does not remain; / He is like the beasts that perish." Verse 20, the last verse of the psalm, concludes, "A man in honor but without

understanding / Is like the beasts that perish." Like the beasts, the foolish ones who trust in their wealth are appointed to die and to perish.

D. Not Trusting in Christ for Their Redemption

Those who trust in their wealth do not trust in Christ for their redemption. The worst thing a person can do is not to trust in Christ. To trust in Christ simply means to believe in Him. It is most foolish not to believe in Christ.

E. Having No Share in the Enjoyment of God in His House and in His City

Finally, the ones who trust in their wealth have no share in the enjoyment of God in His house and in His city. Because they are outside of Christ, they are excluded from the enjoyment of God in His house, the church, and in His city, the kingdom.

II. THOSE CALLING UPON THE LORD ACCORDING TO HIS COVENANT

In Psalm 50 we have the second category of persons regarding the enjoyment of God in Christ—those who call upon the Lord according to His covenant. To call upon the Lord, saying, "O Lord Jesus," makes a very real difference in our situation.

According to this psalm, we need to call upon the Lord according to His covenant. The Bible is the book of a covenant, the book of a testament. A covenant may be compared to the title deed to a house. To give someone the title deed to a house is actually to "covenant" the house to that person. In the Bible, a book of covenant, God has covenanted Himself to us, and now we need to call upon the Lord according to this covenant. We should say, "O Lord, You have covenanted Yourself to me. According to Your covenant, You are now my possession, my portion, and my enjoyment." This is to call upon the Lord according to His covenant.

A. As the Saints of God, Who Have Made a Covenant with God by Sacrifice

In this psalm, those who call upon the Lord according to His covenant are the saints of God who have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. They have been charged by the righteous God, who is Judge, to offer Him a sacrifice of thanksgiving and to call upon Him in the day of trouble that they may participate in His deliverance, His salvation (vv. 1-15, 23). To make a covenant with God by sacrifice is to make a covenant by Christ as our Mediator, as the "middleman" between us and God. If we pray to God in the name of the Lord Jesus, this means that we pray to God by Christ as our sacrifice.

In ancient times the people of Israel offered different kinds of offerings to God, such as the burnt offering, the meal offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, and the peace offering. Of all these offerings, the one that was the most touching to the hearts of the people was the peace offering. Because the peace offering touched the heart of the one who offered it, it became a thanksgiving offering. One could offer to God a burnt offering, a meal offering, a sin offering, or a trespass offering without much affection. This means that one could offer such an offering without his heart being touched. However, whenever a person, being thankful to God, offered a thanksgiving offering to God, that person's heart was touched.

Psalm 50 tells us that some of the saints of God were offering burnt offerings and other kinds of offerings (vv. 8-13), but, because they were lacking in affection, they would not offer the thanksgiving offering. Thus the psalmist, speaking for God, indicated that what God wants is not the burnt offering but the thanksgiving offering. In verse 14a the psalmist says, "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving." Here the psalmist seemed to be saying, "God does not want your burnt offering. God wants you to offer Him your thanksgiving offering, an offering that is touching to both you and God, an offering full of affection."

We need to consider this in the light of our experience with the Lord. Many of us have prayed in this way: "O God the Father, I am a sinner. The Lord Jesus Christ is my burnt offering, sin offering, and trespass offering." This is a prayer without affection, without tender feeling. This indicates that we can offer certain offerings without being touched in our heart. Suppose, however, that after passing through a time of trouble, you pray, "O God the Father, I would like to offer to You my thanksgiving." Such a prayer touches your heart, fills you with affection, and causes you and God to become intimate.

Which experience is better—to offer the burnt offering, the meal offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, or to offer the thanksgiving offering? Surely the experience of offering the thanksgiving offering is better. We may offer Christ as the other kinds of offerings without being deeply touched. But when we are thankful to God and offer to Him a prayer of thanksgiving, we may be deeply touched. This is what God wants. We should not contact Him without being touched in our heart. Rather, our contact with God needs to be full of affection and tender feeling.

In verses 16 through 22 we have God's warning to the wicked, who are not included in the category of those who call upon the Lord according to His covenant.

B. Redeemed by God in Christ

Those who call upon the Lord according to His covenant are those who have been redeemed by God in Christ, typified by the sacrifices.

C. Enjoying God in His Shining Forth out of His House in Zion, the Perfection of Beauty

Verse 2 says, "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, / God shines forth." Just as the shining of the sun is a dispensing of the sun's goodness, so the shining forth of God out of His house is a dispensing of His goodness. Under such a shining, such a dispensing, we enjoy God in Christ.

This is the second category of persons regarding the

enjoyment of God in Christ. I believe that most of us are in this category.

III. A PERSON REPENTING, CONFESSING HIS SINS TO GOD, AND ASKING GOD FOR HIS PURGING

In Psalm 51 we have the third category—a person repenting, confessing his sins to God, and asking God for His purging. In the life of each one of us, there needs to be a period of time, perhaps lasting for several days, in which we thoroughly repent, confess our sins to God, and plead with Him to deal with our sins and with our sinful nature. Furthermore, day by day we need to repent and confess.

A. David, after Committing His Great Sin and Being Rebuked by the Prophet Nathan

The title of Psalm 51 is significant: "A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba" (2 Sam. 11:1—12:14). This indicates that this psalm was composed after David's great sin in murdering Uriah and robbing him of his wife Bath-sheba and then being rebuked by the prophet Nathan.

B. Repenting and Confessing His Sins to God

In verses 3 through 5 and 17 David repented and confessed his sins to God.

C. Begging God

1. To Blot Out His Transgressions, Wash Him Thoroughly from His Iniquity, Cleanse Him from His Sin, and Purge His Sin with Hyssop

David begged God to blot out his transgressions, wash him thoroughly from his iniquity, cleanse him from his sin, and purge his sin with hyssop (vv. 1-2, 7, 9). The verbs used by David—"blot out," "wash," "cleanse," and "purge"—indicate that his repentance and confession were thorough and that his asking for forgiveness was genuine.

In contrast, suppose someone would pray, saying, "God, I

know that You are merciful. No matter how many sins I have committed, I know that You will forgive me." This kind of confession does not mean anything. Like David, we need to stay in the presence of God, confessing that we were born in sin and pleading with Him to wash us and cleanse us, to blot out our transgressions, and to purge our sin. To pray in this way indicates that we have no trust in ourselves. Realizing that we are sinful and that God is holy, we trust only in Him. Also, we realize that we need Christ to be our Mediator and our sacrifice.

In verse 7a David prayed, "Purge my sin with hyssop, and I will be clean." Hyssop typifies Christ in His humble and humiliated human nature (1 Kings 4:33a; Exo. 12:22a). In Psalm 51:7a hyssop implies Christ as the Mediator and the sacrifice.

2. To Create in Him a Clean Heart and Renew a Steadfast Spirit within Him

In verse 10 David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, / And renew a steadfast spirit within me." The Hebrew word for "clean" here may also be translated "pure." David begged God not only to forgive him and purge him but also to renew him.

By sinning we become old, but after we are forgiven by God we may be renewed. Thus, after we enjoy God's forgiveness, we need to ask Him for His renewing. We need to pray that He will give us a pure heart and a steadfast spirit.

3. To Not Cast Him from His Presence and Not Take the Spirit of His Holiness Away from Him

In verse 11 David continued, "Do not cast me from Your presence, / And do not take the Spirit of Your holiness away from me." We need a new heart and a steadfast spirit, and we also need God's presence. If we lose God's presence, we lose everything. God's presence is actually the Spirit. When the Spirit is away, God's presence also is gone.

4. To Restore to Him the Gladness of His Salvation and Sustain Him with a Willing Spirit

In verse 8a David prayed, "Let me hear gladness and joy," and in verse 12 he asked, "Restore to me the gladness of Your salvation, / And sustain me with a willing spirit." Here we see a connection between gladness and willingness of spirit. When we are happy, we also have a willing spirit. This is the overcoming life. A defeated person, on the contrary, is unhappy and does not have a willing spirit. If such a defeated one confesses his sin and asks God for His forgiveness, he will have the gladness of God's salvation and will also have a willing spirit. It is by the gladness of God's salvation that a willing spirit is sustained within us.

5. To Deliver Him from the Guilt of Bloodshed

Finally, in verses 14 and 15 David begged God to deliver him from the guilt of bloodshed that his tongue may ring forth His righteousness and his mouth may declare His praise.

D. Participating in the Enjoyment of God in His House and in His City through the Offerings on the Altar

"Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion; / Build the walls of Jerusalem. / Then You will delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, / In burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; / Then they will offer sacrifices of bullocks upon Your altar" (vv. 18-19). This signifies the participation in the enjoyment of God in the local church as God's house and in the church as God's city through the all-inclusive Christ as the offerings. If we are those who repent, confess our sins, and ask God for His purging, we will have the enjoyment of God in Christ in His house, the local church, and in His city, the universal church. This is related to God's favoring of the local churches and the building up of the universal church. May this be our practical experience day by day.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FOUR

THE PIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF THE PSALMISTS UTTERED OUT OF THEIR COMPLEX SENTIMENTS WHILE ENJOYING GOD IN HIS HOUSE PSALMS 52—67

(1)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 52—57

With the divine revelation in the Psalms, there are stations for the revelation concerning Christ. The last of these stations which we have covered thus far is Psalm 45, and the next will be Psalm 68. Between Psalm 45 and Psalm 68 there are twenty-two psalms. As we have seen, Psalms 46—48 are concerned with the city, and Psalms 49—51 deal with three categories of persons regarding the enjoyment of God in Christ. Before we come to Psalm 68, we need to pass through sixteen psalms, and we will devote three messages to these psalms. Psalms 52—67 present us with a "marsh," a kind of "muddy" situation that is hard for us to pass through. Nevertheless, we need to get through these sixteen psalms. In this message we will consider Psalms 52—57.

These psalms were treasured by God's people in ancient times, with each psalm being valued as a "gem." Otherwise, these six psalms would not have been included in the book of the Psalms. Although some have highly appreciated these psalms, I find it difficult to be impressed with them. Furthermore, because these psalms are very much alike, I also find it difficult to see how each of them differs from the others. Moreover, it is hard to say what they talk about. The sentiment here is surely strong, mixed, and complex. Therefore, these psalms may be considered the pious expressions of the psalmists uttered out of their complex sentiments while

enjoying God in His house. Let us now consider these psalms one by one.

I. THE PSALMIST'S CONDEMNATION OF THE EVIL MAN AND THE PSALMIST'S ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HIS HOUSE

The superscription to Psalm 52 calls it "a Maschil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul and said to him, David has come to the house of Ahimelech." The word "Maschil" may indicate that this is a psalm of instruction.

In the first seven verses the psalmist condemns the evil man, and in the last two verses the psalmist speaks concerning his enjoyment of God in His house.

A. The Psalmist's Condemnation on the Evil Man

"Why do you boast in evil, O mighty one? / God's lovingkindness endures continually" (v. 1). Who is this mighty one? Why, after referring to the mighty man, does the psalmist immediately go on to speak of God's lovingkindness? There seems to be no connection here.

In verses 2 through 7 it appears that David, the psalmist, is full of hatred for this mighty one. Although David does not say that God will curse this one, he says, "God will likewise bring you down forever; / He will take you and pluck you up from your tent, / And uproot you from the land of the living" (v. 5). David's word here is very strong. How could a godly man pray in such a way concerning one of his persecutors?

B. The Psalmist's Enjoyment of God in His House

In verses 8 and 9 David continued, "But I, like a flourishing olive tree / In the house of God, / Trust in God's lovingkindness / Forever and ever. / I will give You thanks forever, / For You have acted; / And I will hope in Your name in the presence of Your godly ones, / For it is good." Since David was flourishing in God's house and since he trusted

in God's lovingkindness, why did he still need to pray so strongly regarding the mighty one?

What should we think of David? After reading such a psalm as this, will we continue to consider him to be perfectly spiritual? When I was young, I appraised David highly, but after studying the Bible for so many years, my appreciation of him has decreased. On the one hand, David enjoyed God in His house, even as an olive tree flourishing in the dwelling of God; on the other hand, in his prayer he condemned the evil man, saying that God would uproot him from the land of the living. How could David at the same time enjoy God and hate one of his enemies to the uttermost? Surely this mixture of hate for an enemy and praise to God for His enjoyment of God in His house is not right. How could a godly man mix together hatred to his enemy and praise to God in the same psalm? This is what David did in Psalm 52.

II. NONE AMONG ALL THE SONS OF MEN DOING GOOD, BUT THE PSALMIST WANTING TO ENJOY GOD IN HIS SALVATION FROM HIS HOUSE

The superscription to Psalm 53 says, "To the choir director: according to mahalath. A Maschil of David." Concerning "mahalath," the meaning of the Hebrew is obscure. It may refer to a kind of sad melody. This psalm of instruction refers to a time when David was being attacked by the Gentiles.

A. None among All the Sons of Men Doing Good

In verses 1 through 5 we are told that none among all the sons of men was doing good. Here David is saying that none among the Gentiles is doing good. This psalm puts all the Gentiles into a "ditch" and uplifts the Jews to heaven.

Verse 1 says, "The fool has said in his heart, / There is no God. / They are corrupt and do abominable deeds; / There is none who does good." This verse refers not to Jews but to Gentiles, and the fool here is a Gentile. Paul quoted this

verse, along with verses 2 and 3 in Romans 3:10-12, referring to all men.

In verse 4 David goes on to say, "Have they no knowledge, all who do iniquity, / Who devour my people as they would devour bread / And do not call upon God?" Here David seems to be saying that this is God's word to the Gentiles.

B. The Psalmist Wanting to Enjoy God in His Salvation from His House

In verse 6 we see that the psalmist wanted to enjoy God in His salvation from His house when God turned the captivity of His people. This verse says, "Oh that the salvation of Israel might come forth from Zion! / When God turns the captivity of His people, / Jacob will exult, Israel will rejoice." The salvation here is only for the Jews.

III. THE PSALMIST ASKING GOD TO ANNIHILATE HIS ENEMIES, WHILE SEEKING TO PARTICIPATE IN GOD IN HIS HELP, SUSTENANCE, AND SALVATION

Psalm 54 is in the same category as Psalms 52 and 53. Here the psalmist asked God to annihilate his enemies, while he himself was seeking to participate in the enjoyment of God in His help, sustenance, and salvation. It is hard to believe that a God-man could pray for such a thing.

In verse 1 the psalmist says, "O God, save me by Your name, / And execute judgment for me by Your might." On whom was judgment to be executed? According to the psalmist, it was to be executed on his enemies, who were Gentiles.

Verses 2 and 3 continue, "O God, hear my prayer; / Give ear to the words of my mouth. / For strangers have risen up against me, / And those who terrorize seek my soul; / They do not set God before them." The strangers here are Gentiles. For the Gentiles not to set God before them means that they do not fear God. To them, there is no God.

In verse 4 the psalmist goes on to say, "Behold, God is my help; / The Lord is among those who sustain my soul."

Those who sustained the psalmist's soul, helping God to save David, must have been Jews.

It is in verse 5 that the psalmist prays for the annihilation of his enemies, saying, "He will return the evil to those who lie in wait for me. / Annihilate them in Your faithfulness." Instead of asking the Lord to have mercy on them in His faithfulness, the psalmist prays that God will annihilate them. This does not fit in with the psalmist David's spirituality. In typifying Christ as the fighting victor, it is all right for David to ask God to annihilate his enemies. But in his spiritual living, in his spirituality, it is altogether not right for him to hate his enemies, to ask God to destroy, to annihilate, his enemies. This is against the nature of the spiritual life of God's chosen people, and even against God's holy word in the Old Testament, Proverbs 25:21-22, quoted by the apostle Paul in Romans 12:20. Hence, we cannot admit that David's spirituality is perfect.

Then the psalmist says, "I will offer a freewill offering to You; / I will praise Your name, O Jehovah, for it is good. / For He has delivered me from all distress, / And my eye looks triumphantly upon my enemies" (vv. 6-7). Is this the prayer of a spiritual man, or is it the utterance of a man in his natural concept? After reading such a psalm, can we still hold David in high regard?

I have learned that it is altogether not easy to understand the Bible. In particular, it is not easy to have the proper understanding of a psalm like Psalm 54. In studying this matter, I have been helped by John Nelson Darby's use of the word *sentiment* in relation to the Psalms. Darby says that the Psalms are the expressions of the sentiments of the saints. Regarding Psalms 52—57, I would say that here we have not merely the sentiments of the psalmists but their *complex sentiments*. Their sentiments are a matter of mixture. To trust in God is certainly right, and part of Psalm 54 is an expression of David's trust in God. But how can we justify David's praying, in the same psalm, for the annihilation of his enemies? He hated them to such an extent that he asked God to annihilate them. We must admit that in this psalm

we have a mixture and that the sentiments of the psalmist are complex.

IV. THE PSALMIST SEEKING TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S SALVATION WHILE, UNDER THE OPPRESSION OF HIS ENEMY, ASKING GOD TO DEAL WITH HIS ENEMY

In Psalm 55 the psalmist seeks to experience God's salvation. At the same time, being under the oppression of his enemy, he asks God to deal with his enemy.

A. The Psalmist Seeking to Experience God's Salvation

Verses 1-2, 4-8, 16-18a, 22, and 23b show us that the psalmist is seeking to experience God's salvation. Verse 22, a "golden" verse, says, "Cast your burden upon Jehovah, / And He will support you; / He will never allow the righteous to be moved." This verse assures us that with God we are safe, for He, the supporting One, will not allow anything to move us. Do you have any kind of burden, and are you still bearing it by yourself? You need to cast your burden upon Jehovah, and He will support you.

B. The Psalmist, under the Oppression of His Enemy, Asking God to Deal with His Enemy Based on the Principle of Good and Evil

While under the oppression of his enemy, the psalmist asked God to deal with his enemy (vv. 3, 9-15, 18b-21, 23a). His request was based not on the principle of mercy and grace but rather on the principle of good and evil. His prayer regarding his enemy was based on the principle of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

C. Prophesying Concerning Judas' Betraying of Christ

Verse 13 prophesies concerning Judas' betraying of Christ (41:9; John 13:18). This indicates that in the pious expressions of the psalmist there was a prophecy concerning Christ on

the negative side, considering Judas, who betrayed Christ, as His enemy. David was the type of the suffering Christ. In his pious expression of his complex sentiment concerning his suffering of his enemies, he uttered this prophecy here, indicating that Judas' betrayal of Christ was a part of the sufferings of Christ.

D. The Psalmist, under the Persecution of His Enemy, Recalling His Enjoyment with Others in the House of God

While the psalmist was under the oppression and persecution of his enemy, he recalled his enjoyment of God with the throng in the house of God (Psa. 55:14). This may refer to the enjoyment of the festivals which the people of Israel used to have three times a year (Exo. 23:14-17).

V. THE PSALMIST ASKING GOD TO CAST DOWN HIS ENEMIES, WHILE TRUSTING IN GOD AND ENJOYING GOD IN HIS DELIVERANCE OF HIM FROM DEATH AND STUMBLING

A. The Psalmist Asking God to Cast Down His Enemies

"All day long they wrest my words; / All their thoughts are against me for evil. / They gather themselves; they lurk; / They watch my steps, / As they have waited to take my life. / Will there be deliverance for them in spite of their iniquity? / In anger cast down the peoples, O God" (Psa. 56:5-7). On the one hand, the psalmist trusted in God; on the other hand, while trusting in God, he asked God to cast down his enemies. Many of us have done this very thing. While we are praying that the Lord will uphold us and sustain us, we may ask Him to deal with someone who is bothering us, perhaps our husband or wife, or our roommate. Have you not had this kind of prayer? Sometimes we may have such a sentiment within us but may not actually utter it to the Lord in our prayer.

B. The Psalmist Trusting in God and Enjoying God in His Deliverance of Him from Death and Stumbling

The psalmist trusted in God and enjoyed God in His deliverance of him from death and stumbling (vv. 1-4, 8-13). In verse 8 the psalmist says, "You have counted my wanderings. / Put my tears into Your bottle. / Are they not in Your book?" This word of David regarding his tears and God's bottle may be a figure of speech in poetry as a comfort to himself under God's kind of care. There might be some readers of this verse who have applied David's word here to themselves and have been comforted by it.

VI. THE PSALMIST REJOICING AT THE MISFORTUNE OF HIS ENEMIES, WHILE TRUSTING IN GOD AND ENJOYING GOD IN HIS SALVATION, LOVINGKINDNESS, AND FAITHFULNESS

In Psalm 57:6 the psalmist rejoiced at the misfortune of his enemies. The psalmist did this even while he was trusting in God and enjoying God in His salvation, lovingkindness, and faithfulness (vv. 1-5, 7-11). On the one hand, he trusted in God and enjoyed Him; on the other hand, he was happy to see that his enemies were suffering.

After reading these psalms, I am troubled that there is no hint here that David learned any lessons from his suffering under the attacks of his enemies. There is no indication that David said, "God, why is Saul persecuting me? Why are certain ones attacking me? Lord, I want to know the reason and learn the lesson."

My point is that David's prayers in these psalms are altogether different from what is taught in the New Testament. For instance, when Paul was suffering from "a thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7), he entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from him (v. 8). Eventually, the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness" (v. 9a). The Lord seemed to be saying to Paul, "I will not take the thorn away, and I will not do anything to reduce your suffering. Without the thorn, you

might be lifted up with pride because of the revelations you have received from Me. Also, I will allow the thorn to remain so that you may have the opportunity to learn that My grace is sufficient for you." If David had learned this kind of lesson, he would not have prayed for the Lord to annihilate his enemies.

Many of today's Christian readers of the Psalms do not have any realization concerning the learning of lessons. Instead, they mainly see two things in these psalms: first, that David was good, that he was faithful and trusted in the Lord; second, that God was good and faithful in hearing David and in answering him. They do not see David's defects and shortages displayed in each of the psalms covered in this message. David did not learn any lessons or deal with his defects by God's mercy and grace. Instead, he prayed that his enemy would be plucked up and uprooted from the land of the living.

In our reading of these psalms, we need to receive enlightenment regarding our own situation. No doubt, we should trust in God. Surely He will take care of us according to His lovingkindness and faithfulness. But we also need to learn the lessons of God's discipline. We need to find out the reason for the oppositions against us in our environment, for they are God's discipline to correct us, to break us, and to bring us down. We should not pray that God would put others down; we are the ones who need to be brought down and broken by God. We should not have the shortage, displayed in nearly all the psalms, of being devoid of learning the lessons of God's discipline.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FIVE

THE PIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF THE PSALMISTS UTTERED OUT OF THEIR COMPLEX SENTIMENTS WHILE ENJOYING GOD IN HIS HOUSE PSALMS 52—67

(2)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 58—62

Throughout the centuries, many Christian readers of the Old Testament have not had the proper understanding of the Psalms. In order to have such an understanding, especially of the psalms written by David, we need to consider David's situation regarding his fighting against the enemies and regarding his spirituality.

David was raised up by God to defeat the nations, especially the Canaanites, surrounding Israel. In Genesis 15:18 God had promised to give to Abraham's descendants "this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Later, in Deuteronomy, Moses charged the children of Israel to enter the land of Canaan, possess the land, and slaughter all the inhabitants of the land, clearing the land of idols. However, the children of Israel did not obey God. Instead, they possessed the land only in part and allowed most of the enemies to remain. As the book of Judges indicates, when Israel became weak, they were attacked by the nations. Various judges were raised up to defeat these nations, but the enemies were not utterly defeated until the time of David. David defeated the surrounding nations and prepared the land for the establishing of God's kingdom, with Jerusalem as the center, the capital, and the place where the temple would be built.

As such a person raised up by God, David was a type of

the fighting Christ. While Christ was on earth, He was a fighting Christ, typified by David. But as the One at rest in the heavens after His ascension, He is the Christ of peace, typified by Solomon.

David often prayed, in his psalms, concerning his enemies, even asking God to annihilate them (54:5). Insofar as he had been raised up by God to destroy the enemies of the kingdom of God, he was justified in praying this way. Furthermore, because he typified the fighting Christ, he should have defeated the enemies and slaughtered them, and he should have asked for God's help in this matter.

However, we need to consider David not only in the aspect of his being a type of the fighting Christ but also in the aspect of his spirituality. David's psalms indicate that his spirituality was not perfect. As far as spirituality is concerned, David's prayers regarding his enemies actually violated the teaching not only of the New Testament, in which we are told to love our enemies (Matt. 5:43-48), but also of the Old Testament. Some might excuse David by saying that the Old Testament saints were not expected to love their enemies and were justified in hating them. This, however, is not true. To prove this, I would ask you to read Romans 12:20. Here Paul says, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing this you will heap coals of fire upon his head." This verse is actually a quotation of Proverbs 25:21 and 22. In both places "coals of fire" signifies burning love. Thus, even the saints in Old Testament times were charged to love their enemies. Yet in his psalms David prayed for his enemies to be annihilated, to be killed. It seems that his prayers contradict the word spoken by his son, Solomon, in Proverbs 25:21 and 22. The atmosphere and spirit in David's psalms are related not to loving the enemy but to hating him. From this we see that David, although he was spiritual, was not perfect in his spirituality.

Let us now go on to consider Psalms 58—62. In our study of these psalms, we will use the psalmists' pious expressions uttered out of their complex sentiments as a background to know the spiritual things in the New Testament.

VII. THE PSALMIST'S CONDEMNATION ON THE SONS OF MEN AND HIS PRAYER FOR THEIR DESTRUCTION

In Psalm 58 the psalmist first condemned the sons of men (vv. 1-5) and then he prayed for their destruction (vv. 6-11).

A. The Psalmist's Condemnation on the Sons of Men

In his condemnation of the sons of men, David says that in heart they perform injustice and that their hands "weigh out violence on earth" (v. 2). Then, writing very poetically, he goes on to liken them to a cobra, a most poisonous serpent (vv. 4-5).

B. The Psalmist's Prayer for the Destruction of the Wicked

In his prayer for the destruction of the wicked, David says, "O God, break their teeth in their mouth; / Break off the fangs of the young lions, O Jehovah" (v. 6). He continues by likening the wicked to water that runs off, to a snail that melts and goes away, and to a woman's miscarriage (vv. 7-8). Then he declares, "The righteous man will rejoice when he sees vengeance; / He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked" (v. 10). Surely it is not a virtue to rejoice at seeing vengeance. David concludes this psalm, saying, "Men will say, Indeed there is fruit for the righteous man; / Indeed there is a God who judges on earth" (v. 11). Here "fruit" signifies a good result or some kind of just compensation.

How do you feel about the standard of spirituality in this psalm? I cannot have a high appreciation for this psalm. There is very little here that is good. Even the prayer and the praise are unpleasant. Nevertheless, some Christians may love such a psalm and follow it blindly, something which I cannot do.

VIII. THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER FOR GOD'S SALVATION FROM HIS ENEMIES

Psalm 59 is the psalmist's prayer for God's salvation from his enemies.

A. The Psalmist's Prayer for God's Salvation by Watching for God

The psalmist asks God to deliver him from his enemies (vv. 1-3). He prays that God would set him on high, secure from those who rose up against him (v. 1b). Verses 9 and 10 indicate that the psalmist prayed by watching for God. "O my strength, I will watch for You; / For God is my high retreat. / My God in His lovingkindness will meet me; / God will let me look triumphantly upon those who lie in wait for me."

B. Asking God to Punish the Nations

In verses 4 through 8 and 11 through 15, the psalmist asks God to punish the nations. He asks God to awake (v. 4b) and to have no mercy upon any who treacherously perform iniquity (v. 5b). He goes on to pray that Jehovah will scatter them by His power and bring them down (v. 11b). Then he prays, "Consume them in wrath; consume them so that they are no more; / And men will know that God rules in Jacob / Unto the ends of the earth" (v. 13).

C. The Psalmist's Praise to God

In verses 16 and 17 we have the psalmist's praise to God. Here David says, "I will sing of Your strength; / And I will sing aloud of Your lovingkindness in the morning. / For You have been my high retreat / And a refuge in the day of my distress. / O my strength, unto You I will sing psalms, / For God is my high retreat, / My God of lovingkindness." This praise is quite good, but it is preceded by many verses involving accusation and condemnation.

IX. THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER TO GOD FOR HIS RESTORATION

In Psalm 60 we have the psalmist's prayer to God for His restoration. This psalm also includes God's exultation in His promise to His people for the possession of the land and the psalmist's prayer for God's deliverance from the adversary.

A. The Psalmist's Prayer for God's Restoration

In verses 1 through 5 we have the psalmist's prayer for God's restoration. In verse 5 the psalmist prays, "That Your beloved ones may be delivered, / Save with Your right hand, and answer us."

B. God's Exultation in His Promise to His People for the Possession of the Land

Verses 6 through 8 are concerned with God's exultation in His promise to His people for the possession of the land. In verse 6a the psalmist says, "God has spoken in His holiness." The Hebrew word for "holiness" here may also be translated "holy place." In His holiness, or holy place, God said that He would exult, divide Shechem, and measure out the Valley of Succoth. He declared that Gilead and Manasseh are His, that Ephraim is the helmet of His head, that Judah is His scepter, that Moab is His washbowl, that upon Edom He would cast His sandal, and that Philistia should shout aloud because of Him. Here the psalmist expresses his expectation that God will subdue the neighboring nations and restore His people to their possession. Regarding the setting up of the kingdom of God on earth, the psalmist's expectation can be justified. However, spiritually speaking, it is hard to justify what the psalmist is saying here.

C. The Psalmist's Prayer for God's Deliverance from the Adversary

Verses 9 through 12 are the psalmist's prayer for God's deliverance from the adversary. Verses 11 and 12 say, "Give us help from the adversary, / For salvation from man is vain. / In God we will do valiantly, / And it is He who will tread down our adversaries." The psalmist asks that good things will happen to Israel and evil things to the enemies. This is the principle in all these psalms.

X. THE PSALMIST'S ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HIS HOUSE

Psalm 61 is about the psalmist's enjoyment of God in His house.

A. Enjoying God as His Refuge by Dwelling in the Tent of God

In verses 1 through 5 we see that the psalmist enjoyed God as his refuge by dwelling in the tent of God under the covering of His wings. Verses 3 and 4 say, "You are a refuge to me, / A strong tower before the enemy. / Let me sojourn in Your tent forever; / Let me take refuge in the covering of Your wings." This indicates that the psalmist enjoyed God in His house to such an extent that he wanted to dwell in God's tent forever. This shows us that the psalmist was close to God.

Verse 5 continues, "For You, O God, have heard my vows; / You have given me the inheritance of those who fear Your name." Here the psalmist's thought is that since he was one who feared Jehovah, he had a share of God's inheritance. He feared God's name, and God gave him a portion of the inheritance.

B. Asking God to Add Days to His Days

In verses 6 through 8 the psalmist asks God to add days to his days. "You will add days to the days of the king; / May his years be like generation after generation. / May he dwell forever before God; / Appoint lovingkindness and faithfulness, that they may preserve him" (vv. 6-7). It is not easy to translate the Hebrew word for "appoint" in verse 7. The American Standard Version says "prepare," and Darby says "bestow." The psalmist is asking God not simply to give but to appoint lovingkindness and faithfulness that they may preserve him.

"So will I sing psalms to Your name forever, / As I repay my vows day by day" (v. 8). The psalmist's word here seems good, but it actually involves a kind of commercial transaction between him and God. God appoints lovingkindness and faithfulness, and then the psalmist repays God by singing psalms to His name. This means that the singing of psalms to God's name is the psalmist's "payment" for the "purchase" of God's lovingkindness and faithfulness. Here the psalmist is acting somewhat like a businessman.

In principle, we may do the same thing today. For example, we may pray, "Lord, we praise You, for You love us so much." This praise is a kind of commercial transaction. What would we do if, to our impression, God did not love us so much? Real love is a matter not of receiving but only of giving. If we love with the expectation of receiving something in return, that is not genuine love—it is trade, business, commerce. Peter had such a commercial concept in Matthew 19. After the Lord Jesus had spoken about the way for a rich man to enter into the kingdom, Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left all and followed You. What then will there be for us?" (v. 27). Peter, like the psalmist, was thinking in commercial terms. If he had said, "Lord, no matter what happens, I will still love You," that would have been real love.

XI. THE PSALMIST'S ENJOYMENT OF GOD AS HIS HIGH RETREAT

The subject of Psalm 62 is the psalmist's enjoyment of God as his high retreat.

A. The Psalmist's Enjoyment of God

Verses 1 through 7 speak of the psalmist's enjoyment of God. In verse 2 he says, "He alone is my rock and my salvation, / My high retreat; I will not be greatly shaken." He repeats this word in verse 6. This is good, but it cannot compare with the teaching in the New Testament.

B. The Psalmist's Advice to the People

In verses 8 through 12 we have the psalmist's advice to the people. In verse 8 he says, "Trust in Him at all times, O people; / Pour out your heart before Him; / God is a refuge to us." He goes on to say that men of low degree are but a vapor and men of high degree, a lie. Then he gives this advice: "Do not trust in oppression, / And do not become vain through robbery; / If wealth increases, / Do not set your heart on it" (v. 10). This advice regarding wealth is good, but it is not as good as Paul's word in 1 Timothy 6. The psalmist concludes by saying, "Once has God spoken; / Twice have I heard this, / That strength belongs to God. / To You also, O Lord, belongs

lovingkindness; / For You repay every man according to his work" (62:11-12). This word may seem somewhat good, but its spiritual level is very low compared to that of the New Testament.

The psalms we have covered in this message may function as a background to help us understand the real spiritual things revealed in the New Testament. These psalms concern humanity in the ethical field, and thus they are lacking in spiritual weight.

Nowhere in the Psalms do we have a word about living and walking according to the spirit. But in Romans 8:4 Paul speaks about walking according to spirit, and in Galatians 5:25 he says, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." Furthermore, in Philippians 3:10 he says, "To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Nothing in the Psalms compares to this. Instead, the Psalms speak about things such as being just and upright and holding on to our integrity. We need to realize, however, that justice, uprightness, and integrity are not spirituality. Spirituality is the Spirit. Since only the Spirit is spirituality, whatever we have apart from the Spirit is not spirituality.

As New Testament believers, it is not right for us to take, without adequate discernment, all the psalmists' pious expressions uttered out of their complex sentiments. We should use their pious expressions as a background for us to know the spiritual things in the New Testament. We need to see the contrast between the Psalms and the spirituality revealed in the New Testament. We should not pursue the justice, uprightness, and integrity we see in the Psalms. Instead, we should pursue the genuine spirituality we see in the New Testament—a spirituality which is actually the divine life lived out of us by the bountiful supply of the Spirit. This is real spirituality. If we practice such a spirituality, we will not pray for the Lord to destroy our enemies. On the contrary, we will pray, "Lord, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing. Lord, have mercy on them that they may repent and receive You by believing into You."

We should not follow the Psalms blindly, for they are not the absolute pattern up to the level of the New Testament standard for us to follow. Instead of following the Psalms, we should appreciate them for the help they give us—the help of being a background for the revelation of the all-inclusive Christ. Christ is the centrality and universality of God's economy, and He is the perfect One whom we should pursue.

From our study of the Bible, we can see that in both the Old Testament times and the New Testament times, many people, including some godly ones, have been misled by the wrong application of God's word. Some have been misled to such an extent that, as the Lord Jesus said, they have thought that by killing the believers they were offering service to God (John 16:2). Throughout the centuries, a great many Christians have been misled by the mistaken application of the Bible. From this we see that we should not follow the Bible without adequate realization of the sources, courses, lines, and principles of the Bible, and we must know the Bible's sources, courses, lines, and principles if we are to understand the Bible in the right way.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul charged Timothy, saying, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth." To cut straight the word of the truth means to unfold the word of God in its various parts rightly and straightly without distortion. This is what I am trying to do by helping you to know the Word according to its lines and principles.

If I did not love the Psalms, I would not study them so much. However, I want to emphasize the fact that the function of the Psalms is not up to the standard of the New Testament teaching. Concerning the prophecies related to Christ, the Psalms are outstanding, but in other matters the Psalms are below the standard of the teaching of the New Testament. The Psalms advise us to trust in God, to have confidence in God, and to wait on God. This may be good, but it is far below the spiritual level of the New Testament. New Testament spirituality involves the cross, resurrection, the eternal life of God, the life-giving Spirit, and the Spirit's application

of the Triune God to our being for the mingling of divinity with humanity in the accomplishment of God's eternal economy concerning the church. This is the spiritual level of the New Testament, and the spiritual level of the Psalms is much inferior to it.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SIX

THE PIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF THE PSALMISTS UTTERED OUT OF THEIR COMPLEX SENTIMENTS WHILE ENJOYING GOD IN HIS HOUSE PSALMS 52—67

(3)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 63—67

Our appreciation of the Bible, in particular of the Psalms, depends upon the kind of discernment we have. Just as the discernment and appreciation of a mature person differs from that of a child, so our appreciation of the Bible differs according to our degree of spiritual experience, understanding, and maturity. There is a vast difference between what an aged grandfather would value and appreciate and what a two-year-old child would value and appreciate. Let us suppose that a number of items are placed before them. Among these items the child may appreciate a small, beautiful, empty, round box, but to the grandfather this box and all the items he sees before him are worthless. What he appreciates and desires is a great diamond. This shows that we appreciate things according to our maturity and our capacity to discern what is of real value. Whereas some will appreciate Ephesians 3, a chapter on God's eternal economy and the preaching of the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles according to God's plan to produce the church, others may appreciate a portion such as Psalm 65:11-13, which speaks of God's crowning the year with His goodness, His paths overflowing with fatness, the hills girding themselves with exultation, and the valleys shouting for joy and singing.

In this message we will consider Psalms 63—67. As we read these psalms, we need to exercise adequate discernment

so that we may realize how these psalms compare to the standard of the teaching of the New Testament.

XII. THE PSALMIST COMPARING HIS ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HIS HOUSE WITH THE PUNISHMENT OF HIS ENEMIES

In Psalm 63 the psalmist compares his enjoyment of God in His house with the punishment of his enemies. On the one hand, the psalmist treasures the enjoyment of God; on the other hand, he also rejoices in God's punishment of his enemies.

A. The Psalmist's Seeking After God

In verses 1 through 4 the psalmist says, "O God, You are my God; I seek You diligently. / My soul thirsts for You, / My flesh faints in longing for You, / In a dry and weary land without water. / So I have looked upon You in the sanctuary, / Seeing Your power and Your glory. / Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, / My lips praise You. / Thus I bless You while I live; / I lift up my hands in Your name." To seek God and thirst for Him are very good. However, we need to ask these questions: For what do we seek after God? For what do we thirst for God? In our seeking and thirsting, are we looking for something that is of great spiritual value? For what was the psalmist seeking God? For Christ? For the Divine Trinity or the life-giving Spirit? It seems that the psalmist was seeking mainly for God's lovingkindness (v. 3). The poetic writing here is marvelous, but the contents are very limited. Nevertheless, some readers of these verses may highly appreciate them.

B. The Psalmist's Enjoyment of God

In verses 5 through 8 we have the psalmist's enjoyment of God. He declares that his soul is satisfied with the rich fatness and that when he remembers God while on his bed and considers Him in the night watches, his mouth praises God with lips of joyous shouting (vv. 5-6). In verses 7 and 8 the psalmist says, "For You have been my help, / And in the shadow of Your wings I will shout joyously. / My soul pursues

after You; / Your right hand upholds me." Here the most precious thing is the shadow of God's wings.

C. The Punishment of the Psalmist's Enemies

In verses 9 through 11 the psalmist concludes by speaking concerning God's punishment of his enemies.

What do you find in this psalm that is of value? Perhaps you will point out the matter of seeking after God. Yes, we should have a heart to seek after God, but are you satisfied with this? In my opinion, this psalm is quite lacking in content.

XIII. THE PSALMIST'S COMPLAINT OF HIS ENEMY'S EVIL PLAN AND GOD'S JUDGMENT ON THE EVILDOERS

In Psalm 64 we have the psalmist's complaint of his enemy's evil plan and God's judgment on the evildoers.

A. The Psalmist's Complaint of His Enemy's Evil Plan

In verses 1 and 2 the psalmist asks God to hear the voice of his complaint, to preserve his life from the enemy's dread, and to hide him from the throng of evildoers. The evildoers have sharpened their tongue like a sword and have aimed their arrow, their bitter word, to shoot in secret places at the perfect man (vv. 3-4). The psalmist's use of the words "perfect man" indicates that he considers himself perfect, one who should not be hated by anyone. Then the psalmist goes on to speak of his enemies, saying, "They firm up an evil matter; / They plan to lay snares secretly; / They say, Who will see them? / They devise injustices, saying: / We have completed a carefully sought out plan. / Indeed each man's inward thought / And heart is deep" (vv. 5-6).

B. God's Judgment on the Evildoers

In the next two verses, the psalmist proclaims God's judgment on the evildoers. "But God will shoot an arrow at them; / Suddenly they are wounded. / They are made to stumble over each other by their own tongue; / All who see them shake their heads." The psalmist was surely happy about this.

C. The Righteous Man's Rejoicing in Jehovah and Taking Refuge in Him

"All men will fear / And declare God's doing, / And they will ponder what He has done. / The righteous man will rejoice in Jehovah and take refuge in Him, / And all the upright in heart will boast" (vv. 9-10). This indicates that the psalmist considered himself not only perfect but also righteous and upright in heart. Like the previous psalm, this psalm is lacking in content. It is hard to find anything here that is of some greater spiritual value.

XIV. THE PSALMIST'S PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HIS HOUSE AND FOR GOD'S GOODNESS TO THE EARTH FOR MAN

In Psalm 65 we first have the psalmist's praise to God for his enjoyment of God in His house (vv. 1-4), and then the psalmist's praise to God for His goodness to the earth for man (vv. 5-13).

A. The Psalmist's Praise to God for His Enjoyment of God in His House

In his praise to God, the psalmist says, "Iniquities prevail against me; / As for our transgressions, You make propitiation for them. / Blessed is he whom You have chosen and bring near / To dwell in Your courts. / We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, / Of Your holy temple" (vv. 3-4). Literally, the Hebrew word translated "iniquities" means "instances of iniquities" or "matters of iniquities." Here David is saying that God should remember the iniquities of David's enemies but should propitiate his transgressions. The word about dwelling in God's courts and being satisfied with the goodness of His house is good, but once again we need to ask the question, "For what do we dwell in God's courts?"

B. The Psalmist's Praise to God for His Goodness to the Earth for Man

In his praise to God for His goodness to the earth for man, the psalmist says, "You visit the earth and water it; / You enrich it greatly: / The river of God is full of water. / You

provide men grain, for so You have prepared the earth. / Saturating its furrows, settling its ridges, / You soften it with showers; / You bless its sprouting out" (vv. 9-10). What is meant by the poetic expression "the river of God"? This may refer to the water in the air, to the source of the rain that falls upon the earth so that it may produce grain for the benefit of man.

What do you get from Psalm 65? Some may appreciate the good poetry, but what do you receive from the psalmist's word about grain, ridges, and furrows? The content of this psalm cannot compare with chapter four of Ephesians, which speaks of keeping the oneness of the Spirit and which reveals that the Body is an entity mingled with the Triune God.

XV. THE PSALMIST'S ADVICE TO ALL THE EARTH FOR PRAISING GOD, HIS GRATITUDE TO GOD FOR THE PAST, AND HIS RECOUNTING OF GOD'S GRACIOUS DOINGS TO HIM

Psalm 66 covers three matters: the psalmist's advice to all the earth for praising God (vv. 1-4); the psalmist's gratitude to God for the past (vv. 5-15); and the psalmist's recounting of God's gracious doings to him (vv. 16-20).

A. The Psalmist's Advice to All the Earth for Praising God

The psalmist begins by advising the earth to shout joyfully to God, to sing forth the glory of His name, to make glorious His praise, and to say to God, "How awesome are Your deeds!" (vv. 1-3). Then the psalmist tells God that all the earth will worship Him and sing psalms to Him and to His name (v. 4).

B. The Psalmist's Gratitude to God for the Past

In expressing his gratitude to God for the past, the psalmist says that He turned the sea into dry land (v. 6), that He rules by His might forever (v. 7), that He has kept their soul in life (v. 9), and that He has brought them forth into abundance (v. 12). Then the psalmist says, "I will come into Your house with burnt offerings; / I will repay my vows

to You, / Which my lips uttered / And my mouth spoke when I was in distress. / I will offer to You burnt offerings of fatlings / With the smoke of rams; / I will offer bullocks with goats" (vv. 13-15). These verses indicate that the psalmist is engaged in a business transaction. His offerings are his repayment to God for His goodness. First, the psalmist receives God's goodness, and then he pays for it with his offerings.

C. The Psalmist's Recounting of God's Gracious Doings to Him

"Come, hear, all you who fear God, / And I will recount what He has done for my soul" (v. 16). The psalmist then concludes this psalm by recounting God's gracious doings to him. As he does this, he again speaks of God's lovingkindness (v. 20).

XVI. THE PSALMIST ENTREATING GOD FOR MORE GRACE AND BLESSING AND ADVISING ALL THE NATIONS TO PRAISE GOD

In Psalm 67 the psalmist entreats God for more grace and blessing (vv. 1-2, 6-7) and advises all the nations to praise God (vv. 3-5).

A. The Psalmist Entreating God for More Grace and Blessing

In verses 1 and 2 the psalmist asks God to be gracious to them, to bless them, and to make His face to shine upon them, that His way may be known on earth and His salvation among all the nations. In verses 6 and 7 he declares, "The earth has yielded its increase; / God, our God, blesses us. / God blesses us; / And all the ends of the earth will fear Him."

B. The Psalmist Advising the Nations to Praise God for His Equitable Judgment and Kind Guidance

In verses 3 through 5 the psalmist advises the nations to praise God for His equitable judgment and kind guidance. In verse 4 he says, "Let the nations rejoice and shout for joy, /

For You will judge the peoples equitably / And will guide the nations on the earth."

Since the Bible has sixty-six books, we all need to learn to exercise discernment in reading the Bible. In order to understand the Psalms, we need all the other books. This means that in order to evaluate the Psalms properly, we need to consider such books as Genesis, Leviticus, Matthew, John, and the fourteen Epistles of Paul. If we read the Psalms in the light of what is revealed in Paul's Epistles, we will realize that the content of the Psalms is below the standard of the teaching of the New Testament.

At this point, I would like to emphasize a matter that I have often mentioned—that the divine revelation in the Bible is progressive. The Psalms are in the middle of this progression, and thus they are below the standard of the New Testament. However, without the earlier books we cannot realize the value of the later books. Suppose you read the entire Old Testament and then study the Epistles of Paul. If you do this, you will realize that the Epistles of Paul are a deep mine full of gold and precious gems. If after studying the writings of Paul for a long period of time you return to the Psalms, you will realize that by comparison the Psalms do not contain many treasures.

This does not mean, however, that there is nothing to treasure in the Psalms. In certain of the psalms we have a wonderful revelation concerning Christ as the centrality and universality of God's economy. Although the revelation of Christ in the New Testament surpasses that in the Psalms, some aspects of this revelation are unveiled in a particular way in the Psalms. For instance, Psalm 2:7 reveals that Christ was born in His resurrection to be the Son of God, and this verse is quoted in Acts 13:33. This indicates that without Acts 13 we cannot understand Psalm 2 and that without Psalm 2 we do not have the ground to declare, as the New Testament does, that Christ as the only begotten Son of God was born in His resurrection to be the firstborn Son of God. From this we see that we need both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In order to learn anything, we need both the capacity to

learn and the proper instruction to help us learn. Students in a university may study the same book, but how much they learn will differ according to their capacity and according to the kind of teaching they receive from their professors. Those with a lesser capacity will learn less than those with a greater capacity. Hebrews 5 shows us that our capacity to learn spiritual things increases with exercise. Through exercise, our capacity to understand the Bible will grow and develop. In particular, we will become more able to understand the Bible according to its controlling lines and governing principles. I believe that if we have the heart to stay with the Lord's ministry in His recovery today, we will eventually become different in our view, in our capacity, in our understanding of the Word, and in our discernment of spiritual things.

In order to have the proper appreciation of Psalms 63—67, we need to see the revelation of God's economy. God's eternal economy is to impart Himself into man and dispense His riches into man's inner being (Eph. 3:8-9) that He may be man's life and life supply. By His life and the bountiful supply of His life-giving Spirit (Phil. 1:19b), man can live Him and magnify Him (Phil. 1:20-21a) for His manifestation (1 Tim. 3:16a). In this way, all His chosen people can corporately be His expression as His fullness, His organism, the church (Eph. 3:19-21).

However, in the five psalms covered in this message, we cannot see anything of such a kind of spirituality. Instead, these psalms only cover the psalmist's praises to God for God's goodness to him, his concern for the safety of his person and for prosperity in his affairs, God's care for the psalmist, and the psalmist's trust in God. All these are good things. But good things often become the replacement of the best, the opposition against the best, and even the enemy to the best. Many seekers of the Lord are held back by these kinds of good things and would not seek the Lord further for His best that they might participate in the life-giving Spirit's bountiful supply for them to live and magnify Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12, 16) and for the accomplishing of God's eternal purpose.

Hence, in studying the Psalms, on the one hand, we should receive all the marvelous revelations concerning Christ as the centrality and universality of God's economy, but, on the other hand, we should discern that the Psalms are pious expressions of the psalmists uttered out of their natural concepts, and some are based on the principle of good and evil, not on the principle of the divine life. All of these expressions are far below the standard of the requirements of God's new creation (Gal. 6:15).

As a result of studying the Psalms, we should have an increased appreciation of the Epistles of Paul. The standard of the divine revelation in Paul's Epistles is high compared not only to the Psalms but also to the four Gospels and Acts. For example, the expression *the Body of Christ*, used by Paul, is not found in the Gospels or in Acts. The Body of Christ is not simply a composition of His believers, but is actually an organism produced by the Triune God's dispensing of Himself into the believers to make them His counterpart. As a result of this dispensing, Christ is not only the Head of the Body but even all the Body (1 Cor. 12:12), the new man. Concerning the church as the new man, Colossians 3:10 and 11 reveal that "Christ is all and in all." In the new man there is room only for Christ. He is all the members of the new man and in all the members. He is everything in the new man and actually is the new man. If we do not believe that Christ is us and is in us, then we have not yet seen the revelation concerning the new man in the New Testament. We need to know Christ to such an extent that we realize that He is us and that He is in us. He is within us to make us one with Him.

We praise the Lord that we have both the Old Testament and the New Testament. We have the Psalms, and we have the other sixty-five books of the Bible with which we may compare the Psalms. The more we make a comparison, the more we will realize that the divine revelation in the Bible is progressive, and the more we will appreciate the standard of spirituality revealed in the New Testament.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SEVEN

CHRIST AS THE CENTER OF GOD'S MOVE ON THE EARTH

(1)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 68:1-18; Num. 9:15a; 10:35; Eph. 4:8, 11-12; 6:12; 2:22

In this message we will begin to study Psalm 68. As we come to this psalm, we should regard it as the highest psalm among the one hundred fifty psalms.

Psalm 68 is extremely difficult to understand. Examples of this difficulty are found in verses 11b through 13. "The women who bear the glad tidings are a great host. / The kings of the armies flee. / They flee! / And she who abides at home / Divides the spoil. / Though you lie among the sheepfolds, / There are dove wings covered with silver, / And its pinions, with greenish yellow gold." Who are the women who bear the glad tidings and are a great host? Who is she who abides at home and divides the spoil? There seems to be no antecedent for the pronoun "she" here. To whom does this pronoun refer? Furthermore, who is the "you" lying among the sheepfolds? We also need to inquire concerning the dove wings covered with silver and the pinions covered with greenish yellow gold. We must admit that it is difficult for us to know what these things mean and to understand them.

As we will see, the dove, the silver, and the gold refer to the Triune God. The dove symbolizes the Spirit of God; in typology silver signifies Christ as the Redeemer who accomplished redemption for God's salvation; and gold signifies God in His nature. Here the gold is greenish yellow, with green signifying the divine life and yellow, the divine glory. Hence, greenish yellow gold signifies God in His nature glittering in

His life and glory. Here we have the Triune God—the Spirit, Christ, and God—with all His accomplishments for us to enjoy.

Verse 12 speaks of dividing the spoil. What is this spoil? It is something reaped as the result of fighting a battle. In His death, resurrection, and ascension, Christ fought the battle, and the spoil reaped by Him has become our enjoyment. Christ gained some spoil in every step of His fighting; He reaped spoil in His death, in His resurrection, and in His ascension, at which time, according to Colossians 2, the evil ones tried to hold Him back. The spoil gained, reaped, by Christ is actually the Triune God. This means that the spoil in verse 12 is the Spirit as the dove, Christ the Son as the silver, and God the Father as the gold.

To illustrate further how hard it is to understand Psalm 68, let us also consider verses 25 through 27. "Singers go before; players after; / In the midst of virgins sounding the tambourines. / Bless God in the congregations, / Even Jehovah, O you who are of the fountain of Israel. / There are little Benjamin, who rules them, / And the princes of Judah in their company, / The princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali." Do you understand all this? Why are the names of four of the twelve tribes mentioned—Benjamin, Judah, Zebulun, and Naphtali—but not the names of the other tribes? Once again, we must admit that this matter is difficult to understand.

An even more difficult matter to understand is the reason Psalm 68 was written. Why was this psalm written, and why was it composed in the way it was? In order to answer this question, we need to consider the way the psalm begins. Verse 1 says, "Let God arise; let His enemies be scattered; / And let those who hate Him flee before Him." This is a quotation of Moses' prayer in Numbers 10:35, uttered when the ark of the covenant set out from Mount Sinai.

After Moses brought the children of Israel to Mount Sinai, they stayed there for quite a long time. During that time, God decreed His law to them through Moses. However, the main thing that happened at that time was not the decreeing of the law but God's charging Moses to build the tabernacle

with the ark, the incense altar, the lampstand, the showbread table, the laver, the altar, and all the utensils.

What was God's purpose in decreeing the law and in charging Moses to build the ark and the tabernacle with all its furnishings? The law was decreed for the purpose of exposing and subduing Israel. God intended to use the law to expose the people's weakness, incapacity, defects, and shortages in order to make them realize that they were sinful and could do nothing for Him. Thus, the law was decreed to convince them of this and even to condemn them.

Exodus 19 speaks of the experience of the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. On the one hand, they were fearful, for they heard the thunder, saw the lightning and the thick cloud, and realized that God was present with them at the mountain. On the other hand, they were proud of all these things concerning God. When Moses laid before them all the words which God had commanded him, the people answered and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (v. 8). Moses told the words of the people to the Lord, and then He came in to decree the law. Even before the law had been decreed to the children of Israel, they broke the Ten Commandments and committed sin by worshipping the golden calf. When Moses learned about this, he became angry and broke the two tablets of stone. The point here is that the law was given in order to expose the people of Israel, to convince, condemn, and subdue them, and to cause them to realize that they could not do anything to please God. This was God's purpose in decreeing the law.

Now we need to see God's purpose concerning the building of the tabernacle. God wanted the children of Israel to build Him a tabernacle so that He could dwell among them and they could contact Him and even dwell with Him. However, because they were sinful, they needed an altar to take care of their sins. In addition, they needed the showbread table for spiritual food, the lampstand for spiritual light, and the incense altar for them to pray to the Lord.

The tabernacle built and erected at Mount Sinai was a type of Christ as the real tabernacle. This real tabernacle was set up through Christ's incarnation. John 1:14 tells us

that the Word, which is God, became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and reality. Whereas the tabernacle built up by Israel under Moses was a type, or a shadow, Jesus Christ, the incarnated God, is the real tabernacle for God's dwelling on the earth and for God's people to contact Him and dwell with Him.

During their years in the wilderness, the children of Israel did nothing except deal with the law and the tabernacle with the altar, the laver, the showbread table, the lampstand, the incense altar, and the ark. Whenever it was time for them to move on in their journey, they packed up the tabernacle and its furnishings and utensils and carried them with them in their move. Eventually they would stop, and the tabernacle and everything related to it would be set up again.

The people also had to present the various offerings to God. Otherwise, they would have been condemned by the law because of their sins in breaking God's commandments. However, the blood of the sin offering that was sprinkled on the cover of the ark fulfilled the requirements of the law and enabled the people to be at peace and to contact God.

Before the incarnation of Christ, God did not do anything for the accomplishment of His New Testament economy. In the Old Testament, God called Abraham, having chosen him and his descendants to be His people, His called race. Centuries later, God brought the people of Israel to Mount Sinai to train them and to help them to know their sinfulness and thereby to convince and subdue them. Whereas the law decreed through Moses was a reality, the tabernacle with all its furnishings and utensils was a type of Christ. Nevertheless, God could dwell in that tabernacle, and the people had a way to contact Him. Throughout the remainder of the Old Testament, in all the books of history and of the prophets, God continued to expose Israel. He exposed them in Joshua and in Judges; He exposed them in the books of Samuel and of the Kings; and He exposed them in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the other prophets, both major and minor. It seems that God did not move but rather did only one thing—expose the people of Israel.

God's move on earth for His New Testament economy

began with the incarnation, with God's coming as the Son to be incarnated. The incarnation was the setting up of the real and living tabernacle. Thus, the incarnate Christ was the real tabernacle in whom God dwelled and through whom He could move on earth. Beginning with the incarnation, God began to move, to walk, on earth for His New Testament economy. He moved on the earth for thirty-three and a half years and then, after His death and resurrection, ascended to the heavens.

This move of God in Christ is portrayed in Psalm 68:1-18. We have seen that the first part of verse 1 says, "Let God arise," and God did rise up to move. Through what did God move? He moved through the tabernacle. Without the tabernacle, God could not move. This indicates that God moves in Christ and through Christ. Without Christ, God cannot move on the earth. In Christ the Triune God made a long "tour," a tour that lasted thirty-three and a half years and that ended with Christ's ascension to the third heaven.

In typology, this tour, this move, of God for His New Testament economy is pictured in Psalm 68 as the journey of God with Israel from Sinai to Zion. Sinai was the place where the law was decreed, and Zion was the destination of the traveling Triune God and His people. As we consider this, we need to realize that there have been two journeys—a journey in type and a journey in reality. The journey in type was the journey of God with Israel from Sinai through the wilderness to Zion. The journey in reality, the actual move of God on the earth, was the journey of God in Christ as the real tabernacle starting from the incarnation and ending with the ascension to the heavenly Zion.

In Psalm 68 we have the type of God's journey, and in the New Testament we have the fact and the reality. God's actual journey on the earth, His real move on the earth, was His move in Christ, the real tabernacle with the real ark. In order to understand this real journey, we need to study Psalm 68, a psalm that helps us to see that Christ's personal life from His incarnation to His ascension was the journey, the move, of the Triune God. If we realize this, we are ready

to consider the first eighteen verses of Psalm 68 in some detail.

Psalm 68 is the highest peak of the divine revelation concerning Christ in all the Psalms. It is written in poetry, with types and signs, portraying the nine steps in God's move on the earth in Christ, the all-inclusive embodiment of the Triune God.

I. GOD'S MOVE WITHIN THE TABERNACLE AS HIS DWELLING PLACE WITH THE ARK AS THE CENTER

Psalm 68 is about God's move within the tabernacle (typifying Christ) as His dwelling place with the ark (typifying Christ) as the center. The tabernacle with the ark traveled among the children of Israel for forty years until it arrived at Zion. This traveling was a type, a shadow, of God's real move on the earth.

A. After the Decree of the Law for the Exposing, Convincing, and Condemning of Israel

This move began after the decree of the law for the exposing, convincing, and condemning of Israel. This means that God's move within the tabernacle began after God had gained a people who had been prepared by the law and trained under the law to go along with Him.

B. After the Rearing Up of the Tabernacle of the Ark

This move of God began after the rearing up of the tabernacle of the ark, signifying Christ incarnated to be the dwelling place of God on the earth with Himself as the center for God's move in His economy (John 1:14a; Num. 9:15a). This means that God could move on earth only after He had established a way—the tabernacle with the ark—in which He could be with His people and in which they could contact Him and be with Him. In the Old Testament we have the type, but in the New Testament we have Christ as the reality of the tabernacle of the ark.

C. In the Midst of Israel, His Elect

God's move within the tabernacle was in the midst of Israel, His elect.

D. From Sinai through the Wilderness to Mount Zion

This move was from Sinai, signifying from the law (Psa. 68:8b, 17b), through the wilderness, signifying the earth (vv. 4b, 7b), to Mount Zion, God's dwelling place (v. 16), signifying God's dwelling place in the heavens (Eph. 4:8a).

E. Israel, God's Elect, Triumphing in God

Psalm 68:4 says, "Sing to God; sing psalms to His name; / Triumph in Him who rides through the deserts— / For Jah is His name—and exult before Him." This indicates that Israel, God's elect, triumphed in God, who rode through the deserts, and exulted before Him. Today we should triumph and exult in the move of God on earth, in His move from incarnation to ascension.

II. GOD'S VICTORY IN CHRIST AS THE CENTER, TYPIFIED BY THE ARK

A. Moses' Prayer for Jehovah to Arise

In verse 1 we have the prayer of Moses, the representative of God's elect, for Jehovah to arise and for His enemies to be scattered (v. 14). The enemies here typify Satan and his forces in the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12). This prayer was actually the aspiration of all God's elect people.

1. The Kings of His Enemies' Armies Fleeing

"The kings of the armies flee. / They flee!" (Psa. 68:12a). These kings, who were defeated and scattered, typify Satan and the rulers (Eph. 6:12).

2. A Great Host of Women of Israel Bearing Glad Tidings

"The women who bear the glad tidings are a great host" (Psa. 68:11b). These women of Israel signify the weak ones.

As believers today, we are the weak ones, those who cannot do anything except bear, preach, the glad tidings.

3. She Who Abides at Home Dividing the Spoil

"She who abides at home / Divides the spoil" (v. 12b). The "she" here is collective and refers to the women in verse 11. To abide at home signifies not to be at work. The spoil signifies all the gains of the accomplishment, consummation, attainment, and obtainment of Christ as the reapings of the victory of His death, resurrection, and ascension. This spoil includes dove wings covered with silver and pinions covered with greenish yellow gold.

a. Though They Lie among the Sheepfolds

They will divide the spoil even though they lie among the sheepfolds (v. 13a). The "you" in verse 13a refers to the collective "she" in verse 12 and the women in verse 11. Lying among the sheepfolds signifies resting in God's provision and care for His elect.

b. There Being Four Items

Verse 13b shows us that there are four items among the spoil.

1) Dove Wings

The dove wings signify the moving power of the Spirit.

2) White Silver

The dove wings are covered with white silver. Silver signifies Christ in His redemption for our justification, which is indicated by the color white, the color of approval.

3) Pinions

The pinions are feathers at the end of a bird's wings. The pinions give a bird the strength to fly and to soar. Hence, in verse 13b "its pinions" signify the soaring power of the Spirit.

4) Greenish Yellow, Glittering Gold

The greenish yellow, glittering gold with which the pinions

are covered signifies God's nature glittering in the divine life and glory.

5) The Contents of the Four Items Actually Being the Triune God with All the Items of His Complete, Full, and All-inclusive Salvation

The contents of the above four items, as Christ's spoil in His victory for the enjoyment of God's elect, are actually the Triune God with all the items of His complete, full, and all-inclusive salvation. "Dove" signifies the Spirit with His moving and soaring power; "white silver" signifies Christ in His all-inclusive redemption for His believers' justification as the entrance into His full salvation; and "greenish yellow gold" signifies God in His nature glittering in His life and glory. Both Christ and God are brought in by the Spirit's power: Christ by the Spirit's moving power and God by the Spirit's soaring power.

6) God's Elect Enjoying These Items as Their Portion in Christ and Announcing Them to Others as the Glad Tidings

Verse 11 indicates that God's elect enjoy all the above items as their portion in Christ and announce them to others as the glad tidings. On the one hand, we are the great host of women bearing, preaching, the glad tidings. On the other hand, we are restfully enjoying our portion in Christ, enjoying the Triune God—the Spirit as the dove, Christ the Son as the silver, and God the Father as the gold. The Spirit as the dove moves with Christ as the silver and with God as the gold. While we are preaching the glad tidings, we are enjoying the Triune God as the spoil gained for us by Christ.

B. Christ Leading Those Taken Captive

Verse 18b says, "You have led captive those taken captive." Here "those taken captive" refers to the believers of Christ. Before we were saved, we were sinners and enemies of God, and we had been taken captive by Satan and imprisoned. We were "those taken captive." But Christ defeated Satan and captured his captives, including us. Then, like a general

leading his captives, Christ in His ascension to the heavens led us to the Father.

III. CHRIST'S ASCENSION

Psalm 68 speaks concerning Christ's ascension (v. 18a; Eph. 4:8a).

A. Ascending on High

Psalm 68:18a says, "You have ascended on high." This refers to the highest peak in the universe (cf. Isa. 14:13b).

B. Leading Captive Those Taken Captive, Included in the Train of Vanquished Foes

As we have pointed out, in His ascension Christ led captive those taken captive. Now we need to see that these ones, the redeemed of Christ, are included in the train of vanquished foes. The Amplified New Testament renders "He led captive those taken captive" (Eph. 4:8) as "He led a train of vanquished foes." In Christ's ascension there was a procession of these vanquished foes, led as captives from a war, for a celebration of Christ's victory. Although, as Colossians 2 indicates, the evil spirits tried to hinder Christ in His ascension, Christ nevertheless ascended to the Father leading a train of vanquished foes. He did not appear before the Father empty-handed but had a great many vanquished foes following Him.

IV. CHRIST RECEIVING THE GIFTS

Psalm 68:18 also reveals the matter of Christ receiving the gifts.

A. Taking the Gifts among Men, even the Rebellious Ones

"You have taken gifts among men, / Even the rebellious ones" (v. 18b). When Christ ascended to the Father, He presented to the Father all the ones He had captured and brought with Him. The Father then returned all these captured ones to Christ, making each one of them a gift to Christ.

We all were held captive by Satan in his prison, but we have been captured by Christ, presented by Christ to the Father, and then given to Christ by the Father as gifts. Although as gifts we may differ in size and quality, we all are gifts given by the Father to the ascended Christ.

B. The Gifts Becoming the Gifted Believers

The gifts received by Christ have become the gifted believers, like the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers (Eph. 4:11). We should not believe the lie that we are not a gift or that we have not been gifted. Every saved person is a gifted believer.

V. THE BUILDING UP OF THE DWELLING PLACE FOR GOD

The last part of Psalm 68:18 says, "That Jehovah God may dwell among them." This indicates that Christ uses all the gifts to build up the dwelling place for God. The dwelling place here signifies the church as God's habitation (Eph. 2:22). As Ephesians 4 reveals, all the gifts do the same work of the ministry to build up the Body of Christ as God's dwelling place on earth today.

A. The Gifts as the Gifted Persons Builded Together to Be the Dwelling Place for God

The gifts as the gifted persons, the believers in Christ, are builded together to be the dwelling place for God. This dwelling place signifies the church, the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12).

B. This Dwelling Place Being Also the Habitation of the Believers

"A Father to the orphans and a Judge for the widows / Is God in His holy habitation. / God causes the solitary to dwell in a household" (Psa. 68:5-6a). Here we see that God's dwelling place is also the habitation of the believers, the needy, the solitary, and the bound ones. Today we all are the needy ones (the orphans and widows), the bound ones (the prisoners),

and the solitary ones, and the church is our dwelling place. The church is a building that includes such people.

C. This Dwelling Place of God Being Built on Mount Zion

"O mighty mountain, O mountain of Bashan, / O many-peaked mountain, O mountain of Bashan: / Why do you look with envy, O many-peaked mountain, / At the mountain on which God desires to dwell? / Indeed Jehovah will dwell there forever" (vv. 15-16). The "mountain on which God desires to dwell" is Mount Zion. The dwelling place of God is built on Mount Zion, signifying the highest peak in the universe, the heavens.

The builded church is in the heavens. Whether we are in the heavens or on the earth depends on whether or not we have been built up. If we have not been built up, we are earthly. If we have been built up, we are heavenly. Whenever the saints in a locality are divided and scattered, they are on the earth or, even worse, below the earth. But whenever the saints in a locality are built up together, they are in the heavens. This is an aspect of the wonderful things in God's New Testament economy, in His move in Christ from incarnation to ascension.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWENTY-EIGHT

CHRIST AS THE CENTER OF GOD'S MOVE ON THE EARTH

(2)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 68:18-35

Psalm 68 has two main sections. Verses 1 through 18 are the first section, and verses 19 through 35 are the second section. As we will see, each section has a center. Before we explain what is the center of the first section, let us consider once again the matter of God's move on the earth.

In the entire universe, God has only one move. The Old Testament time was actually not a time for God to move on the earth but rather a time of preparation for His move. God's activities from Genesis to Malachi were all a part of this preparation. As an illustration, we may consider the preparation that is necessary for opening a store. The store may be built and furnished and yet not be open for business. All the preparations have been made, but the owner of the store has not yet started his business. In a similar way, the Old Testament time was a time of God's preparation for opening the "business" of the divine economy.

God's economy is mainly to work Himself into His chosen and redeemed people in order to make Himself one with them and to make them one with Him. In His economy God even mingles Himself with His people to be one entity with them. Concerning this, the Bible says that we who are joined to the Lord are one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). He is the Spirit; He has made a spirit within us; and now the divine Spirit and the regenerated human spirit have been mingled together to be one spirit. How marvelous! Such a mingling did not take place in the Old Testament, for the Old Testament time was

the time of God's preparation. He prepared the heavens for the earth, the earth for man, and man with a spirit for God (Zech. 12:1). In this way, man was prepared by God for the carrying out of the business of God's economy.

God took about two thousand years—the period of time from Abraham to the coming of Christ—to prepare the people of Israel. Consider all the work God did with Israel throughout the Old Testament. Beginning with Abraham in Genesis and continuing to the end of Malachi, God engaged in many activities to make everything ready for Him to carry out His economy.

The carrying out of God's economy actually began with the incarnation of Christ. John 1:14 says that the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. This indicates that the incarnation brought in the real and living tabernacle, which was Christ Himself as the embodiment of the Triune God. The physical tabernacle erected by Moses was a type, a shadow; it was not the real tabernacle. Both the tabernacle and the ark were types of Christ. However, without that type, God could not have had, with the children of Israel, a type of His move on the earth in Christ. God's move in the tabernacle with the ark from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion was a type of His move in Christ from the incarnation to the ascension.

At Sinai God prepared the children of Israel for His move in the tabernacle with the ark. God had sent Moses to Egypt to bring them out of Egypt to Sinai, and there at Sinai God gave them a training which lasted quite a long time. First, God decreed the law in order to test them, expose them, convince them, convict them, and subdue them. Eventually, after they were subdued, they were trained to be a holy people, a people sanctified to God so that He could dwell among them and move with them.

By the time the tabernacle was set up, the people had been trained and prepared, even as an army, for God's move. Thus Moses, the representative of Israel, prayed, saying, "Let God arise; let His enemies be scattered; / And let those who hate Him flee before Him" (Psa. 68:1; Num. 10:35). Immediately, God began to move with His people through the

wilderness. Eventually, the ark ascended Mount Zion and was placed in the temple, which had been built to replace the tabernacle. This was God's move in the Old Testament, a type indicating that one day God would move on the earth in Christ as the real tabernacle.

After being on earth for thirty-three and a half years, Christ was crucified, was resurrected, and ascended to the heavens. As the ascended One, Christ is still working on us, the people of God, to make us a new creation, that is, to work the new creation out of the old creation. This is not a simple matter, and it cannot be done in a short time. Many of us can testify that, even though we have been in the Lord for many years, we are not that spiritual and are still being renewed, sanctified, and transformed. We still need Christ to work on us by His heavenly ministry. Even Paul had to wait until the end of his life before he could say, "I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). I hope that one day we all will be able to say this. At present, the Lord is still moving on in the heavens to make us the new creation in full and to bring us from the earth to the heavens.

Let us now endeavor to explain what is the center of the first section of Psalm 68. The center of this section is the dove wings gilded with silver and the dove pinions gilded with greenish yellow gold (v. 13). The dove wings signify the moving power of the Spirit; the silver signifies Christ in His redemption for our justification; and the greenish yellow gold signifies God in His nature glittering in His life and glory. Here we have the Triune God with all His accomplishments for our enjoyment.

The dove wings gilded with silver and the pinions gilded with greenish yellow gold are the spoil mentioned in verse 12. Some may wonder how the Triune God could be such spoil. To understand this we need to realize that by spoil we mean something gained, or reaped, as the result of fighting and winning a battle. Christ fought the battle in His death, resurrection, and ascension, and surely He has gained some spoil as a result. What has He reaped through His victory? He has reaped the riches of the Triune God for us. At the

very time we confessed our sins and believed in Christ, we received the Spirit with God, Christ, and the divine life—the riches, the spoil, gained by Christ through His victory.

As those who have believed in the Lord Jesus, we gain what He has gained. We gain God; we gain the Spirit; we gain the divine life; and we gain the all-inclusive Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God. This means that in Christ we gain the processed and consummated Triune God as the spoil for our enjoyment. Now day by day we are enjoying the dove, the silver, and the gold. This is the center of the first section of Psalm 68.

Let us now go on to consider the second section of this psalm.

VI. THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HIS HOUSE

In the first section five matters are covered: God's move on the earth, God's victory in Christ, Christ's ascension, Christ's receiving the gifts, and Christ's building up the house of God. This brings us to the first item in the second section—the enjoyment of God in His house (vv. 19-23).

A. After the Building Up of God's Dwelling Place

The enjoyment of God in His house comes after the building up of His dwelling place, the church (v. 18b).

B. Enjoying God Loading Us with Good

Verse 19a says, "Blessed be the Lord, who day by day loads us with good." What is this "good" with which God is loading us every day? This good, as the "good" mentioned in Romans 8:28, does not refer to material things such as a nice home or a new car; rather, it refers to the Triune God—to the dove wings gilded with silver and the pinions gilded with gold. This means that daily God is loading us with Himself.

C. Enjoying God as Our Salvation and Deliverance

"God is our salvation. / God is to us / A God of deliverance, / And to Jehovah the Lord / Belongs escape even from death" (vv. 19b-20). This reveals that in God's house we enjoy God

as our salvation and deliverance; with Him are the goings forth, the way to escape, even from death. Only God can give us a way to flee death and to escape it because only God is life. When we enjoy Him as our life, we escape death. Actually, the way to go forth from death is God Himself.

D. Enjoying God's Victory over the Enemies

Verses 21 through 23 reveal that in God's house we also enjoy His victory over the enemies. For example, verse 21 says, "Indeed God will smash / The head of His enemies, / The hairy crown / Of him who goes about in his guiltiness."

VII. PRAISING GOD

In verses 24 through 28 we have the matter of praising God.

A. Praising God That His Enemies Have Seen His Goings in the Sanctuary

"They have seen Your goings, O God, / The goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary" (v. 24). Here "they" refers to the enemies, to the unbelievers; "goings" refers to God's activities; and the "sanctuary" signifies the church.

In order to appreciate this part of Psalm 68, we need to be familiar with the background. At Mount Sinai God decreed the law and charged Moses to build the tabernacle with the ark and all the various furnishings. The erecting of the tabernacle was a kind of ceremony. All the children of Israel were assembled and, after everything had been arranged, the ark was brought in. I believe that, as verse 25 indicates, while the ark was being carried into the tabernacle, there was a procession of virgins and singers who went before the ark. At the rear there might have been another group composed not of virgins but of males from the tribes of Benjamin, Judah, Zebulun, and Naphtali (v. 27). This move of the ark was an activity of God, for God was with the ark. Hence, the ark's activity was God's activity. Furthermore, since Israel had been at Sinai for a long time, the peoples in the surrounding regions must have heard that something important was taking place and might have come to see what was

happening. Therefore, this ceremony might have been observed not only by the children of Israel but also by a number of Gentiles who had come to witness the ceremony.

B. By the Virgins Sounding the Tambourines

"Singers go before; players after; / In the midst of virgins sounding the tambourines" (v. 25). Here the praise is by the females, by the virgins as singers going before and players after. In this verse "virgins" signifies the believers.

C. Blessing God in the Congregations by Men Who Are of the Fountain of Israel

"Bless God in the congregations, / Even Jehovah, O you who are of the fountain of Israel. / There are little Benjamin, who rules them, / And the princes of Judah in their company, / The princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali. / Your God has commanded your strength; / Strengthen, O God, that which You have done for us" (vv. 26-28). Here we have the blessing of God by the men, signifying the strong ones.

D. Portraying a Scenery in Typology concerning God's New Testament Economy

In the praise rendered to God by His elect, there is portrayed a scenery in typology concerning God's New Testament economy in the accomplishment of God's redemption for His salvation by Christ and in the spreading of the glad tidings of Christ's accomplishment with the goodly words of the gospel.

1. Little Benjamin

Verse 27a speaks of "little Benjamin."

a. As the Son of Sorrows, Benoni

Benjamin had two names, the first of which was Benoni. This name, given to him by his mother Rachel as she was dying in childbirth, means "son of my sorrow" (Gen. 35:18a). As the son of sorrows, Benoni, Benjamin typifies Christ who, as the Man of sorrows in His incarnation and human life on

earth, accomplished God's eternal redemption for His full salvation.

b. As the Son of the Right Hand, Benjamin

Whereas Rachel named her son Benoni, Jacob immediately changed the child's name to Benjamin, which means "son of the right hand" (v. 18b). To be at the right hand is to be in a position of glory and honor. As the son of the right hand, Benjamin typifies Christ who, as the Son of the right hand of God in His resurrection, victory, and ascension, ministers in the heavens to carry out the application of God's redemption for His salvation. Christ was incarnated to be Benoni, the Man of sorrows, but in resurrection He became Benjamin, the Son of the right hand of God in glory and honor.

2. The Princes of Judah

Psalm 68:27 speaks also of the princes of Judah. Judah is the lion with the power and the scepter, and he is the peace (Shiloh) to God's people (Rev. 5:5a; Gen. 49:8-10).

a. Typifying Christ as the Victory for God's People and the Peace to God's People

Whereas Benjamin typifies Christ mainly in His humanity, Judah typifies Christ mainly in His divinity. In His divinity, Christ is not a Man of sorrows but a lion with power and authority (signified by the scepter). In particular, Judah typifies Christ as the victory for God's people and the peace to God's people. In the application of redemption, Christ is our peace.

b. As the Kingly Tribe, Accompanied Always by Benjamin, as a Warrior Tribe

Judah, as the kingly tribe, was accompanied always by Benjamin, as a warrior tribe (Gen. 49:27), for God's kingdom on the earth. In typology Judah and Benjamin, who were joined geographically, form a group concerning the accomplishment and application of Christ's redemption for God's salvation. With Benjamin the emphasis is on the accomplishment of

redemption; with Judah the emphasis is on the application (in Christ's ascension) of redemption.

3. The Princes of Zebulun

Psalm 68:27 goes on to mention the princes of Zebulun. Dwelling at the haven of the sea (Galilee) for a haven of ships (Gen. 49:13), Zebulun typifies Christ as the "haven" of the evangelists for the transportation and spreading in the preaching of God's gospel. The gospel has been accomplished, but there is the need of the spreading of the gospel by means of "ships." On the day of Pentecost, at least one hundred and twenty gospel "ships," all of whom were Galileans, set out to spread the gospel.

4. The Princes of Naphtali

Finally, Psalm 68:27 speaks of the princes of Naphtali. Genesis 49:21 tells us that Naphtali is a hind let loose and that he gives goodly words.

a. Typifying Christ as the One Who Is Released from Death in Resurrection and Gives Goodly Words for the Preaching of His Gospel

Naphtali typifies Christ as the One who is released from death in resurrection, signified by the "hind let loose" (Psa. 22, title; S.S. 2:8-9), and gives goodly words for the preaching of His gospel (Matt. 28:18-20). In resurrection Christ came to His disciples and charged them to disciple the nations.

b. People of Both Zebulun and Naphtali Being Men of Galilee

People of both Zebulun and Naphtali were men of Galilee (Matt. 4:12-17; Acts 1:11), from whom the gospel of Christ has been spread, preached, and propagated.

c. Zebulun and Naphtali Forming a Group in Typology

In typology Zebulun and Naphtali form a group for the spreading and the propagating of the glad tidings of Christ's redemption for God's salvation.

Perhaps you are wondering why only four of the twelve tribes of Israel are mentioned in Psalm 68:27. The reason is that in the typology here only four are required, and these four are the most suitable.

Just as the center of the first section of this psalm is the Triune God typified by the dove, the silver, and the gold, so the center of the second section is the four tribes of Benjamin, Judah, Zebulun, and Naphtali. The first two—Benjamin and Judah—are a group concerning the accomplishment and application of redemption; the other two—Zebulun and Naphtali—are a group concerning the preaching, spreading, and propagation of the gospel. As we consider the centers of the two sections of Psalm 68, we can see that the Triune God as Christ's spoil has become our enjoyment, and we can see also that Christ's redemption has been accomplished for God's salvation, that this accomplished redemption has been applied to us, and that the word concerning God's salvation is now spreading everywhere.

VIII. THE SPREADING INTO THE CITY OF GOD

The next matter in Psalm 68 is the spreading from the temple into the city of God.

A. Following God's Strengthening of What He Has Done for His Elect

"Strengthen, O God, that which You have done for us./ Because of Your temple at Jerusalem" (vv. 28b-29a). This word indicates that following God's strengthening of what He has done for His elect, the influence of the enjoyment of God in His house would spread to the entire city of Jerusalem because of the house of God, which was at Jerusalem.

B. The House of God Signifying the Local Church and the City of Jerusalem Signifying the Kingdom

The house of God signifies the local church, and the city of Jerusalem signifies the kingdom, the strengthening and the safeguard of the church.

IX. THE GAINING OF THE EARTH FOR GOD

Psalm 68 concludes with a word about the gaining of the earth for God (vv. 29b-35).

A. The Influence of the Enjoyment of God Gaining the Whole Earth for God

The influence of the enjoyment of God will gain the whole earth for God.

1. Kings of the Nations Bringing a Gift to God

According to verse 29b, kings of the nations will bring a gift to God.

2. God Dealing with the Egyptians

God will deal with the Egyptians, who are likened to animals in the reeds by the Nile (v. 30a).

3. God Dealing with the Nations

God will also deal with the nations, who are likened to herds of the bulls among the calves and who lust for silver and delight in war (v. 30b).

4. Nobles Coming Out of Egypt to Visit Jerusalem and Cush Quickly Stretching Out Its Hand to God

Verse 31 indicates that nobles will come out of Egypt to visit Jerusalem, the city of God, and that Cush (today's Ethiopia) will quickly stretch out its hand to God.

5. This Scenery Consummating in the Coming Age of Restoration

The scenery portrayed above will consummate in the coming age of restoration (Matt. 19:28), in which all the earth will come to Jerusalem to worship God and to receive instruction and enlightenment (Isa. 2:2-3; Zech. 14:16-17).

B. The Kingdoms of the Earth Being Charged to Praise God

In verses 32 through 34 the kingdoms of the earth are charged to sings psalms in the restoration to God, who rides upon the heavens, the ancient heavens, and utters His voice,

a mighty voice (thunder). They are charged also to ascribe strength to God, whose excellence (glory) is over Israel and whose strength is in the skies.

C. The Psalmist Praising and Blessing God

"You are awesome, O God, from Your sanctuaries. / The God of Israel, He gives strength and power to the people. / Blessed be God!" (v. 35). In this concluding verse the psalmist praises God and blesses Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE TWENTY-NINE

THE SUFFERING CHRIST AND THE REIGNING CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Psa. 69—72

In this message we will consider Psalms 69 through 72. Whereas Psalms 69 and 72 are on Christ, Psalms 70 and 71 are typical examples of psalms that are the pious expressions uttered out of the complex sentiments of the psalmists.

Psalm 69 is on the suffering Christ typified by the suffering David, and Psalm 72 is on the reigning Christ typified by the reigning Solomon. David was a warrior who won victories and gained territories for God's kingdom, yet his life was a life of suffering, and in his suffering he was a type of the suffering Christ. Psalm 72 is actually a psalm on King Solomon, a type of Christ as the reigning One. Thus, David, the father, typified one aspect of Christ, and Solomon, the son, typified another aspect of Christ. After His life of suffering on earth, typified by the sufferings of David, Christ ascended to the heavens where He is now reigning as the King, typified by Solomon. From this we see that the suffering Christ has become the reigning Christ. The subject of this message, therefore, is "The Suffering Christ and the Reigning Christ."

Let us now go on to consider Psalms 69—72 one by one.

I. THE SUFFERING CHRIST

Unlike Isaiah 53, which speaks of Christ's sufferings in a general way, calling Him the Man of sorrows, Psalm 69 speaks of Christ's sufferings in a detailed way.

A. Typified by the Suffering David

In Psalm 69 Christ is typified by the suffering David (vv. 1-3, 19-20, 26).

B. The Sufferings of Christ

1. Hated by Many without Cause

"More numerous than the hairs of my head / Are those who hate me without cause" (v. 4a). This verse, which indicates that Christ was hated by many without cause, was quoted by the Lord Jesus Himself in John 15:25.

2. Bearing Reproaches for God's Sake

Psalm 69:7 says, "Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; / Humiliation has covered my face." Verse 9b, quoted by Paul in Romans 15:3, says, "The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me." Christ suffered in bearing reproaches for the sake of God.

3. Devoured by the Zeal of God's House

"For the zeal of Your house has devoured me" (Psa. 69:9a). This verse is quoted in John 2:17 in relation to Christ's cleansing of the temple.

4. Suffering Much and No One Taking Pity upon Him

In this psalm we see also that Christ suffered much and that no one took pity upon Him (vv. 29a, 19-20; John 16:32).

5. Weeping and Entreating God to Deliver Him out of the Waters of Death

Christ suffered in His weeping and entreating God to deliver Him out of the waters of death (Psa. 69:10, 13-17, 1-2). Speaking of Christ, Hebrews 5:7 says that He "offered up both petitions and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him out of death."

6. Being Given Gall as His Food While Suffering on the Cross

Psalm 69:21a says, "They gave me gall for my food." In Matthew 27:34 we are told that Christ was given gall as His food while suffering on the cross.

7. Being Given Vinegar to Drink in His Thirst on the Cross

"In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psa. 69:21b). While the Lord Jesus was suffering on the cross, He said, "I thirst," and mockingly they gave Him vinegar to drink (John 19:28-30).

8. Stricken and Wounded by God

"They persecute him whom You have stricken, / And they recount the pain of those whom You have wounded" (Psa. 69:26). This indicates that Christ was stricken and wounded by God (Isa. 53:10a).

9. Betrayed by One of His Disciples

Christ was betrayed by one of His disciples (Psa. 69:25; Acts 1:16-20a).

C. The Psalmist's Expression from His Complex Sentiments concerning His Enemies

Even in such a good psalm concerning Christ, there is a portion that falls short of the divine revelation. I am referring to Psalm 69:22-24, 27-28, verses which are the psalmist's expression from his complex sentiments concerning his enemies.

II. A PRAYER OF THE PSALMIST

Psalm 70 is a prayer of the psalmist.

A. The Psalmist's Seeking for God's Deliverance

In verses 1, 4, and 5 the psalmist seeks for God's deliverance. There is surely nothing wrong with this. On the contrary, here we have a good example of seeking God's deliverance, His salvation. In verse 1 the psalmist prays, "O God, hasten to deliver me; / O Jehovah, hasten to help me." This prayer is quite good. In verses 4 and 5 the psalmist continues his prayer, saying, "May all those who seek You / Be glad and rejoice in You; / And may those who love Your salvation / Say continually, / May God be magnified! / But I

am poor and needy; / O God, hasten to me. / You are my help and my Deliverer; / O Jehovah, do not delay."

B. The Psalmist's Expression from His Complex Sentiments concerning His Enemies

"May those who seek my life / Be put to shame and confounded; / May those who take delight in my misfortune / Be turned back and humiliated; / May those who say, Aha! Aha! / Turn away because of their shame" (vv. 2-3). These verses, which surely are inferior to the prayer for deliverance in verses 1, 4, and 5, are another instance of the psalmist's expression from his complex sentiments concerning his enemies. David found it very difficult to forget his enemies.

III. THE PSALMIST'S TRUST IN GOD AND HIS PRAISE TO GOD

Psalm 71 is about the psalmist's trust in God and his praise to God.

A. The Psalmist's Trust in God

Verses 1 through 12 are about the psalmist's trust in God. In verse 5 he says, "You are my hope, O Lord Jehovah, / My trust from my youth."

B. The Psalmist's Praise to God

Verses 6b, 8, and 14 through 24 are the psalmist's praise to God. In verse 6b he says, "My praise is continually of You," and in verse 8 he declares, "My mouth is full of Your praise, / With Your glory, all day long."

C. The Psalmist's Expression from His Complex Sentiments concerning His Enemies

Even in this good psalm about trusting in God and praising Him, the psalmist does not forget his enemies. In verse 13 he says, "May those who are the adversaries to my soul / Be put to shame and consumed; / May those who seek my misfortune / Wrap themselves in reproach and humiliation." This word is

a repetition of 70:2. Once again, this is the psalmist's expression from his complex sentiments concerning his enemies.

IV. THE REIGNING CHRIST

A. Typified by the Reigning Solomon, the Son of David, in His Prosperous and Flourishing Time

The reigning Christ is typified in Psalm 72 by the reigning Solomon, the son of David (Matt. 1:1; 22:42), in his prosperous and flourishing time. This is indicated by the title of this psalm, "Of Solomon," and by the first verse: "O God, give Your judgments to the king, / And Your righteousness to the son of the king.

B. The Reigning of Christ

1. In the Millennium in the Age of Restoration

The reign of Christ typified by Solomon will be in the millennium in the age of restoration (Rev. 20:4, 6; Matt. 19:28).

2. In Righteousness and in Justice for Peace

"He will judge Your people in righteousness, / And Your poor with justice. / The mountains will bear peace to the people, / And the hills, in righteousness" (Psa. 72:2-3). This indicates that the reigning of Christ will be in righteousness and in justice for peace. He will be feared by the people throughout the generations as long as the sun and the moon endure (vv. 4-5).

3. Dropping Like Rain upon Mown Grass and Like Showers Dripping on the Earth

As Christ reigns, He will drop like rain upon mown grass and like abundant showers dripping on the earth for the flourishing of the righteous and for abundance of peace on earth as long as the moon lasts (vv. 6-7).

4. Having Dominion from Sea to Sea and from the River unto the Ends of the Earth

Verse 8 says, "He will have dominion from sea to sea / And from the River unto the ends of the earth." From "sea to sea"

means from the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea. The river mentioned here is the Euphrates. As Christ exercises His dominion, all the nations will serve Him (vv. 9-11).

5. His Favor to the Needy and Their Response to Him

Verses 12 through 15 speak of Christ's favor to the needy and their response to Him. He will deliver the needy when he cries, and the poor when there is no one to help him. He will have pity on the weak and needy and will save the souls of the needy, redeeming their soul from oppression. Verse 15 tells us of the response of the needy to the reigning of Christ. "He shall live and to Him shall be given / The gold of Sheba; / And prayer shall be made continually for Him; / He shall be blessed all the day long."

6. A Blessing to All the Earth in Prosperity and Their Response to Him

In verse 16 we see that the reigning of Christ will be a blessing to all the earth in prosperity. "There will be an abundance of grain on the earth, / Even at the tops of the mountains. / Its fruit will wave like the forests of Lebanon, / And those of the city will blossom like the foliage of the earth." Then in verse 17 we have the response of the blessed ones to Him. "His name will be forever; / As long as the sun endures, His name will spread; / And men will be blessed in Him; / All the nations will call Him blessed."

C. The Psalmist's Blessing to God as the Closing Word of Book 2

"Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel, / Who alone does wondrous deeds; / And blessed be His glorious name forever; / And may His glory fill the whole earth. / Amen and Amen" (vv. 18-19). This is the psalmist's blessing to God as the closing word of Book 2 of the Psalms. Thus, verse 20 concludes, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

In the remainder of this message, I have the burden to say a word concerning the relation of the Psalms to the book

of Job. Apparently these books are not related, but actually they are closely related.

Readers of the book of Job can easily understand that this book is about Job's sufferings. After reading this book, many Christians might think that Job is a good pattern for us today. Although he suffered so much, he did not blame God but still praised Him. These readers would agree with the following word from the book of James: "You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen his end from the Lord" (5:11). It is, of course, not wrong to use Job as a pattern of suffering with endurance; however, this understanding of Job is shallow.

Why did Job suffer? We know from the first two chapters of Job that God allowed Satan to damage Job, taking away his possessions and his children and even touching his body. Much of this book is the record of a long debate involving several parties: Job, his wife, his three friends, and Elihu. Eventually God came in to speak, asking Job one question after another in order to convince him that he was foolish and did not know anything and that he should stop his speaking. Job did not know God's purpose in allowing him to suffer, and in the entire book no answer is given to the question of why Job suffered so much.

The book of Job is a good match to the Psalms. Perhaps nearly half of the one hundred fifty psalms are the pious expressions of the complex sentiments of the psalmists, mainly complaining to God and asking Him to destroy the psalmists' enemies. We all need a clear view of this negative side of the Psalms. On the positive side, many of the Psalms give us a revelation concerning Christ. This revelation is mainly on Christ's person, work, exaltation, and position.

However, in the Psalms there is not much revelation, if any, on Christ's being life to us, Christ's dwelling in us and making His home in us, and on our living Christ in order to magnify Him. There is not such a thought in the Psalms. Instead, the Psalms give us the impression that we have to be godly, to fear God and to trust in Him, to keep the law, to maintain our integrity, and to be righteous, upright, just, and perfect. Seemingly, all this is right. Actually, the concept

that we need to fear God, keep the law of God, and be just and righteous is wrong, for it is not according to the divine revelation. It is worthwhile for us to study the Psalms to appreciate Christ but not to appreciate other matters such as trusting in God. Apparently, the matter of trusting in God is right, but the way we trust in God may be wrong and the purpose of our trusting in God may also be wrong.

The basis for my speaking about the Psalms in this way is the New Testament with its twenty-seven books. The New Testament tells us that we have been crucified (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20). Since we have been crucified and even buried (Rom. 6:4), there is no need for us to fear God. However, many of us live day by day as if we have not been crucified and buried. If this is our situation, then we are today's psalmists holding mistaken concepts about such matters as trusting in God, keeping the law, and being righteous.

We need to see the vision in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." Since we have been crucified and Christ now lives in us, it is no longer a matter of "I" fearing God or trusting in Him. The bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19) is not for us to fear God or to keep the law but for us to live Christ in order that Christ might be magnified (vv. 20-21). Christ must be our fear, our trust, our righteousness, our integrity, our perfection. To be perfect outside of Christ is wrong, and God condemns this kind of perfection just as He condemns imperfection. Only the living person of Christ is acceptable to God, justified by God, and approved by God.

I hope that one day your eyes will be open to see this. Then you will say, "God, now I know that You do not want anything of me. You want nothing but Christ. You want me to realize that I have been crucified, terminated, finished, so that I can live Christ and magnify Him."

In the upcoming Life-study of Job, we will see that much of what was spoken by Job, his wife, his friends, and Elihu was along the line of good and evil. This means that their speaking was according to the line of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. None of them, including Job, was

along the line of the tree of life. At the end of the Bible, we see the tree of life (Rev. 22:2, 14). The tree of life is a matter of Christ, not of integrity or perfection.

May we all look to the Lord for His mercy that we may study the Psalms in the proper way. The Psalms present us a picture showing us that the human race is wrong in holding to the concept that God wants us to fear Him, to keep the law, and to be righteous, just, upright, and full of integrity. This concept is wrong; it is altogether the concept of the Old Testament under the law according to the knowledge of good and evil.

The concept in the New Testament is very different. The New Testament reveals that Christ came to die an all-inclusive death. When He died, we died; and when He was buried, we were buried. This is the reason that our believing in Christ needs to be followed by our being baptized into Christ and into His death (Rom. 6:3). The baptistry is our tomb, and we should remain in this tomb. Since we are dead and buried, how can we still fear God and keep the law? It is impossible for one who is dead and buried to do such things. Death has liberated us from the law (Rom. 7:1-6).

The New Testament also reveals that when Christ died, He ended the old creation. On the third day He was resurrected, and through His resurrection He regenerated us (1 Pet. 1:3) to be a new man, not a man of Adam and in Adam but a man of Christ and in Christ.

Many, however, are devoid of such a revelation. Lacking this revelation, you may come out of your tomb and go back to Adam and try to correct Adam, to build up Adam, to change Adam from bad to good. This is what you are doing when you try to keep the law in order to be perfect, righteous, and just and to have integrity. You are actually trying to improve fallen and degraded Adam. Many of today's Christians are doing this very thing.

Also, you may meet with the church without knowing the purpose of the church. You may think that the church is helping you to be good. No, the church is helping you to remain in your tomb so that you will no longer be the one living but that Christ will be the One living in you. In the

church we are being helped to realize, with Paul, that we have been crucified, that it is no longer we who live, that Christ lives in us, and that now we should care only for one thing—to live Christ that we may magnify Christ.

Whereas many of us are remaining in Job or in the Psalms, we need to be brought by these two books into the New Testament economy. I would ask you to compare Job and the Psalms with the fourteen Epistles of Paul. If you make such a comparison, you will realize that Paul's Epistles are vastly superior to Job and the Psalms.

Before Paul was saved, he boasted in the righteousness of the law, but after he was saved he considered that kind of righteousness as dung, as refuse (Phil. 3:8-9). Can you say this about your own goodness, righteousness, justice, and integrity? Do you hate these things and count them as dung? On the contrary, you may treasure these human virtues. But these are the virtues of a dead person, and God does not want them, for they are something of Adam and in Adam. God wants only those virtues that are in Christ and of Christ, the virtues that come by living Christ and magnifying Christ.

If you see this, you will repent not only for being bad but also for being good. Both are of the same tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—and both are rejected by God. As we go through the Psalms message by message, I hope that this will become increasingly clear to you.

My concern in all these messages is for the divine revelation. I hope that you will receive this revelation and thereby come to know what God's eternal economy is. God's economy is to terminate us and to put us into the tomb so that we may receive Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God. Having received Him into us, we should let Him live in us, no longer caring for our righteousness, justice, or integrity but caring only for Christ, the living One. It is a great thing to see that we have been crucified and that it is no longer we who live but that it is Christ who lives in us. If we realize this, we will care only for Christ, and we will eagerly receive the revelation in Paul's Epistles concerning Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THIRTY

THE DESOLATION OF GOD'S HOUSE AND CHRIST AS THE SOLUTION

PSALMS 73—76

Scripture Reading: Psa. 73:1-3, 12-17, 25-26; 74:2-3, 7-8; 75:2, 4-7; 76:2-4

The divine revelation in the Bible is progressive. In Genesis 1 we have a history of God's creation, but in that chapter we cannot see much of the divine revelation. Of course, there is some revelation there. For instance, verse 1 says, "In the beginning God created…." The Hebrew word for "God" here is *Elohim*, which means the "faithful, mighty One." From this word we can realize that God is faithful and also mighty. Furthermore, this word, a proper noun, is not singular but plural; however, the predicate "created" is singular. This is an indication that God is triune, three-one. This surely is something of the divine revelation that progresses throughout the Bible until the last chapter of Revelation.

In Colossians 1:25 Paul tells us that the stewardship of God was given to him "to complete the word of God." The word of God is the divine revelation, which had not been completed before the New Testament was written. In the New Testament the apostles, especially Paul in his fourteen Epistles, completed the word of God. It is clear, therefore, that the word of God had not been completed at the time of Job or David or Malachi or even at the end of the book of Acts.

Some mistakenly think that orthodox doctrine consists only of what the Lord Jesus taught the twelve apostles. Those who hold this concept need to consider the Lord's word in John 16:12-15: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you

cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; for this reason I have said that He receives of Mine and will declare it to you." The disciples had to wait for the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of reality to reveal more things to them. From this we see that the word of God had not been completed even when the Lord Jesus was on earth, but still needed to be completed through the speaking of the Spirit of reality. Surely Paul was a person to whom the Holy Spirit revealed many things, and he wrote concerning these things in his Epistles, indicating, as we have seen, that he had been commissioned by God to complete the word of God.

In particular, Paul completed the word of God in regard to the mystery of God, which is Christ (Col. 2:2), and the mystery of Christ, which is the church (Eph. 3:4). In Colossians 1:27 he says, "To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." There is not such a word in Genesis or in the Psalms or fully in the four Gospels. This is an example of the fact that the divine revelation in the Bible is progressive and that it is not completed until the end of Revelation.

Revelation 22:18 and 19 tell us that, since the divine revelation has been completed, no one is allowed to add to it or take away from it. In other words, the Bible itself makes it clear that the entire revelation has been completed and closed, and no one is permitted to claim, as the Mormons do, that additional revelation has been given to them.

The teaching of the New Testament as a whole is called the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). The apostles' teaching began with the teaching of the Lord Jesus and continued with Peter, John, Paul, and the other apostles. We praise the Lord that we have in our hand the complete divine revelation.

As we read the Bible, we need to learn the principles of the Bible. Especially we need to keep in mind the basic

principle that the divine revelation in the Bible is progressive. If we are clear concerning this, we will realize that the speaking of Job's three friends is a matter not of divine revelation but of human opinion. How, then, can we regard their opinion as divine revelation?

We face a similar situation when we come to the Psalms. I appreciate the comment of John Nelson Darby that the Psalms are the expressions of the psalmists uttered out of their complex sentiments. We should not regard every aspect of the psalmists' sentiments as the divine revelation. It would be very unwise for us to do this. On the one hand, the psalmists received a certain amount of the divine revelation; on the other hand, their receiving of this revelation caused them to have various sentiments, including sentiments related to hating their enemies, to doing good, and to keeping the law.

Many Christians appraise the Psalms very highly and even exalt them. On the contrary, I have been helped by Darby to see that some of the expressions in the Psalms are not the direct expression of the divine revelation but the expression of the complex sentiments of the psalmists. The psalmists who uttered these expressions were pious; they loved God, feared God, and tried their best to please God, trust God, and keep the law. With the exception of trying to keep the law, all these things are good. Trying to keep the law is contrary to one of the principles of the Bible. The law was not given for God's people to keep; rather, the law was given to try them, to prove them, and to convince them that they were unable to keep the law.

Today's Christians commonly say that every word of the Bible from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21 is the word of God. I believe that the Bible is wholly inspired by God but not that every word in the Bible is a word by God. Surely, the word of the serpent to Eve in Genesis 3 is not a word by God, and it would be a great mistake to say that it is. In the Bible there are many words uttered by God's enemies, for instance, the words uttered by the chief priests and the scribes in their mocking of the Lord Jesus (Mark 15:31). My point here is that we need to differentiate between the word spoken by God and the word spoken by others. No doubt,

every word out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus is a word out of the mouth of God, and such a word is the divine revelation directly given. However, in the Bible there are many words that are not the words of God. Without those words we would not have the proper background for the showing of the divine revelation.

In the fifty chapters of Genesis we have a history of a number of people from Adam to Joseph, but in this book there is very little teaching or doctrine, if any. Without teaching or doctrine how can there be much revelation? In this matter, Romans is very different from Genesis. Chapters one through fifteen of Romans are filled with Paul's teaching.

What do we have in the Psalms? Do we have history and doctrine? No, in the Psalms we have the expressions of sentiments. How much of the divine revelation is unveiled in a particular expression depends on the kind of sentiment conveyed by that expression. Certainly David's expression of his sentiment of hatred for his enemies should not be considered something of the divine revelation.

I hope that this opening word will help to give you, especially the young generation, a proper foundation for understanding the Bible. In particular, I hope that this word will help you to understand what I am endeavoring to do in these messages on the Psalms. In our reading of the Psalms, we need to realize that certain expressions are not of the divine revelation but of the psalmists' complex sentiments.

Let us now go on to consider Psalms 73 through 76, which are concerned with the desolation of God's house and Christ as the solution.

I. THE PROBLEM OF DESOLATION

It may be hard for some to believe that the temple, God's house, was desolated, but it was desolated to such an extent that it was burned, and the city surrounding it was ruined.

A. Due to God's People's Negligence of the Experience of Christ

What was the cause of the desolation of God's house? Apparently it was because the children of Israel were evil

and sinful. However, the intrinsic reason for the desolation was that Christ was not exalted by God's people; they did not give Him the preeminence, the first place, in everything. Actually their failure to give Christ the preeminence, their failure to honor and exalt Him, was the cause of their becoming sinful and evil.

The principle is the same with us in the church life today. If we do not love Christ with our first love, giving Him the first place in everything that He may have the preeminence among us, the church will become desolate. The desolation of the church as the house of God always issues from the negligence of the experience of Christ.

B. Solved by Christ Properly Appreciated and Exalted by God's People

The problem of desolation is solved by Christ being properly appreciated and exalted by God's people. Recently the church in Anaheim has been praying for revival. If all the saints in Anaheim would give Christ the preeminence, exalting Him to the uttermost and loving Him with the first love, there would be a genuine revival. The real revival in the church depends upon everyone in the church life giving Christ the first place in everything.

If we are clear concerning the problem of desolation and its solution, we may now go on to consider Psalms 73 through 76 one by one.

II. THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SEEKING SAINTS

Psalm 73 is on the sufferings of the seeking saints.

A. God Being Good to Those Who Are Pure in Heart

Psalm 73:1 tells us that God is good to those who are pure in heart. To be pure in heart is to have God as our one goal and aim. No doubt the psalmist here was this kind of person.

B. The Sufferings and the Puzzles of the God-seeking Psalmist

Verses 2 through 16 are a record of the sufferings and

puzzles of the God-seeking psalmist. Verse 2 says, "As for me, my feet were nearly turned aside; / My steps had almost slipped." This indicates that the psalmist was nearly stumbled by the situation concerning the prosperity of the wicked (vv. 3-12). Whereas Psalm 1 says that the wicked do not prosper, here the psalmist is puzzled by the prosperity of the wicked, who are at ease and heap up riches (v. 12). The psalmist goes on to say that he has purified his heart in vain, that he has been plagued all day long, and that he was chastened every morning (vv. 13-14). Psalm 1 says that the one who keeps the law will be blessed, but in Psalm 73 we see a law-keeper who was plagued. In verse 15 the psalmist continues, "If I had said, I will speak thus; / Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children." This pious seeker of God was suffering, but if he had told others about his situation, they would have been stumbled and would have said, "Whoever keeps the law will be prosperous." However, here is one who kept the law, yet was not at all prosperous. In the next verse the psalmist tells us that he was puzzled. "When I considered this in order to understand it, / It was troublesome in my sight." This is a heavy word. The more the psalmist considered the situation, the more he was troubled and puzzled.

C. The Solution Obtained in the Sanctuary of God

In verses 17 through 28 we see that the psalmist obtained the solution in the sanctuary of God. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; / Then I perceived their end." Where is God's sanctuary today? First, God's sanctuary, His habitation, is in our spirit. Second, God's sanctuary is the church. Thus, to go into the sanctuary of God, we need to turn to our spirit and then go to the meetings of the church. Once we are in the sanctuary—in the spirit and in the church—we will have another view, a particular perception, of the situation concerning the wicked.

1. The Wicked Being Set in Slippery Places to Be Cast Down into Ruins

Having gone into the sanctuary of God, the psalmist could

perceive that the wicked were set in slippery places to be cast down into ruins (v. 18). This caused the psalmist to say, "How they are made desolate in a moment! / They are utterly consumed by terrors. / Like a dream from which someone awakes, You, O Lord, / Upon arising, will despise their image" (vv. 19-20).

2. God to Be His Pure Seeker's Only Possession in Heaven and His Unique Desire on Earth

"Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth" (v. 25). This verse reveals that God's pure seeker would have God as his only possession in heaven and his unique desire on earth. God was the psalmist's unique goal. The psalmist did not care for anything except God and gaining Him. In this matter, Paul was the same. In Philippians 3:8 Paul said that he counted all things as refuse in order to gain Christ.

Psalm 73 ends with these words: "My flesh and my heart fails, / But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever" (v. 26). Here we have the answer to the psalmist's question concerning his suffering and the prosperity of the wicked. The one who does not care for God may gain many things and seem to prosper. However, the one who cares for God will be restricted by God and even stripped by God of many things. As we will see in the upcoming life-study of the book of Job, this is what happened to Job.

III. THE DESOLATION OF THE HOUSE OF GOD

Whereas Psalm 73 is on the sufferings of the seeking saints, Psalm 74 is on the desolation of the house of God.

A. A Painful Presentation of the Perpetual Ruins and Damages in the Sanctuary of God

Verses 1 through 11 are the psalmist's painful presentation of the perpetual ruins and damages in the sanctuary of God. "Why, O God, have You cast us off forever? / Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? / Remember

Your assembly, which You have purchased of old, / Which You have redeemed as the tribe of Your inheritance, / And this Mount Zion, on which You dwell" (vv. 1-2). These verses indicate that the psalmist was concerned about two things—God's people and God's dwelling place. Both God's people and His dwelling place had been damaged. Regarding this, the psalmist was deeply disappointed.

B. A Desperate Cry for God's Interest according to His Power and Based on His Covenant

Verses 12 through 23 are a desperate cry for God's interest according to His power and based on His covenant. The psalmist did not pray for his own interest—he prayed for God's interest. He cried out to God for God's interest according to His power as described in verses 13 through 17. Then in verse 20 the psalmist said to God, "Regard the covenant." Here he seemed to be saying, "O God, You must regard the covenant which You made with our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You cannot forget it. You may disregard us, for we are evil, but You cannot disregard the covenant which You made."

The psalmist's prayer here is an example of the best kind of prayer—the prayer that is for God's interest, that is according to God's power, and that is based upon God's faithfulness to His covenant. We all need to learn to pray in this way. I believe that God heard this prayer of the psalmist and answered it, for eventually He came in to restore the ruined sanctuary.

IV. THE JUDGMENT OF CHRIST UPON THE DESOLATORS

Psalm 75 is concerned with the judgment of Christ upon the desolators. Some may wonder how with respect to this psalm I can speak of the judgment of *Christ,* since this psalm does not mention Christ or the Messiah. The basis for my speaking here is the fact that, according to John 5:22, God has given all judgment to Christ the Son. Thus, the very God who judges in Psalm 75 should be Christ. Christ, as the second person of the Divine Trinity, is the One who will

execute judgment upon all sinners. Here Christ's judgment is upon the desolators.

A. At the Time Appointed by Him

Christ's judgment upon the desolators will be at the time appointed by Him (vv. 1-3). "When I choose the appointed time, / It is I who judge with equity" (v. 2). The "I" must refer to Christ, the just Judge.

B. Cutting Off the Uplifted Horns of the Wicked to Vindicate That Exaltation Comes from Him in the North

In verses 4 through 10 the psalmist speaks of the cutting off of the uplifted horns of the wicked to vindicate that exaltation comes from Him in the north. Verses 6 and 7 say, "Neither from the east nor from the west, / And neither from the south, does exaltation come; / For God is the Judge: / He puts this one down and exalts that one." Here we see that exaltation comes from the north, where God dwells (cf. Isa. 14:13-14). For exaltation to come from the north means that it comes from God, who dwells in the north. Furthermore, this indicates that Christ is unique. Exaltation should not come from any direction other than where He dwells. Therefore, preeminence should be given to Him.

V. THE VICTORY OF GOD IN HIS DWELLING PLACE

Psalm 76 is on the victory of God in His dwelling place.

A. The Victory of God, as the Glorious and Excellent One, in His Tabernacle

Verses 1 through 5 are a declaration concerning the victory of God, as the glorious and excellent One, in His tabernacle. Verse 2 says, "In Salem is His tabernacle, / And His dwelling place, in Zion." Verse 4 speaks of God's excellence and glory: "More glorious are You, / More excellent than the mountains of prey."

B. The Praise of the Psalmist concerning the Wrath and Fearfulness of God

Verses 6 through 12 are the praise of the psalmist concerning the wrath and fearfulness of God. Concerning God's wrath, verse 10 says that He will gird Himself "with the remainder of wrath." Concerning God's fearfulness, verse 7 declares, "You, indeed You, are to be feared," and verse 11 says, "Let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared."

Psalms 73 through 76 cover four matters: the sufferings of the saints, the desolation of God's house, the judgment of Christ, and the victory of God. Since these four psalms are the expressions of the psalmists' complex sentiments, we need to discern those sentiments that are divine from those that are merely human. This means that we need to discern the Holy Word according to the proper principles. To understand the Old Testament, we need the writings of Paul. If as we study the Psalms we stand on the shoulders of Paul, we will have a clear view of all one hundred and fifty psalms.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THIRTY-ONE

THE WAY OF RESTORATION—EXALTING CHRIST

PSALMS 77—83

Scripture Reading: Psa. 77:7-13; 78:65-66, 68-69; 79:1; 80:14-15, 17-19; 82:8; 83:2-5, 12, 18

All the psalms are arranged in a very good sequence. This sequence is either according to history or according to doctrine. In the divine arrangement, the psalms that we will cover in this message—Psalms 77 through 83—form a cluster that may be according to both history and doctrine. These psalms cover the devastation of three holy things—the holy temple, the holy city, and the holy people. In particular, these psalms reveal the way of restoration, showing us that the way to be restored is to exalt Christ. The more Christ is exalted, the more restoration there will be.

These seven psalms were written by Asaph, a Levite who had served in the temple. The fact that these psalms speak of the desolation of the temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the people indicates that they were written after the children of Israel had been taken captive to Babylon.

According to the history recorded in these psalms, the ark of God was captured once and was probably lost eventually. First, it was captured before the temple was built. Psalm 78:60 and 61 refer to this: "He forsook the tabernacle in Shiloh, / The tent that He had established among men; / And He gave over His strength [His ark] into captivity, / And His glory into the hand of the adversary." The ark had been in the tabernacle at Shiloh. One day, when the people of Israel went out to fight against the Philistines, they brought with them the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 4:1-5). In that battle

the people of Israel were defeated, and the ark of God was captured by the Philistines (v. 11). God, however, came in to protect the ark, and it was returned (1 Sam. 5—6). Eventually, David defeated the enemies of Israel and prepared both the site and the materials for the building of the temple, even giving the design of the temple to his son Solomon. Under Solomon the temple was built, and the ark was placed in it. That temple remained about four hundred years until it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 606 B.C. At that time the ark was lost without a trace. This is part of the history recorded in these psalms, which we will now consider one by one.

I. GOD'S WAY BEING IN THE SANCTUARY AND HIS WAY BEING IN THE SEA AND HIS PATHS IN THE GREAT WATERS

In Psalm 77 we are told that God's way is in the sanctuary and His way is in the sea and His paths are in the great waters.

A. It Being the Psalmist's Infirmity That He Was Puzzled and Complained to God because God Had Cast Off His People for Awhile

The psalmist was puzzled and complained to God because God had cast off His people for awhile (vv. 1-9). In verses 7 and 8 he said, "Will the Lord cast us off forever? / And will He never be favorable to us again? / Has His lovingkindness ceased forever? / Has the promise come to an end for all generations?" The Bible tells us that God will never forsake us (Deut. 31:6; Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5), but in our experience it sometimes seems to us that He does forsake us. God has chosen us, and He will never forsake us. God may allow us to go away from Him for a short time. Then He touches us, and we come back to Him.

In Psalm 77:10a the psalmist said, "This is my infirmity." Here he admits that it was his infirmity that he was puzzled and complained to God because God had cast off His people for awhile.

B. The Psalmist Recalling the Past and Musing on God's Wondrous Doings for His People

In verses 10b through 20 the psalmist recalled the past and mused on God's wondrous doings for His people. "But I recall the years of the right hand of the Most High. / I will bring to remembrance the deeds of Jehovah, / For I will remember Your wonders from of old. / I will meditate on all Your work / And muse on Your doings" (vv. 10b-12). The word "muse" conveys a sense of sweetness, even of enjoyment. When the psalmist could not sleep during the night, he mused upon the great things God had done for His people.

The psalmist went on to relate the story of God's saving Israel from Egypt, recalling how God made His strength known among the peoples and redeemed His people with His arm (vv. 14-15). He remembered that the waters saw Him and were afraid, that the depths trembled, that the clouds poured forth water, that the sound of His thunder was in the whirlwind, that lightning illuminated the world, that the earth trembled and quaked, and that He led His people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron (vv. 16-18, 20). As the psalmist recalled these things and mused upon them, he realized that he could not say that God had ceased to be gracious and compassionate.

In this way, the psalmist introduces the subject of restoration. The temple had been destroyed, the city had been devastated, and many of the people had been either killed or taken captive. This does not mean, however, that Israel is finished, for there will be restoration through the exalting of Christ.

C. God's Way Being Hidden in the Sea but Revealed in His Sanctuary

God's way is hidden in the sea, and His paths in the great waters with His footsteps are not known to men (v. 19), but His way is revealed in His sanctuary (v. 13). The thought here is similar to that in Psalm 73 where the psalmist, puzzled by the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the seeking saints, said, "When I considered this in order to understand

it, / It was troublesome in my sight, / Until I went into the sanctuary of God; / Then I perceived their end" (vv. 16-17). In the sanctuary, the psalmist had a clear view of the situation.

Spiritually speaking, for us today God's sanctuary is our spirit and the church. Many Christians neglect the matter of the spirit. Some do not even realize that they have a human spirit. Likewise, many do not have a proper understanding concerning the church. Without paying attention to our spirit and to the church, we cannot know God's way, which is revealed in His sanctuary. I thank the Lord that we in the Lord's recovery know both the spirit and the church. When we were in Elden hall, we had a slogan: "In spirit, on the ground." In this slogan the word "spirit" refers to our regenerated human spirit, and the word "ground" denotes the ground of the church. Today we have a twofold sanctuary: a private sanctuary—the spirit—and a public sanctuary—the church.

Many of us can testify that certain secrets in the Bible were unknown to us until we went into this twofold sanctuary. When we exercise our spirit and live in the church, God's way becomes clear to us.

We may use the matter of marriage as an illustration of this. In the early years of my ministry, I would give many principles to those who consulted with me about whom they should marry. I discovered, however, that this did not work, and eventually I changed my practice regarding this. Now if young people ask me concerning marriage, I will not give them any principles; instead, I will encourage them to exercise their spirit and to attend the meetings of the church. If those who are concerned about marriage will enter into the sanctuary of God by exercising their spirit and living in the church, they will know what they should do. The main point in Psalm 77 is that God's way is revealed in His sanctuary.

II. MAN'S FAILURE AND GOD'S RESTORATION

The subject of Psalm 78 is man's failure and God's restoration.

A. The Recall of Israel's Failure in the Past

Verses 1 through 58 are the psalmist's recall of Israel's

failure in the past. Verse 2 says, "I will open my mouth in a parable; / I will utter riddles from of old." This is quoted in Matthew 13:35 with respect to Christ's speaking in parables. The psalmist goes on to say that the things which were related to them by their fathers they will relate to the generation to come, especially regarding the "praises of Jehovah and His strength / And His wondrous deeds that He has done" (v. 4).

B. The Issue of Israel's Failure

Verses 59 through 64 describe the issue of Israel's failure. God greatly abhorred Israel, forsook the tabernacle in Shiloh, gave over His ark into captivity and His glory into the hand of the adversary, and delivered His people to the sword (vv. 59-62).

C. God's Restoration of Israel

In verses 65 through 72 we have a word concerning God's restoration of Israel. He chose Mount Zion, which He loved, and "He built His sanctuary like the heights, / Like the earth that He has founded forever" (vv. 68-69). He chose David His servant, and David, a marvelous king, "shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, / And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands" (v. 72).

III. RESTORATION BY EXALTING CHRIST

Psalms 79 and 80 reveal that restoration comes by exalting Christ.

A. The Devastation of God's Temple

Psalm 79:1-3 speaks about the devastation of God's temple. In verse 1 the psalmist says, "O God, the nations have come into Your inheritance; / They have defiled Your holy temple; / They have turned Jerusalem into heaps."

B. The Psalmist's Cry to God for the People

Verses 4 through 13 are the psalmist's cry to God for the people, his prayer for the devastated Israel.

C. The Psalmist's Prayer for Israel as God's Flock

In 80:1-7 we have the psalmist's prayer for Israel as God's flock. The psalmist prayed that the Shepherd of Israel would give ear (v. 1). In both verse 3 and verse 7, he prayed, "O God, restore us; / And cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved."

D. God's Dealing with Israel as His Vine

In verses 8 through 13 the psalmist speaks regarding God's dealing with Israel as His vine, which He brought out of Egypt and planted. Whereas the vine once was flourishing, it eventually became desolate.

E. The Psalmist Asking God to Visit His Vine for the Sake of Christ as the Man of His Right Hand

In verses 14 through 19 the psalmist asks God to visit His vine for the sake of Christ as the Man of His right hand. "O God of hosts, turn, we beseech You; / Look down from heaven and see, / And visit this vine, / Even the stock which Your right hand has planted / And the son which You have strengthened for Yourself" (vv. 14-15). The vine which God had brought out of Egypt and planted in the good land became evil, and God took away its protection. As a result, Israel became a prey to the Gentile powers, such as Babylon. However, among the Israelites there is one—the Lord Jesus—who is signified by the word "son" in verse 15. Hosea 11:1 indicates that when Christ became a man, He, the Son of God, joined Himself to Israel. He is "the son which You have strengthened for Yourself" (Psa. 80:15). During the time Israel was forsaken by God, this unique One was strengthened by God for Himself.

In verse 17 the psalmist goes on to say, "Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, / Upon the son of man whom You have strengthened for Yourself." From this verse we see that Christ is at the right hand of God, the highest place in the universe. This reveals that the first place, the

highest position, the preeminence, has been given to Christ. This is the exaltation of Christ.

The way of restoration is the exaltation of Christ. Whenever God's people exalt Christ, there will be restoration and revival. We can have revival among us only if we exalt Christ, letting Him have the preeminence and giving Him the first place in everything. If a church is somewhat cold and old and desires revival, that church should give Christ the preeminence, recognizing Him as the One who is at the right hand of God. Christ is now at the right hand of God, and whoever calls upon Him as such a One will be restored and revived. In our private life, married life, family life, and church life, Christ needs to be at the right hand of God. If He is exalted in every aspect of our living, there will be restoration everywhere. Exalting Christ is the way for revival, for restoration.

The day is coming when Israel will be restored through their exalting of Christ. When they repent to Christ and give Him the first place, they will be restored.

According to Psalm 80, the vine is Israel and the man at God's right hand is Christ. The world rejected Christ and put Him on the cross, but God came in to raise Him from among the dead and to seat Him at God's right hand in the heavens. Today, as we visit people for the preaching of the gospel, we need to tell them that Christ, the Son of God, became a man, died on the cross for their sins, resurrected, and ascended to the right hand of God in the heavens, and now they need to call upon Him. In the sight of God, for a sinner to call upon the Lord Jesus is to exalt Him. When a sinner exalts Christ by calling upon Him, that sinner will be regenerated.

As regenerated people we need to come together in the meetings of the church to exalt Christ by praising, singing, and shouting. Instead of being silent, we should exercise our spiritual birthright to exalt Christ. We should declare, "Lord Jesus, You are at the right hand of God. You have the preeminence in my private life, married life, family life, and church life." The more we exalt Christ, giving Him the

preeminence in everything, the more we will be revived and restored.

IV. GOD'S INTENTION BEING TO GET THE EARTH FOR CHRIST'S INHERITANCE AND SATAN'S PLOT BEING TO TAKE GOD'S HABITATION IN POSSESSION

God's intention is to get the earth for Christ's inheritance, and Satan's plot is to take God's habitation in possession. These matters are covered in Psalms 81—83.

A. Israel Charged to Shout Joyfully to God

Israel should shout joyfully to God and sing pleasantly to Him at their feasts (81:1-4). According to God's ordination, Israel, God's elect, should live a joyful life. The annual feasts, as well as the Sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee, are times of rejoicing, singing, and shouting. "That is a statute of Israel, / An ordinance of the God of Jacob" (v. 4).

B. Israel Listening to God and Walking in His Ways, and God Subduing Their Enemies

If Israel will listen to God and walk in His ways, God will subdue their enemies (the nations) and feed Israel with the finest of wheat and satisfy them with honey from the rock (vv. 5-16). Verse 10 says, "I am Jehovah your God, / Who brought you up out of the land of Egypt; / Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." We may apply this verse to the matter of praising God in the meetings of the church. If we open our mouth by praising God and shouting, He will fill it.

C. God Judging in the Midst of the Judges because of Their Unjust Judgment over the Poor and the Orphan

Psalm 82:1-7 reveals that God judges in the midst of the judges (Exo. 21:6) because of their unjust judgment over the poor and the orphan. In Old Testament times, the judges were the priests, who knew God's law and who represented God to judge God's people. Psalm 82:6 is quoted by the Lord Jesus in John 10:34 and 35.

D. The Aspiration of the Psalmist for Christ to Judge the Earth and to Inherit the Nations

In verse 8 we have the aspiration of the psalmist for Christ to judge the earth and to inherit the nations: "Arise, O God; judge the earth; / For You will inherit all the nations." John 5:22 tells us that God has given all judgment to the Son, and Psalm 2:8 reveals that God has given the entire earth to Christ as His inheritance. Therefore, the word in 82:8 applies to Christ, the One appointed to judge the earth and the One worthy to inherit all the nations.

E. Satan's Plot Being to Take God's Habitation in Possession through the Nations Who Conspire against God's Hidden Ones

Satan's plot is to take God's habitation in possession through the nations who conspire against God's hidden ones (83:2-12). Psalm 83:3 says, "They devise crafty counsel against Your people, / And conspire against Your hidden ones." Today we, the believers in Christ, are God's hidden ones, and the worldly people do not know us. However, when the Lord Jesus comes back, the hidden ones will become the manifested ones. Today is the time for us not to be manifested but to be hidden.

F. The Psalmist's Prayer for God to Deal with the Nations

Finally, in 83:1, 13-18 we have the psalmist's prayer for God to deal with the nations that they may know that God alone is the Most High over all the earth and that they may seek His name. This will take place in the millennium, the time of restoration.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THIRTY-TWO

THE PSALMIST'S LOVE FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD WITH CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Psa. 84

In this message we will consider Psalm 84, which is concerned with the psalmist's love for the house of God with Christ.

I. AFTER GOD'S DEALING AND STRIPPING

Psalm 84 comes after a number of psalms on God's dealing and stripping. Book 3 of the Psalms has much to say about God's dealing and stripping. For example, the psalmist in Psalm 73 was puzzled by God's dealing and stripping and did not become clear concerning this until he entered into the sanctuary of God. The situation of the psalmists in such psalms was nearly the same as Job's. The main difference is that whereas the psalmists experienced God's dealing and stripping, Job also experienced God's consuming.

Psalm 84 uses a special term—"the valley of Baca." "Baca" means "weeping." Hence, the valley of Baca is the valley of weeping. This special term indicates that the psalmist had been dealt with by God and had been stripped by Him.

II. BLESSED BEING THOSE WHO DWELL IN GOD'S HOUSE

Verse 4 says that those who dwell in God's house are blessed. Here "house" signifies the church as a totality.

A. The Psalmist Longing, Even Fainting, for God's Habitations

Verses 1 and 2 say, "How lovely are Your tabernacles, / O Jehovah of hosts! / My soul longs, indeed even faints, / For

the courts of Jehovah; / My heart and my flesh cry out / For the living God." God's tabernacles, God's habitations, signify the local churches. The psalmist was not yet in God's habitations, but he longed to be there. His longing was so great that he even fainted. This indicates to what extent the psalmist loved God's habitations.

B. The Sparrow Finding a Home and the Swallow a Nest for Herself Where She May Lay Her Young at the Two Altars

The psalmist goes on to liken himself to the sparrow and the swallow: "At Your two altars, even the sparrow has found a home; / And the swallow, a nest for herself, / Where she may lay her young, / O Jehovah of hosts, my King and my God" (v. 3). These two altars are the golden altar for incense and the brass altar of burnt offering (Exo. 40:5-6). The brass altar, on which all kinds of offerings were offered, was in the outer court before the door of the tabernacle. The laver was also in the outer court. In the Holy Place were the table of showbread, the lampstand, and the golden altar for incense.

1. The Brass Altar in the Outer Court Where All Negative Things Have Been Dealt With by the Offerings

The brass altar typifies the cross of Christ. At this altar all the negative things have been dealt with by the offerings, which typify Christ. At the cross Christ took away our sins, crucified the old man, destroyed Satan, judged Satan's cosmos, and terminated the old creation and all the negative things. It was at the cross, therefore, that all our problems were solved, and it was at the cross that we first believed in the Lord Jesus. At the cross we confessed our sins, and at the cross we were forgiven. This qualified us to enter into the Holy Place and to come to the showbread table to receive food, to the lampstand to receive light, and to the golden altar to experience Christ as our incense acceptable to God.

2. The Golden Altar in Front of the Holy of Holies Where God's People Are Accepted by God in Peace

The golden altar for incense in front of the Holy of Holies is where God's people are accepted by God in peace. This incense typifies the resurrected Christ in His ascension as the acceptance to God (Rev. 8:3). As our incense Christ is fragrant, pleasant, and acceptable. Apart from Christ we cannot be accepted by God. Christ is our acceptance. On the negative side, at the brass altar our problems were solved by the crucified Christ; on the positive side, at the golden altar we become acceptable to God in the resurrected Christ in His ascension.

Before Christ's death there was a veil separating the Holy of Holies, where the ark was, from the Holy Place, where the golden altar was. Thus, there was a veil between the ark and the golden altar. Whereas some verses say clearly that the golden altar was outside the veil, other verses indicate that the golden altar belonged to the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:4; 1 Kings 6:22, ASV). When Christ died He rent the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 10:20), so now there is no longer a veil, a separation, between the ark and the golden altar.

The fact that Exodus 40:5 and 6 mention the golden altar together with the brass altar indicates that these two altars are closely related. They are closely related also in our experience. First, we come to the altar of brass, to the cross, where all negative things are dealt with. As a result of our experience at this altar, we are clean and are qualified to enter into the tabernacle to contact God at the incense altar.

3. Through These Two Altars God's Redeemed Finding Their Home with God in Rest

Through these two altars God's redeemed can find their home with God in rest. Psalm 84:3 speaks both of a home and of a nest. What is the difference between a home and a nest? Whereas a home is a place of rest, a nest is a place of refuge. For us today, the brass altar is a refuge. We hide ourselves under the cross, escaping our troubles, and thus we are covered and have refuge. Then at the golden altar we

contact our Christ in the heavens. This contact is not for refuge—it is for rest.

A swallow is small and weak and is troubled by storms and by many other things. But a swallow has a nest, a refuge. Like a swallow coming to the nest where she may lay her young, we may come to the cross of Christ as our refuge. Here we may bring our "young," those whom we contact in our preaching of the gospel. Spiritually speaking, at the "nest" of the cross we should "lay" our young, our spiritual children. To lay the young is to produce them through the preaching of the gospel. To do this we need to bring sinners to the cross of Christ. It is here, at the cross, that we have our nest, our refuge, and it is here that we "lay our young," that is, produce our spiritual children. Before contacting the cross they were sinners, but by contacting the cross they become believers, young children in the Lord. As we teach our young to call on the Lord, they will learn to offer prayer to God at the altar of incense. Then in their experience these two altars will be closely related.

We have pointed out that this psalm on the psalmist's love for the house of God with Christ speaks of God's tabernacles and God's house. In type, the tabernacles, the habitations, are the local churches, and the house is the church as a totality. When we come to the church, the house of God, we are attracted by the two altars, both of which are very striking. At the first altar, the brass altar, we confess our sins, failures, and defects. Here at the cross our problems are solved, and we are qualified to enter into God. Then we may come to the golden altar to contact God.

At the brass altar we meet the crucified Christ, but at the golden altar the crucified Christ becomes the ascended Christ. In His ascension Christ becomes our acceptance. No matter how good or pure we may seem to be in ourselves, we cannot be acceptable to God apart from Christ. We can be acceptable to God only in Christ. This is what it means for Christ to become our incense.

Revelation 8:3 indicates that in order for our prayer to be accepted by God, it must have Christ as the incense added to it. This is why we need to pray in the Lord's name.

Sometimes we may conclude our prayer with the words "in the name of the Lord Jesus." If we pray in our own name, we will not be acceptable to God. Only when we are in the Lord's name will we be acceptable to God, for then Christ as the incense, as a pleasant fragrance, will be our acceptance. In Him we will be not only acceptable to God but also fragrant and pleasant to Him.

In the church we first find a refuge, and then we find a home. Before we were saved and came into the church, we not only were wandering and homeless, but we were also without any safeguard, protection, or hiding place. When we came to the church, we came immediately to the brass altar, the cross of Christ, and there, having the solution to our problems, we found a hiding place, a refuge. We hid ourselves in the cross. Then as we went on to contact God, praying at the incense altar, we had the sense that we were resting at home. Many of us can testify that this was our feeling when we came to the church.

As we experience these two altars in the church, we can say with Paul, "I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). We know only Christ and His cross. The cross is our refuge, our hiding place, and Christ Himself is our acceptance. Day by day we come to these two altars. Day by day we are hiding and resting. We come to the cross, where we have refuge, and we come to Christ, where we rest and are at home.

C. Those Being Blessed Who Dwell in God's House, Praising Him

Psalm 84:4 says, "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; / They will yet be praising You." To dwell in God's house is to praise Him. Quite often, however, we are lacking in praise. Our vital groups should be full of praising. Not to praise the Lord is to be dormant, but to praise Him is to be vital. Praising the Lord should be our living, and our church life should be a life of praising.

D. A Day to Dwell in God's Courts Being Better than a Thousand

"For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand; / I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God / Than dwell in the tents of the wicked" (v. 10; cf. Ezek. 47:3-5; Rev. 20:4-6). Here the psalmist speaks of one who stands at the threshold, which is the dividing line between the inside and the outside. I surely would like to be one who stands at the threshold of the house of God.

III. BLESSED BEING THE MAN WHOSE HEART IS ON THE HIGHWAYS TO ZION

Psalm 84:5-7 reveals that the one is blessed whose heart is on the highways to Zion. To be on the highways to Zion means that we intend to come into the church. Actually, our intention to be in the church life is a highway for us to come into the church.

A. Having Strength in God

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in You" (v. 5a). This indicates that on the highways to Zion we have strength in God. Many of us can testify that before we came into the church we were weak and hesitant, but once we made the decision to come to the church, we were strengthened in God.

B. Passing through the Valley of Baca

Verse 6a speaks of passing through the valley of Baca. As we have pointed out, "Baca" means "weeping." On the one hand, when we had the intention to come into the church life, we were strengthened in God; on the other hand, we were opposed by Satan, who has caused many saints to suffer persecution. The trouble and persecution caused by Satan can make our highway a valley of weeping.

C. Making the Valley of Weeping a Spring

When we pass through the valley of Baca, God makes this valley a spring (v. 6b). If we take the highway to go to God's house, trouble and persecution will come to us, and such

things will cause us to weep. But God will turn our tears into a spring. Only those who weep will have a spring. The more tears we shed, the greater will be the spring.

D. The Early Rain Covering the Valley of Weeping with Blessings

Verse 6c says, "Indeed the early rain covers it with blessings." According to our experience, this means that our tears become a spring and that this spring becomes the early rain that covers the valley with blessings. This early rain is the Spirit, and the Spirit is our blessing.

This was the situation with a certain brother in Cheefoo. Before he believed in the Lord Jesus, he was a Moslem. After he was saved and came into the church life, he suffered a great deal of persecution. This persecution nearly killed him, and he shed many tears. But those tears became a spring; the spring became the Spirit as the early rain; and as a result this brother was very living.

Those who come into the church life by passing through the valley of weeping will find that this weeping eventually becomes a great blessing to them. This blessing is the Spirit. The tears they shed are their own, but these tears become a spring, which becomes the early rain, the Spirit as the blessing.

E. Going from Strength to Strength

"They go from strength to strength" (v. 7a). This indicates that strength is added to strength. Those who take the highway to Zion already have strength in God, and now they are strengthened further and thus go from strength to strength.

F. To Appear before God in Zion

"Each appears before God in Zion" (v. 7b). The issue of the foregoing is that we appear before God in Zion. We treasure God's habitation because Zion is here. We treasure the church life because here we are in Zion. Even though we are on earth, we are nonetheless in the heavenly Zion (Heb. 12:22).

IV. THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER

Verses 8, 9, 11, and 12 are the psalmist's prayer.

A. Praying That God Will Behold Their Shield and Look upon the Face of His Anointed

"Behold our shield, O God; / And look upon the face of Your anointed" (v. 9). The "shield" in this verse refers to David the king, and the "anointed" refers also to David the king, typifying Christ. Here the psalmist prayed concerning David, saying that he was the shield to protect them and that he was God's anointed. In typology, however, this anointed one, is Christ. In our prayer we may say, "O God, look upon the face of Christ, Your anointed One, who is our Savior."

B. To Enjoy Jehovah Our God in Christ as a Sun, a Shield, Grace, and Glory, Lacking Nothing

Verse 11a says, "Jehovah God is a sun and a shield." The sun is the source of light, and light gives life. Plants, animals, and human beings all need sunlight in order to live and grow. In our spiritual life, we also need sunlight, and for this we have Christ as our source of light and life.

In verse 11b-c the psalmist goes on to say that Jehovah gives grace and glory with nothing good withheld. Grace and glory are both God Himself. Grace is God for our enjoyment, and glory is God for our splendor. Therefore, in these verses Jehovah God in Christ is four things to us: the shield, the sun, the grace, and the glory.

Psalm 84 was written according to the psalmist's background, which was very similar to Job's background. In verse 11c the psalmist says that God "does not withhold anything good / From those who walk uprightly." In verse 12 he goes on to declare, "O Jehovah of hosts, blessed is the man / Who trusts in You." In verse 11d "those who walk uprightly" probably refers, in the complex sentiments of the psalmist, to those who keep the law. In verse 12 "the man who trusts in You" probably refers, also in the complex

sentiments of the psalmist, to the man who dwells in God's house.

What we have here is the complex expression of the mixed sentiments of the psalmist. Such sentiments were not according to God's revelation. Job walked uprightly, yet God not only withheld something from him but also stripped him and consumed him. Furthermore, Job trusted in God, yet he did not always have God's blessing. Do you believe that it is because we walk uprightly that we today enjoy Christ as our sun, shield, grace, and glory? Do you believe that it is because we trust in God that He blesses us? We must confess that in ourselves we cannot walk uprightly or have a firm trust in God. Does this mean that we lose Christ as our sun, shield, grace, and glory? No, this is not our situation.

In type, Psalm 84 shows us how excellent the church life is and how we should treasure it. Here we enjoy the cross of Christ, and here we enjoy Christ Himself. We all should take the highway to come to the church and then dwell here. Here we enjoy our David, our anointed One, our Christ, who is our sun, our shield, our grace, and our glory.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THIRTY-THREE

A SUPPLEMENT TO MESSAGE THIRTY-TWO ON PSALM 84

Scripture Reading: Psa. 84

In this message I have the burden to give a further word on Psalm 84 as a supplement to the foregoing message. Recently, the Lord has opened up the intrinsic content of this short psalm. The intrinsic content of Psalm 84 is the secret revelation concerning the enjoyment of the incarnated Triune God.

The Old Testament indicates that God is triune (Gen. 1:1, 26; Isa. 6:1-3, 8), but the God unveiled in the Old Testament is not the incarnated Triune God. In the Old Testament the incarnation of the Triune God was a hidden mystery. However, the very first chapter of the New Testament, a chapter on the genealogy of Christ, speaks of God being born into a virgin to become a man in the flesh (Matt. 1:20). This is the Triune God coming into man to make Himself one with man, to make Himself humanly divine as the God-man named Jesus (vv. 21, 23).

The Lord Jesus lived and walked on earth in a divine-human way for thirty-three and a half years, and then He died on the cross to consummate an all-inclusive, vicarious death, a death that solved all the problems between God and man. His death on the cross is signified by the first of the two altars mentioned in Psalm 84. This altar is the bronze altar for the offering of the sacrifices.

After Christ passed through death, He entered into resurrection. In resurrection He was born to be the firstborn Son of God (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:3-4; 8:29). Prior to that time He was the only begotten Son of God (John 1:18; 3:16). As the only begotten Son, Christ had divinity, but He did not

have humanity. However, as the firstborn Son of God, begotten in resurrection, He has humanity as well as divinity, the human nature as well as the divine nature.

Furthermore, in His wonderful resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). The Spirit of God was there in the Old Testament, but at that time the Spirit of God did not have the capacity to give the divine life to humanity. For this reason, certain ones of the descendants of Adam received the power of God but not the life of God. Samson is a typical example of one who received the power of God from the Spirit of God but did not have anything related to God's life. Many others in the Old Testament, such as Job, were quite godly and pious, but we cannot say that they were spiritual, that they were filled with the spiritual, divine life. It was only since the resurrection of Christ, who is the incarnated Triune God, that the Spirit of God began to have the capacity to give the divine life to human beings, for it was in resurrection that Christ Himself became the life-giving Spirit. Also, in the resurrection of Christ all of God's chosen people were regenerated, born again (1 Pet. 1:3). In the resurrected Christ, who is the firstborn Son of God and the life-giving Spirit, we, God's chosen people, were regenerated to become the new creation, the new man.

Following His resurrection, Christ ascended. When He ascended to the heavens, another altar was established, the golden altar of incense for God to accept what Christ has brought to Him. The two altars—the bronze altar for the sacrifices and the golden altar of incense—are the leading consummations of the work of the incarnated Triune God, who is Christ as the embodiment of God for His increase. This is the intrinsic content of Psalm 84.

Psalm 84 bears four aspects. The first aspect is the loveliness of the house of God (v. 1). The second aspect is the longing of the psalmist to enter into God's house (v. 2). Third, there is the aspect of the highways to the house of God (v. 5b). The fourth aspect consists of the blessings of dwelling in the house of God to enjoy God as the sun, the shield, the grace, and the glory. In such a house we enjoy the incarnated and consummated Triune God as our sun to supply

us with life, as our shield to protect us from God's enemy, as grace for our enjoyment, and as glory for the manifestation of God. Let us now consider this psalm in more detail.

I. A SECRET REVELATION CONCERNING THE ENJOYMENT OF THE INCARNATED TRIUNE GOD

We have pointed out that in Psalm 84 there is a secret revelation concerning our enjoyment of the incarnated Triune God. Although many Christians talk about and even debate regarding the Trinity, not many enjoy the incarnated Triune God. We thank the Lord that in the recovery, in the church life, the Christ we enjoy is the incarnated Triune God.

We need to see that Christ is not only the embodiment of God but also that Christ is the incarnated Triune God. In this Christ we have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit coexist and also coinhere, that is, they dwell in one another. The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father. The Father and the Son are in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in the Father and in the Son. In this way the three of the Triune God coinhere. Furthermore, in Christ the Triune God has passed through a long process to become the processed and consummated Triune God. This is Christ as our enjoyment and as our portion allotted to us by God (Col. 1:12).

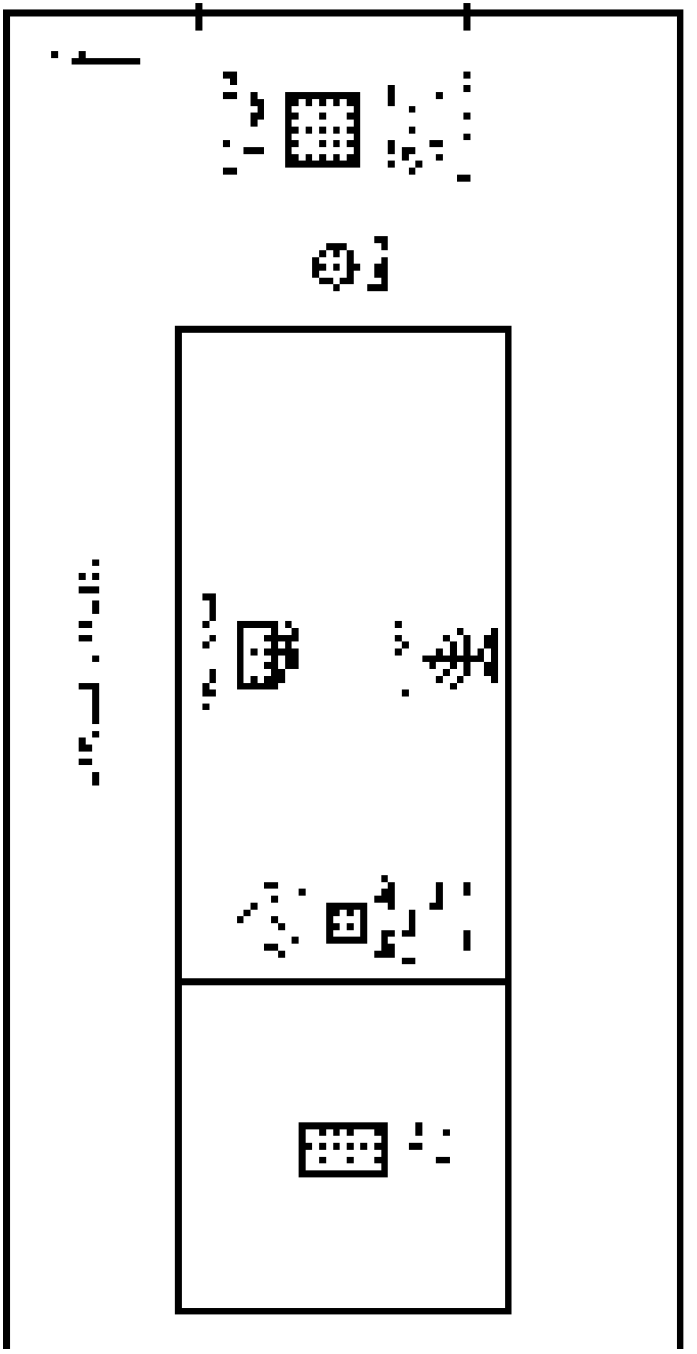
A. The Center of This Secret Revelation—the House of God

The center of this secret revelation is the house of God (Psa. 84:4, 10a), typified by the tabernacle (Exo. 40:2-8) and by the temple (1 Kings 6:1-3; 8:3-11). Both of these types have been fulfilled in Christ.

B. A Diagram of the Layout of the House of God

At this point, I would ask you to consider the diagram of the layout of the house of God printed on the next page. In this diagram we see the main items of our enjoyment of Christ as the incarnated Triune God.

The diagram shows us that in the outer court there are



two items: the first altar, the bronze altar, for the offering of the sacrifices, and the laver, a large basin containing water for washing. At the first altar, all of our problems before God are solved through the sacrifices, and we are saved. Why, then, do we still need the laver? To answer this question we need to see that God's goal is not to solve our problems; God's goal is to make us, the old creation, the new creation. In order to become the new creation, we need to be washed. Our old creation was made of the dust of the earth, and this dust needs to be washed away in the laver. Thus, Titus 3:5 says that God has saved us "through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." After we have experienced the altar and the laver, we are qualified to enter into the incarnated God, signified by the tabernacle.

In the Old Testament no one could enter into God. But in His incarnation God has become enterable. However, many of today's Christians, not realizing that God is enterable, do not proceed from the first altar to the laver, and they do not enter into God. They may speak of fearing God, of exalting God, and of loving God but not of entering into God. Have you entered into God? We all need to pass through the first altar, come to the laver, and then enter into God.

Do you know who the enterable God is? Our enterable God is Christ, the God-man, the incarnated Triune God and the embodiment of the Triune God. When we enter into Him, we have the showbread table for the life supply and the lampstand for the light of life. This enables us to live and walk in the incarnated Triune God. I can testify that in these days I have been living and walking in the incarnated Triune God.

In the incarnated Triune God we have not only the showbread table and the lampstand but also the second altar, the incense altar, for the offering of the incense. The incense signifies Christ as our acceptance. At the first altar our problems before God are solved through Christ as the sacrifices. At the second altar Christ is the incense for us to be accepted by God.

The diagram of the layout of the house of God indicates that, according to the Old Testament, the incense altar was

in front of the ark of the testimony. But there was a veil separating the incense altar in the Holy Place from the ark of the testimony in the Holy of Holies (Exo. 26:31-35). However, through the death of Christ this veil has been rent (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 10:20). Now there is no longer a separation between the incense altar and the ark of the testimony. They are one. This indicates that when we are accepted by God in Christ as our acceptance, we become God's testimony to express, to manifest, God.

C. Christ as the Embodiment of the Triune God Being the Fulfillment of the Types of the Tabernacle and the Temple

Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God (Col. 2:9) is the fulfillment of the types of the tabernacle and the temple. This fulfillment commenced in His incarnation (John 1:14; 2:21) and will consummate in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2-3). The New Testament, from Matthew 1 through Revelation 22, covers the entire span of the incarnation of the Triune God. This incarnation, which commenced in Matthew 1, will continue until it consummates in the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and 22. The New Testament, therefore, is simply a record of the divine incarnation, which commenced at the birth of Christ and which will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

In the first chapter of the New Testament we have the individual Christ, but in the last chapter we have the corporate Christ. This means that the individual Christ is the beginning of the incarnation of the Triune God and that the corporate Christ, the New Jerusalem, will be the conclusion and consummation. We praise the Lord that we have been blessed to be involved with the incarnation of the Triune God by being made a part of the corporate Christ. We need to see this, to be in this, and to minister this to the saints.

II. THE MAIN CONSUMMATIONS OF THE INCARNATED TRIUNE GOD

Regarding the incarnated Triune God, there are two main consummations.

A. The First Altar

The first consummation is the first altar—the bronze altar for the offering of all the sacrifices (Christ in His crucifixion) to solve all the problems of man before God. Concerning this, Psalm 84:3 says, "Even the sparrow has found a home; / And the swallow, a nest for herself, / Where she may lay her young: / Your altars, O Jehovah of hosts, my King and my God." Today we all are "swallows" who have suffered from storms, wind, rain, snow, and the burning sun and who need a nest, a refuge. Our refuge is the first altar, which signifies the cross of Christ. At the cross of Christ we are saved, and here we have our nest. Actually, our nest is the cross of Christ itself. In this nest we may lay our young, that is, produce new believers.

B. The Second Altar

The second altar is the golden altar of incense (Christ in His ascension) for God's acceptance of the redeemed sinners (v. 3). When we experience Christ in His ascension, we have a place of rest, and we sense that we are at home. At the first altar we have a nest, and at the second altar we have a resting place in the house of God.

III. THE BLESSED HIGHWAYS—THE HIGHWAYS TO ZION

Psalm 84:5 tells us that the one is blessed in whose heart are the highways to Zion. The highways to Zion are the blessed highways for seeking the incarnated Triune God in His consummations (comprising the washing laver, the showbread table, the lampstand, and the ark of the testimony). From our spiritual experiences we have learned that, on the one hand, we have entered into God, but, on the other hand, we are still on the way to enter into God. None of us can say that our entering into God has been completed. For many of us, the entering into God has only begun. We are in God, yet we are still on the highways to enter into God.

A. Having Strength in God

Verse 5a says, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in

You." This indicates that one who is on the highways to Zion has his strength in God.

B. Passing through the Valley of Baca

Verse 6a speaks of passing through the valley of Baca (weeping). On this highway we have times of weeping.

C. Making the Valley of Weeping a Spring

Those on the highways to Zion make the valley of weeping a spring (v. 6b). This spring is just the Spirit. How wonderful!

D. The Early Rain Covering the Valley of Weeping with Blessings

"Indeed the early rain covers it with blessings" (v. 6c). The early rain signifies the Spirit. This indicates that the more we weep on the highways to Zion, the more of the Spirit we receive. While we are weeping, we are being filled with the Spirit, and the Spirit becomes our spring.

E. Going from Strength to Strength

"They go from strength to strength" (v. 7a). This indicates that as we are walking on the blessed highways to seek the incarnated Triune God, we go from strength to strength. As a result, no one can turn us aside.

IV. SOME FURTHER MATTERS

A. Our Shield and God's Anointed

Psalm 84:9 says, "Behold, our shield, O God, / And look upon the face of Your anointed." Here the "shield" and the "anointed" refer to David the king, who typifies Christ.

B. Standing at the Threshold of the House of God

Verse 10 speaks of standing at the threshold of the house of God. It is better to stand at this threshold than to dwell in the tents of the wicked. However, we should not be satisfied to stay at the threshold of the house of God but should enter into His house.

C. Those Who Walk Uprightly and the Man Who Trusts in Jehovah

Verse 11 speaks of those who walk uprightly, and verse 12 concludes, "O Jehovah of hosts, blessed is the man / Who trusts in You." Here "those who walk uprightly" refers probably, in the sentiments of the psalmist, to those who keep the law. The "man who trusts in You" refers probably, in the sentiments of the psalmist, to the man who dwells in the house of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FOUR

CHRIST VERSUS RESTORATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE, PERSONAL SALVATION, AND RELEASE FROM SUFFERINGS

Scripture Reading: Psa. 85—89

In this message we will cover Psalms 85 through 89. In order to enter into the intrinsic significance of these five psalms, we need to realize that the aim of the entire book of Psalms is to turn God's people from so many things which they regard as positive to Christ. For example, Psalms 1 and 2 indicate that we need to be turned to Christ from certain things that in our eyes are very positive. Of the five psalms which we will consider in this message, three psalms (Psa. 85, 86, 88) show us a particular background, and the other two (Psa. 87, 89) show us the way to go on from this background.

The background in Psalms 85, 86, and 88 involves three things: the restoration of God's people, personal salvation, and release from sufferings. Throughout the centuries, God's people have been praying for revival, for corporate restoration. God's people have also been concerned about personal salvation, not only from eternal perdition but also from various bothering and entangling things in their daily life. Furthermore, all Christians pray about their sufferings, asking God to release them from their sufferings. In our eyes these three matters are positive, but in God's eyes they are not positive.

Psalms 87 and 89 present Christ with God's saints, God's house, God's city, and God's earth. The Christ unveiled in these psalms is versus the restoration of God's people,

personal salvation, and the release from sufferings spoken of in Psalms 85, 86, and 88. For this reason, I have entitled this message "Christ versus Restoration of God's People, Personal Salvation, and Release from Sufferings." Today many Christians do not care for anything concerning God. If they do care for God, their concern is related mainly to restoration, personal salvation, and release from sufferings.

Let us now go on to consider Psalms 85 through 89 one by one.

I. THE SEEKING OF THE SONS OF KORAH FOR THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

The subject of Psalm 85 is the seeking of the sons of Korah for the restoration of Israel. In verse 4 the psalmist prays, "Restore us, O God of our salvation, / And cause Your indignation toward us to cease." In verse 6 he goes on to ask, "Will You not again revive us, / That Your people may rejoice in You?" In verses 8 through 11 the psalmist writes about Jehovah's speaking peace to His people, about His salvation being near to those who fear Him, and about glory, lovingkindness, truth, and righteousness. Verses 12 and 13 conclude, "Indeed Jehovah will give what is good, / And our land will give its increase. / Righteousness will go before Him / And make His footsteps a way to walk in."

This seeking for the restoration of Israel was based upon God's promise to Israel's forefathers to give land, peace, and many other good things to their descendants. Eventually, however, the sons of Korah experienced God's punishment and the desolation and degradation of God's people. Hence, in their seeking as recorded in this psalm they prayed for restoration. Surely this was good and also important, but we need to see what God would say about it.

II. THE SEEKING OF DAVID FOR HIS PERSONAL SALVATION

Psalm 86 is concerned with the seeking of David for his personal salvation. As we read this psalm we need to pay special attention to verses 2, 11-13, and 15-16. In verse 2 David prayed, "Keep my soul; for I am godly; / Save Your

servant who trusts in You, O You who are my God." In verse 16 he said, "Turn to me and be gracious to me; / Give Your strength to Your servant, / And save the son of Your maidservant." David's seeking for his personal salvation was important; however, it was important not for itself but for something else. We may use eating as an illustration. Eating is important not for its own sake but for something else. Likewise, it is important to be saved, but salvation is for something else, not for itself.

III. THE DESIRE OF GOD FOR ZION WITH CHRIST

Whereas Psalm 85 is on the seeking of the sons of Korah for restoration and Psalm 86 is on the seeking of David for salvation, Psalm 87 is on the desire of God for Zion with Christ. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, Zion always implies God's house and God's city. "Zion" is a poetic title of the church in the universal sense and also in the local sense (Heb. 12:22; Gal. 4:26). Therefore, Zion signifies the church universally and locally. The heavenly Zion is the final resting place of the overcomers (Rev. 14:1).

Psalm 87 firstly refers to Zion's foundation, which is called "His [God's] foundation" (v. 1). This divine foundation, typifying Christ as God's unique foundation for the building up of His house, the church (1 Cor. 3:11), is built in the "holy mountains," which typify the local churches. Jerusalem was built on these holy mountains, and among these mountains the highest peak is the one on which Zion was built, which typifies the church.

Psalm 87:2 says, "Jehovah loves the gates of Zion / More than all the dwellings of Jacob." The gates are for coming in and going out, signifying fellowship. The fact that the New Jerusalem will have twelve gates indicates that God's holy city will be full of fellowship.

Recently, for the sake of fellowship among the churches, the Lord has led us to practice the clustering and the blending. However, some saints care only for the jurisdiction of their local church, and they do not want anyone to come to them and touch anything related to their local church. This means that they close the gate. In Brother Nee's words, they

make their local church a "native church" and a "small empire." This is not Zion, for Zion has many gates for fellowship.

Psalm 87 unveils Christ with all the saints to be God's house for God's city and for God to gain the whole earth. Verses 5 and 6 say, "Of Zion it will be said, / This one and that one were born in her, / And the Most High Himself will establish her. / Jehovah will count / When He records the peoples: / This One was born there." The word about "this one" and "that one" being born in Zion indicates that Zion is full of saints. Verse 6 tells us that "this One"—Christ, the unique One—was born there. Christ Himself and all the saints were born in Zion.

In addition to those born in Zion, Psalm 87 speaks of people born in five other places: Rahab, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Cush. "Rahab" is a poetic title given to Egypt. In the Bible Egypt stands for a place rich in resources, a place where it is easy for one to make a living and where it is possible for one to make a fortune for his enjoyment. When there was a famine in Canaan and people were short of food, they went down to Egypt, a land of riches signifying today's world.

Babylon was famous in the realm of human success and glory. It was the continuation of Babel, where man endeavored to glorify himself by building a tower to heaven. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, built a great and powerful empire, a monument to man's success and glory.

Philistia was very close to the holy land. According to the Bible, the Philistines were clever in handling the holy things in a human way. When the ark of God was captured and brought into their country, they devised a way to deal with it. Having contacted the holy land and having learned about the holy things from the holy land, the Philistines became adept in handling holy things according to human wisdom. Today there are many people who are not in the holy things but are very close to these things and have their human way to handle them.

According to the Bible and to history, Tyre was a commercial country, a country of merchandise and of high

civilization. Their traffic in commerce was their glory. There are many "Tyres" on earth today.

The last place was Cush (Ethiopia). Cush was a place from which people came to learn of the holy land. The queen of Sheba, for example, came from Ethiopia to learn of Solomon. The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 also came to the holy land to learn. Hence, in history, Cush, or Ethiopia, also had a name and a reputation.

The people from these five places represent all the people on earth. The people in these places boasted of their "giants," saying, "This one was born there" (v. 4b). Egypt could say that the Pharaohs were born there, and Babylon could say that Nebuchadnezzar was born there. But what does God say concerning Zion? He declares, "This one and that one were born in her." Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, Peter, Paul, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Zinzendorf, Darby, Watchman Nee, and so many others were born in Zion. Eventually, even the unique One, Christ, who is the totality of all the saints as the One who is all the saints and in all the saints (Col. 3:11), was born there. This is God's counting, God's record, regarding Zion.

Not all the saints born in Zion are famous ones. Rather, among the singers and the dancers (v. 7), there are many unknown ones. We today may be the unknown ones, but we can sing and praise the Lord, saying of Zion, the city of God, "All my springs are in you." Let Egypt boast of the Nile and let Babylon boast of the Euphrates. They do not have the springs, but we in Zion have them.

IV. THE SEEKING OF HEMAN, A SON OF KORAH, FOR HIS RELEASE FROM SUFFERINGS

In Psalm 88 we have the seeking of Heman, a son of Korah, for his release from sufferings. In verses 14 through 17 the psalmist says, "Why, O Jehovah, have You rejected my soul? / Why do You hide Your face from me? / I have been afflicted and about to die since my youth; / I bear Your terrors; I am overwhelmed. / Your fierce wrath has gone over me; / Your terrors have cut me off. / They surrounded me like water all day long; / They altogether encompassed me." Like

Heman, many Christians today are suffering ones, and to them nothing is more important than release from their suffering.

V. THE INTENTION OF GOD FOR CHRIST, HIS ANOINTED, TO POSSESS THE ENTIRE EARTH

Psalm 89, especially verses 3-4, 19-29, and 34-37, unveils the intention of God for Christ, His Anointed, to possess the entire earth. Like Psalm 88, this psalm is the prayer of a saint, but in contrast to the prayer in Psalm 88 for release from suffering, the prayer in Psalm 89 is concerned with Christ, the unique One. God cares for this One, the One who was born in Zion, not for our sufferings.

The unique One in God's record in Psalm 87 has become God's anointed One, God's Holy One, God's mighty One, in Psalm 89. He has become the Firstborn and "the highest of the kings of the earth" (v. 27). His throne will be like the sun before God; it will be established forever like the moon (vv. 36-37). God will establish His seed forever and "His throne as the days of heaven" (v. 29). God will extend the territory of this unique One so that He will possess the entire earth, setting "His hand on the sea / And His right hand on the rivers" (v. 25). I believe that the sea refers to the Mediterranean Sea, the center of the populated earth. The word "rivers" indicates that all the earth will belong to Christ. All the parts of the earth are signified by their rivers, such as Egypt by the Nile and Babylon by the Euphrates. That Christ's territory will be extended to all the rivers indicates that Christ will possess all the parts of the earth and that He will therefore possess the whole earth.

Psalm 89 is a lengthy psalm revealing that God cares for nothing other than Christ as the unique Possessor of the whole earth. We, however, regard certain spiritual things—restoration, personal salvation, release from suffering—as very positive. But if we neglect Christ, we will suffer a great loss. Our seeking and our praying will not touch God's heart because God's heart is for Christ with Zion, in which are many saints and which is for the house of God and the city of God for Christ to possess the whole earth.

God's desire is for this Christ who was born in Zion with so many saints for God's house and God's city so that Christ might gain the whole earth. This is God's economy. God does not care for restoration, salvation, and release from suffering as we do. God does not care for our kind of restoration or for the kind of salvation that we seek for ourselves. God saves people for His economy. God saves people for His Christ, for His Zion, and for His house and His city in order that one day He might gain the entire earth through Christ with His overcomers. God is for this.

VI. FIVE OUTSTANDING PSALMS OUT OF THE SEVENTEEN IN PSALMS BOOK 3

In Psalms Book 3 there are five outstanding psalms.

A. Psalm 73 Unveiling God as Our Unique Portion

Psalm 73 unveils God as our unique portion. Here the psalmist declares, "Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth" (v. 25).

B. Psalm 80 Unveiling Christ as the One in the Place of Preeminence

Psalm 80 unveils Christ as the One in the place of preeminence. In verse 17 the psalmist prays, saying, "Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, / Upon the son of man whom You have strengthened for Yourself." This psalm reveals that in the entire universe Christ has the place of preeminence.

C. Psalm 84 Unveiling Christ as the House of God with the Two Altars for the "Sparrows" and the "Swallows"

Psalm 84 unveils Christ as the house of God with the two altars for the "sparrows" and the "swallows," that is, for the weak ones. We may be weak "sparrows" and "swallows," but we enjoy the incarnated Triune God with the two altars as His two great consummations.

D. Psalm 87 Unveiling Zion with Christ Loved by God

Psalm 87 unveils Zion with Christ loved by God. This signifies the church with Christ and with so many saints loved by God, for Zion will be God's house and also God's city as the kingdom for God to gain the entire earth.

E. Psalm 89 Unveiling Christ as God's Anointed to Possess the Entire Earth

Psalm 89 unveils Christ as God's Anointed to possess the entire earth, with His territory extending from the sea to all the rivers.

Of the seventeen psalms in Psalms Book 3, these five are outstanding, showing us that God is our unique portion and then showing us Christ, the saints, the house and the city, the local and universal church full of gates, full of fellowship, for God to move on to accomplish His eternal economy. This is the intrinsic significance of Book 3.

F. Indicating the Processed and Consummated Triune God to Be the All-inclusive Enjoyment of His Chosen People in the Incarnated, Crucified, Resurrected, and Exalted Christ

Finally, these five outstanding psalms in Book 3 indicate the processed and consummated Triune God to be the all-inclusive enjoyment of His chosen people in the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and exalted Christ. The processed and consummated Triune God is revealed in the Psalms, and the enjoyment of God's chosen people is also revealed here. Their enjoyment is in the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and exalted Christ. These four matters concerning Christ—His incarnation, His crucifixion, His resurrection, and His exaltation—are repeatedly unveiled in the Psalms. This Christ is for the accomplishment of God's economy that we may enjoy in full the Triune God as the processed and consummated One.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FIVE

THE SAINTS' DEEPER EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN THE IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Psa. 90—92

The Psalms, the most difficult book in the Bible to read and understand, is divided into five books. Book 1 is composed of Psalms 1 through 41; Book 2, of Psalms 42 through 72; Book 3, of Psalms 73 through 89; Book 4, of Psalms 90 through 106; and Book 5, of Psalms 107 through 150. The division of the Psalms into these five books is not according to chronological order, that is, it is not according to the time of writing. Neither is the arrangement of the books according to the nature of the teaching found in these books. In each book there are psalms that are a mixture of the revelation concerning Christ and the complex sentiments of the psalmists, sentiments that are according to the writers' thought regarding good and evil.

In this message we come to Book 4, which, like Book 3, has seventeen psalms. The seventeen psalms in Book 4 are in three categories. Psalms 90—92 are in one category; Psalms 93—101 are in a second category; and Psalms 102—106 are in a third category.

It is hard to say how the Psalms were divided into five books, but we can be sure that this arrangement was not made by the human mind. Of course, certain persons made the arrangement, but the Spirit was also involved. As the Lord showed us during our study of the Psalms in 1969, the five books of the Psalms were divided by the Spirit according to four crucial words: Christ, house, city, earth.

Although Psalm 1 is on the law, in Psalm 2 the psalmist turns from the law to Christ. In verse 7 we have Jehovah's decree concerning His Son: "You are My Son; / Today I have

begotten You." This indicates that God does not care for the law but for His Son, Christ. In Psalm 27:4 we have a word concerning the house: "One thing I have asked from Jehovah;/ That do I seek: / To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the beauty of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple." Psalm 36:8 speaks of being saturated with the fatness of God's house and of drinking of the river of His pleasures, for with Him is the fountain of life (v. 9a). Psalm 46:4a says, "There is a river whose streams gladden the city of God." In Psalm 48 we find expressions such as "the city of our God" (v. 1) and "the city of the great King" (v. 2). In Psalm 72, the last Psalm in Book 2, we have a word about the earth. Verse 8 declares, "He will have dominion from sea to sea / And from the River unto the ends of the earth." Psalm 89, the last psalm in Book 3, unveils Christ as the unique Possessor of the whole earth. Therefore, in the Psalms we see Christ, the house, the city, and the earth.

In this message, entitled "The Saints' Deeper Experience of God in the Identification with Christ," we will consider Psalms 90 through 92. As we read these psalms, we need to seek what they reveal about the deeper experience of God and about the identification with Christ.

Psalm 90 opens with a word concerning God as our dwelling place: "O Lord, You have been our dwelling place / In all generations." To be sure, the Bible is the only book that tells us that God can be our dwelling place. Psalm 42:1 speaks of panting after God as a hart pants after streams of water. In preaching the gospel, we may tell others that they can drink, eat, and breathe the Lord Jesus, but have you ever told others that they can dwell in the Lord? Dwelling in the Lord is deeper than drinking Him. Many of us, after coming into the church life, can testify of drinking, eating, and breathing Christ, but have you ever had the thought of dwelling in Christ?

Psalms is not a book on good and evil. Psalms is a book on Christ—a book on drinking Christ, eating Christ, breathing Christ, and dwelling in Christ. Christ is the living water to quench our thirst. In Psalm 36 the river of God's pleasures

is for our drinking, and the fatness of God's house is for our eating. We can drink, eat, and breathe the Lord. Now in Psalm 90 we see that we can also dwell in the Lord.

Psalm 90 was written by Moses, the one who gave the law with all the statutes and ordinances. In verse 1 this lawgiver, who was quite old, proclaimed that God is our dwelling place in all generations. Then in verse 2 he went on to say, "Before the mountains were brought forth, / And before You produced the earth and the world, / Indeed from eternity to eternity, You are God." This was a new thought, something altogether unprecedented. Have you ever considered this matter of God's being our dwelling place?

From my youth I was taught by Bible teachers regarding the abiding in Christ mentioned in John 15. The Lord Jesus said, "Abide in Me and I in you" (v. 4a). At that time I understood the word "abide" as meaning to stay or to remain, not to dwell. But eventually I learned that the Greek word translated "abide" means not simply to remain but also to dwell. To abide in Christ is to dwell in Him, not just remain or stay in Him. When we dwell in our house, we have our life and our living there. This means that our life and living are altogether wrapped up with our dwelling place. We spend more money on our house than on anything else. Some people really love their house and all the furniture in it. Furthermore, our house indicates the kind of person we are. In Scotland, for example, the people are known for the excellent way they care for their houses.

According to Moses' word in Psalm 90:1, our house, our dwelling place, is the Triune God as our Lord. Dwelling in God is the deeper experience of God. When we experience the Triune God to the degree that we take Him as our dwelling place, we have the deeper experience of God.

As we have indicated, Psalms 90 through 92 are about the saints' deeper experience of God in the identification with Christ. We have seen that the deeper experience of God is to dwell in God, but what is revealed in these psalms concerning the identification with Christ? To answer this question we need to read 91:9: "You have made Jehovah, who is my refuge, / Even the Most High, Your habitation." Moses,

the writer of Psalm 90, took Jehovah as his dwelling place, and the writer of Psalm 91 did the same thing. Verses 11 and 12 indicate that "You" and "Your" in verse 9 refer to Christ. These verses are quoted in Matthew 4:6 and applied to Christ. This reveals that not only Moses took God as his dwelling place, but even the Lord Jesus, while He was on earth, took God the Father as His habitation. Moses, the lawgiver, and Christ, the grace-giver, were the same in taking God as their dwelling place, as their habitation.

To take God as our habitation, our dwelling place, is the highest and fullest experience of God. To take God as our dwelling place is to experience Him to the fullest extent. Probably no one among us would dare to say that he dwells in God all the time. But this is what Christ did. When He was living His human life on earth, He continually took God the Father as His habitation.

To be identified with Christ is to be identified with Him not only in His death, in His resurrection, and in His ascension but also in His taking God as His habitation. We are identified with Christ to such an extent. A number of good books have been written on our identification with Christ in His death, resurrection, and ascension. Jessie Penn-Lewis emphasized the identification with Christ in His death; T. Austin-Sparks, the identification with Christ in His resurrection; and Brother Nee, the identification with Christ in His ascension. If we would be identified with Christ in His death, resurrection, and ascension, we need to abide in Christ. If we do not abide in Christ, we are separated from Him and thus are not identified with Him. The only way that we can be identified with Christ in His death, resurrection, and ascension is to abide in Christ, and to abide in Christ is not only to remain in Him but also to dwell in Him, taking Him as our everything.

To dwell in our house means that we have our living there in many different ways. For instance, I eat my meals at home, sitting in my comfortable seat at the dining table. Likewise, to dwell in God is to have our living in God. Often we speak about eating Christ, but we need to see that when we eat Christ, we should be dwelling in Him.

Let us now consider these three psalms one by one.

I. PSALMS BOOK 4 UNVEILING THE SAINTS' DEEPER EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN THE IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST AND GOD'S RECOVERY OF HIS TITLE AND RIGHT OVER THE EARTH

Psalms Book 4 unveils the saints' deeper experience of God in the identification with Christ and God's recovery of His title and right over the earth. This indicates that our experience of dwelling in God paves the way for Christ to come to posses the earth that God may recover His title and right over the earth. *Title* refers to ownership, and *right* refers to all God's rights over the earth. Without the saints' deeper experience of God, God has no way to recover this title and right. This means that if we drink Christ, eat Christ, and breathe Christ without taking Christ as our habitation, God has no way to recover the earth.

This thought is found in John 15. In John 14:2 the Lord Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many abodes…I go to prepare a place for you." These abodes are not rooms in a heavenly mansion, as commonly supposed, but places in the Father's house. In 15:4 the Lord went on to say, "Abide in Me." This reveals that Christ is not only the way to the house—He is the house itself. To abide in Christ is to dwell in Him. By our dwelling in Him Christ has a way to recover the earth.

A. Psalms Book 1 Unveiling Christ, and Books 2 and 3 Unveiling Christ with the House and the City of God

Psalms Book 1 unveils Christ, and Books 2 and 3 unveil Christ with the house and the city of God.

B. Books 2 and 3 Ending with the Extension of God's Kingdom to the Whole Earth

Both Books 2 and 3 end with the extension of God's kingdom to the whole earth (Psa. 72:8, 11, 19; 89:25, 27).

II. THE SAINTS' DEEPER EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN THE IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

A. The Saints' Deeper Experience of God

Psalm 90 unveils the saints' deeper experience of God.

1. Taking God from Eternity to Eternity as Their Dwelling Place

As we have pointed out, verses 1 and 2 speak of the saints' taking God from eternity to eternity as their dwelling place. He has been our dwelling place in all generations. From eternity to eternity He is God.

2. Realizing the Short Span of Human Life and Its Sins and Afflictions

If you take God as your dwelling place, you will realize that the span of your life on earth is short (vv. 3-11). In verse 10 Moses said, "The days of our years are in sum seventy years, / Or, if because of strength, eighty years; / But their pride is labor and sorrow, / For it is soon gone, and we fly away." With the Lord, however, a thousand years are "like yesterday when it passes by / And like a watch in the night" (v. 4). According to the Bible, the person who lived the longest was Methuselah; he lived nine hundred sixty-nine years. In the sight of God, however, this was less than a day.

The short span of our life is full of sins and afflictions. If one has such a realization, he must be one who takes God as his dwelling place. I want to dwell in God, living in Him every minute, for outside of Him there are sins and afflictions.

3. Asking God to Teach Them to Number Their Days

Moses, writing according to the realization that comes from dwelling in God, prayed, "Teach us then to number our days / That we may gain a heart of wisdom" (v. 12). Gaining a heart of wisdom enables us to live a glad and rejoicing life (vv. 13-17). Moses had the deep feeling that he needed to learn how to number his days so that he could live a happy life. As we look back upon yesterday, we may feel shameful. This indicates that we need to let God teach us how to number our days. Young people may not understand the meaning of

this, but as an elderly person I can testify that I do know how to number my days. I number every day.

B. In the Identification with Christ

The matter of the identification with Christ is unveiled in Psalm 91.

1. Making Jehovah the Most High Their Habitation, Dwelling in the Secret Place and Abiding in His Shadow under His Wings

In the identification with Christ, the saints make Jehovah the Most High their habitation, dwelling in His secret place and abiding in His shadow under His wings (vv. 1-9). We all need to dwell in God by dwelling in the secret place (v. 1). This is the real oneness with God. Here God becomes us; we are constituted with Him; and we and God live together as one.

2. Being under the Keeping Care of the Angels and Treading upon the Enemy Satan

In the identification with Christ, we are under the keeping care of the angels, and we tread upon the enemy Satan (vv. 11-13; Matt. 4:6). Psalm 91:13 says, "You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; / You will trample the young lion and the serpent." Here Satan is likened to a lion that devours God's people and to a serpent that poisons God's people. In Matthew 4 we see that while the Lord Jesus was living a human life on earth, He was under the care of the angels, who protected Him from Satan and the evil spirits. Matthew 4:11 says that angels came and ministered to Him. The angels are also protecting and safeguarding us today, as indicated by Hebrews 1.

3. Setting Their Love upon God, Being Set on High by Him, and Seeing His Salvation in the Extension of Their Days

In the identification with Christ, the saints set their love upon God; they are set on high by Him; and they see His salvation in the extension of their days (Psa. 91:14-16). These verses are a prophecy referring to Christ. Christ set His love

upon God the Father. Christ has been exalted to the highest place in the heavens, and He is now seeing God's salvation in the extension of His days in resurrection. Christ died, but in resurrection He will live forever. Therefore, He could say, "I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever" (Rev. 1:18a). This is the extension of His days in resurrection for the carrying out of His salvation prophesied not only in Psalm 91 but also in Isaiah 53.

In all these matters we should be identified with Christ. If we are identified with Christ, we too will take God as our habitation. We will be one with Christ in His crucifixion, in His resurrection, in His ascension, and in His taking God as His habitation. Then we will live with Him and set our love upon God. Thus, we will be exalted, and we will see God's salvation in the extension of our days.

C. The Issue

Psalm 92 shows us the issue of the deeper experience of God in the identification with Christ.

1. Rejoicing in the Great Works of Jehovah

First, the issue is that the saints rejoice in the great works of Jehovah (vv. 1-9). If we do not dwell in God, not taking God as our habitation, we may see many things, but these things will be insignificant. But when we dwell in God, taking Him as our habitation, we see His great works. For example, as I dwell in God today, I can see the spreading of His recovery to Russia and to Poland. Surely this is a great work of God. By dwelling in God we will see His great works and rejoice in them.

2. Their Horns Being Exalted by Jehovah, and They Being Mingled with Fresh Oil

In verse 10 the psalmist says, "You have exalted my horn like that of a wild ox; / I am anointed with fresh oil." The Hebrew word translated "anointed" here (the same word used in Leviticus 2:4) can also be rendered "mingled." The fresh oil is the consummated Spirit, who is fresh and present. I can testify that in the last five years I have enjoyed being

mingled with fresh oil more than ever, and I have been full of joy in the Lord.

3. Flourishing like the Palm Tree and Growing like a Cedar in Lebanon

Psalm 92:12 through 14 says, "The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree; / He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. / Planted in the house of Jehovah, / They will flourish in the courts of our God. / They will still bring forth fruit in old age; / They will be full of sap and green." The poetry here is a picture of those who experience God in a deeper way by dwelling in Him, taking Him as everything in their living in the house of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SIX

GOD'S RECOVERY OF HIS TITLE AND RIGHT OVER THE WHOLE EARTH THROUGH THE REIGN OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Psa. 93—101

Psalms 93 through 101 are a group, a cluster. If you read these nine psalms carefully, you will see that the first eight of them are very similar. They are like one psalm, for they speak about the same thing with the same voice, tone, and emphasis. Psalm 101 is the conclusion to this cluster of psalms, showing how Christ will reign and judge in His kingdom. These psalms are on God's recovery of His title and right over the whole earth through the reign of Christ.

Teachers and students of the Bible agree that the Bible is centered on Christ. If we have an intrinsic understanding of Genesis, for example, we will see Christ in this book. Likewise, Christ is unveiled in the book of Leviticus. Dr. Scofield has pointed out that every page of Leviticus shows us Christ. However, in order to see Christ in Leviticus, we need a proper guide who can give us the necessary teaching. In this matter we are like the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 who was reading Isaiah the prophet. Philip asked him, "Do you really know the things that you are reading?" (v. 30). The eunuch replied, "How could I unless someone guides me?" (v. 31a). If we would clearly see Christ in the Psalms, we need a proper guide.

We need to realize that the Psalms is a book which is very strong concerning the unveiling of Christ in God's economy. However, in our reading of the Psalms, it is easy for us to think that the Psalms help us to be godly and pious, to worship, praise, and thank God, and to behave ourselves. Actually the Psalms are not for such things. Rather, the

Psalms use these things as a background for the revelation concerning Christ.

In Book 1 of the Psalms we see Christ with some stress on God's house (27:4). In Book 2 we see Christ with God's house and God's city. In Psalm 48 the city is strongly emphasized. In Book 3 we have not only Christ, the house, and the city but also the earth. The last psalm in Book 3, Psalm 89, says that Christ will come to reign and to possess the whole earth from the sea (the Mediterranean) to all the rivers, indicating all the places, of the earth (v. 25). We have pointed out that the seventeen psalms in Book 4 are in four groups. The first group, which includes Psalms 90 through 92, is on the deeper experience of God in the identification with Christ in taking God as our habitation. The second group, Psalms 93 through 101, shows us that God will recover His full title and right over the earth through the reign of Christ.

The front page of the daily newspaper indicates that today's world is filled with darkness and sinfulness, with person fighting against person, society against society, and nation against nation. But Psalms 93 through 101 shout joyfully that God will recover His title and right over the whole earth. God has the right over the earth because the earth with all its fullness—all the different peoples, regardless of race or color—was created by Him. Thus, He is the Possessor of the earth and holds the title deed. He has the full right to claim the earth, and He will do it through the reign of Christ. According to Psalm 101, Christ will reign and judge in lovingkindness and justice.

Psalm 94:15a says, "Judgment will return unto righteousness." This indicates that on earth today judgment has gone astray from righteousness, but when Christ comes back to reign, He will bring in justice and will cause judgment to return to righteousness. Christ is with us in the church, but today's world is without Christ, and for this reason the world is evil, dark, and sinful. However, the coming reign of Christ will make a great difference throughout the earth. Instead of injustice and unrighteousness, there will be justice and righteousness.

Let us now consider some matters related to God's

possessing the earth through Christ and then look one by one at Psalms 93 through 101.

I. GOD HAVING GIVEN THE EARTH TO CHRIST AS HIS POSSESSION AND THE NATIONS AS HIS INHERITANCE

Psalm 2:8 says, "Ask of Me, / And I will give the nations as Your inheritance / And the limits of the earth as Your possession." This indicates that God has given the earth to Christ as His possession and the nations as His inheritance. Therefore, the earth with all the nations belongs to Christ. America belongs to Christ, not to the Americans, and Russia also belongs to Christ, not to the Russians.

II. CHRIST COMING TO TAKE POSSESSION OF THE EARTH BY PUTTING HIS RIGHT FOOT ON THE SEA AND THE LEFT ON THE LAND

Revelation 10:1-2 shows us that Christ will come to take possession of the earth by putting His right foot on the sea and the left on the land. Christ's placing His feet on the sea and on the land is His treading on them, and to tread on them is to take possession of them (Deut. 11:24; Josh. 1:3; Psa. 8:6-8). In order to possess the land, one first must possess the sea. For this reason, Christ will possess the earth by putting His foot first on the sea and then on the land.

III. THE KINGDOM OF THE WORLD TO BECOME THE KINGDOM OF OUR LORD AND OF HIS CHRIST, AND HE TO REIGN FOREVER AND EVER

Revelation 11:15 tells us that the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord (God) and of His Christ and that Christ will reign forever and ever.

IV. CHRIST REIGNING AND THE WORLD ESTABLISHED

"Jehovah reigns; He is clothed with majesty. / Jehovah is clothed, He has girded Himself, with strength. / Indeed the world has been established so that it cannot be moved. / Your throne is established from of old; / You are from eternity"

(Psa. 93:1-2). These verses indicate that when Christ reigns the earth is established. However, apart from the reign of Christ the earth is easily shaken. When God recovers His title and right over the earth through the reign of Christ, the earth will no longer be shaken but will be established.

V. CHRIST EXECUTING HIS JUDGMENT OVER THE WORLD

Psalm 94 reveals that Christ will execute His judgment over the world. Verse 1 says, "O God of vengeance, O Jehovah, / O God of vengeance, shine forth!" Because there is a great deal of injustice on earth today, there is the need for the God of vengeance to shine forth. When Christ reigns He will shine, and this shining will be His vengeance executed over the unjust world.

Verse 10 says, "He who disciplines the nations, / He who teaches man knowledge, does He not reprove?" When Christ reigns He will discipline the nations. Apparently this is not happening today, for it may seem that God is not doing anything regarding world affairs. Actually, God is reigning and, at least to some extent, He has been disciplining the nations. For instance, in World War II He dealt with Hitler, Mussolini, and Japan. In the coming kingdom age, Christ will discipline every nation much like a father disciplines his children. At that time, the judgment in this world will return unto righteousness (v. 15a).

VI. CHRIST AS A GREAT KING POSSESSING THE EARTH

In these psalms the earth, the world, the peoples, and the nations are mentioned again and again. Psalm 95 unveils Christ as a great King possessing the earth. Jehovah as Christ is a great King above all gods (v. 3). In His hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are His also (v. 4). The sea is His. He made it, and His hands formed the dry land (v. 5). Therefore, the psalmist says, "Come, let us worship and bow down; / Let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker" (v. 6).

VII. CHRIST COMING TO JUDGE THE EARTH, THE WORLD, AND THE PEOPLES WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUTH AND REIGNING OVER THE NATIONS

In 96:3-13 we see that Christ will come to judge the earth, the world, and the peoples with righteousness and truth and that He will reign over the nations. The word "peoples" in verses 3, 5, 7, 10, and 13 indicates that people of every race and color will be judged by Him. In verse 13 the psalmist concludes by saying that Jehovah "is coming to judge the earth; / He will judge the world with righteousness, / And the peoples with His truth." This surely reveals that God will recover His title and right over the earth through the reign of Christ.

VIII. CHRIST REIGNING, AND THE EARTH BEING GLAD AND REJOICING

According to Psalm 97:1-2, 4-6, 8-9, and 11 Christ will reign, and the earth will be glad and rejoicing. Today the earth is not pleasant, and thus the inhabitants of the earth are not glad. But when Christ reigns, the earth will be glad and will rejoice.

IX. ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH HAVING SEEN THE SALVATION OF GOD

Psalm 98 declares that all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God. Verses 2 and 3 say, "Jehovah has made His salvation known; / In the sight of the nations / He has revealed His righteousness. / He remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness / Toward the house of Israel; / All the ends of the earth have seen / The salvation of our God." The whole earth has seen God's salvation.

X. CHRIST REIGNING IN ZION AND THE PEOPLES TREMBLING

Psalm 99 speaks of Christ reigning in Zion and of all the peoples trembling. Today the nations around Israel are trying to destroy her. But when Christ reigns in Zion, all the nations around Zion will tremble (vv. 1-2, 4, 9).

XI. ALL THE EARTH MAKING A JOYFUL NOISE TO CHRIST

Psalm 100 opens with a charge to all the earth: "Make a joyful sound to Jehovah, all the earth" (v. 1). As Darby points out in a footnote in his translation of the Bible, the Hebrew word translated "joyful sound" here can also be rendered "joyful noise." When we are joyful we will shout, and to shout is surely to make a noise. Sometimes in our meetings we should make a joyful noise to the Lord, praising Him and shouting "Hallelujah!" This will make the Lord happy, and it will put the devil and the demons to shame. When we are silent, we are deadened, but when we praise the Lord with a joyful noise, we are strengthened.

XII. LOVINGKINDNESS AND JUSTICE TO BE THE BASE OF THE REIGN AND JUDGMENT OF CHRIST

Psalm 101 reveals that lovingkindness and justice will be the base of the reign and judgment of Christ (typified by David—vv. 1, 6, 8). It seems that this psalm does not belong to this section concerning God's recovery of the earth through Christ's reign. This psalm, however, is actually the conclusion of this section.

Psalm 101 is a word spoken to God by Christ, who reigns on the earth for God. At the psalmist's time the name of Christ, the anointed One, had not yet been revealed, so David, God's anointed, was used to typify Christ as the man anointed by God to reign over the earth for God. Therefore, this psalm unveils how Christ will reign over the earth with lovingkindness and justice and deal with all the wicked people. When Christ reigns on earth in the coming age, lovingkindness and justice will be the base of His reign and judgment over the earth.

Verses 1 and 2a say, "I will sing of lovingkindness and justice; / To You, O Jehovah, I will sing psalms. / I will give careful heed to the way of the perfect." Remember, the "I" here is the word of David, a type of Christ, indicating that this word is the word of Christ to God. Thus, "I" here actually refers to Christ. *Christ* will sing to Jehovah of lovingkindness

and justice. Christ will also give careful heed to the way of the perfect. If we are on the way of the perfect, Christ will give careful heed to our way.

Psalm 101 speaks in detail concerning the way Christ will reign, rule, and judge in the coming age. As we read through this psalm, we see many virtues that will be manifested in Christ's reign on earth. Today the earth is filled with injustice, but we have the hope that the earth will be recovered. One day God's title and right over the whole earth will be recovered through the reign of Christ. Then the virtues described in Psalm 101 will be manifested.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SEVEN

THE EARTH TURNING TO THE LORD THROUGH ZION

Scripture Reading: Psa. 102—106

At the beginning of our study of the Psalms, we pointed out that the Psalms were written by godly saints. These saints were very close to God, and they had much thought and consideration concerning God and God's interest. Many of the psalms were written during times of suffering. When, as they were suffering, the psalmists were expressing certain of their feelings and complex sentiments, some high thoughts came forth mainly related to Christ, God's house, God's city, and God's recovery of His title over the earth. In the Old Testament this recovery is called the restoration, referring to the millennium. God's house denotes God's home and also His family, His household; God's city refers to His kingdom; and the coming restoration refers to the millennium. These four matters—Christ, God's house, God's city, and the coming restoration—are the essential elements, the inner essences, of the Bible.

We may say that the Psalms are an extract of the entire Bible. The Bible begins with God's existence and then goes on to speak of God's creation, which has certain indications concerning Christ. Out of Christ there issues the church, which is God's house. When the church as God's house is strengthened and enlarged, it becomes the city, that is, the kingdom of God. Eventually, the kingdom of God will bring in the restoration of the earth during the millennium, which will consummate in the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem—the consummation of God's house and

God's kingdom—as the center. This extract of the Bible in the Psalms is a key that opens the whole Bible.

In this message we come to another group of psalms, consisting of Psalms 102 through 106, which is somewhat hard to understand. In this group we first see Christ. Psalm 102 is a psalm on Christ. Strong evidence of this is the quotation of verses 25 through 27 in Hebrews 1:10-12.

The title of Psalm 102 tells us that it is a prayer of an afflicted one, one who was suffering. The psalmist, a godly one, was suffering because of the destruction and devastation of Zion with the temple and the holy city. He suffered to such an extent that he was fainting. In this matter he was somewhat like Jeremiah who, after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, sat on a mountain outside the city, looked at the devastation of the temple and the city, and wrote the book of Lamentations, probably fainting as he did so. The godly one who wrote Psalm 102 was also afflicted by the destruction of the temple and the city. Fainting because of his suffering, he prayed to God and poured out his complaint. The word "complaint" in the title of this psalm does not mean that the psalmist was complaining to God; rather, here this word denotes a miserable situation—the suffering caused by the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

Psalm 102 has three sections. Verses 1 through 11 are the first section, concerned with suffering and affliction; verses 12 through 22 are the second section, concerned with the rebuilding of Zion, the restoration of the destroyed temple and holy city; and verses 23 through 28 are the third section, unveiling the Lord as the One who is everlasting in His resurrection. In Revelation 1:18 Christ, the living One, says, "I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever." Resurrection is the lengthening of the Lord's days; He will exist forever and ever in His resurrection.

According to Psalm 102, the restoration of Zion and Jerusalem turns the nations to God. For this reason, I have entitled this message "The Earth Turning to the Lord through Zion." Zion here is the Zion that has been rebuilt after its devastation. Thus, the second section of this psalm presents

us a picture of the restoration of the destroyed and devastated temple and city of Jerusalem. This rebuilding turns the entire earth with the peoples of all the nations to the Lord.

In typology, Psalm 102 first refers to Christ's suffering, especially to His death. Christ's suffering consummated in His death, and through His death the church, God's house, came into existence. Eventually, the church as God's house becomes God's city, God's kingdom. Ephesians 2:19, therefore, refers both to the household of God and to the kingdom of God.

The history of Israel is a picture of the history of the church. Israel passed through a time of destruction and devastation, and the people of Israel were captured and carried away to captivity in Babylon. Likewise, in the book of Revelation we see that Babylon the Great is versus the church. Eventually, Babylon the Great will fall, and the church will be fully established. That rebuilding of the church will turn all the nations to the Lord, and the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of God and of Christ (Rev. 11:15).

Psalm 102 unveils Christ's death and His existence in His resurrection. The product of Christ's death and resurrection is Zion with God's house and God's city. Therefore, in Psalm 102 we have Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, and Zion.

Zion is a total title of the church. Galatians 4:26 says that the "Jerusalem above" is our mother, and Hebrews 12:22 tells us that we have come to "Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Furthermore, in our study of Psalm 84 we saw that the "highways to Zion" mentioned in this psalm (v. 5) are the highways of the church life. Revelation 14 shows us that the one hundred and forty-four thousand will be raptured to Mount Zion. Today we are heading to Zion, the highest peak of God's mountains. This Zion is the church.

Psalm 102 is very deep, containing some hidden secrets. If we have insight into this psalm, we will see that Christ's suffering and death are not only for redemption but also for restoration. Verses 1 through 11 speak of suffering; verses 12

through 22, of restoration; and verses 23 through 28, of Christ's continued existence in His resurrection. Christ's suffering is for redemption, and His redemption is to produce the church as the house of God and the city of God, which will consummate in the restoration. It is in Christ's resurrection, by Christ's resurrection, and through Christ's resurrection that the church will consummate in the restoration. Christ's death produced the church, and His resurrection prolongs the existence of the church. Having been produced through Christ's death, the church has its continued existence in Christ's resurrection. This is the revelation in Psalm 102.

We should not study Psalms 102 through 106 in a superficial way, in a natural way, or in the way of paying attention only to the letters in black and white. We need to study these psalms, as well as all the psalms, with much prayer and with much consideration of the Holy Word. If we study the Psalms in this way, we will realize that Psalms 102 through 106 are a group. Psalm 102, the prayer of an afflicted saint, is the foundation of this group. We have emphasized the fact that this psalm shows us Christ's sufferings, the church produced by His sufferings, and the continued existence of the church in Christ's resurrection due to Christ's unchanging existence in His resurrection. As we will see, the four other psalms in this group are a narration of God's history and that three of these four psalms—Psalms 104, 105, and 106—are "hallelujah psalms." With these three psalms we have the beginning of the "hallelujahs" in the Psalms.

Let us now consider Psalm 102 in more detail and then go on to consider the narration of God's history in Psalms 103 through 106.

I. PSALM 102 BEING A PRAYER OF AN AFFLICTED ONE

The title of Psalm 102 is "A Prayer of an afflicted one, when he is fainting and he pours out his complaint before Jehovah." This psalm is therefore an expression of the psalmist's sentiment, with his affliction (vv. 1-5, 9-11) referring to the affliction of Christ (vv. 6-8).

II. CHRIST BEING THE KEY THAT TURNS THE EARTH TO THE LORD

Verses 6 through 8 and 12 through 27 reveal that Christ is the key that turns the earth to the Lord and that recovers God's title and right over the whole earth. Without Christ this cannot be accomplished.

A. Based upon His Suffering

Christ's being the key that turns the earth to the Lord is based upon His suffering (vv. 6-8). Verse 7 says, "I lie awake, and I am like / A lone sparrow on a housetop." The "housetop" here refers to the flat roof of a Jewish house. People would often go to the housetop to pray. Peter did this in Acts 10:9. Since Psalm 102:7 refers to Christ, this verse indicates that when the Lord Jesus was on earth, probably there were times when in the night He, like a lone sparrow on a housetop, would watch and pray, caring for God's interest. This was also the situation of the writer of this psalm. Because of the devastation of Zion, he could not sleep nor stay in bed. Instead, he went to the housetop where he poured out his complaint to God, asking Him to look upon Zion, the city, and the temple.

Psalm 102:7 is a particular verse concerning Christ's suffering, His affliction. His affliction was related to His zeal for God's house (John 2:17; Psa. 69:9). In His suffering Christ was a watcher, caring not for His own interest but for the interest of God's house. Thus, He likened Himself to a lone sparrow on the roof of a house. As He was watching for God's interest, He was like a lone sparrow on a housetop. This was an aspect of Christ's suffering.

As we have pointed out, Christ's suffering was for the producing of the church. Today's Christians realize that Christ's suffering, which consummated in His death, was for redemption, but very few realize that His suffering was also for the producing of the church. We need to see that Christ's death was for redemption to produce the church.

B. Through Zion

We have seen that the turning of the earth to the Lord is based upon Christ's church-producing suffering. Now we

need to see that this turning of the earth to the Lord is through Zion, that is, through the church. The church today is Zion. We should not think that what we are doing in the Lord's recovery is a small thing. In the sight of God, the work in His recovery is very significant.

The church was produced through Christ's death, and then the church existed on earth for a while. However, the church has been devastated, destroyed. We today must be those who are afflicted because of the church's degradation. We should be afflicted to such an extent that we are fainting. As such afflicted ones, we should present our complaint to God, saying, "Lord, where is Your Zion? Where is Your holy city? We can see the great Babylon everywhere, but where is the church?"

Israel is a type of the church. In the upcoming messages on Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, we will see that these books are a record of the history of God's elect. From our point of view this record is unpleasant, even a tragedy. From God's point of view, however, this record is pleasant because even among the devastated elect of God, there was still something on earth for God, and as long as God can have something for Himself on earth, He is satisfied. The principle is the same with the church today. The proper church life has been fully devastated, and everywhere we can see Babylon the Great. But God still has something on earth for Himself. This is the Lord's recovery.

Even though the record of the history of Israel in Joshua, Judges, and Ruth is disappointing, there was nevertheless a line that was for God. God still had a line. For a while, at the time of the judges, this line consisted of only two persons—Boaz, a Jew, and Ruth, a Moabitess. After they were married, they became the unique line to bring in Christ. According to the genealogy in Matthew 1, Boaz begot David's grandfather of Ruth. Thus, although Israel, God's elect, had been defeated, there was still a line that could bring forth Christ. Today, in spite of the degradation and devastation of the church, God still has a line that is for Christ, and for this we should worship Him.

1. Zion as the Center of the City Jerusalem

Zion is the center of the city Jerusalem (Psa. 102:16, 21), typifying the church as the center of God's kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19). In Matthew 16:18 and 19 the words *church* and *kingdom* are used interchangeably. This indicates that the church is the kingdom and that the kingdom is the church.

2. Zion's Stones as the Pleasure of the Lord's Servants and Her Dust in Which Is Their Favor

Psalm 102:14 says, "Your servants take pleasure in her stones, / And show favor to her soil." The Hebrew word translated "soil" can also be rendered "dust." In this verse the stones typify the believers as the building materials of the church (1 Pet. 2:5), and the dust, the soil, typifies the ground of the church. Do you take pleasure in all the members of the church? Do you favor the ground of the church? We should be happy with all the members of the church, and we should care for the ground of the church.

3. Bringing the Peoples and the Kingdoms of the Earth into the Praise and Worship of Jehovah

Psalm 102:21 and 22 say, "That the name of Jehovah may be declared in Zion, / And His praise, in Jerusalem; / When the peoples are gathered together, / And the kingdoms, to serve Jehovah." These verses indicate that it is through the established, restored Zion—the church—that all the nations and kingdoms will be brought into the praise and worship of Jehovah. This means that the church turns the world to the Lord.

C. Because of His Eternal and Unchanging Existence

Christ is the key that turns the earth to the Lord because of His eternal and unchanging existence (vv. 24-27; Heb. 1:10-12). Christ died and resurrected, and now He lives forever in His resurrection. Christ's existence is unchanging throughout all the generations because of His resurrection.

Christ's death produced the church. The church has been devastated and will be restored. Christ's resurrection then will enable the church to continue its existence.

III. PRAISING JEHOVAH WHO HAS RECOVERED THE TITLE AND THE RIGHT OVER THE WHOLE EARTH THROUGH THE REIGN OF CHRIST

Psalm 102 is a psalm on Christ, the church, and the restoration. In Psalms 103 through 106 we have the praising of Jehovah who has recovered the title and the right over the whole earth through the reign of Christ.

A. A Narration of God's History

If we put these four psalms together, we will see that they are a narration of God's history.

1. In His Lovingkindness and Compassions in His Forgiving of Sins, Healing, Redeeming, and Caring of His People

Psalm 103 speaks of God's history in His lovingkindness and compassions in His forgiving of sins, healing, redeeming, and caring of His people. This is the first part of God's history.

"Bless Jehovah, O my soul; / And all that is within me, bless His holy name. / Bless Jehovah, O my soul; / And do not forget all His benefits" (vv. 1-2). These benefits include forgiveness, healing, redemption, and the crown of lovingkindness and compassions (vv. 3-4).

In verse 5 the psalmist continues, "He satisfies the prime of your life with good, / So that your youth is renewed like the eagle." The meaning of the Hebrew for "the prime of your life" is uncertain; others translate it as, "your years." The Septuagint uses the word "desire." The prime of our life is the strongest part of our life, which is our youth. Because God satisfies the strongest part of our life with good, our youth is renewed. I can testify that, as an elderly person, day by day I have the feeling that I am being renewed. This renewing enables me to stand up and speak for the Lord.

In verse 7 the psalmist says, "He made His ways known to Moses; / His acts, to the children of Israel." This is

marvelous. To the experienced ones God makes His ways known, and to the younger ones, to the children, He makes His acts known. Today some among us know God's ways, whereas others know only God's acts. Both His ways and His acts are benefits to us.

Verses 12 through 14 declare, "As far as the east is from the west, / So far has He removed our transgressions from us. / As compassionate as a father is toward his children, / So compassionate is Jehovah toward those who fear Him. / For He knows our frame; / He remembers that we are dust." The east and the west have no end. How good it is that as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our transgressions from us! Furthermore, as verse 14 indicates, He knows our frame, our body, much better than any medical doctor can know it.

2. In His Greatness in the Creation of the Universe and Its Fullness

Psalm 104 is on God's greatness in the creation of the universe and its fullness. As used here, the *fullness* includes all things in the universe. Concerning God's greatness in creation, verse 24 says, "How many are Your works, O Jehovah! / In wisdom You have made all of them; / The earth is full of Your creatures."

3. In His Dealing with Abraham and His Descendants according to His Covenant

Another part of God's history is narrated in Psalm 105. This psalm speaks of God in His dealing with Abraham and his descendants according to His covenant.

4. In His Dealing with Israel in the Wilderness and in the Promised Land with His Favor according to His Covenant

Psalm 106, the last psalm in this group, is on God in His dealing with Israel in the wilderness and in the promised land with His favor according to His covenant.

B. Issuing in Hallelujahs

The praise of Jehovah in Psalms 103 through 106 issues in hallelujahs. These hallelujahs begin in 104:35 and continue in 105:45 and 106:1, 48.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THIRTY-EIGHT

THE HIGHEST REVELATION OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Psa. 107—110

The Psalms is a very hard book for us to read because in our reading of it we can easily be seduced to care for things such as godliness and comfort. Christians read the Psalms mainly for godliness and comfort. They appreciate this book because, in their view, it teaches them how to be godly and it offers them comfort concerning the sufferings in human life. We all need comfort, and in the Psalms there are many verses that are words of divine comfort. This may be the reason that Bible societies often print the New Testament together with the Psalms. In our reading of the Psalms, it is difficult for us to stay away from the godliness and the comfort that we see in this book. This was my situation when I was young. I wanted to be godly, but I did not know how to be godly. I wanted to be comforted, but I did know where to find comfort. Thus, I passed through the experience of regarding the Psalms as a book concerned with godliness and comfort.

If we read the Psalms in the way of seeking godliness and comfort, our reading of this book will not consummate in hallelujahs. Can you tell me of anyone who read the Psalms for godliness and comfort whose reading consummated in hallelujahs? I doubt that there has ever been such a person. The Psalms consummates in hallelujahs because this is a book with the highest revelation concerning Christ. In Luke 24:44 the Lord Jesus said, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning Me must be fulfilled."

We should not think that the Psalms is a book of godliness or a book of comfort. Yes, there are many verses in the Psalms

concerning godliness, and there are many verses through which we may find comfort. But we should not seek godliness and comfort apart from Christ. Without Christ we cannot have genuine godliness, and without Christ there is no real comfort. If we care only for godliness and comfort but not for Christ, we will have nothing. But if we have Christ, even though we do not think about godliness and comfort, we will enjoy godliness and we will participate in much comfort. I can testify that whenever I care for Christ, I am filled with godliness, holiness, comfort, and happiness.

There are two ways to study the Bible: the natural, human way and the divine, spiritual way. To study the Psalms in the natural way is to gain godliness and comfort. To study the Psalms in the spiritual way is to gain Christ with the house, that is, the church, and with the city, that is, the kingdom, to bring in the restoration to the whole earth.

The Bible is not mainly for godliness or comfort. Rather, the Bible teaches us that Christ is the centrality of God's eternal economy to produce the church, first as God's house and then as God's kingdom, issuing in the millennial kingdom with full restoration for all the creation, which will consummate in the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem. Have you ever thought that the Psalms is a book not mainly on godliness and comfort but on Christ with the house of God and the city of God leading to the restoration of the universe during the millennium and ushering us into the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem? In our reading of the Psalms, our preoccupation with godliness and comfort should be replaced with Christ.

The Psalms were composed not only by David but by a number of different writers, including Moses and some of the sons of Korah. Eventually, the one hundred fifty psalms were arranged in their present order. I believe that this arrangement was made after the time of Malachi, approximately 400 B.C. The sequence of this arrangement is very meaningful. For example, it surely is significant that immediately after Psalm 1, which is on the Law, we have Psalm 2, which is on Christ, the Son of God and His anointed One.

It is not a simple matter to see how the psalms may be put into groups. In the foregoing message we considered the group consisting of Psalms 102 through 106. We have seen that Psalm 102 unveils Christ as the key that turns the earth to the Lord and that Psalms 103 through 106 are a narration of God's history in His forgiving our sins, in His greatness in the creation of the universe and its fullness, in His dealing with Abraham and his descendants according to His covenant, and in His dealing with Israel in the wilderness and in the promised land. In this message we will consider another group of psalms—Psalms 107 through 110. In Psalm 107 there is a change of tone, and in Psalm 110 there is the highest revelation of Christ. Here the revelation of Christ reaches the peak. I believe that it was Martin Luther who said that Psalm 110 is the highest among all the psalms.

In the preceding psalms Christ is revealed in many different aspects. In a forthcoming message we will see that in Psalm 118 we have a further revelation of Christ, an unveiling of Christ as the cornerstone (v. 22) for the building of God. As the cornerstone, Christ joins the two walls, one wall being the Jewish believers and the other, the Gentile believers. Christ is therefore the One who joins the Jews and the Gentiles for the building of God's house. Christ is the cornerstone for God's building, and God's building is the church today as God's house and God's kingdom, and ultimately God's building is a new city, the New Jerusalem.

As we will see, Christ is unveiled also in Psalm 119. We may think that this psalm is on the law, but it is actually on the testimony of God and the word of God. According to the Bible as a whole, the testimony of God is Christ, and the word of God is also Christ. Christ's being the testimony of God depends on His first being the cornerstone. If He were not the cornerstone, He could not be the adequate, qualified testimony, or witness, of God. If we consider Psalms 118 and 119 together, we will see that Christ is both the cornerstone and the testimony of God.

As we come to Psalms 107 through 110, we need to realize that the last psalm in this group, Psalm 110, is on Christ in

the highest way. However, in order to have the highest revelation of Christ in Psalm 110, we need the three psalms that come immediately before it. Let us now go on to consider Psalms 107 through 110 one by one.

I. GOD'S CARE AND DELIVERANCE OF HIS REDEEMED IN CHRIST

Psalm 107 is on God's care and deliverance of His redeemed in Christ. No doubt, God takes care of us every day, always delivering us, rescuing us, and saving us. When some hear this, they may say that this is comfort. Yes, it is comfort, but it is the divine comfort in Christ. When we speak of the comfort in this psalm, we have to say that this is the comfort in Christ. Then we will say, "Hallelujah!" However, if we speak of divine comfort without seeing that this comfort is in Christ, we will not say, "Hallelujah." Christ is the One who induces us to speak hallelujahs and to praise the Lord not for comfort, care, or deliverance but for Christ, in whom we are.

A. The Thanks of God's Redeemed, Gathered from the East, West, North, and South

"Give thanks to Jehovah, for He is good, / For His loving-kindness is forever. / Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so, / Whom He redeemed from the hand of the adversary, / And gathered out of the lands, / From the east and from the west, / From the north and from the south" (vv. 1-3). The word "redeemed" in verse 2 implies Christ, for He is our Redeemer and even our redemption. This gives us the ground to say that the comfort in this psalm is in Christ. In Christ we enjoy God's care and deliverance, which imply His rescue and saving every day.

Furthermore, the gathering out of the lands, from the east, west, north, and south, mentioned in verse 2 corresponds to Revelation 5:9, which speaks of those purchased for God by Christ's blood "out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." In this matter we once again use the New Testament to interpret the Old Testament.

B. God's Care and Deliverance of the Wanderers

Psalm 107:4-9 speaks of God's care and deliverance of the wanderers. Such ones "wandered in the wilderness, on the desert way; / They found no city of habitation. / Hungry and thirsty, / Their soul fainted within them" (vv. 4-5). This was our situation before we were saved. We were homeless and famished; we were without a habitation and without food. Then God took care of us and delivered us, providing us food and a lodging place. Hallelujah, in the church we are at home, and we are fed every day! Our testimony is that "He satisfies the thirsty soul, / And the famished soul He fills with good" (v. 9).

C. God's Care and Deliverance of the Prisoners in Darkness and the Shadow of Death

Verses 10 through 16 tell us of God's care and deliverance of the prisoners in darkness and the shadow of death. Before we were saved we not only were wanderers—we were also prisoners. According to Acts 26:18, the Lord Jesus sent Paul to turn the Gentiles "from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God." This is to bring people out of their imprisonment. Because of God's care for us in Christ, we have been delivered from our imprisonment. We have been set free.

D. God's Care and Deliverance of the Ones Sick because of Their Way of Transgression

In Psalm 107:17-22 we see God's care and deliverance of the ones sick because of their way of transgression. Verse 17 says, "Some were fools, because of their way of transgression; / And because of their iniquities, they were afflicted." But Jehovah "sent forth His word and healed them" (v. 20a). This reminds us of the case of the centurion who said to the Lord Jesus, "Only speak a word, and my servant will be healed" (Matt. 8:8). His servant was healed at the word of the Lord.

E. God's Care and Deliverance of the Seafarers

Psalm 107:23-32 covers the matter of God's care and deliverance of the seafarers. We all are seafarers traveling on a human sea that is full of waves and storms, but here also we experience God's care and deliverance.

F. God's Adjusting of the Environment to Deal with the Wicked and Haughty Ones and to Take Care of the Needy Ones

The last section of this psalm, verses 33 through 43, is concerned with God's adjusting of the environment to deal with the wicked and haughty ones and to take care of the needy ones. Verses 33 and 34 tell us that God turns rivers into a wilderness, springs of water into thirsty ground, and fruitful land into a salt flat. This is God's dealing with the wicked. However, verses 35 and 36 say, "He turns a wilderness into a pool of water, / And a dry land into springs of water. / And He makes the hungry dwell there, / That they may prepare a city of habitation." This is God's taking care of the needy ones.

Psalm 107 shows us that we, the redeemed in Christ, are under God's care and deliverance. Now we need to see that God's care and deliverance both require that Christ be sitting in His ascension at the right hand of God, as revealed in Psalm 110. Today we can enjoy God's care, and we can be delivered by Him from so many things because Christ is sitting there at God's right hand. Actually, because Christ is our High Priest in the heavens praying for us, this care is His care for us and this deliverance is His deliverance of us. His praying for us means that He is taking care of us, delivering us, and rescuing us.

If we did not have Psalm 110, Psalm 107 would be empty. Do you want the care and deliverance described in Psalm 107? You can have this only in Christ, by Christ, and with Christ. Where is Christ today? Christ is no longer in the manger or on the cross—He is at the right hand of God in heaven. As the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedec, He is

praying for us there. We have a word regarding this in Hebrews 5 through 7. Thus, because of Psalm 110, we have Psalm 107.

II. GOD'S VICTORY IN CHRIST OVER THE ENEMIES

In Psalm 108 we see God's victory in Christ over the enemies.

A. God's Lovingkindness and His Truth

Verses 1 through 5 are a quotation from 57:7-11. Verse 4 unveils God's lovingkindness and truth: "Your lovingkindness is higher than the heavens, / And Your truth reaches to the sky."

B. God's Victory in Christ over the Enemies

Verses 6 through 13, a quotation from Psalm 60:5-12, portray God's victory in Christ over the enemies. In describing this victory, these verses say that God will divide Shechem, that He will measure out the Valley of Succoth, that Gilead and Manasseh are His, that Ephraim is the helmet for His head, that Judah is His scepter, that Moab is His washbowl, that upon Edom He will cast His sandal, and that over Philistia He will shout. All this shows us God's victory in Christ.

III. A PRAYER OF DAVID, TYPIFYING CHRIST, IN HIS SUFFERINGS

Psalm 109 is a wonderful psalm. Because it is a psalm on Christ, those who read the Psalms in a natural way find it hard to understand. Written to describe the sufferings of David, Psalm 109 is a prayer offered by David about his sufferings. David here is a type of Christ, and David's sufferings typify Christ's sufferings.

A. Referring to Judas, Who Betrayed Christ

Verse 8 says, "May his days be few; / May another take his office." In Acts 1:20 this verse is quoted and applied to Judas, who betrayed Christ. This quotation of verse 8 indicates that Psalm 109 is on Christ and that the sufferings

described in this psalm signify the sufferings of Christ in His flesh.

B. Answered in the Next Psalm, Psalm 110

David's prayer concerning his sufferings typifies Christ's prayer. The prayer in Psalm 109 is answered in the next psalm, Psalm 110. Since Psalm 110 is the answer to the prayer of David as a type of Christ in Psalm 109, Psalm 110 should be considered an answer to Christ's prayer. Hebrews 5:7 says that Christ, in the days of His flesh, "offered up both petitions and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him out of death." God answered this prayer not only through resurrection but also in ascension. Psalm 110 unveils Christ in His ascension. Psalms 107 through 109, therefore, usher us into Psalm 110.

IV. THE HIGHEST REVELATION OF CHRIST

Although Psalm 110 is one of the shortest of the psalms, it is the highest revelation of Christ.

A. God Making Christ Sit at His Right Hand

1. In His Ascension

"Jehovah declares to My Lord, / Sit at My right hand" (v. 1a). This word, which concerns Christ in His ascension (Heb. 1:3b), has been quoted directly more than twenty times in the New Testament and has been quoted indirectly approximately another twenty times. Again and again the New Testament refers to this word concerning Christ in His ascension.

The highest place in the universe is the right hand of God. Let us use as an illustration the desire of a child to be in his mother's arms, at her bosom. You may offer a child the best seat in a palace, but he will not care to be in that place if his mother is not there. The child might say, "I don't want to be in that place—I want to be in the arms of my mother." To the child, the best place, the highest place, is in his mother's arms, at her bosom. In like manner, Christ's ascension is not merely a matter of His being in a place but

of His being in a person, the Father. In His ascension Christ entered into the Father's being and sat down there.

This word about Christ's sitting at the right hand of God implies Christ's kingship. In the New Testament we are told that in His ascension Christ has been made by God the Lord, the Christ, the Leader of the entire universe, and the Savior (Acts 2:36; 5:31; 10:36). This concerns Christ's kingship.

2. Until God Makes His Enemies His Footstool

According to Psalm 110:1, Christ is sitting at God's right hand until God makes Christ's enemies His footstool. At home you may have an excellent seat, but you may not have a footstool. Likewise, Christ is on the throne, but He is still in need of a footstool. Thus, God is endeavoring to subdue all of Christ's enemies and to make them His footstool. Our fighting today is for the subduing of Christ's enemies.

3. God Sending Forth from Zion the Scepter of Christ's Power to Rule over All the Nations

"Jehovah will send forth / The scepter of Your strength from Zion: / Rule in the midst of Your enemies" (v. 2). Zion here is not the Zion on earth but the Zion in the heavens, as mentioned in Hebrews 12 and Revelation 14. Hebrews 12:22 says that we have "come forward to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Revelation 14:1-5 shows us that the living overcomers will be raptured to Zion in the heavens. From this heavenly Zion God will send out the scepter of Christ's power to rule over all the nations. The word "enemies" in Psalm 110:2 refers to the nations. Today the nations are His enemies. For example, in their way of dealing with Israel, the Arab nations are the enemies of Christ.

4. Christ's People Offering Themselves Willingly in the Days of His Forces (Army) in the Splendor of Their Consecration

"Your people will offer themselves willingly / In the days of Your forces / In the splendor of their consecration" (v. 3a). Literally, the Hebrew words translated "offer themselves

willingly" mean "be freewill offerings." Instead of the word "forces," some translations render the Hebrew word as "army" or "war." These different renderings all indicate that some kind of fighting is raging on. Today is still a time of fighting because Christ still does not have a footstool. Hence, this ministry is engaged in a constant struggle. We stand against and annul every kind of improper ground concerning the church, whether Catholic or Protestant, and this causes opposition and fighting.

In verse 3 we are told that in the day of His forces, or army, Christ's people will offer themselves willingly "in the splendor of their consecration." Do you realize that in the eyes of the Lord our willing consecration, our offering ourselves to Him, is a kind of splendor? Although the church has become degraded, throughout the centuries there has been a line of those who have offered themselves willingly to the Lord in the splendor, the beauty, of their consecration. Giving up everything on earth, thousands have offered themselves freely to Christ, and with this offering there was the splendor of consecration. John Nelson Darby was such a person. Darby lived to be eighty-four years of age and, because of his love for Christ, he never married. One day, in his old age, he was staying alone in a hotel and he said, "Lord Jesus, I still love You." No doubt, Darby was a freewill offering to the Lord in the splendor of consecration.

Instead of the word "splendor" some versions use the word "adornment." The splendor of consecration is an adornment. We need to be adorned by offering ourselves willingly to the Lord. If we do this, we will be beautified with a divine, heavenly splendor.

5. Christ's Young Men Being to Him like the Dew from the Womb of the Morning

"Your young men will be to You / Like the dew from the womb of the morning" (v. 3b). This indicates that, on the one hand, Christ likes to see the splendor of our consecration; on the other hand, He desires the dew that comes from the womb of the morning. Christ enjoys seeing the splendor of those who offer themselves to Him as freewill offerings, but, even

more important, He still needs some dew to water Him. Even Christ needs the watering. He needs us to be the dew that waters Him.

According to the poetry here, this dew comes from "the womb of the morning." We need to enter into this womb to be conceived as the dew with which to water Christ. I believe that this involves the morning watch. If we do not rise up early in the morning, we will miss the opportunity to enter into the womb of the morning to be made dew for Christ's watering. Instead of being watered, He will be dry and we also will be dry. I hope that we all, especially the young people, will see that here Christ likens Himself to a plant that needs the mild, soft, gentle dew. May we respond to Him by saying, "Lord Jesus, I want to be the dew conceived and produced by the womb of the morning for You to be watered."

B. God Swearing without Repenting to Ordain Christ a Priest Forever according to the Order of Melchizedec

"Jehovah has sworn / And He will not change: / You are a Priest forever / According to the order of Melchizedek" (v. 4; Heb. 5:6, 10). The Hebrew word translated "change" here may also be rendered "repent." Christ is not only the King with power and authority, as indicated in verse 2; He is also the High Priest, as revealed in verse 4. Today we need Christ not only as our King but also as our Priest to pray for us and to take care of our case before God.

Christ's ministry is of two sections. The first section was His ministry on earth, and the second section is His ministry in the heavens. In His earthly ministry He did many things. Now, having completed the first section of His ministry, Christ in His ascension is carrying out the second, the heavenly, section of His ministry. This includes both His kingship and His priesthood. As the King He has the scepter signifying power and authority to rule over the earth and to manage our affairs, and as the High Priest He is praying for us and taking care of our case.

C. Christ, Who Is the Lord (*Adonai*) and Who Is at God's Right Hand, to Shatter Kings in the Day of His Anger at His Coming Back and to Execute Judgment among the Nations

"The Lord is at Your right hand; / He will shatter kings in the day of His anger. / He will execute judgment among the nations; / He will fill the place with corpses; / He will shatter the head / Over a great land" (Psa. 110:5-6). The words "great land" refer to the entire earth, the whole globe. Here we see that Christ, who is the Lord, the Master (*Adonai*), and who is at God's right hand, will shatter kings in the day of His anger at His coming back and will execute judgment among the nations (2:9, 12; Dan. 2:44; Rev. 2:26-27). This indicates that Christ will be the greatest Victor, overcoming all the nations, shattering the kings and the head of the enemies, and executing judgment upon all who oppose Him. In addition to being the King and the Priest, Christ is the Warrior to be the greatest Victor. According to Revelation 19, in His coming back He will be the fighting One. However, He will not fight alone against Antichrist and his armies from the nations. Rather, He will come with His bride, a composition of all His overcomers, as His army, and with her He will fight against Antichrist and his armies.

D. Christ to Drink from the Brook by the Way and to Lift Up His Head Triumphantly

"He will drink from the brook by the way; / Therefore He will lift up His head" (Psa. 110:7). While Christ is fighting, He will be thirsty. Needing some water to drink, He will drink from "the brook by the way." This brook is the overcomers. Those who offer themselves in the splendor of consecration are the dew of the morning to water Christ, and the overcomers are the brook to quench His thirst. As Christ is taking the lead to fight through to the end, He will need water to drink, and this water will be the overcomers. I believe that this interpretation is correct because it fits in with the New Testament teaching.

When Christ drinks from the brook, "He will lift up His head." This means that He will be victorious. To lower our head is a sign of defeat, but to lift up our head is a sign of victory, of triumph. Those who lift up their head are the ones who overcome all the enemies.

To the enemies Christ is the Victor, but to us He is a Drinker. We may say to Him, "Hallelujah! Lord Jesus, You are the Victor." But He may say to us, "Yes, I am the Victor, but to you I would like to be the Drinker." In this psalm we see Christ as the King, the Priest, the Warrior, the Victor, and the Drinker. Christ overcomes the enemies, and He drinks from the overcomers, from the brook by the way.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE THIRTY-NINE

THE PRAISE OF GOD'S ELECT CONSUMMATING IN THE PARTICULAR POSITION OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Psa. 111—118

In this message we come to the hardest point in the Bible—Christ as the cornerstone. Who would think that Christ would be the cornerstone? Prior to the Psalms there is not a verse which speaks of Christ as the cornerstone. Then, all of a sudden, Psalm 118:22 says, "The stone which the builders rejected / Has become the head of the corner."

Once again I would call your attention to the arrangement of the Psalms into five books. Book 5 begins with Psalm 107. The main psalms in Book 5 that unveil Christ are Psalm 110 and Psalm 118.

Psalm 110 is on Christ as the exalted One, as the One who in His ascension has been uplifted to the right hand of God in heaven. In this psalm there are two matters which are difficult to understand adequately—"the dew from the womb of the morning" (v. 3) and "the brook by the way" (v. 7). Whereas the brook is for drinking, the dew is for watering. As Christ is on His way to carry out God's economy, He needs to be watered, and He needs something to drink. Christ is watered by those who offer themselves willingly to Him. Whoever volunteers himself to Christ as an offering is a young man likened to the dew conceived in the womb of the morning for watering Christ. When we are thirsty from working or from running a race, dew is not adequate. We need water to drink. Christ also needs something to drink. Thus, in addition to the dew, which is moisture for comforting, Christ needs to drink of the brook flowing by the way.

As we will see, Psalm 119 is on Christ as the cornerstone. When we come to this psalm, we will consider a number of verses related to Christ as the cornerstone for God's building.

After Psalm 119 the revelation concerning Christ in the Psalms is closed. Psalm 119, a particular psalm, is followed by fifteen psalms which are called songs of ascents. After these psalms, we have the last sixteen psalms. In these thirty-one psalms we cannot find anything concerning Christ, for Christ has been revealed to us adequately beginning with Psalm 2 and ending with Psalm 119.

In the next message we will see that Psalm 119 is on Christ's being the reality of the law as the testimony and the word of God. The one hundred seventy-six verses of Psalm 119, arranged in twenty-two sections of eight verses each, are on Christ as the law. Toward the beginning of the Psalms, in Psalm 2, the Spirit turns the reader of the Psalms from the law to Christ. After all the revelations of Christ in Psalms 2 through 118, the Spirit gives us Psalm 119, indicating or implying that Christ is the real, actual, and practical law of God. In the Old Testament, the law was put in the ark, which is a type of Christ. Therefore, the entire law of God is in Christ, making Christ the reality of the law of God.

Psalm 119 speaks directly about the law. In this psalm the word "testimonies" is used twenty-two times, and the word "testimony" is used once. This psalm also speaks many times about the word. It is true to say that the law typifies Christ as a portrait of God. This is why the law is called the testimony of God. The law is a portrait of God, and eventually this portrait is not merely the Ten Commandments but a living person, Christ. Christ is the law of God, the portrait of God. Christ is also the word of God.

After Psalm 119, which closes something and also opens something, there is no further revelation in the Psalms concerning Christ. After we see Christ, we should ascend. Hence, after Psalm 119 we have the psalms of ascents, indicating that the Christian life is a life of ascending.

What kind of interest do you have in knowing the Psalms? Are you interested in coming to the Psalms to learn about godliness or to find comfort? Many Christians love the Psalms

because they contain instruction concerning godliness and words of comfort. Sixty years ago I also loved the Psalms in this way, but today my love for the Psalms is different. I love the Psalms because this book is full of revelation concerning Christ which we cannot see in other books of the Bible. The four Gospels give us a fourfold record of what Christ is and of what He has done. However, the Gospels do not reveal Christ as much as the Psalms do. Sometimes the Psalms are quoted in the Gospels. For example, Psalm 118:22-23 is quoted in Matthew 21:42, and Psalm 110:1 is quoted in Matthew 22:44. Without the Psalms we cannot have a clear view concerning Christ. If you consider all the points regarding Christ in the Psalms, you will see that the Psalms present us a particular picture of Christ.

The title of this message on Psalms 111 through 118 is "The Praise of God's Elect Consummating in the Particular Position of Christ." This group of psalms may be called "psalms of hallelujahs." Psalms 111, 112, and 113 all begin with the word "Hallelujah." These psalms, therefore, are psalms of praises to God, and these praises consummate in a particular position of Christ. This means that Psalm 118 does not come out of nothing but is the issue of the praises of God's elect. As we consider these psalms, we will see that the praises in them are different from the praises in the foregoing psalms.

I. THE PRAISE OF GOD'S ELECT FOR GOD'S GREAT WORKS ACCORDING TO HIS COVENANT

In Psalm 111 we have the praise of God's elect for God's great works according to His covenant which He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In verse 2 the psalmist declares, "Great are the works of Jehovah, / And sought out by all who delight in them." Verse 4 says, "He has caused His wondrous deeds to be remembered; / Jehovah is gracious and compassionate." In verse 5b we are told that He remembers His covenant forever, and in verse 9, that He has commanded His covenant forever.

II. THE PRAISE OF GOD'S ELECT FOR GOD'S BLESSING DUE TO THEIR FEAR OF HIM AND THEIR VIRTUES THEREOF

Psalm 112 is the praise of God's elect for God's blessing due to their fear of Him (vv. 1-2) and their virtues thereof, mainly in giving to the poor (vv. 4-5, 9; cf. 2 Cor. 9:6-11).

III. THE PRAISE OF GOD'S ELECT FOR GOD'S EXALTATION AND HUMILITY IN TAKING CARE OF THE LOWLY AND NEEDY ONES

Psalm 113 is the praise of God's elect for God's exaltation and humility in taking care of the lowly and needy ones. Verses 4 through 6 say, "Jehovah is high above all the nations, / And His glory is above the heavens. / Who is like Jehovah our God, / Who has set His throne on high, / Who humbles Himself to behold / The heavens and the earth?" This is a praise both of God's exaltation and His humility. His humility was manifested in His incarnation. If we compare these verses with Philippians 2:7-11, we will see that Christ humbled Himself and, due to His humility, He was exalted.

IV. THE PRAISE OF GOD'S ELECT FOR GOD'S MARVELOUS DEEDS TO THEM IN EGYPT AND IN THE WILDERNESS AND THEIR BECOMING GOD'S SANCTUARY AND DOMINION

Psalm 114 is the praise of God's elect for God's marvelous deeds to them in Egypt and in the wilderness and their becoming God's sanctuary and dominion. God did many things to make the rebellious people of Israel His sanctuary and His dominion under His rule. Concerning this, verse 2 says, "Judah became His sanctuary, / Israel, His dominion."

V. THE PRAISE OF GOD'S ELECT FOR GOD'S BEING REAL, TRUSTWORTHY, AND FULL OF BLESSING TO HIS ELECT AND TO ALL THOSE WHO FEAR HIM, UNLIKE THE IDOLS

Psalm 115 is the praise of God's elect for God's being real, trustworthy, and full of blessing to His elect and to all those who fear Him, unlike the idols. This psalm says that the idols made of silver and gold are not real but false. We should not

put our trust in them. "They have mouths, but they do not speak; / They have eyes, but they do not see. / They have ears, but they do not hear; / They have noses, but they do not smell. / They have hands, but they do not feel; / They have feet, but they do not walk; / They make no sound in their throat" (vv. 5-7). In actuality, idols are not real and can do nothing. Thus, they are not trustworthy, and they have no blessing to give. But our God is real. He can speak, and He can give blessing. "Jehovah has been mindful of us; He will bless us; / He will bless the house of Israel; / He will bless the house of Aaron; / He will bless those who fear Jehovah, / Both small and great" (vv. 12-13).

VI. THE PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING OF GOD'S ELECT, IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL GOD'S PEOPLE, IN THE COURTS OF HIS HOUSE, AND IN THE MIDST OF JERUSALEM, FOR GOD'S SALVATION, DELIVERANCE, PRESERVATION, BOUNTIFUL DEALING, AND ABUNDANT BENEFITS

Psalm 116 is not only the praise but also the thanksgiving of God's elect. They praised and thanked God in the presence of all God's people, in the courts of His house, and in the midst of Jerusalem. They praised and thanked Him for His salvation, deliverance, preservation, bountiful dealing, and abundant benefits.

VII. THE EXHORTATION OF GOD'S ELECT TO ALL THE NATIONS TO PRAISE JEHOVAH FOR HIS GREAT LOVINGKINDNESS AND EVERLASTING FAITHFULNESS

Psalm 117 is the exhortation of God's elect to all the nations to praise Jehovah for His great lovingkindness and everlasting faithfulness. The two verses of this psalm say, "Praise Jehovah, all you nations; / Laud Him, all you peoples. / For His lovingkindness is great toward us, / And the faithfulness of Jehovah is forever. / Hallelujah."

VIII. THE THANKSGIVING OF GOD'S ELECT FOR GOD'S BOUNTIFUL GOODNESS AND EVERLASTING LOVINGKINDNESS LEADING TO CHRIST AS THE CORNERSTONE FOR GOD'S BUILDING

In Psalm 118 we have the thanksgiving of God's elect for God's bountiful goodness and everlasting lovingkindness leading to Christ as the cornerstone for God's building.

A. The Thanksgiving of God's Elect for God's Bountiful Goodness and Everlasting Lovingkindness

Verses 1 through 21 and 27 through 29 are the thanksgiving of God's elect. In verse 1a the psalmist says, "Give thanks to Jehovah, for He is good." This word is repeated in verse 29a. Only God is good, as indicated by the word of the Lord Jesus to the young man in Mark 10, who had addressed Him as "Good Teacher." The Lord Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except One—God" (v. 18). We may think that others are good, but actually besides God no one is good. Because God is good, the psalmist said repeatedly, "His lovingkindness is forever" (118:1b, 2b, 3b, 4b, 29b).

B. Leading to Christ as the Cornerstone for God's Building

According to verses 22 through 26, thanksgiving of God's elect for God's bountiful goodness and everlasting lovingkindness leads to Christ as the cornerstone for God's building.

1. Christ Rejected by Israel, the Builders of God

In verse 22a the psalmist speaks of "the stone which the builders rejected." Verse 26 indicates that the psalmist was referring not to himself but to someone else. In His interpretation of verses 22 and 23, the Lord Jesus revealed that He was the cornerstone rejected by the Jewish leaders as the builders of God, who, in a sense, were building something for God. Although Christ was the stone given to them by God, they rejected Him to such an extent that they put Him on the cross.

2. Christ Becoming the Chief Cornerstone for God's Building

Psalm 118:22b tells us that the stone which the builders rejected has become "the head of the corner." The Hebrew for "head of the corner" can also be translated "chief cornerstone." Although Christ was rejected by Israel as the builders of God, in resurrection God made Him the cornerstone for God's building. In Isaiah 28:16 Christ is unveiled as the foundation stone; in Zechariah 4:7, as the topstone; and in Psalm 118:22, as the cornerstone. Of these three kinds of stones, the cornerstone is the most crucial, for it joins together the two walls and thus enables God's building to stand.

Concerning Christ as the cornerstone, Acts 4:10-12 says, "Let it be known to you all and to all the people of Israel that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified and whom God has raised from the dead, in this name this man stands before you in good health. This is the stone which was considered as nothing by you, the builders, which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no other, for neither is there another name under heaven given among men in which we must be saved." The word in verse 12 about there not being another name in which we must be saved is often quoted by evangelists, but who ever points out that the Savior is the cornerstone? If Christ had not been made the cornerstone, He could not be the Savior.

In Ephesians 2:19-22 we have Paul's word regarding Christ as the cornerstone. "So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone; in whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit." All the revelations, truths, and teachings concerning Christ that we have passed on to you from the Word have been about Christ as the cornerstone. Without Christ's being

the cornerstone, we could not have been crucified with Him and resurrected with Him. Without Christ's being the cornerstone, we could not have been made alive with Him and seated with Him in the heavenlies. As the cornerstone Christ is everything; He is all-inclusive. Do you know what we are doing in all our meetings? We are building up God's building by Christ as the cornerstone.

The Psalms unveil Christ to us in a complete way. If we did not have Psalm 118, the revelation concerning Christ in the Psalms would not have been completed. Christ is unveiled from Psalm 2 through Psalm 110, which is the highest revelation of Christ. Nevertheless, we still need to see from Psalm 118 that Christ is the stone rejected by the builders but honored by God as the cornerstone. If Christ were not the cornerstone, He could not have died for us and for our sins, and He could not have died with us. If He were not the cornerstone, He could do nothing. Everything He is, everything He has done, and everything He is doing is due to the fact that He is the cornerstone. In Acts 4 we see that as the cornerstone He is the Savior, and in Ephesians 2 we see that as the cornerstone He is the building factor. Without Christ as the cornerstone, we cannot be built up together to be God's dwelling place, God's habitation, which is the unique temple in the universe. This temple is built up through Christ, by Christ, and with Christ as the cornerstone.

In 1 Peter 2:4-7 we have another word about Christ as the cornerstone. "Coming to Him, a living stone, rejected by men but with God chosen and precious, you yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it is contained in Scripture: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a cornerstone, chosen and precious; and he who believes on Him shall by no means be put to shame.' To you therefore who believe is the preciousness; but to the unbelieving, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner.'" How can we who are lifeless clay become living stones? We can become living stones only through Christ's being the cornerstone. Christ as the cornerstone is the factor for many things. We have been saved

because Christ is the cornerstone. Now we are being transformed and built up also because Christ is the cornerstone.

This revelation concerning Christ as the cornerstone is unveiled in the praises of the psalmist. Often, while the psalmists were expressing their complex sentiments, something suddenly came forth as a revelation concerning Christ. This is the way the revelations of Christ are presented to us in the Psalms.

Have you ever thanked the Lord for being the cornerstone or praised Him for His being the cornerstone? I doubt that many among us have done this. We need to pray, saying, "Lord Jesus, I thank You that You are the cornerstone as my Savior and as my salvation. I praise You that You are the cornerstone for God's building. Without You we do not have any element or factor to be built up as God's temple."

I am concerned that even after you have heard that Christ is the cornerstone, you may have no interest in thanking and praising Him for this. Instead, you may prefer to pray in an old way regarding the Lord's mercy and lovingkindness. I would encourage you to pray like this: "Lord, I thank You for unveiling to me that You are the cornerstone to be my salvation and to be the element and factor for me to be transformed and built up into Your habitation."

The most striking point of Christ being made the cornerstone is that the New Testament unveils to us that Christ as the cornerstone is for the building up of the church in the New Testament age (Matt. 21:42-43). In God's New Testament economy, Christ, in His salvation, firstly makes us living stones for the building up of God's spiritual house (Acts 4:10-12; 1 Pet. 2:5-6), and then, in the process of His transformation, builds us up into a dwelling place of God (Rom. 12:2a; Eph. 2:20-22), that He may carry out God's eternal economy for God's good pleasure (Eph. 1:9).

3. This Being from Jehovah and Being Wonderful in Our Sight

Psalm 118:23 says, "This is from Jehovah, / And it is wonderful in our sight." Here we are told that Christ's

becoming the cornerstone was from Jehovah and that it is wonderful in our eyes.

4. This Taking Place in the Day That Jehovah Has Made

Verse 24a goes on to say, "This is the day that Jehovah has made." This day is the day of Christ's resurrection. On the day of His resurrection, on the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10), the Lord Jesus was made the cornerstone by God. This is why we like to meet together on the Lord's Day, a very particular day.

5. We Being Charged to Exult and Rejoice in This Day

Psalm 118:24b continues, "Let us exult and rejoice in it." Here we are charged to exult and rejoice in this day. This indicates that we should come to the meetings with rejoicing, praising the Lord. However, when many come to the meetings, they are silent, as if they do not have a spirit and a mouth. In the meetings, let us exercise our spirit and open our mouth to rejoice in the Lord and to praise Him for His being made the cornerstone.

6. God's Salvation and the Prosperity Sent by God Coming from Christ as the Chief Cornerstone

Verse 25 says, "O Jehovah, do save, we pray! / O Jehovah, do send prosperity, we pray!" In Hebrew the words "do save" are *hoshiah-na*, the source for *hosanna* in the New Testament (Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9-10; John 12:13). The prosperity mentioned in Psalm 118:25 is not material; rather, it refers to rich blessings that are heavenly, spiritual, and divine. This is the kind of prosperity described in Ephesians 1, which speaks of the heavenly, spiritual, and divine blessings given to us by the Triune God. Verse 3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." According to Ephesians 1, the first portion of these blessings is of God the Father (vv. 3-6); the second portion is of God the Son (vv. 7-12); and the third portion is of God the Spirit

(vv. 13-14). If we are interested in these blessings, we will be brought into the enjoyment of the prosperity sent to us by God because of Christ's being the cornerstone.

7. Christ as the Chief Cornerstone Coming in the Name of Jehovah

Psalms 118:26a declares, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of Jehovah." This indicates that Christ will come in the name of God, in the name of Jehovah. In fact, He will come two times in the name of Jehovah.

a. The First Time

The first time is mentioned in Matthew 21:5-11. That was the time when Christ was warmly welcomed by the people in Jerusalem who said, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (v. 9).

b. The Second Time

After Christ came in the name of Jehovah the first time, He was rejected by the Jews, and today they still will not welcome Him. However, when He comes back, the Jews will give Him a warm welcome and say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39).

The Lord Jesus quoted Psalm 118 in Matthew 21:42 and in 23:39, each time applying the words of the psalm to Himself and thereby interpreting them. Without His interpretation, we could not understand that the cornerstone in Psalm 118:22 refers to Christ and that the word in verse 26 about "He who comes in the name of Jehovah" also refers to Christ.

8. The Psalmists Blessing Israel with All the Nations from the Praising House of Jehovah

Finally, Psalm 118:26b says, "We bless you from the house of Jehovah." Here we have the psalmists blessing Israel with all the nations from the praising house of Jehovah.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE FORTY

CHRIST—THE REALITY OF THE LAW AS THE TESTIMONY AND THE WORD OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Psa. 119

In this message we come to Psalm 119. This psalm does not have a title telling us who wrote it, but it is commonly understood by Bible teachers that this psalm was written by David.

Psalm 119 is one of the alphabetical, or acrostic, psalms. The first letters of each group of eight verses in this psalm follow the order of the Hebrew alphabet. The twenty-two sections of this psalm thus correspond to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Furthermore, all the verses in a particular section begin with the same Hebrew letter. For example, in the Aleph section (vv. 1-8) every verse starts with the Hebrew letter Aleph.

The title of this message is "Christ—the Reality of the Law as the Testimony and the Word of God." In both the Old Testament and the New Testament there is a strong basis for saying that the law in its reality is Christ. If we would see that Christ is the reality of the law, we need to regard the law, as Psalm 119 does, as the testimony of God and as the word of God. This psalm does not contain the word "Christ," but it does contain a number of synonyms of Christ, such as "testimony" and "word," which are also synonyms of "law." We should not consider the law merely as commandments, regulations, and ordinances. Rather, we should consider the law as God's testimony. The law was given on Mount Sinai, but it was put into a little ark called "the ark of the testimony" (Exo. 25:16). The ark was then placed into "the tabernacle of testimony" (38:21). Thus, the law was in the ark of the

testimony, and the ark of the testimony was in the tabernacle of testimony.

At this point we need to ask a very particular question: In typology, who is the law? This is a question not about *what* the law is but about *who* the law is. We cannot answer the question concerning who the law is by saying that the law is the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are not a person, but they are a portrait of a person. A law is always a picture of the person who makes it. The laws passed by today's legislators are pictures of the legislators. The principle is the same with the law of God. The law of God—the Ten Commandments with the many statutes, ordinances, and judgments—is a portrait of the person of God.

I. CHRIST BEING THE REALITY OF THE LAW, SIGNIFIED BY:

A. The Testimony of God, Signifying Christ as the Living Portrait of What God Is

Christ is the reality of the law as the testimony of God. The testimony of God signifies Christ as the living portrait of what God is (Col. 2:9; 1:19).

The Ten Commandments are brief, but they give us a portrait of God. They show us that God is a jealous God, that He cannot tolerate other gods. In this matter, He is like a husband who is jealous concerning his wife. Also, God is a God of love, light, holiness, and righteousness. Here we have five crucial words—jealous, love, light, holiness, and righteousness.

The Ten Commandments were written on two tablets, with each tablet containing five commandments. In this way, the Ten Commandments were divided into two groups of five. The first three commandments are concerned with God. The first commandment says that the Lord is God and that we should not have any gods before Him (Exo. 20:2-3); the second commandment, that we should not make idols or worship idols (vv. 4-6); and the third commandment, that we should not take the name of God in vain (v. 7). The fourth commandment requires that we keep the Sabbath (vv. 8-11). This

commandment indicates that God is love. Because He loves us, He wants us to have a day of rest. The fifth commandment is the commandment to honor our parents (v. 12). This commandment is ranked with the first four commandments, which are related to God. The reason for this ranking involves our source as human beings. In Luke 3 the human generations are traced all the way back to Adam, and then to God. This indicates that when we honor our parents, we honor our source, which, ultimately, is God Himself. When we honor our parents, we recognize the fact that, through them, we can trace our source back to God. Those who do not respect their parents do not respect God.

The five commandments in the second group are all related to humanity. These are the commandments about not killing, not committing adultery, not stealing, not lying, and not coveting. We may use five words to summarize these five commandments: murder, adultery, stealing, lying, and covetousness. Anyone who does not murder, commit fornication, steal, lie, or covet is a perfect person.

We have pointed out that the Ten Commandments portray God as the One who is a God of jealousy, love, light, holiness, and righteousness. The last five commandments are related to God's holiness and righteousness. For example, a person who steals or lies is not righteous.

The God who is jealous, who is love and light, and who is holy and righteous is embodied in Christ. For this reason, Christ is God's testimony. Christ is jealous, loving, and full of light. He is also holy and righteous. He is the reality of the law, which is a portrait of God.

B. The Word of God, Signifying Christ as the Living Word of God Breathed Out by Him

Christ is the reality of the law not only as the testimony of God but also as the word of God, signifying Christ as the living word of God breathed out by Him (Rev. 19:13b; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). John 1:1 says that in the beginning was the Word (Christ), that the Word was with God, and that the Word was God. According to Revelation 19:13b, when Christ comes back to judge, His name will be called "the Word of God." The Ten

Commandments, with all their statutes, ordinances, and judgments, are also called the word of God. A literal rendering of the Hebrew translated "ten commandments" in Exodus 34:28 would be "ten words." The Ten Commandments are thus God's words, breathed out by Him.

The word "law" is used twenty-five times in Psalm 119 (vv. 1, 18, etc.). A number of different synonyms for "law" are also used in this psalm, including "testimony" (once, in v. 88), "testimonies" (twenty-two times, in vv. 2, 14, etc.), "word" (thirty-six times, in vv. 9, 11, etc.), "words" (six times, in vv. 57, 103, etc.), "commandment" (once, in v. 96), "commandments" (twenty-one times, in vv. 6, 10, etc.), "statutes" (twenty-two times, in vv. 5, 8, etc.), "ordinances" (seventeen times, in vv. 7, 13, etc.), "judgments" (three times, in vv. 75, 120, 137), and "precepts" (twenty-one times, in vv. 4, 15, etc.). All these terms from "law" to "precepts" consummate in the "way" (four times, in vv. 14, 27, 32, 33) or "ways" (three times, in vv. 3, 15, 37), signifying Christ as the way of God to His people.

Psalm 119 is a psalm of one hundred seventy-six verses describing Christ, who is the reality of the law, the commandments, the ordinances, the statutes, the precepts, and the judgments. In total, He is the Word of God. The words of Psalm 119 are the written words of God, but Christ is the living Word of God. The written words are the letters, but the living Word is the Spirit, who is the reality of the letters.

Now we can see not only what the law is but also who the law is. Who is the law? The law is the person of Christ, and the person of Christ is the Spirit. The Spirit is the reality of whatever God is. Hence, as the Spirit Christ is the reality of the law. Eventually, this law, this person, consummates in the way (John 14:6). When we have Him, we have not only love and light but also the way. This is Christ being the reality of the law as the testimony and the word of God.

II. THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE LAW

There are two aspects of the law—the aspect of the letter and the aspect of the Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 3:6 Paul says that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." Whether you

have a killing law or a life-giving law depends on your attitude. If your attitude in coming to the law is to care only for the commandments in letters and to realize that you cannot fulfill these commandments, then you have the law in the aspect of the letter. However, if you take every part of the law—all the commandments, ordinances, statutes, precepts, and judgments—as the word breathed out by the God whom you love, then you will have the law in the aspect of the Spirit. Then instead of trembling before the law of letters, you will be happy to be fed with every part of the law as the word, the breath, of God.

III. THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW

Just as the law itself has two aspects, so also the function of the law has two aspects.

A. The Negative Aspect

1. As God's Commandments to Expose Man's Sin

As God's commandments, the law exposes man's sin (Rom. 7:7b; 3:20b; 5:20a; 4:15b). Every item of the law with its statutes and ordinances exposes our shortcomings, defects, dishonesty, and unfaithfulness. For example, the commandment about not worshipping idols may expose the fact that many things are idols to us. For some people a pen or a diamond is an idol. Also, the commandment about keeping the Sabbath may expose our not resting regularly according to God's ordination. By failing to rest properly we fail to enjoy God's love expressed in the commandment to keep the Sabbath.

2. As God's Regulations with Statutes, Ordinances, and Rituals to Guard God's Chosen People in Its Custody That They Might Be Conducted to Christ

As God's regulations with statutes, ordinances, and rituals, the law functioned to guard God's chosen people in its custody that they might be conducted to Christ (Gal. 3:23-24). The law kept God's chosen people in custody, in ward, in the proper way until Christ came. The sheepfold in John 10 signifies the custody of the law. The Lord Jesus is the door of

the sheepfold (v. 9), and through Him all those who were in the sheepfold could come out. Thus, on the negative side the law functioned to guard God's chosen people until Christ came.

B. The Positive Aspect

1. As God's Living Testimony to Minister the Living God to His Seekers

As God's living testimony the law functions to minister the living God to His seekers (Psa. 119:2, 88). If we regard the law only as letters, the law will be very negative to us. However, if we regard the law as God's testimony, as a portrait of God, and if we consider that every word of the law is something breathed out by God, then to us the law will be the living and loving word of God. If this is our attitude toward the Bible today, then whenever we come to the Bible we will have the sense deep within that we are with God. Then as we read the Bible we will touch God, knowing that He is loving and that it is surely worthwhile for us to love Him and to seek Him. This is the positive function of the law as the testimony of God.

2. As God's Living Word to Dispense God's Life and Light to Its Lovers

As God's living word the law functions to dispense God's life and light into those who love the law (vv. 25, 116, 130). We all should regard the Bible as the living word of God which dispenses God Himself into us as our life and light. Whether or not this is our experience depends upon whether we seek God and love Him. This means that what the Bible is to us depends upon our attitude toward the Bible.

IV. TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN RELATION TO THE LAW

There are two kinds of people in relation to the law.

A. The Letter-keepers, Illustrated by the Judaizers and Saul of Tarsus

The first kind is the letter-keepers, illustrated by the Judaizers and Saul of Tarsus (Phil. 3:6b). The Judaizers, who were zealous for Judaism, were a damage to the Lord Jesus

in the Gospels, to the apostles in the Acts, and to the believers in the Epistles. Paul, before he was saved, was a strong Judaizer. In Philippians 3:2 Paul referred to the Judaizers as "dogs" and "evil workers," saying, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision."

B. The God-seekers, Illustrated by the Psalmists

The second kind is the God-seekers, illustrated by the psalmists, especially by the writer of Psalm 119.

1. Seeking God

"Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, / Who seek Him with all their heart" (v. 2). The writer of this psalm was one who sought God with his whole heart.

2. Loving His Name and Remembering It

Verse 132 says, "Turn to me, and have compassion on me, / As is Your custom with those who love Your name." This verse indicates that the psalmist loved God's name. Verse 55 says, "I have remembered Your name in the night, O Jehovah, / And have kept Your law." When the psalmist awoke during the night, he remembered God's name. May we all love God's name and remember it.

3. Entreating His Countenance

The psalmist also entreated God's countenance (v. 58). To seek a person's countenance, his face, is actually to seek his favor. If we seek God's countenance, we will receive bounty. Often little children will earnestly seek the face of their mother. To them nothing is more precious than beholding the face of their mother. We also should seek God in such an intimate way. If we seek God in this way, we will not regard the law as letters but as a portrait of God which bears His countenance.

4. Asking for His Face to Shine upon Them

"Cause Your face to shine on Your servant, / And teach me Your statutes" (v. 135). Here we see that the psalmist lovingly

sought God in an intimate way, even asking Him to cause His face to shine upon him.

5. Walking in His Presence

"I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies, / For all my ways are before You" (v. 168). This indicates that the psalmist walked in God's presence.

6. Considering God's Law to Be His Word

Verses 17 and 18 say, "Deal bountifully with Your servant that I may live / And keep Your word. / Open my eyes that I may behold / Wondrous things out of Your law." This indicates that the psalmist considered God's law to be His word. This is indicated also by what the psalmist says in verses 28 and 29: "My soul melts because of grief; / Strengthen me according to Your word. / Remove from me the way of falsehood, / And graciously grant me Your law." These verses prove that the psalmist thought of God's law as His living and loving word breathed out of God's mouth.

7. God's Word Being Sweeter than Honey to Their Mouth

For the psalmists God's word was sweeter than honey to their mouth (v. 103).

8. God's Word Being More Precious than Fine Gold to Them

"Therefore I love Your commandments / More than gold, indeed, more than fine gold" (v. 127). This indicates that to the psalmists God's word was more precious than fine gold.

9. God's Word Being a Lamp to Their Feet and a Light to Their Path

God's word was a lamp to the psalmists' feet and a light to their path (v. 105).

V. THE GOD-SEEKERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD'S LAW AS GOD'S TESTIMONY AND GOD'S WORD

In Psalm 119 many different verbs are used to express

the attitude of the God-seekers toward God's law as God's testimony and God's word.

A. Choosing It

Psalm 119:30 says, "I have chosen the way of faithfulness; / Your ordinances I have set before me." Verse 173 says, "Let Your hand be ready to help me, / For I have chosen Your precepts." Like the psalmists, we all should choose God's word, making a strong decision in favor of the word of God.

B. Believing It

Considering God's law to be His word, the psalmist believed in the word. Verse 66 says, "Teach me proper discernment and knowledge, / For I believe in Your commandments." We all must believe in the genuineness, accuracy, authority, and power of God's word.

C. Lifting Up Their Hand unto It

"I will lift up my hand to Your commandments, which I love" (v. 48a). To lift up our hand unto God's word is to welcome it. Therefore, to lift up our hand unto the word of God is to indicate that we receive it warmly and gladly and that we say "amen" to it.

D. Loving It

Many times the writer of this psalm declared that he loves God's word (vv. 47, 48, 97, 113, 119, 127, 140, 159, 163, 165, 167). We all should be able to testify that we love the word of God.

E. Delighting in It

The psalmist also delighted in God's word (vv. 16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 174). He enjoyed the word of God and found it a source of delight. Every day we should have a time to delight ourselves in the Word.

F. Tasting It

"How sweet are Your words to my taste! / Sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (v. 103). To the psalmist the law was

not merely a list of commandments; it was also a word full of enjoyment and life supply. For this reason, God's words were sweet to his taste. If we regard the law as nothing more than the commandments of God, it will not be sweet to us. But if we regard God's law as His word for our nourishment and life supply, we will enjoy its sweet taste.

G. Rejoicing in It

When we taste the word of God, we rejoice in it. This was the experience of the psalmist, who testified again and again that he rejoiced in God's word (vv. 14, 111, 162).

H. Singing of It

"Your statutes have become my songs of praise / In the house of my pilgrimage" (v. 54). This indicates that the psalmist even sang of God's word.

I. Regarding It

In verse 6 the psalmist said that he regarded God's commandments, and in verse 117, that he regarded God's statutes. This means that he respected God's word. If we would be genuine seekers of God, we must respect His word.

J. Having a Sound Heart in It

The psalmist also had a sound, or healthy, heart in God's word (v. 80).

K. Inclining Their Heart unto It

In verses 36 the psalmist prayed, "Incline my heart to Your testimonies / And not to unjust gain." Then in verse 112 he declared, "I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes / Forever, to the end." These verses show us that we need a heart inclined to the word of God. Sometimes as we are reading the Bible, our heart is inclined to something else. Because our heart has the tendency to depart from God's word, we need to pray that our heart will be called back to God's word and be inclined to it.

L. Seeking It, Longing for It, and Hoping in It with Prayer

The psalmist also sought God's word (vv. 45, 94), longed for it (vv. 20, 40, 131), and hoped in it with prayer (vv. 43, 74, 114, 147).

M. Trusting in It

In verse 42 the psalmist declared that he trusted in God's word.

N. Musing on It

In several verses the writer of Psalm 119 tells us that he mused upon God's word (vv. 15, 23, 48, 78, 99, 148). To muse on the word is to taste it through careful considering. Thus, musing is a kind of enjoyment. I can testify that most of the enlightenment I receive comes by musing on the Word early in the morning. As I muse on the Word, I think about it with much consideration in a detailed way.

O. Considering It

In verse 95b the psalmist said, "I consider Your testimonies." To consider the Word is to think it over very carefully. Concerning this, we may use the word *mull*. To consider the Word is to mull it over, even to study it and research it.

P. Esteeming It Right concerning All Things

"I esteem all Your precepts concerning all things to be right" (v. 128a). Here we see that the psalmist esteemed God's word to be right—to be upright, straight, strict—in all things.

Q. Learning It

"Your hands have made me and fashioned me; / Give me understanding that I may learn Your commandments" (v. 73). This indicates that God has created us in such a way that we may have understanding of His word and learn it. In verse 71 the writer says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, / That I might learn Your statutes." This indi-

cates that suffering and affliction can help us to learn God's word.

R. Treasuring It

The psalmist also treasured the word of God. He treasured it as much as all riches (v. 14), as great spoil (v. 162), better than gold and silver (vv. 72, 127), and as a heritage forever (v. 111).

S. Treasuring It Up in Their Heart

In verse 11 we are told that the psalmist treasured up God's word in his heart. Paul charged us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). We should not only memorize the word and keep it within us—we should treasure it up in our heart.

T. Remembering It and Not Forgetting It

In Psalm 119:52 the psalmist indicates that he remembered God's word. If we treasure up the word in our heart, we will remember it; we will call back, or recall, our enjoyment of it. In verse 16b the writer declared, "I will not forget Your word," and in verse 93 he said, "I will never forget Your precepts, / For by them You have enlivened me."

U. Standing in Awe of It

In verse 161b the psalmist said, "My heart stands in awe of Your words." The psalmist also said that he was afraid of God's judgments (v. 120). Like the psalmist, we also should stand in awe of the word of God.

V. Clinging to It

In verse 31 the psalmist said to God, "I cling to Your testimonies." We also need to cling to the word of God.

W. Not Forsaking It, Not Swerving from It, Not Turning Aside from It, and Not Going Astray from It

Furthermore, the psalmist said that he did not forsake

God's word, did not swerve from it, did not turn aside from it, and did not go astray from it (vv. 87, 51, 157, 102, 110).

X. Turning Their Feet toward It

"I considered my ways / And turned my feet toward Your testimonies" (v. 59). Instead of turning aside from the law, we, like the psalmist, should turn our feet toward it.

Y. Keeping, Observing, and Doing It

The psalmist kept, observed, and did the word of God (vv. 33, 69). All these different words show how he regarded the word of God.

Z. Walking in It and Running the Way of It

Verse 1 says, "Blessed are those whose way is perfect, / Who walk in the law of Jehovah." Verse 32a says, "I run the way of Your commandments." The psalmist walked in the word of God and ran the way of the word of God. This indicates that he lived according to the word of God.

These twenty-six items reveal the attitude of the God-seekers toward God's law as God's testimony and as God's word.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE FORTY-ONE

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF ZION AND JERUSALEM IN THE EXPERIENCES AND PRAISES OF THE SAINTS

(1)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 120—127

In this message we will begin to consider a particular group of psalms, Psalms 120 through 134, which are known as the Psalms of Ascents.

Whereas Psalm 119 talks about the law, in these fifteen psalms the law is not mentioned. Instead of speaking concerning the law, these psalms refer to the matter of captivity. The people of Israel loved the law, but they did not live according to the law. After they received the law, their sins, offenses, and transgressions increased. They even went so far as to turn from God and worship idols. For instance, Judges 17 tells us of a man who set up idols in his home, who appointed one of his sons to be his priest, and who later hired a Levite to be a priest in his house. Since the people of Israel wanted to worship idols, God caused them to go into captivity in a land of idols. As the people were suffering in captivity, they forgot many things, but they could not forget Zion and Jerusalem.

At that time, Mount Zion and Jerusalem, which was built on Zion, were the only signs left on earth of God. Zion was the place where Abraham offered his son Isaac; it was also the place chosen by David. God is invisible, mysterious, and very deep. No one has seen Him. Nevertheless, Zion and Jerusalem were earthly signs of God's existence. As indicated by Psalms 120 through 134, Zion, the center, and Jerusalem, the circumference, remained deeply in the consideration of the people of Israel. For this reason, I have entitled the two

messages on these psalms "The Preciousness of Zion and Jerusalem in the Experiences and Praises of the Saints." Because of their experiences, the saints could not forget Zion and Jerusalem, and in their praises they did not neglect them. The saints were concerned not for godliness or comfort but for the fate of Zion and Jerusalem.

Israel was first invaded by the Assyrians and later by the Babylonians. Unlike the Babylonians, the Assyrians did not destroy the city of Jerusalem or devastate the temple. When the Psalms of Ascents were written, both the city and the temple remained, and the saints in captivity remembered them as signs, as symbols, of the very God whom they worshipped.

Why are these fifteen psalms called Songs of Ascents? To answer this question we need to see that when the people of Israel were captured, they were in a downward situation. To return to Jerusalem and to Zion was to be in an upward situation. Furthermore, they had to climb, to ascend, the hill of Zion, and as they were ascending they sang a song of ascents, a song of degrees.

When we were saved, we were in an upward situation and thus could not sing a song of ascent. However, we may eventually become "down" or "low" for a period of time. At such a time we are in a kind of captivity. But when the Lord gains us again and we are revived, we will sing a song of ascent. As a result of our experiences of the ups and the downs, we will no longer uplift the law, appreciating it in a natural way. We will realize that the law does not help us. Rather, the things that truly help us are Zion and Jerusalem.

Let us now consider these fifteen psalms one by one.

I. THE PRAISE OF A SAINT IN HIS GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING JEHOVAH'S DELIVERANCE OF HIM FROM HIS DISTRESS

Psalm 120 is the praise of a saint in his going up to Zion concerning Jehovah's deliverance of him from his distress.

A. The Fifteen Psalms of Ascents Being the Favorites of Hezekiah's Singing

According to history, Psalms 120 to 134, fifteen Psalms

of Ascents, were the favorites of Hezekiah's singing (cf. Isa. 38:20). He used to sing these psalms with stringed instruments in the temple at Jerusalem.

B. Meshech, a Place Far to the North in Assyria, and Kedar, a Place to the South in Arabia

Psalm 120:5 says, "Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, / I dwell among the tents of Kedar." Here we have two proper nouns—Meshech and Kedar—referring to two places. Meshech was a place far to the north in Assyria, and Kedar was a place to the south in Arabia (Isa. 21:13, 16; Ezek. 27:21). Both may refer to the places in which the psalmist was captured in the Assyrian invasion (2 Kings 18:11; 2 Chron. 32:1). This indicates that Psalm 120 is related to the Assyrian invasion. The Assyrians invaded Israel and took the capital of Israel, Samaria. The writer of this psalm was among the captives in Meshech and Kedar.

C. The Psalmist's Suffering of Afflictions in Captivity

How could a godly Israelite have been in Meshech, a place far to the north, and in Kedar, a place to the south? The answer must be that the psalmist was among the godly Jews who had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians. The "distress" in verse 1 may refer to the suffering of afflictions in the psalmist's captivity. Here the psalmist said, "In my distress I called out to Jehovah, / And He answered me." Verse 6 may indicate that his captivity was for a long time: "Long has my soul had its dwelling / With him who hates peace." Those who hated peace were first the Assyrians and later the Babylonians and the Persians, both of whom invaded Israel. The invading Assyrians were not for peace but for war. Thus, in verse 7 the psalmist went on to say, "I am for peace; but when I speak, / They are for war." Because these invaders also were liars, the psalmist prayed, "O Jehovah, deliver my soul from lying lips, / From a tongue of deceit" (v. 2). The first of the Psalms of Ascents, therefore, describes the suffering of the psalmist in his captivity.

II. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINT IN HIS GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING JEHOVAH'S KEEPING OF HIM FROM EVIL

Psalm 121 is the praise of the saint in his going up to Zion concerning Jehovah's keeping of him from all evil, disasters.

A. Jehovah as the Keeper of Hezekiah

Verse 5 says, "Jehovah is your Keeper; / Jehovah is your shade at your right hand." According to history, the "Keeper" here refers to Jehovah as the Keeper of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:14-19). Apart from Jehovah's protection, Hezekiah surely would have been slain by the Assyrians.

B. "To the Hills" Referring to Jehovah, Who Created the Heaven and Earth

Psalm 121:1 and 2 say, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills. / From where will my help come? / My help comes from Jehovah, / Who made heaven and earth." "To the hills" in verse 1 refers to Jehovah, who created the heaven and earth, including the hills (2 Kings 19:15).

C. The Sun and the Moon Becoming the Instruments of God's Keeping

In Psalm 121:6 the psalmist says, "The sun will not strike you by day, / Nor the moon by night." Here "sun" and "moon" refer to God's creation, and both became the instruments of God's keeping.

I experienced a particular fulfillment of this verse during the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. I had been asked by the co-workers to return from Hangkow in central China to my home town of Chefoo, on the tip of the Shantung Peninsula. This involved a long, complicated trip by train. The country was in confusion, and because of the threat of attack by Japanese airplanes, it was a fearful thing to travel by train. When the sky was clear, the airplanes could attack either during the day or at night. Whenever the alarm sounded, we had to leave the train and hide in the field. The passengers were relieved that the sky was cloudy during the day. However, at night the sky was clear, the moon was bright,

and the people were afraid. At that very time, I happened to be reading Psalm 121, and I praised the Lord for His word in verse 6. Then I testified to the other passengers, saying, "I am a Christian and I have just read in the Bible, the Word of God, that the sun will not strike you by day nor the moon by night. I believe that God will keep me safe. All those who are traveling with me will also be safe. Be at peace." Some of them laughed at me. But after we safely made the long trip to the capital of Shantung Province without any alarms, I asked them about what I had said, and they admitted that it was true. In that situation I, like Hezekiah, experienced God as my Keeper.

III. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINT IN HIS GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING HIS LOVE OF THE HOUSE OF GOD IN JERUSALEM

Psalm 122 is the praise of the saint in his going up to Zion concerning his love of the house of God in Jerusalem. This is a sweet psalm concerning the psalmist's love of the house of God. This psalmist cared not for the law but for Zion and Jerusalem.

A. The Psalmist's Rejoicing

The psalmist rejoiced when others said to him, "Let us go to the house of Jehovah" (v. 1). Today we who love the church should rejoice when someone says, "Let us go to the meeting."

B. His Praise of Jerusalem

In verses 2 through 4 we have the psalmist's praise of Jerusalem, to which the tribes of Jehovah go up.

C. The Thrones of the House of David Being Set There for Judgment

"For there thrones are set for judgment, / Thrones of the house of David" (v. 5). David here typifies Christ.

D. His Prayer and Blessing for Jerusalem's Peace and Prosperity

Verses 6 through 9 are the psalmist's prayer and blessing

for Jerusalem's peace and prosperity. In verse 6 he says, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. / Those who love you will prosper." The "you" refers to Jerusalem. This verse expresses the intimate feeling of the psalmist concerning Jerusalem. Verse 7 indicates that the psalmist is concerned not for his own comfort but for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem. Thus, in verses 8 and 9 he goes on to say, "For my brothers' and companions' sake I will now say, / Peace be within you. / For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God / I will seek your good."

IV. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINT IN HIS GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING GOD'S COMPASSION ON THE RETURNED CAPTIVES

Psalm 123 is the praise of the saint in his going up to Zion concerning God's compassion on the returned captives. This psalm is short, but it is very meaningful.

A. Lifting Up His Eyes to Jehovah

The psalmist said that he lifted up his eyes to Jehovah, who sits enthroned in heaven (v. 1). Then he continued by saying that as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters and as the eyes of a maidservant look to the hand of her mistress, so do the eyes of the saints look to Jehovah until He has compassion on them (v. 2).

Verse 3a says, "Have compassion on us, O Jehovah, have compassion on us." In this psalm the most striking word is "compassion." It is not a matter of our loving God's law but of His having compassion on us. Compassion is deeper than mercy, for mercy is outward whereas compassion is inward.

B. Because of the Contempt and Scorn of Their Captors

Jehovah had compassion on the returned captives because of the contempt and scorn of their captors. Concerning this, verses 3b and 4 say, "For we are greatly filled with contempt. / Our soul is greatly filled / With the scorn of those who are at ease, / With the contempt of the proud." This indicates that they still remembered what happened to them in their captivity. They remembered that day by day they were

scorned, despised, and treated with contempt. While they were undergoing such an experience, they could not forget Zion and Jerusalem, and when they returned, they ascended the hill of Zion.

V. THE PRAISE OF ISRAEL IN THEIR GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING JEHOVAH'S HELP IN THE INVASIONS OF THEIR ENEMIES

Psalm 124 is the praise of Israel in their going up to Zion concerning Jehovah's help in the invasions of their enemies.

A. Jehovah Not Giving Them as a Prey

When their enemies rose up in anger against them like the insolent waters flowing over them to swallow them up, Jehovah did not give them as a prey to their teeth (vv. 1-6). The psalmist said that if Jehovah had not been on their side, the proud waters would have passed over their soul. The psalmist then praised Jehovah for His help. "Blessed be Jehovah, who has not given us / As prey to their teeth" (v. 6).

B. Their Help Being in the Name of Jehovah

Speaking in a poetic way, the psalmist continued, "Our soul has escaped like a bird, / Out of the snare of the fowlers; / The snare is broken, / And we have escaped" (v. 7). They were like birds threatened by fowlers, but due to Jehovah's help, they escaped the snare. Thus, the psalmist concluded by declaring, "Our help is in the name of Jehovah, / Who made heaven and earth" (v. 8).

VI. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINTS IN THEIR GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING JEHOVAH'S SURROUNDING OF HIS PEOPLE

Psalm 125 is the praise of the saints in their going up to Zion concerning Jehovah's surrounding of His people.

A. Those Who Trust in Jehovah Being like Mount Zion

In verse 1 the psalmist says that those who trust in Jehovah are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but

abides forever. They loved Mount Zion and they likened themselves to Mount Zion.

B. Jehovah Surrounding His People from Now to Eternity

Verse 2 tells us that as the mountains surround Jerusalem, so Jehovah surrounds His people from now to eternity.

C. Jehovah Judging Righteously

The psalmist continues by saying that Jehovah judges righteously those upright in their hearts and those turning aside to their crooked ways (vv. 3-5a). In verse 4a the psalmist prays, "Do good, O Jehovah, to the good." The expression "the good" indicates that the psalmist's concept was still according to the principle of good and evil. No one is good except God (Mark 10:18). How, then, could the psalmist ask God to do good to the good? This prayer shows the influence of the old tradition upon the psalmist.

D. Blessing Israel with Peace

This psalm ends with the psalmist's blessing Israel, saying, "Peace be upon Israel" (v. 5b).

VII. THE PRAISE OF THE RETURNED CAPTIVES IN THEIR GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING THE GREAT THINGS WHICH JEHOVAH HAD DONE FOR THEM

Psalm 126 is the praise of the returned captives in their going up to Zion concerning the great things which Jehovah had done for them.

A. They Being like Dreamers Filled Joyfully with Laughter in Their Mouth and with a Ringing Shout in Their Tongue

The psalmist said that when Jehovah turned the captivity of Zion, they were like those who dream. Their mouth was filled with laughter and their tongue with a ringing shout (vv. 1-2a). "At that time they said among the nations, /

Jehovah has done great things for them. / Jehovah has done great things for us; / We are joyful" (vv. 2b-3).

B. Asking Jehovah to Turn Again Their Captivity

"Turn again, O Jehovah, our captivity / Like the streams in the south" (v. 4). Although some of the people had returned, many remained in captivity, and here the psalmist prayed for them. In his prayer the psalmist asked Jehovah to turn again their captivity like the streams in the south. In contrast to the streams in the north, which may be frozen, the streams in the south are flowing.

"Those who sow in tears / Will reap with a ringing shout. / He who goes forth and weeps, / Bearing seed for scattering, / Will no doubt come in with a ringing shout, / Bearing his sheaves with him" (vv. 5-6). I believe that this refers to the captives. In a human sense, their captivity in foreign countries was a suffering. In a divine sense, however, it was a sowing through their preaching to the Gentiles concerning God. Apparently, God's people were captives; actually, they were preachers. Many of the captives, such as Daniel and his companions, were excellent preachers. Their preaching was a sowing. As a result, a number of Gentiles were brought to God through these captives. For example, Nebuchadnezzar had to admit to Daniel and his companions that their God was the true God (Dan. 2:47; 3:28-29; 4:34-35). This indicates that the captives sowed the seed of the knowledge of God among the heathen.

Verse 5 of Psalm 126 speaks of reaping with a ringing shout, and verse 6, of coming in with a ringing shout. A ringing shout is a shout of joy, a joyful noise. Whereas the captives sowed in tears, they returned with a ringing shout, bearing their "sheaves" with them.

VIII. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINTS IN THEIR GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING JEHOVAH'S CARE FOR AND BLESSING TO HIS PEOPLE

Psalm 127 is the praise of the saints in their going up to Zion concerning Jehovah's care for and blessing to His people. This Song of Ascents was written by Solomon.

A. Jehovah's Care for His People

In verses 1 and 2 we see Jehovah's care for His people.

1. Jehovah Building the House and Keeping the City

"Unless Jehovah builds the house, / Those who build it labor in vain. / Unless Jehovah keeps the city, / The guard watches in vain" (v. 1). This is a comforting word, especially for the elders and for those who consider themselves guards protecting the church. Unless the Lord builds the church, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord keeps the city—that is, keeps the church as the kingdom—those who guard the church watch in vain.

2. It Being Vain to Toil for Bread

"It is vain for you to rise up early, / To lie down late, / To eat the bread of toil; / All the same, He gives to His beloved while they sleep" (v. 2). This indicates that if the Lord does not do anything for us, whatever we do will be in vain. Instead of toiling and striving in ourselves, we need to trust in Him, for He gives to His beloved even while they sleep. Do you believe that what you do means something? We need to realize that whatever we do without trusting in the Lord means nothing. If we realize this, we will rest in the Lord.

B. Jehovah's Blessing to His People

Verses 3 through 5 are Jehovah's blessing to His people.

1. Children Being the Heritage of Jehovah

In verse 3 the psalmist says that children are the heritage of Jehovah and that the fruit of the womb is a reward.

2. Blessed Being the Man Who Fills His Quiver with Children as Arrows

"Like arrows in the hand of a mighty man, / So are the children of one's youth. / Blessed is the man / Who fills his quiver with them. / He will not be put to shame / When he speaks with enemies in the gate" (vv. 4-5). This indicates that instead of striving without trusting in the Lord, we should

simply be a good father producing children. We cannot gain much by our toil, but we can produce children. Certain people are intelligent and very diligent in their labor, but they do not have any children. They do not have any "arrows" in their "quiver." This is a shame. We need to consider what we will choose—to toil or to rest and produce children.

Psalm 127 is a psalm of release, a psalm that releases us from labor. This psalm teaches us that God takes care of us and blesses us. Whether we labor or do not labor, the situation is the same. "All the same," He gives to us while we sleep. In addition to caring for us, He blesses us with increase, with children. We all need to believe this. Even though I am a laboring person, I believe that the result depends not on my labor but on God's care and blessing.

Solomon's word in this psalm is directed at those who labor and endeavor to do things but do not trust in God. Instead of laboring in yourself, you should trust in God. He will take care of you, and He will bless you.

What is described in this Song of Ascents needs to become our experience. Today we are talking about the increase. However, the more we talk, the more we are disappointed. The more we expect to have increase, the less increase we have. As a result, we do not have peace and rest, and we do not have this Song of Ascents. Our concept, therefore, needs to be changed. Increase does not depend on what we do—it depends on how much God gives. Both the care and the blessing come from Him. Let us learn to be today's Solomon, knowing that whatever we do without trusting in the Lord is in vain, but that as long as we trust in Him, there will be a good result. If we have learned to be such a Solomon, then we will pray, saying, "Lord, I don't have any trust in myself. I trust in Your mercy, in Your blessing, in Your presence, and in Your Spirit." This is the experience of Psalm 127.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE FORTY-TWO

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF ZION AND JERUSALEM IN THE EXPERIENCES AND PRAISES OF THE SAINTS

(2)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 128—134

In the previous message we covered the first eight of the Psalms of Ascents. In this message we will consider the remaining seven, Psalms 128 through 134.

The sequence of these seven psalms is significant. Psalm 128 speaks of Jehovah's blessing to Israel from Zion and the prosperity of Jerusalem in Israel's enjoyment. Psalm 129 concerns God's righteous dealing with the persecutors of Israel and the haters of Zion. On this earth there is a people chosen by God as His elect, and this people is always persecuted. This is true of the believers today, who may be persecuted for preaching the gospel and teaching the Bible. Furthermore, Zion, the highest peak of that range of mountains, signifies the overcomers in the church, the higher ones among the believers. Just as Zion was hated, so the overcomers also are hated. But God comes in to deal righteously with those who persecute Israel and hate Zion. Israel is God's elect, and God deals with those who persecute His people, but this does not mean that Israel is perfect and sinless. On the contrary, Israel has many sins and iniquities. Thus, in Psalm 130 we have a psalm of forgiveness and redemption.

Psalm 131 indicates that after we experience God's forgiveness, we become humble. Formerly, we were proud and even haughty, thinking that we alone were right and that others were wrong. But after we are enlightened concerning our real situation, make a thorough confession, and receive

God's forgiveness, we become humble. We humble our heart, lower our eyes, and our soul becomes quiet "like a weaned child with its mother" (v. 2). I have had this experience many times, realizing that I am nothing, that I have nothing, and that I can do nothing. When our heart is humbled and our soul is quiet, we are in a condition that is suitable for God to come in to rest. In such a situation God can have a resting place, a dwelling. However, when we are proud and our eyes are haughty, God has no rest, no dwelling place, in us. Only when we are humble, calm, and quiet is the situation right for God to rise up, enter into us, and take us as His resting place. This is Zion becoming God's habitation, His resting place, as revealed in Psalm 132.

Next, Psalm 133 shows us that Zion is the unique place where the brothers can come together in unity. Zion is the uniting center. In any other place we are scattered and divided. When God has His rest, His dwelling place, in Zion, we can come to Him in Zion and dwell there in unity with the brothers. How good and how pleasant this is! It is like the fine oil, signifying the anointing, upon Aaron, and it is also like the morning dew, signifying grace, that descends from Mount Hermon to the mountains of Zion. This indicates that, as God's people, we need both the anointing and the watering. Moreover, in Zion God has a place where He can command His blessing. Therefore, in Zion we receive the commanded blessing of God, even life forever.

Finally, in Psalm 134 the children of Israel first charge the priests to praise God in the night, and then they bless the priests. Whereas the priests taught and blessed the children of Israel, here the children of Israel teach and bless the priests. This indicates that the children of Israel have become higher than the priests.

The sequence of Psalms 128 through 134 is logical and reasonable. We enjoy God's blessing from Zion and the prosperity of Jerusalem, and then God deals with those who persecute us and hate us. Nevertheless, we are sinful and need God's forgiveness. When we receive His forgiveness, we become humble, calm, and quiet, and God comes in to rest, to dwell, in us. Then we come up to Him to dwell in unity.

As a result, we become Mount Zion; that is, we become the highest people, those who are even higher than the priests.

Now that we have seen the sequence of these seven psalms, let us consider each psalm in particular.

IX. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINT IN HIS GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING JEHOVAH'S BLESSING TO ISRAEL FROM ZION AND THE PROSPERITY OF JERUSALEM IN THEIR ENJOYMENT

Psalm 128 is the praise of a saint in his going up to Zion concerning Jehovah's blessing to Israel from Zion (signifying the overcomers in the churches) and the prosperity of Jerusalem (signifying the church as God's kingdom) in their enjoyment. This indicates once again how precious are Zion and Jerusalem in the experiences and praises of the saints.

A. They Eating the Labor of Their Hands, and It Going Well with Them

"Blessed is everyone who fears Jehovah, / Who walks in His ways. / You will indeed eat the labor of your hands; / You will be blessed, and it will go well with you" (vv. 1-2). They will eat and they will have peace. Food and peace are two basic elements for our daily life. If we lack food, we will not have peace.

B. Their Wives Being like Fruitful Vines, and Their Children Being like Olive Shoots

According to verse 3, their wives will be like fruitful vines in the innermost parts of their houses, and their children will be like olive shoots round about their tables. In this way will the man be blessed who fears Jehovah (v. 4).

C. Jehovah Blessing Them from Zion, and They Seeing the Prosperity of Jerusalem

Jehovah will bless them from Zion, and they will see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of their life. They will also see the children of their children under the peace of God upon Israel (vv. 5-6).

X. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINT IN HIS GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING THE PERSECUTORS OF ISRAEL AND THE HATERS OF ZION

Psalm 129 is the praise of the saint in his going up to Zion concerning the persecutors of Israel and the haters of Zion. Here Israel signifies the New Testament believers, and Zion signifies the overcomers in the church. The more we love the Lord Jesus, the more we will be hated. In some cases, parents have hated their children because the children loved the Lord Jesus so much.

A. Many Times the Persecutors Having Afflicted the Believers since the Beginning of Their Christian Life

Many times the persecutors have afflicted the believers since the beginning of their Christian life, but they have not prevailed against them. As the plowers, the persecutors plowed on the believers' back, making their furrows long, but Jehovah is righteous and has cut the cords of the wicked persecutors (vv. 1-4).

B. All the Haters of Zion Being Put to Shame

All the haters of Zion shall be put to shame and turned back like grass on the housetops, withering before growing up, having no multiplication of sheaves for the reapers (vv. 5-7). They will have no blessing from those who pass by saying, "The blessing of Jehovah be upon you! / We bless you in the name of Jehovah" (v. 8). This is the way God deals with the persecutors and the haters.

XI. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINT IN HIS GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING GOD'S FORGIVENESS TO ISRAEL AND HIS REDEEMING OF ISRAEL FROM ALL THEIR INIQUITY

In Psalm 130 we see the way God deals with His chosen people. This psalm is the praise of the saint in his going up to Zion concerning God's forgiveness to Israel and His redeeming of Israel from all their iniquity. We are not better

than the persecutors and the haters. We need God's forgiveness.

A. No One Standing if Jehovah Marked Iniquities

The psalmist cried out to Jehovah, praying that His ears would be attentive to the voice of his supplications (vv. 1-2). Then the psalmist said, "If You, O Jehovah, marked iniquities, / Who, O Lord, would stand?" (v. 3).

Nearly every morning I begin my prayer by saying, "Lord, thank You that You have forgiven me of all my transgressions, failures, and defeats. Lord, I also thank You that You have cleansed me of all my filthiness with Your cleansing blood." I have no other way to start my prayer, for I realize that every day my imperfections need God's forgiveness and my filthiness needs His cleansing.

B. There Being Forgiveness with Jehovah, That He Would Be Feared

"With You there is forgiveness, / That You would be feared" (v. 4). The more the Lord forgives us, the more we fear Him.

C. Waiting for the Lord and Hoping in Him and in His Word

In verses 5 through 8 the psalmist speaks of waiting for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning and hoping in Him and in His word for His abundant redemption that will redeem Israel from all their iniquity.

XII. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINT IN HIS GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING HIS HUMBLED HEART AND QUIETED SOUL BEFORE JEHOVAH

Psalm 131 is the praise of the saint in his going up to Zion concerning his humbled heart and quieted soul before Jehovah.

A. His Heart Not Being Proud, nor His Eyes Being Haughty

In verse 1 the psalmist says that his heart is not proud, nor are his eyes haughty. He also says that he does not go

about in things too great or too wondrous for him. Certain things are too great and wondrous for us, and we should not go about in these things.

B. He Having Calmed and Quieted His Soul within Him

The psalmist continues by saying that he has calmed and quieted his soul within him, like a weaned child with its mother (v. 2). He had been weaned, or stripped, of everything except the Lord.

C. Advising Israel, God's Chosen People, to Hope in Jehovah

The psalmist then advises Israel, God's chosen people, to hope in Jehovah from now to eternity (v. 3). When we have become like the psalmist, humble, calm, quiet, and weaned, we can advise others to hope in God.

XIII. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINT IN HIS GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING JEHOVAH'S HABITATION AND REST IN ZION THROUGH DAVID HIS ANOINTED

Psalm 132 is the praise of the saint in his going up to Zion concerning Jehovah's habitation and rest in Zion through David (typifying Christ) His anointed.

A. Asking Jehovah to Remember All of David's Afflictions

In verse 1 the psalmist asks Jehovah to remember all of David's afflictions, which typify all the afflictions of Christ.

B. David's Desire for the Habitation of God

Verses 2 through 5 show us David's desire for the habitation of God (cf. 69:9a). David swore to Jehovah and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob that he would not go into the tent of his house, go up onto the couch of his bed, or give sleep to his eyes or slumber to his eyelids until he found "a place for Jehovah, / A tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob" (132:5). Here "tabernacle" means a habitation.

C. David's Seeking for the Ark of Jehovah

David sought for the ark, and he found it in Jaar. He then wanted Jehovah to arise and enter with the ark into His resting place in Zion (vv. 5-9; 13). Today this resting place is the overcomers in the churches.

D. Jehovah's Speaking concerning Zion

Verses 14 through 18 are Jehovah's speaking concerning Zion. "This is My resting place forever; / Here will I dwell, for I have desired it" (v. 14). I hope that one day God will say such a word to you. Jehovah continues by saying that He will abundantly bless Zion's provision and satisfy its poor with bread, that He will clothe its priests with salvation, that its saints will shout with a ringing shout, that there He will cause the horn of David to shoot forth, that He has prepared a lamp for His Anointed One, and that He will clothe with shame the enemies of His Anointed One but that on Him His crown will shine.

In this psalm we have seven items related to the overcomer—resting, dwelling, food, clothing, the victorious horn, the enlightening lamp, and the shining crown. These items are at the top of the church life. When we are at the top of the church life, we have the resting with God, the dwelling, and the food. However, when God is homeless, we also are homeless. When He does not have satisfaction, we also do not have satisfaction. But when God is resting and dwelling in Zion, we have plenty of food. Furthermore, we have the proper clothing, a horn, a lamp, and a crown. This is the top church life. This is the situation of the overcomers in Zion, the highest peak of God's mountain.

XIV. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINT IN HIS GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING JEHOVAH'S COMMANDED BLESSING FOR BROTHERS TO DWELL IN UNITY

Psalm 133 is the praise of the saint in his going up to Zion concerning Jehovah's commanded blessing for brothers to dwell in unity. Before we can have Psalm 133 we must reach Psalm 132. This means that without God's resting and

dwelling in His dwelling place, we have no place where we can come together. We have no Zion, no center for our gathering. When Zion is built up and when God is resting there and dwelling in Jerusalem, then we have a place where we can gather and where we can dwell together in unity. If this is our situation in the meetings of the church, we will enjoy God's commanded blessing.

A. It Being Good and Pleasant for Brothers to Dwell in Unity

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is / For brothers to dwell in unity!" (v. 1). I believe that "how good" refers to the oil in verse 2 and that "how pleasant" refers to the dew in verse 3.

B. It Being like the Fine Oil upon the Head

"It is like the fine oil upon the head / That ran down upon the beard, / Upon Aaron's beard, / That ran down to the hem of his garments" (v. 2). For the oil to run down from the head to the hem of the garments signifies that both the Head and the Body, both Christ and the church, are under the anointing of God's fine oil.

C. It Being like the Dew of Hermon That Came Down upon the Mountains of Zion

Verse 3a goes on to say that is also like "the dew of Hermon / That came down upon the mountains of Zion." The north wind caused the dew to descend from Hermon to the mountains of Zion. This dew signifies the fresh and refreshing grace of God. Such a dew, such a grace, waters us.

D. There Jehovah Commanding the Blessing, Even Life Forever

"For there Jehovah commanded the blessing: / Life forever" (v. 3b). I believe that by "life forever" the psalmist had in mind a long life. In our interpretation, however, we understand the word "life" here to mean not long life but eternal life. As we dwell together in the church life, we enjoy God's

eternal life commanded by Him as a blessing to us. This is the living of the church.

In Psalm 132 we have the church life, and in Psalm 133 we have the church living. The church living is the highest living—a living with brothers dwelling in unity. Such a living causes God to come in to bless us with fine oil and fresh dew.

XV. THE PRAISE OF THE SAINT IN HIS GOING UP TO ZION CONCERNING THE CHARGE AND THE BLESSING OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL TO THE SERVING PRIESTS IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

As the last of the Songs of Ascents, Psalm 134 is the praise of the saint in His going up to Zion concerning the charge and the blessing of the children of Israel to the serving priests in the house of God. This psalm indicates that the highest people, those who are in Zion, can bless everyone and teach everyone.

A. The Charge to the Servants of Jehovah

"Bless Jehovah now, / All you servants of Jehovah / Who stand by night in the house of Jehovah. / Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, / And bless Jehovah" (vv. 1-2). This is the charge of the children of Israel to the serving priests. Although these priests are serving in the house of God, they are lower than the ones in Zion. Thus, those in Zion can give such a charge to these servants of Jehovah.

B. The Blessing to the Servants of Jehovah

"May Jehovah, who made heaven and earth, / Bless you from Zion" (v. 3). Here we see that the blessing comes from Zion, that is, from the highest people. If you read the history of the church, you will see that in every age and century God's blessing has come to the church because of the overcomers. Whenever there are some overcomers, there will be God's blessing. God always blesses His people from Zion, from the highest peak, from the ones who have attained to the top, to the position of the overcomers. From this position God blesses all His people.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE FORTY-THREE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF THE SAINTS BEFORE JEHOVAH IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS

Scripture Reading: Psa. 135—139

In this message we will consider Psalms 135 through 139. Before we come to these psalms, I would first like to say a word concerning the arrangement of the one hundred fifty psalms.

The first one hundred nineteen psalms talk about the law. Psalm 1 is on the law, and Psalm 119 also is on the law. Regarding the law, Psalm 1 is an excellent beginning, and Psalm 119 is an excellent ending. In speaking about the law, Psalm 119 uses seven synonyms of the word *law*: testimony or testimonies, word, statutes, ordinances, precepts, judgments, and commandments. These seven synonyms issue in the way.

In particular, Psalm 119 is on the law as the testimony of God. According to the Bible this testimony is the testimony of what God is. The law is a type, a symbol, of Christ as the testimony of God. In order to understand this, we need to consider another type of Christ—the ark of the testimony (Exo. 25:10-11, 16, 21-22). The ark of the testimony was put into the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle, which is called the tabernacle of the testimony (Exo. 38:21). The Bible does not say that the law was put into the ark; rather, the Bible tells us that the testimony was put into the ark (Exo. 40:20). The law contained, or concealed, in the ark is called the testimony.

Psalm 119 is followed by fifteen psalms called Songs of Ascents (Psa. 120—134). The remaining sixteen psalms may be clustered into three groups—Psalms 135 through 139, Psalms 140 through 145, and Psalms 146 through 150.

Psalm 135 and Psalms 146 through 150 are "hallelujah" psalms, for each of these psalms begins and ends with "Hallelujah." However, as we will see, the nature of the content of Psalm 135 is different from that of Psalms 146 through 150. These six psalms are all hallelujah psalms, but their contents are different.

In this message we will cover Psalms 135 through 139. Each of these psalms has a striking point or significance. The striking point of Psalm 135 is the praise of Jehovah for His virtues. The striking point of Psalm 136 is Jehovah's everlasting lovingkindness. The second part of every verse in this psalm says, "For His lovingkindness is forever." The striking point of Psalm 137 is the remembrance of Zion and the non-forgetting of Jerusalem. The psalmist said that the captives wept by the rivers of Babylon when they remembered Zion (v. 1). The psalmist went on to say that he could not forget Jerusalem (v. 5). The striking point in Psalm 138 is the thanking of Jehovah in the worship of His holy temple. Psalm 139 speaks of God's omniscience and omnipresence. However, the striking point of this psalm is neither God's omniscience nor His omnipresence but the psalmist's asking Jehovah for His searching and trying. Here the psalmist seemed to be saying, "O Jehovah, search me and try me to see what is within me. Only You can search me in this way because only You are omniscient and omnipresent. Only You are qualified to search me and try me."

Those who arranged the Psalms arranged them according to their contents. In this arrangement we have Psalms 1 through 119, which speak about the law; Psalms 120 through 134, which are psalms about the going up, the ascending, to Zion; and the last sixteen psalms, Psalms 135 through 150. Psalm 135, a hallelujah psalm, stands alone, whereas Psalms 146 through 150, five other hallelujah psalms, are grouped together.

In Psalms 136 through 145 there is nothing crucial, nothing of particular importance. When some hear this, they may wonder about Psalm 137 and ask, "Are not the remembrance of Zion and the non-forgetting of Zion crucial?" Concerning the captivity these may be crucial. However,

concerning God's economy these things are not crucial. Matters such as weeping and hanging harps on the willows have nothing to do with God's economy. Thus, our saying that there is nothing crucial in these psalms is based on the principle of God's economy.

The title of this message on Psalms 135 through 139 is "The Expressions of the Saints before Jehovah in Different Directions." What is particular about these psalms is actually not the saints' expressions but the fact that the writers were people who were very close to God. Thus, these psalms are the expressions of the sentiments of writers who were very close to God. These sentiments are expressed from different directions. For example, Psalm 137 was written from the direction of one sitting by the rivers of Babylon, whereas Psalm 139 was written from the direction of God's searching and trying. In 139:23-24 David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart;/Try me, and know my anxious thoughts;/And see if there is some harmful way in me,/And lead me on the eternal way." Such a prayer can be uttered only by a person who is very close to God, even face to face with Him.

Psalms 135 through 139 were written from different directions to express before God the sentiments of the psalmists. In these psalms there is nothing crucial related to God's economy. Nevertheless, these psalms reveal that the writers were very close to God. We need to keep this point in mind as we consider each of these five psalms.

I. CHARGING THE PRIESTS WHO SERVE JEHOVAH IN HIS HOUSE, IN THE COURTS OF HIS HOUSE, TO PRAISE HIM

The subject of Psalm 135 is the charging of the priests who serve Jehovah in His house, in the courts of His house, to praise Him for His virtues. This psalm could have been written only by someone who was close to the Lord and concerned for the Lord's interest and for the serving priests. I believe that the writer of this psalm was not a priest but a common citizen among the Israelites. Because he was close to the Lord and because he had an intimate concern for the

worship of God and for the priests, he charged the priests to worship God.

The principle is the same in the church life today. We have co-workers, full-timers, and full-time trainees. Certain of the saints among us in the church who are very close to the Lord may be concerned for all these ones, watch over them, and pray for them. For instance, a particular co-worker is serving the Lord full-time, but he may not be very desperate with the Lord. Some of the older saints, bothered about the situation, may then pray for this co-worker.

A. In His Goodness

"Praise the name of Jehovah; / Praise Him, you servants of Jehovah, / Who stand in the house of Jehovah, / In the courts of the house of our God. / Praise Jehovah, for Jehovah is good; / Sing psalms to His name, for it is pleasant" (vv. 1-3). Here the priests are charged to praise God in His goodness.

B. In Choosing Jacob for Himself, Israel for His Personal Treasure

"For Jehovah has chosen Jacob for Himself, / Israel for His personal treasure" (v. 4). Isaac had two sons: Esau, the well-behaved one, and Jacob, the naughty one. Isaac chose Esau, who did things to please him, but God chose Jacob for Himself. God's economy needed this naughty one. Without him, God's economy could not be fulfilled.

Verse 4 says not only that God chose Jacob for Himself but also that He chose Israel for His personal treasure. When Jacob was transformed into Israel, the prince of God, he became God's personal treasure. God chose Jacob for Himself, but He chose Israel for His treasure.

C. In His Greatness above All Gods

In verse 5 the psalmist says, "I know that Jehovah is great / And that our Lord is above all gods." Then in verses 15 through 18 he explains, "The idols of the nations are silver and gold, / The work of human hands. / They have mouths, but they do not speak; / They have eyes, but they do not see. / They have ears, but they do not give ear; / And there is no

breath in their nostrils. / Those who make them, / All who trust in them, / Are like them." Here we have a comparison between our God, who is particular, and the gods, the idols, who cannot speak, see, or hear. Our God is mightier than the gods and is above all gods.

D. In His Being Mighty to Do as He Pleases in Heaven, on Earth, and in the Seas

Verses 6 and 7 indicate that the priests were also charged to praise God in His creation. "Whatever Jehovah pleases He does / In heaven and on earth, / In the seas and all the depths. / He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; / He makes lightning for the rain; / He brings forth wind from His treasuries." He regulates the atmosphere around the globe for the benefit of all living things—plants, animals, and human beings—because they all need the clouds, the wind, and the rain.

E. In His Marvelous Deeds in Egypt, upon Its Firstborn, of Man and of Beast, and unto Pharaoh and All His Servants

Verses 8 and 9 tell us that the priests were to praise God in His marvelous deeds in Egypt, upon its firstborn, of man and of beast, and unto Pharaoh and all his servants.

F. In His Striking of Great Nations and His Slaying of All the Kings of Canaan, Especially King Sihon and King Og

In verses 10 through 12 we have a word regarding Jehovah's striking of great nations and His slaying of all the kings of Canaan, especially Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan. These kings were the two gate-guards of the demonic and idolatrous Canaan. Jehovah smote the nations and the kings so that He might give their lands as an inheritance to Israel His people. The psalmist charged the priests to praise God for all that He did in bringing Israel into Canaan and killing the kings so that His people could possess the land.

G. In His Executing of Judgment for His People and in His Repenting concerning His Servants for the Sake of His Name

In verses 13 and 14 the psalmist charges the priests to praise Jehovah in His executing of judgment for His people and in His repenting concerning His servants for the sake of His name, which is His memorial throughout all generations.

H. Charging the House of Israel, the House of Aaron, and the House of Levi to Bless Jehovah

Verses 19 and 20 are the charge to the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, and the house of Levi, all of whom feared Jehovah, to bless Jehovah. To bless God is to speak well of Him. Every psalm is a blessing to God because every psalm is a well-speaking concerning God.

I. Blessing Jehovah from Zion, Who Dwells in Jerusalem

Verse 21 is a word about blessing Jehovah from Zion, who dwells in Jerusalem. This is the conclusion of this charge given to the priests by a common person who was close to God and concerned for His interests.

II. CHARGING THE PEOPLE TO GIVE THANKS TO JEHOVAH FOR HIS EVERLASTING LOVINGKINDNESS

The subject of Psalm 136 is the charging of the people to give thanks to Jehovah for His everlasting lovingkindness. Many of the details in this psalm are similar to the details in Psalm 135.

A. In Being Good

Verse 1 speaks of giving thanks to Jehovah for His being good.

B. In Being the God of Gods and the Lord of Lords

Verses 2 through 4 are a charge to give thanks to the God of gods and the Lord of lords, to Him who alone does great and wondrous deeds.

C. In Creating the Heavens, the Earth over the Waters, and the Great Lights

Next, the psalmist charges the people to give thanks to God who by understanding made the heavens, who spread forth the earth over the waters, and who made the great lights, the sun to rule the day and the moon and the stars to rule the night (vv. 5-9).

D. In Bringing Forth Israel from Egypt and Marching Them through the Wilderness

In verses 10 through 16 we have a word about giving thanks to God who struck Egypt through their firstborn, who brought forth Israel from their midst with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, who divided the Red Sea apart, brought Israel over through the midst of it, and shook off Pharaoh and his force into it, and who marched His people through the wilderness.

E. In Slaying Great and Majestic Kings of Canaan That He Might Give Their Land to Israel as an Inheritance

Verses 17 through 22 are a charge to give thanks to Jehovah for His everlasting lovingkindness in striking great kings and slaying majestic kings and then giving their land as an inheritance to Israel His servant.

F. In Remembering Israel in Their Low Estate and Rescuing Them from Their Adversaries

Jehovah remembered His people in their low estate and rescued them from their adversaries (vv. 23-24). Sometimes they were defeated by the surrounding Gentiles, who caused them to be in a low estate. Thus they needed God's mercy to remember them and rescue them. For this they were charged by the psalmist to give thanks to Jehovah.

G. In Giving Food to All Flesh

Verse 25 indicates that Jehovah's lovingkindness is seen in His giving food to all flesh.

H. In Being the God of Heaven

Finally, in verse 26 the psalmist charges the people to give thanks to the God of heaven.

This psalm does not have any crucial points. Nevertheless, in order to write such a psalm, the psalmist had to be a person who was very close to God and who cared for God's interests. Only such a person can write such a psalm.

III. THE REMEMBRANCE OF ZION AND THE NON-FORGETTING OF JERUSALEM IN CAPTIVITY

The subject of Psalm 137 is the remembrance of Zion and the non-forgetting of Jerusalem in captivity.

A. Weeping When They Remembered Zion

When they sat down by the rivers of Babylon and remembered Zion, they wept (v. 1).

B. Hanging Their Harps on the Willows

They hung their harps on the willows in the midst of it, for their captors required of them songs, and those who tormented them required of them mirth, saying, "Sing for us / One of the songs of Zion" (vv. 2-3).

C. They Asking How They Can Sing the Song of Jehovah in a Foreign Land

They said, "How can we sing the song of Jehovah / In a foreign land?" (v. 4). Then the psalmist continued, "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, / Let my right hand forget its skill. / Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, / If I do not remember you, / If I do not prefer Jerusalem / Above my chief joy" (vv. 5-6). Here we see that the psalmist could not forget Jerusalem but preferred it above his chief joy.

D. Asking Jehovah to Remember the Evil of Edom against Jerusalem and Punish It

"Remember, O Jehovah, / Against the children of Edom / The day of Jerusalem, / How they said, Lay it bare! Lay it bare, / Down to its foundation!" (v. 7). Here the psalmist asked

Jehovah to remember the evil of Edom against Jerusalem and punish it. This request was according to the principle of good and evil.

E. Cursing Babylon

"O daughter of Babylon, who are to be devastated, / Happy will he be who repays you / The recompense of what you have rendered to us. / Happy will he be who seizes your little ones / And dashes them against the rock" (vv. 8-9). This is the psalmist's cursing of Babylon. The psalmist did not ask God to curse Babylon; rather, he himself did this directly. His cursing was also according to the principle of good and evil.

What should we do today concerning those who oppose the Lord's recovery? We should not curse them or ask God to punish them, for in the New Testament dispensation we are not permitted to do such things. The New Testament tells us that instead of cursing others, we should bless them (Rom. 12:14). We are also charged to pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). Our God is righteous, and He will vindicate Himself, His recovery, and His truths. The psalmists, however, were in the dispensation of the law, and their way of dealing with others was according to the principle of good and evil.

IV. THANKING JEHOVAH IN THE WORSHIP OF HIS HOLY TEMPLE

The subject of Psalm 138 is the thanking of Jehovah in the worship of His holy temple.

A. For His Lovingkindness and Truth in Magnifying His Word of Promise above All in His Great Glory

In verse 1 the psalmist said, "I will give You thanks with all my heart; / Before the gods I will sing psalms to You." The psalmist then thanked Jehovah for His lovingkindness and truth in magnifying His word of promise above all in His great glory (vv. 2-5).

B. For His Regarding the Lowly, Preserving Him Alive in Trouble, and Saving Him from His Enemies

In verse 6 the psalmist declared that though Jehovah is high, He regards the lowly. He was assured that in the midst of trouble Jehovah would preserve him and that He would save him from his enemies (v. 7).

Seemingly this psalm does not contain anything significant, but it reveals something precious concerning the psalmist's intimacy with God. In order to write this short psalm, the psalmist had to be a person who was soaked with God and who was in the divine presence. Only in this way could he be qualified to write such an intimate psalm to the One whom He loved.

V. ASKING JEHOVAH FOR HIS SEARCHING AND TRYING

The subject of Psalm 139 is the psalmist's asking Jehovah for His searching and trying.

A. God Being Omniscient

Verses 1 through 6 speak of God's omniscience. For example, the psalmist said that Jehovah understood his thoughts from afar and was acquainted with all his ways. Jehovah knows everything.

B. God Being Omnipresent

In verses 7 through 12 the psalmist continued with a word regarding God's omnipresence. God not only knows everything—He is also everywhere.

C. Appreciating Being Created by God

Verses 13 through 18 indicate that the psalmist appreciated being created by God. After speaking about God's creation, the psalmist declared, "How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! / How great is the sum of them! / If I should count them, they would be more than the sand. / When I awake, I am still with You" (vv. 17-18).

D. Hating and Loathing the Wickedness of the Wicked according to the Principle of Good and Evil

Verses 19 through 22 describe the psalmist's hating and loathing the wickedness of the wicked according to the principle of good and evil.

E. Seeking to Be Led by God on the Eternal Way

Finally, in verses 23 and 24 the psalmist asked God to search him and try him and then to lead him on the eternal way. He could write such an intimate word because he was close to God and intimate with Him.

I believe that the purpose of the arrangers in clustering these psalms together was to show that they were written by persons who were very intimate with God. When I read these psalms, I am comforted and I receive help in the matter of godliness. Like the writers of these psalms, I aspire to be one who is close to God, who is intimate with God, and who lives and walks not only in God's presence but even in God Himself.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE FORTY-FOUR

FINAL PRAYERS OF DAVID TO JEHOVAH

Scripture Reading: Psa. 140—145

Before we begin to consider Psalms 140 through 145, I would like to say a word about hymn #960 in our hymnal. As we sing this hymn, our heart is touched and we feel that the Lord is close to us and that we are close to Him. We have the sense not mainly of the Lord's coming or of His being the King but of His nearness and dearness. We also have the feeling that the writer of this hymn was very intimate with the Lord. For instance, the third stanza says, "My heart is always with Himself, / My eyes are heavenward, / My lips would utter nothing else / Than meeting with my Lord. / The coming of the Lord draws nigh, / His coming is for me; / His promise ever standeth firm / And soon fulfilled I'll see." The writer addresses the Lord as "my King," an expression that indicates dearness and nearness. The more we sing or read this hymn, the greater is our sense of how dear and near the Lord is to us and we to Him.

This word about *Hymns*, #960 may help us to appreciate Psalms 140 through 145. These six psalms are not great or important, and they do not have any particular taste. Although these psalms are common, they nevertheless show us one striking thing—that David, the writer, was very close to God. Thus, the sense of nearness to the Lord in these psalms is very similar to the sense in *Hymns*, #960.

Concerning the arrangement of the one hundred fifty psalms, we have seen that Psalms 1 through 119 are on the law and that Psalms 120 through 134 are Songs of Ascents. The last sixteen psalms, Psalms 135 through 150, are in three clusters: Psalms 135 through 139, Psalms 140 through 145,

and Psalms 146 through 150. Each of these sixteen psalms is plain, altogether lacking in a particular taste or flavor.

We have also seen that the Psalms are the expression of the complex sentiments of the psalmists. Because the psalmists were close to the Lord, often while they were writing their sentiments, a revelation regarding Christ would break forth. We see such a revelation in Psalm 2:7: "You are My Son; / Today I have begotten You." We may compare the breaking forth of the revelations of Christ in the Psalms to Christ's sudden, unexpected transfiguration on the mountain (Matt. 17:1-2) and to His surprising ascension (Acts 1:9-11). Although revelations concerning Christ burst out in many different psalms, no such bursting out takes place in the last sixteen psalms.

Psalms 140 through 145, written by David, are all prayers. Therefore, I have entitled this message "Final Prayers of David to Jehovah." Let us now look into the content of these prayers. These psalms do not contain great or important things, but, as we will see, they are full of intimacy.

I. ASKING FOR JEHOVAH'S DELIVERANCE AND PRESERVATION

In his final prayers David asked Jehovah for His deliverance and preservation (140:1-5; 141:9; 143:6, 9, 11; 144:7, 11). Quite often David suffered hardship and distress and needed God's saving and protection. Hence, he prayed that Jehovah would deliver him and preserve him. To be preserved by God is to be covered by Him.

II. WITH THE FOLLOWING PRECIOUS POINTS:

These prayers of David contain a number of precious points, which we will now briefly consider.

A. Saying That Jehovah Is His God and the Strength of His Salvation

In 140:6 and 7 David said to Jehovah, "You are my God; /.... O Jehovah Lord, strength of my salvation." This word is simple, but the taste is sweet.

B. Asking That His Prayer Be Set before Jehovah as Incense

In 141:2 David prayed, "Let my prayer be set before You as incense, / The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering." This word has a sense not only of sweetness but also of nearness.

C. Praying That Jehovah Would Set a Watch before His Mouth

"Set a watch, O Jehovah, before my mouth; / Keep the door of my lips" (141:3). This prayer indicates that David could not of himself limit his talking and needed God to help him by guarding his lips. This prayer is another indication that David was close to the Lord. I believe that God answered David's prayer.

Ever since my youth I have appreciated the word in 141:3. Often when we come to the Lord we are too quick in our speaking. Can you stay with the Lord for five minutes without speaking? You may find it difficult to be quiet when you are with the Lord. We make mistakes in our prayer because we are too fast in our talking. Therefore, like David, we need God to set a watch before our mouth and to keep the door of our lips.

D. His Prayer Being against Evil Deeds

In 141:5b David said, "Still my prayer is against their evil deeds." This indicates that David's enemies were doing evil things but that David's prayer was against these evil things. Here David seemed to be saying, "In spite of the evil things that come to me, I am still praying. I do not do anything except pray against these evil deeds." Our situation, however, is often quite different. When bad things happen to us, we may forget to pray. For instance, when a brother and his wife are exchanging words, he may forget to pray. How much better it would be if the brother, instead of arguing with his wife, would pray against that thing. We need to learn of David to pray against evil deeds.

E. Jehovah Knowing His Path When His Spirit Fainted within Him

In 142:3a David had a very particular utterance. He said, "When my spirit fainted within me, / You knew my path." When David was troubled and his spirit fainted, he did not know what to do or what path to take. At such a time he realized that Jehovah knew his path.

F. Saying That Jehovah Is His Refuge

In his prayer in 142:5 David said that Jehovah was his refuge, his portion in the land of the living. Here David spoke a very good word.

G. Saying That No One Alive Is Righteous in God's Sight

"No one alive is righteous in Your sight" (143:2b). When David prayed in this way, he was including himself among those who were not righteous in the sight of God.

H. Saying That He Spread Out His Hands to Jehovah and That His Soul Thirsts for Him like a Parched Land

"I spread out my hands to You; / My soul thirsts for You like a parched land" (143:6). Instead of arguing with others, we should spread out our hands to God and have a soul that thirsts for Him.

I. Asking Jehovah to Cause Him to Hear His Lovingkindness in the Morning

In 143:8 David went on to pray that Jehovah would cause him to hear His lovingkindness in the morning, for he trusted in Him. Then David prayed that Jehovah would make known to him the way on which he should walk, for to Him he lifted up his soul, his whole being, not only his hand.

J. Saying That He Hides Himself in Jehovah

David also told Jehovah that he hid himself in Him. Then David prayed, "Teach me to do Your will, / For You are my

God; / Let Your good Spirit lead me / In a plain country" (143:9b-10).

K. Blessing Jehovah

"Blessed be Jehovah my rock, /…My Lord of lovingkindness and my fortress, / My high tower and my Deliverer, / My shield and He in whom I take refuge" (144:1-2). Here we see that God was many things to David: a rock, a fortress, a high tower, a shield, and a refuge. A rock is something on which to stand; a fortress is for protection; a high tower is for being lifted up above the enemies; and a shield is for protecting the face and the breast. In addition, to David God was a Deliverer and the One in whom he took refuge.

L. Praying That Jehovah Would Bow His Heavens Down and Descend

"O Jehovah, bow Your heavens down and descend" (144:5a). Here, in an extraordinary utterance, David asked Jehovah to bring His heavens down to him and descend to him.

M. Declaring That the People Are Blessed Whose God Is Jehovah

"Blessed are the people whose God is Jehovah" (144:15b). Because Jehovah was David's God, David included himself among those who are blessed.

I believe that if you spend time on all these precious points in David's prayers, the taste of your prayers will be changed. Sometimes our prayers are intimate, but at other times they are cold and without intimacy. It is helpful, therefore, to consider the intimacy in David's final prayers to Jehovah.

III. ASKING FOR PROSPERITY IN MATERIAL THINGS

As an Old Testament saint, in 144:12-15a David prayed for prosperity in material things.

A. Praying That Their Sons Would Be like Plants

David prayed that their sons would be like plants grown up in their youth (v. 12a).

B. Praying That Their Daughters Would Be like Pillars

Next, David asked that their daughters would be like corner pillars hewn out in fashion for a palace (v. 12b).

C. Praying That Their Barns Would Be Full

David also prayed that their barns would be full, furnishing produce of all kinds (v. 13a).

D. Praying That Their Sheep Would Bring Forth Thousands

David continued by praying that their sheep would bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their fields (v. 13b).

E. Praying That Their Oxen Would Be Fully Laden

In verse 14a David asked Jehovah that their oxen would be fully laden to bear things from the field to the home.

F. Praying That There Would Be No Breaking In to Rob or Going Forth to Fight

In verse 14b David prayed that there would be no breaking in to rob or going forth to fight or outcry in their streets.

G. Saying That Blessed Are the People Who Are So

Finally, David declared that blessed are the people who are so (v. 15a). I believe that, if not always then at least sometimes, such a prayer was answered. There were times when their sons were like plants growing up, that their daughters were like hewn corner pillars, that their barns were full, that their sheep brought forth thousands, that their oxen were fully laden, and that there was no breaking in to rob or going forth to fight or any outcry in their streets.

IV. BASED UPON THE PRINCIPLE OF GOOD AND EVIL

Four of these six psalms are full of the principle of good and evil (140:9b-13; 141:10; 143:12; 145:20). For example, in 143:12 David said, "In Your lovingkindness cut off my enemies / And destroy all those who oppress my soul, / For I

am Your servant." Such a word is according to the principle of the knowledge of good and evil.

V. ISSUING IN EXTOLLING AND PRAISING GOD

Psalms 140 through 144 issue in the extolling and praising of God (Psa. 145).

A. For His Unsearchable Greatness in His Goodness

David begins by saying, "I will extol You, O my God and King; / And I will bless Your name forever and ever. / Every day I will bless You, / And I will praise Your name forever and ever" (vv. 1-2). Then David extols and praises God for His unsearchable greatness in His goodness (vv. 3-7).

B. For His Grace and Compassion

"Jehovah is gracious and compassionate, / Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. / Jehovah is good to all, / And His compassions are upon all His works" (vv. 8-9). Here David extols and praises God for His grace and compassion.

C. For the Glory of His Kingdom

In verses 10 through 13 David goes on to extol and praise God for the glory of His kingdom. In verse 12 he speaks of the "glorious splendor" of God's kingdom, and in verse 13 he declares, "Your kingdom is an eternal kingdom, / And Your dominion is throughout all generations."

D. For His Rich Supply to the Needy Ones, His Nearness to All Who Call upon Him, and His Preservation of All Who Love Him

In verses 14 through 20 David extols and praises God for His rich supply to the needy ones, His nearness to all who call upon Him, and His preservation of all who love Him. Jehovah upholds all who are falling, raises up all who are bowed down, gives everyone who waits for Him food in due season, and satisfies the desire of every living thing (vv. 14-16). He is near to all who call upon Him. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him and will hear their

cry and save them (vv. 18-19). He also preserves all who love Him (v. 20a).

VI. HIS CONCLUDING WORD

Psalm 145:21 is David's concluding word. He concludes by saying, "My mouth will speak the praise of Jehovah, / And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever."

We all need to learn from these six psalms to have nearness and dearness in our contact with the Lord. We all need to have a heart that loves the Lord and treasures Him. If we do not have such a heart toward the Lord, then all the higher and deeper things that I have been ministering since 1962 concerning Christ, life, the Spirit, the church as the Body of Christ, and God's eternal economy with the divine dispensing will not mean anything to us. In order for these things to be meaningful to us, we need to love and treasure the Lord to the uttermost.

Speaking to certain people regarding these deeper and higher things may be compared to playing a piano to a cow: there is no interest or response. Many believers today have no interest in God's economy but instead care only for their concept of living a godly life and going to heaven to be with their loved ones. When they hear the truth concerning God's economy, they have no interest in it or response to it.

What about our situation today? We may hear so many precious truths, but we may not have a heart that loves and treasures the Lord. We need to be like John Nelson Darby who, while alone one night in a hotel at the age of eighty-four, could say, "Lord Jesus, I still love You." I believe that whoever loves the Lord and treasures Him will also treasure the truths that have been released concerning Christ, life, the Spirit, the church, the divine economy, and the divine dispensing.

LIFE-STUDY OF THE PSALMS

MESSAGE FORTY-FIVE

THE CONSUMMATE PRAISE

Scripture Reading: Psa. 146—150

In this message we will cover the last five psalms, Psalms 146 through 150. Because each of these psalms begins and ends with the word "Hallelujah," these five psalms are called Hallelujah psalms. The Septuagint says that Psalms 146 to 149 were written by Haggai and Zechariah after their return from captivity. The return of God's people from captivity was a great release and restoration.

Some expositors say that the five books of the Psalms correspond to the five books of the law written by Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Other expositors say that the Psalms are an abstract of the entire Bible. Certain expositors exalt Psalms 146 through 150. However, these psalms reveal very little concerning God's economy and dispensing, for when they were written the "spiritual civilization" was still quite primitive. Since the book of Psalms was written, the divine revelation in the Scriptures has progressed very much. For this reason, Psalms 146 through 150 cannot compare with the book of Ephesians.

I. THIS CONSUMMATE PRAISING CORRESPONDING WITH THAT AT THE END OF REVELATION

I have entitled this message on Psalms 146 through 150 "The Consummate Praise." This consummate praise corresponds with that at the end of Revelation. Revelation 19:1 says, "Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power are of our God." Here God is praised for His salvation, glory, and power. Verse 6 says, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns."

II. PRAISING JEHOVAH FOR HIS REIGNING FROM ZION

Psalm 146 is on praising Jehovah for His reigning from Zion.

A. He Being the Help of His Saints

Verses 3 through 5 are a praise to Jehovah for His being the help of His saints. In verses 3 and 4 we have the background of the psalm. Verse 3 says, "Do not trust in princes, / In a son of man, with whom there is no salvation." Haggai and Zechariah, who were born in captivity, saw the kings of Babylon and Persia, and this was why they said that we should not trust in princes. Verse 4, referring to a son of man, says, "His breath goes forth; he returns to the earth; / On that day his plans perish." The plans of the Babylonian and Persian kings perished. Verse 5 continues, "Blessed is the man whose help is the God of Jacob, / Whose hope is in Jehovah his God." The writer knew that the returned captives were the blessed ones.

B. He Having Created Heaven, Earth, and All Things

Verse 6 says that Jehovah made heaven, earth, and the sea and all things in them and that He keeps faith forever.

C. He Taking Care of the Needy Ones

Verses 7 and 8 tell us that Jehovah executes judgment for the oppressed, gives food to the famished, frees the prisoners, opens the eyes of the blind, raises up those who are bowed down, and loves the righteous. According to verse 9, He also preserves the sojourners and upholds the orphan and the widow, but He subverts the way of the wicked.

D. He Reigning Forever and Ever

Verse 10 concludes with the declaration that Jehovah will reign forever and ever.

Psalm 146 is a good psalm. However, the writer still held to the principle of good and evil and wrote according to the knowledge of good and evil. Here we do not see anything concerning Christ, the Spirit, life, and the church. We need to

see that today Christ is the Spirit in our spirit and that the grace of Christ also is in our spirit.

III. PRAISING JEHOVAH FOR THE REBUILDING OF JERUSALEM

Psalm 147 is on praising Jehovah for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Verse 2a says, "Jehovah builds up Jerusalem."

A. He Gathering the Outcasts of Israel

Jehovah gathers the outcasts of Israel. This gathering of the outcasts is the release of the captives to bring them back to Jerusalem for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Jehovah also heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He restores the afflicted and brings the wicked, the Babylonians and Persians as the captors of the outcasts, down to the ground (vv. 2b-6).

B. He Providing Food for the Beast and the Birds and Taking Pleasure in Those Who Fear Him and Hope in His Lovingkindness

Jehovah provides food for the beast and the birds (v. 9). He takes no delight in the strength of horses, nor pleasure in the legs of man, but He "takes pleasure in those who fear Him, / In those who hope in His lovingkindness" (vv. 10-11).

C. He Having Restored Jerusalem

Jehovah has restored Jerusalem, has strengthened its bars, and has blessed its people with peace and rich provision (vv. 12-18).

D. He Declaring His Word to Jacob, His Statutes and Ordinances to Israel

"He declares His word to Jacob, / His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. / He has not dealt so with any other nation; / And as for His ordinances, they have not known them" (vv. 19-20). Haggai and Zechariah could compare themselves with the Gentiles, boasting that, unlike them, the Gentiles did not have God's ordinances. Today we, the believers in Christ, do not have the statutes and ordinances

but we do have the life-giving Spirit and the divine dispensing. What Haggai and Zechariah had cannot compare to what we have in the New Testament.

IV. PRAISING JEHOVAH FOR HIS EXALTED NAME AND FOR HIS TRANSCENDING GLORY

Psalm 148 is on praising Jehovah for His exalted name and for His transcending majesty.

A. All the Heavenly Things and Persons to Praise Him from the Heavens

In verses 1 through 6 all the heavenly things and persons are charged to praise Jehovah from the heavens. Concerning this, verse 5 says, "Let them praise the name of Jehovah; / For He commanded, and they were created."

B. All the Earthly Things and Persons to Praise Him from the Earth

Verses 7 through 13 continue by saying that all the earthly things and persons are to praise Jehovah from the earth. Concerning this verse 13 says, "Let them praise the name of Jehovah, / For His name alone is exalted; / His glory is above the earth and the heavens."

C. All His People to Praise Him

According to verse 14, all His people, His saints, the children of Israel, a people near to Him, are to praise Him.

V. PRAISING JEHOVAH FOR HIS PLEASURE IN HIS PEOPLE, ISRAEL, AND HIS ADORNMENT OF THE LOWLY WITH SALVATION

Psalm 149 is on praising Jehovah for His pleasure in His people, Israel, and His adornment of the lowly with salvation.

A. With a New Song in the Congregation of His Saints

Verse 1 speaks of singing a new song to Jehovah and His praise in the congregation of His saints.

B. Israel Rejoicing in His Maker, the Children of Zion Being Glad in Their King

Verse 2 says, "Let Israel rejoice in his Maker; / Let the children of Zion be glad in their King." Verse 3 speaks of praising His name with dancing and of singing psalms to Him with the tambourine and the lyre. Jehovah takes pleasure in His people and adorns the lowly with salvation (v. 4). Thus, verses 5 and 6 say that the faithful ones should exult in glory and give a ringing shout upon their beds, with the high praises of God in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand.

C. Executing Vengeance on the Nations and Punishment among the Peoples

Verses 7 through 9a say that the saints should execute vengeance on the nations and punishment among the peoples, bind the kings of the peoples with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron, and execute upon them the judgment written. This honor is for all His faithful ones (v. 9b).

VI. PRAISING JEHOVAH GOD

Psalm 150 is a psalm on praising Jehovah God.

A. In:

Verse 1 is a charge to praise God in His sanctuary and in the firmament of His power.

B. For:

Verse 2 speaks of praising God for His mighty acts and according to His vast greatness.

C. With:

Verses 3 through 5 tell us to praise God with the blast of the trumpet, the harp and lyre, the tambourine and dancing, the stringed instrument and the pipe, the loud cymbals, and the loud clanging cymbals. Today our spirit is a much better "instrument" than any of the instruments mentioned in these verses. If we exercise our spirit, we will make good "music."

D. By Everything That Has Breath

Finally, verse 6 says that everything that has breath should praise Jehovah.

VII. THE SPIRIT, THE REALITY, THE CHARACTERISTIC, OF THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Revelation 19:10 says that the spirit of the prophecy of the book of Revelation is the testimony of Jesus. Based upon this principle we can say that the spirit, the reality, the characteristic, of the divine revelation in the book of Psalms is Christ (Luke 24:44) as the centrality and universality of the eternal economy of God. For this, He is firstly the embodiment of the Triune God, then the house, the habitation, of God (signified by the temple), the kingdom of God (signified by the city of Jerusalem), and the Ruler of the entire earth from the house of God and in the kingdom of God. Thus, He is all in all in the entire universe. Such a divine revelation is the same as what is revealed in the entire Holy Scriptures. The only particular point of the divine revelation in the book of Psalms is that such a high revelation, even the highest peak of the divine revelation, is prophesied in the expressions of the sentiments of the ancient godly saints. So it is mixed with their comfort in sufferings and the cultivation of godliness, yet the center and the reality, the spirit, of this highest revelation is not the comfort in sufferings nor the cultivation of godliness. It is the Christ of God, who is all in all according to God's desire and for God's good pleasure.

The consummation of this highest divine revelation is the city of New Jerusalem as a sign of the habitation, the tabernacle, of God (Rev. 21:1-3), through which the Triune God is manifested and expressed in the all-inclusive Christ.

God desires to have an organic habitation on earth, and this habitation is the aggregate of the living saints gained by God through the terminating death and germinating resurrection of the all-inclusive Christ. They will be the eternal manifestation and expression of the processed and consummated Triune God, and He will be everything to them

in His all-inclusive Christ. The Triune God will reign on the new earth through such an organism in the new universe. This is the spirit, the extract, of the book of Psalms.