

## THE UNIQUE WORK IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

(Thursday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

### **The Pattern of the Lord Jesus— the Work of Christ in His Human Living and Earthly Ministry**

Scripture Reading: John 1:18; 4:34; 5:19, 30; 6:57; 7:18; 14:9-11; 17:4

- I. The work of Christ in His human living is a pattern for all who aspire to participate in the unique work in the Lord's recovery—Phil. 2:7-8:**
  - A. The human living of the Lord Jesus was His work—John 6:57a:
    1. With Christ in His human living, there was no difference between life and work; His life was His work, and His work was His life—Mark 1:14-45:
      - a. The Lord Jesus lived His work; He lived His ministry.
      - b. With Him there was only one thing—His life, which was His work, His ministry—Luke 4:42-43.
      - c. The Lord Jesus worked everywhere and all the time because His work was His life, His life was His move, and His move was His work.
    2. Just as Christ's life was His work, so our living as Christians should be our working; we need a living that matches our ministry for the Lord, a living that is the ground and support of our service for Him—John 6:57b; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 6:3-11.
  - B. In His human living Christ was found in fashion as a man, even in the form of a slave—Phil. 2:7-8:
    1. The Lord's work in His human living to build up the fashion of a man and to take the form of a slave was the foundation and background of His ministry—Luke 4:14-19.
    2. As those who want to serve the Lord, we need to have a work not by doing but by living, building up a work that will be the solid ground and strong background for our coming service to the Lord—Acts 16:1-3a; 2 Tim. 4:5, 11b; Col. 4:17.
  - C. In His human living the Lord Jesus carried out the work of declaring God—John 1:18:
    1. His human living declared God; thus, what others saw in the human living of the Lord Jesus was the declaration of God in Him—14:9-11.
    2. If we want to serve the Lord today, in our daily living there should be a work that declares God—Phil. 1:20-21a.
  - D. The Lord's work in His human living included His expressing the Father; Christ did not express Himself—the Father was expressed through Him in His human living—John 14:9; 7:17-18; 17:4a.
  - E. In His human living the Lord Jesus cared for the things of the Father; in His humanity Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, cared for the things of the Father, for God's interests—Luke 2:43-49.

## **II. In His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus did the work that the Father had given Him to do—John 17:4:**

- A. In His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus preached the gospel (Mark 1:14-15, 38; Luke 4:18a); served people (Matt. 20:28a); sought and saved the lost, the sinners (Luke 19:1-10); preached the kingdom (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15a); sowed the seed of the kingdom (Matt. 13:3; Mark 4:3, 26-29); and taught the truths (Matt. 7:28-29; John 8:40, 45-46).
- B. In His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus was one with the Father and had no work, no will, no word, no glory, and no ambition for Himself—5:43; 10:25; 3:34a; 14:24; 7:16-18; 12:47-50:
  - 1. Christ was one with the Father, living a life that showed that He and the Father were one; His looking up to the Father in heaven indicated that as the Son on earth sent by the Father in heaven, He was one with the Father, trusting in the Father—10:30; 17:22; Matt. 14:19.
  - 2. The Lord Jesus lived the Father—John 6:57a:
    - a. Christ lived on earth not merely by the Father or through the Father but because of the Father; His living had a cause, and that cause was the Father—v. 57a.
    - b. Today Christ should be the cause of our daily living; we should live not only by Him and through Him but also because of Him—v. 57b.
  - 3. The Lord Jesus did not do anything from Himself but always denied the self—5:19; Matt. 16:24.
- C. In His earthly ministry Christ worked with the Father—John 5:17:
  - 1. The Lord Jesus never did any work without the Father but always with the Father; this required the absolute denial of the self—Matt. 16:24.
  - 2. When Christ worked with the Father, He worked with the Father who was with Him and in Him; while Christ the Son was working on earth, the Father was living in Him and working with Him—John 14:9-11.
- D. The Lord Jesus worked in the name of the Father—10:25:
  - 1. Having come in the Father's name, He never did anything in His own name; He did everything in the Father's name—5:43.
  - 2. For the Lord Jesus to work in the name of the Father meant that He worked as the Father; He was working with the Father as one—10:30.
- E. In His work the Lord Jesus did not seek His own will but the will of the One who had sent Him—5:30:
  - 1. He denied Himself, and He rejected His idea, intention, and purpose.
  - 2. He never sought anything of Himself or for Himself—He only sought the will of the Father, who had sent Him—6:38.
  - 3. The Lord's food was to do the will of the Father and to finish His work—4:34.
  - 4. We should not have our own purpose; instead, we should have only God's will—Rom. 12:2.
- F. In His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus never spoke His own word; what He spoke was the Father's speaking—John 7:16, 18; 12:49-50; 14:10:
  - 1. Instead of speaking His own words, He spoke God—1:18.

2. When He spoke God's word, God was expressed through His speaking; God came forth from Him through His words—7:17-18, 46.
  3. The Lord Jesus lived a life of speaking God, a life of expressing God for His glory—v. 18.
- G. The Lord Jesus could say, "I do not seek My glory"—8:50:
1. With Him there was no ground for the self—Matt. 16:24.
  2. He did not seek His own glory but the glory of the Father who sent Him—John 7:18.
- H. If we would participate in the unique work in the Lord's recovery today, our self must be denied, our purpose must be rejected, and our ambition must be given up; furthermore, we must know only to work with the Lord by allowing Christ to live in us, to work in us, and to make us the duplication of Himself for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose—12:24-26; Rom. 8:2, 29; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:9; 3:11.

### **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

#### **CHRIST'S WORK IN HIS HUMAN LIVING AND EARTHLY MINISTRY**

Through His incarnation Christ became a man living on earth. The time required for Christ to become a man was much longer than that required for Him to create the universe, and the time of His work in His human living was far greater than the time of His work in becoming a man, thirty years compared to nine months. For thirty years the Lord Jesus was working in His human living. We may wonder why He, the Creator, the eternal God, spent such a long period of time simply living on earth. According to the record of the New Testament, we do not see much of what the Lord did during those years. It may seem to us that He only lived and that He did not do any work at all. However, the human living of the Lord Jesus was His work.

With Christ in His human living, there was no difference between life and work. His life was His work, and His work was His life. We may say that the Lord Jesus lived His work; He lived His ministry. With Him there was just one thing—His life, which was His work, His ministry. Whatever He did, whatever He spoke, and wherever He went were all a part of His life and work. He was continually living and working. For this reason, we cannot say how much the Lord Jesus worked. He worked everywhere and all the time because His work was His life, His life was His move, and His move was His work. With the Lord Jesus every aspect of His life was the same. With Him there was no distinction between life and work.

Just as Christ's life was His work, so our living as Christians should be our working. This means that we need a living that matches our ministry for the Lord, a living that is the ground and support of our service for Him. Because we need such a living, it takes many years before one who desires to serve the Lord can be truly useful to Him in His ministry.

#### **Being Found in Fashion as a Man, Even in the Form of a Slave**

In His human living Christ was found in fashion as a man, even in the form of a slave. Paul says that He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross" (Phil. 2:7-8). The likeness of men denotes the outward appearance of His humanity. He appeared outwardly to men as a man, but inwardly He had the reality of deity. Furthermore, when Christ became in the likeness of men, entering into the condition of humanity, He was found in fashion as a man by men. The word "fashion"

signifies the outward guise, the semblance. What Christ looked like in His humanity was found by men to be in fashion as a man.

Philippians 2:7 says that Christ even took the form of a slave. In His incarnation the Lord Jesus did not alter His divine nature but only His outward expression of the form of God (Phil. 2:6) to that of a slave. This was not a change of essence but of state.

Although Christ was God in the form of God, He was seen by others as being in fashion as a man. Before His incarnation He was, of course, not in fashion as a man. He was only in the form of God. But after He became a man it was necessary for Him to live and work in such a way as to build up the fashion of man in order to be found by others in fashion as a man. It took the Lord Jesus thirty years to build up such a fashion of man in His human living. Therefore, this should be considered part of His work in His human living.

While the Lord Jesus was living in His humanity on earth, He was working to build up the fashion of man. The Lord did not simply behave like a man for a short period of time. He became a man and then lived a human life for thirty years, living in the poor and lowly home of a carpenter. As He lived there, He built up the fashion of man and was found in fashion as a man. The Lord, therefore, carried out the great work of building up a human fashion. This is what He was doing during the first thirty years of His human life.

When Paul wrote about Christ's human living in Philippians 2, he was very careful. He no doubt considered how to compose this part of the Epistle to the Philippians. Paul surely selected the right words, telling us that Christ was found in fashion as a man and that He took the form of a slave. Christ did not work to build up the fashion of a highly exalted man or of a man with a high rank. On the contrary, He worked to build up the fashion of a man who was a slave. It was not an easy thing that the Lord Jesus built up a fashion of a man in such a low state. This was a very fine work, and it took Him thirty years to accomplish it in full. After He finished this work, He came forth to begin His ministry. His ministry was based upon His work of building up in Himself the fashion of a man.

It is crucial for us to see that Christ's work in His human living to build up the fashion of a man and to take on the form of a slave was the foundation and background of His ministry. Those who aspire to serve the Lord need to have a work not by doing but by living. This is a work carried out by one's daily living. Those who wish to serve the Lord need to live to build up a work that will be the solid ground and strong background for their coming service to the Lord.

### **Declaring God**

Another aspect of Christ's work in His human living was to declare God. "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18). In His human living Christ declared God. According to John 1:1-18, Christ declared God by the Word (vv. 1, 14), life (v. 4), light (vv. 4-5), grace (vv. 14, 16, 17), and reality (vv. 14, 17). The Word is God expressed, life is God imparted, light is God shining, grace is God enjoyed, and reality is God realized. God is declared in the Son through these five things. Although no one has ever seen God, Christ in His human living has declared God in the way of being the Word, life, light, grace, and reality. The more we receive the Word, have the divine life, and let the light of life shine within us, and the more we enjoy God as grace and apprehend Him as reality, the more He is declared to us. In His human living Christ carried out the work of declaring God in this way. During the thirty years of His living and working as a carpenter, Christ declared God. While He was living to build up the fashion of a man, He declared God to His mother, brothers, and sisters. They must have realized that there was something excellent and extraordinary with Him, something higher than the expression only

of humanity. What they saw in the human living of the Lord Jesus was the declaration of God in Him. His human living declared God.

If you want to serve the Lord, you should not begin by trying to do a great work for the Lord. This is contrary to the divine principle. You should simply live a life that declares God. Then others will see in you something excellent, something divine. This indicates that in your daily living there is a work that declares God.

As we read the New Testament, we may wonder what the Lord Jesus was doing day after day for thirty years. In a sense, He was not doing anything. He was just living, and that living was His unique work to build up a fashion of a genuine man. Because the Lord Jesus was built up in this way, when He came out to minister, He did not need to pretend or to perform. There was no need for Him to deliberately try to behave like a God-man, a man with God in Him, for He was a genuine man and was found in fashion as a man. As a real man, He spontaneously declared God. Before the three and a half years of His ministry, He accomplished a preparatory work for thirty years. Therefore, with the Lord Jesus, thirty years were for the work of preparation. Afterward, the Lord Jesus was used by God in His ministry for only three and a half years.

### **Expressing the Father**

Christ's work in His human living also includes His expressing the Father (John 14:9). According to the Gospel of John, Christ the Son came in the Father's name (5:43), worked in the Father's name (10:25), did the Father's will (6:38), spoke the Father's word (3:34a; 14:24; 7:16-17; 12:47-50), and sought the Father's glory (7:18). He was one with the Father (10:30). He had no work, no will, no word, no glory, and no ambition for Himself. As such a one, Christ expressed only the Father. He did not express Himself. He was the Son, yet He expressed the Father.

Because the Son expresses not Himself but the Father, the Son's expression is the Father's expression. Therefore, when we see the Son, we see the Father. This is proved by the exchange between the Lord Jesus and Philip in John 14. In verse 7 the Lord pointed out to the disciples that if they had known Him, they would have known His Father also. Then He said, "Henceforth you know Him and have seen Him." However, Philip replied, "Lord, show us the Father and it suffices us" (v. 8). To this the Lord Jesus answered, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father. How is it that you say, Show us the Father?" (v. 9). In the Son the Father is expressed and seen, for the Son is the expression of the Father. If we have seen the Son, we have seen the Father because the Father is embodied in the Son to be expressed through Him in His human living.

This was true of the Lord Jesus even at the age of twelve. When the Lord was twelve, He was a human child. But as we read the account in Luke 2, we see that in this child there was the divine element. God's attributes were expressed in Christ's human living. The Lord Jesus lived a genuine human life, yet in His human life we see the divine element and also certain divine factors. This life did not express man; it expressed God the Father.

### **Caring for the Things of the Father**

In His human living the Lord Jesus cared for the things of the Father. Luke 2:41-51 reveals that at the age of twelve He cared for God's interests. Verse 42 says, "When He became twelve years old, they went up according to the custom of the feast." At the age of twelve, a boy was called by the Jews "son of the law," and first incurred legal obligation (Alford). The number twelve also signifies eternal perfection in God's administration. Hence, "twelve years old" indicates that what the Lord Jesus did here was perfectly related to God's administration.

According to verses 43 through 48, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, and His parents did not know it. When they realized that He was not with them in the caravan, they returned to Jerusalem searching for Him. When they found Him, His mother said to Him, “Child, why did You treat us like this? Behold, Your father and I are greatly distressed seeking You” (v. 48). The Lord replied, “Why is it that you were seeking Me? Did you not know that I must be in the things of My Father?” (v. 49). This indicates that the boy Jesus was caring for the interests of God. The words “My Father” in verse 49 point to the deity of Jesus (John 5:18). In His humanity He was the son of His parents; in His deity He was the Son of God the Father. Here we see the Lord’s dual status, His status as the Son of God and the Son of Man. In His humanity Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, cared for the things of the Father, for God’s interests. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 683-688)

### **Living the Father**

In John 6:57 the Lord Jesus said that He lived because of the Father. Christ lived on earth not merely by the Father or through the Father but because of the Father. His living had a cause, and that cause was the Father. Hence, the Father was not simply an instrument through which or by which the Son lived; rather, the Father was the cause of the Son’s living on earth. Today Christ should be the cause of our daily living. We should live not only by Him and through Him but also because of Him. He should be the cause of our living. Otherwise, our living will be meaningless. Without the Father as His cause, the Son’s living on earth for thirty-three and a half years would have been vain. But His living was not vain, because the Son’s living had the Father as the cause.

### **Working with the Father**

In John 5 the Lord Jesus did the work of enlivening an impotent man. The religious Jews persecuted Him because He enlivened the impotent man on the Sabbath. He answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working” (5:17). In their religious concept they were resting and keeping their Sabbath. They did not know that there was no rest for the Father and the Son as long as the poor sinners were not saved. While the religious Jews were resting in keeping their Sabbath, the Father and the Son were working so that sinners might receive life and have rest.

Although God’s work in creation was finished (Gen. 2:1-3), in Christ’s earthly ministry the Father and the Son were still working for redemption and building (John 5:19-20). This work includes the Son’s life-giving, which is manifested in John 5. In this matter the Father and the Son are one. Whatever the Father wants to do in the matter of life-giving, the Son does accordingly.

The Lord Jesus never did any work without the Father. He always worked with the Father. This required the absolute denial of the self. Christ denied Himself in order to work with the Father.

As the Lord Jesus worked with the Father, He worked in the name of the Father (John 10:25). Having come in the Father’s name (John 5:43), He never did anything in His own name; He did everything in the Father’s name. For Him to work in the name of the Father means that He worked as the Father. The Lord Jesus and the Father were not working separately. On the contrary, the Lord was working with the Father as one.

When Christ worked with the Father, He worked not with the Father who was merely in heaven, but with the Father who was with Him and in Him. This truth concerning Christ’s working with the Father is contrary to the traditional teaching which says that when the Son was on earth, the Father was merely in the heavens. Economically, the Son was on earth

and the Father was in the heavens. Essentially, however, while the Son was working on earth, the Father was living in Him and working with Him. Essentially, the Father and the Son are one (John 10:30); They cannot be separated. Therefore, Christ worked with the Father in the way of being one with Him.

### **Speaking the Father's Word**

In His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus never spoke His own word. Whatever He spoke was the Father's speaking. On one occasion He said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me" (John 7:16). In not speaking from Himself the Lord did not seek His own glory but the glory of the One who sent Him (v. 18). Instead of speaking His own words, He spoke God. When He spoke God's word, God was expressed through His speaking. God came forth from Him through His words. He lived a life of speaking God, a life of expressing God for His glory.

In John 12:49 and 50 the Lord Jesus says, "I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who sent Me has Himself given Me commandment what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life. The things therefore that I speak, even as the Father has said to Me, so I speak." This clearly reveals that in His ministry the Lord spoke the Father's word. In particular, the commandment that the Father gave Him to speak was eternal life. Therefore, He came with living words, and whoever receives His words will have eternal life.

In John 14:10 the Lord Jesus goes on to say, "The words which I speak to you, I do not speak from Myself; but the Father who abides in Me, He does His works." Once again the Lord makes it clear that He did not speak His own word but the Father's word. While the Son was speaking in this way, the Father was working. The Son's speaking was the Father's working.

### **Doing the Father's Will**

A number of times the Lord Jesus declared strongly that He did not do His own will, but that everything He did was the Father's will. One day He said to His disciples, who had returned with food and were urging Him to eat: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). The Lord's food was to do the will of the Father. In John 4 this means that, in particular, His food was to save and satisfy sinners. The Lord Jesus had come to Samaria with a purpose—to find a sinful Samaritan woman and satisfy her. In doing this He did God's will, and doing God's will was His food and satisfaction.

In John 6:38 the Lord Jesus says that He came down from heaven not to do His own will but the will of the Father who sent Him. In John 5:30 He says that He did not seek His own will but the will of the Father who sent Him. These verses indicate clearly that in His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus did not carry out His own will but the Father's will. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 742-744)