

RETURNING TO THE ORTHODOXY OF THE CHURCH

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Nine

The New Jerusalem— the Consummation of the Central Vision of God’s Economy and of the High Peak of the Divine Revelation through the Overcomers, Who Return to the Orthodoxy of the Church

Scripture Reading: Acts 26:19; Col. 2:2; 3:4; Eph. 3:4; 4:16; Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 9-11

I. The central vision of God’s economy is the experience of Christ as life for the producing and building up of the church as the Body of Christ—Acts 26:19; Eph. 3:10; 1 Tim. 1:4; Col. 3:4; Eph. 1:22-23:

- A. We need to see a vision of the central matter in the Lord’s recovery today, the vision in Paul’s completing ministry—vv. 17-18a; Acts 26:19; Col. 1:25-26:
 - 1. The central vision of Paul’s completing ministry is God in us as our contents, Christ as the mystery of God, and the church as the mystery of Christ—Rom. 9:23-24; 2 Cor. 4:7; Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4.
 - 2. The center of the Lord’s recovery is Christ and the church: Christ as the embodiment of God—the mystery of God—and the church as the expression of Christ—the mystery of Christ—Col. 2:9; Eph. 3:19b; 1 Tim. 3:15-16.
- B. The governing vision of the Bible is the Triune God working Himself into His chosen and redeemed people in order to saturate their entire being with the Divine Trinity for the producing and building up of the church as the Body of Christ, consummating in the New Jerusalem—Eph. 4:4-6; Rev. 21:2, 9-10.

II. The high peak of the divine revelation is that God became man so that man may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead to produce and build up the organic Body of Christ for the fulfillment of God’s economy to close this age and bring Christ back to set up His kingdom—John 1:12-14; 1 John 3:1-2; Rom. 8:3; 12:4-5; Rev. 11:15:

- A. God’s economy is His intention to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity into His chosen and redeemed people to be their life and nature so that they may be the same as He is for His corporate expression—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:3-23.
- B. God’s economy is that God became man to make us God in life, nature, and expression so that we may have a God-man living and become the Body of Christ—Rom. 8:3; 1:3-4; 8:4, 14, 29; 12:4-5.
- C. God redeemed us for the purpose of making us God in life and nature so that He can have the Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem as God’s enlargement and expression for eternity—Eph. 1:7; 4:16; Rev. 21:2.
- D. It is only by God’s becoming man to make man God that the Body of Christ can be produced and built up; this is the high peak of the divine revelation given to us by God—Rom. 8:3; 1:3-4; 8:14, 16, 29; 12:4-5.

III. The New Jerusalem is the consummation of the central vision of God’s economy and of the high peak of the divine revelation—Rev. 21:2, 9-11:

- A. The New Jerusalem, the ultimate consummation of the Bible, involves God

becoming man and man becoming God in life and in nature but not in the God-head—v. 2; 3:12:

1. In Christ God has become man to make man God in His life and in His nature so that the redeeming God and the redeemed man can be mingled, constituted, together to be one entity—the New Jerusalem—21:3, 22.
 2. Eventually, the triune, eternal God becomes the New Jerusalem incorporated with all of us, and we also become the New Jerusalem through the process of God's organic salvation—Rom. 5:10; Rev. 3:12.
- B. The New Jerusalem is the corporate God-man—the enlargement, expansion, and expression of God—the corporate God—Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:10-12; Rev. 4:3; 21:10-11:
1. The New Jerusalem is a composition of divinity and humanity blended and mingled together as one entity; all the components have the same life, nature, and constitution and thus are a corporate person—vv. 2, 10-21.
 2. The New Jerusalem is the expansion and expression of the processed and consummated Triune God with His chosen, redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, built-up, conformed, and glorified people—vv. 10-11.
 3. The New Jerusalem is God's enlargement and expansion, God's expression in eternity, which is the corporate God—Gen. 1:1; John 1:1, 14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 22:17.
- C. The New Jerusalem is the real and consummate Shulammitte—a corporate Shulammitte, including all of God's chosen and redeemed people—S. S. 6:13; Rev. 21:2, 9-10; 22:17:
1. The wonderful Shulammitte, the duplication of Solomon, is the greatest and ultimate figure of the New Jerusalem as the counterpart of Christ—S. S. 6:13; Rev. 21:2, 9-10.
 2. As Solomon's counterpart, the Shulammitte became the same as Solomon in life, nature, and image, as Eve to Adam—Gen. 2:20-23:
 - a. This signifies that the lover of Christ becomes the same as He is in life, nature, and image to match Him for their marriage—2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29; Rev. 19:7; 21:2.
 - b. The many lovers of Christ eventually will become duplications of God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead; this is the fulfillment of God becoming man so that man may become God, which is the high peak of the divine revelation.
 3. The wife of Christ and Christ will be joined together to be the New Jerusalem for God's expression; this is the consummated Shulammitte—22:17.
- D. The New Jerusalem is the universal golden lampstand, the ultimate consummation of the lampstands in the Scriptures—1:12, 20; 21:18b, 23-24a; Exo. 25:31-37; 1 Kings 7:49; Zech. 4:2:
1. The churches as golden lampstands will be consummated in the New Jerusalem, the aggregate of all the lampstands—Rev. 1:20; 21:18b, 23.
 2. The New Jerusalem, a mountain of gold, is the universal golden lampstand holding the Lamb as the lamp shining out God as the light—vv. 18, 23; 22:1, 5.
 3. The New Jerusalem, the aggregate of all the lampstands, the totality of today's lampstands, is a consummate, universal golden lampstand to shine forth God's glory in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—21:24.

4. The golden lampstand signifies the Triune God embodied and expressed, and the more we experience the aspects of the Triune God depicted in the lampstand, the more we will be in reality the golden lampstand as the embodiment and expression of the Triune God and thus become the New Jerusalem as the universal golden lampstand—1:12, 20; 21:18.

IV. In His ministry in the stage of intensification, Christ as the sevenfold intensified Spirit produces the overcomers, who return to the orthodoxy of the church, overcome the degradation of the church, build up the Body of Christ, and consummate the New Jerusalem—1:4; 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21:

- A. Because of the degradation of the church, Christ as the life-giving Spirit has been intensified sevenfold to become the seven Spirits—the sevenfold intensified life-giving Spirit—to produce the overcomers—1:4; 4:5; 5:6; 3:13.
- B. In overcoming the degradation of the churches, the overcomers return to the orthodoxy of the church and overcome satanic Judaism, demonic Catholicism, and dead and Christless Protestantism—2:9-10, 24-28; 3:1-5, 20-21.
- C. The overcomers overcome anything that is against Christ or that replaces Christ—1 John 2:18, 22; Phil. 3:7-11.
- D. The overcomers are for the building up of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem—Eph. 4:12, 16; Rev. 2:7b; 3:12, 21:
 1. Without the overcomers the Body of Christ cannot be built up, and unless the Body of Christ is built up, Christ cannot come back for His bride—19:7-9.
 2. The building up of the Body of Christ is by the overcomers produced by Christ as the sevenfold intensified life-giving Spirit—1:4; 4:5; 5:6; 3:1, 12.
 3. The building up of the Body of Christ by the overcomers in this age is for the initial consummation of the New Jerusalem in the kingdom age and eventually for the full consummation of the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth—2:7; 3:12; 21:2.
- E. “I will write upon him [the overcomer] the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name”—3:12b:
 1. That the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the name of the Lord are written on the overcomer indicates that what God is, the nature of the New Jerusalem, and the person of the Lord have all been wrought into the overcomer.
 2. The mentioning of the New Jerusalem as a prize to the overcomer indicates that this promise will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom; the New Jerusalem in the millennium will be a prize only to the overcomers.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

**OVERCOMING OUR CONCEPTS AND HABITS
TO SEE AND PRACTICE THE CENTRAL VISION OF THE BIBLE**

We may wonder why most Christians do not see the central vision in Paul’s writings when they read the Bible. There are four things that prevent us from seeing the central vision. The

first three are our natural concepts, our religious concepts, and our traditional concepts. We are all under the influence of these three kinds of concepts. In order to accomplish anything, especially in the spiritual or political realm, we must deal with people's concepts. Our problem is our natural, religious, and traditional concepts, but these are hidden. We usually do not think that we are under the influence of our natural, religious, or traditional concepts, but we actually are greatly influenced by them. For this reason, when we read the Bible, there is a covering, or veil, which prevents us from seeing the central vision. The fourth thing that prevents us from seeing this vision is our habitual practices.

Because each of us has concepts and habitual practices, when we read the Bible, we take what we read for granted. We assume that we understand it, but we actually understand very little. The real truth and revelation are veiled by our concepts and habits.

To point out the shortcomings of traditional religious concepts may offend some and stir up opposition. However, this was the way the Lord took in His earthly ministry. He even called the religious Pharisees "hypocrites" and "offspring of vipers" (Matt. 23:13; 12:34). He spoke in this way so that His disciples could be rescued from traditional Judaism. If the Lord had not offended the traditional religionists, many more people would have welcomed and followed Him. However, He ultimately would have gained no one, because His ministry would have become part of Judaism. He first had to discredit the traditional religious concepts.

Because His disciples saw that what the Lord taught was absolutely different from traditional religion, when the day of Pentecost came, the one hundred twenty were absolutely separate from traditional Judaism. Nevertheless, some, such as James and Peter, were still not clear. The Lord eventually allowed Jerusalem to be destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70 because of the ongoing influence of Judaism on the church, which was a situation of mixture. Only a few years earlier, those with James in Jerusalem told Paul, "You observe, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews who have believed; and all are zealous for the law. And they have been informed concerning you that you are teaching all the Jews throughout the nations apostasy from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children, nor to walk according to the customs" (Acts 21:20-21). Then they convinced Paul to prove that he was not opposed to the Judaic law by taking a vow in the temple and paying the expenses of four others who were doing the same thing. Paul may have gone along with this according to the principle in 1 Corinthians 9:20—to become a Jew to the Jews in order to gain them. However, God would not tolerate this and allowed an uproar to rise up against Paul to prevent the completion of his vow. Soon thereafter God allowed the destruction of the temple and all of Jerusalem so that the church would be cleared up of the old Judaistic influence. By allowing Jerusalem to be destroyed, God also allowed the church in Jerusalem to be destroyed, and it has not been restored for nearly two thousand years.

Traditional concepts are terrible. Even we who are in the Lord's recovery must be alert to avoid falling back under the influence of traditional concepts. For an airplane to remain on the ground or fall out of the sky requires no effort, but it requires constant power to remain in the air. In the same way, it is easy to remain or fall back under the influence of traditional religious concepts, but to remain above them requires constant exercise.

All the truth that the Lord has recovered among us in recent years has been in the Bible all along. For centuries Christians have translated, studied, expounded, and interpreted all these verses. However, they did not see the truth because they were veiled by traditional concepts. Concerning the children of Israel, Paul says, "Their thoughts were hardened; for until the present day the same veil remains at the reading of the old covenant...Indeed unto this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart" (2 Cor. 3:14-15). They treasured the

Old Testament, but because a veil covered their heart, they saw nothing when they read it. The principle is the same with many Christians today.

Traditional Christian teaching deals with only a small portion of God's redemption. What they say is not wrong, but it is a small portion of God's full salvation. Furthermore, many groups use the title *Christ* but do not have Christ in reality. The denominations have replaced Christ with many other things for their members to enjoy. For example, many Christians today enjoy Christmas much more than they enjoy Christ. They spend no time to take care of Christ, but they find much time to take care of Christmas. This is only one example. Countless things replace Christ in Christianity today. Most Christians do not even talk about the enjoyment of Christ. They leave Him in the heavens while they enjoy many idolatrous things on earth.

The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations spend millions of dollars to gain members, but the real truth of the gospel does not reach these people. Today the Lord has given us the truth, but it seems that we cannot reach those in religion because they are behind a retaining wall. The Lord raised us up as His recovery to forsake religious tradition and follow His pure Word. What we teach and live is absolutely different from religion. As a result, religious ones attack, oppose, and spread false rumors concerning us in order to keep their members behind a retaining wall and to blockade us. The enemy has used this strategy not only in the United States in recent years but also from the beginning in China.

The devil also tries to subtly creep into the churches in the recovery and bring in damaging foreign things that are cleverly disguised and difficult to discern. These things may appear to be part of the Lord's recovery, but their inward element and nature are absolutely different. There is a real battle. The enemy, Satan, fights to keep the earth for himself. This is not a small thing. The Lord's only way to gain the earth is to recover and spread the truth. The truth is the only remedy, inoculation, and antibiotic. We need to be reminded of the situation and reminded of the truth. As long as the truth is being released, many problems will be solved. Even the leading brothers in the churches need to be reminded of the truth because everything can become habitual to us, and our habits are veils. When we do things out of habit, we lack revelation.

The truths need to be inscribed in our being in a way that cannot be erased. When Martin Luther saw justification by faith in the Word, he emphasized it to the extent that it could never be erased or lost again. Today among us the Lord has recovered the central revelation of Paul's completing ministry concerning Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ. This vision includes the Body of Christ, the new man, and our organic union with the Lord. We need to be deeply impressed with these truths.

In the early days of the Lord's recovery in China, few saints saw the central vision as Brother Watchman Nee did. There were hundreds of co-workers and hundreds of local churches. However, Brother Nee told me that he was unhappy with the situation because many followed his ministry yet did not see the vision that he saw. Now that the Lord's recovery has come to the United States, my greatest concern is whether many of the saints truly see the central vision. If they do not see it, our labor is in vain. Numbers mean nothing without the central vision. Although the Lord fed five thousand, after His ascension only one hundred twenty remained. If we are only giving good messages, the Lord cannot gain what He is seeking. The difference between the Lord's recovery and traditional Christianity is the central vision. If the saints do not see the central vision, we will become a repetition of traditional Christianity, and the Lord will be delayed in carrying out His recovery and accomplishing His purpose. This is serious.

This is why I do not care primarily for the spreading of the churches, the increase in numbers, or other apparent signs of blessing. Instead, my main interest is to release the word concerning the central vision and to care for the real situation in all the churches. Some saints must see the central vision in a solid way in order for the Lord to have a way. Otherwise, we are only a repetition and a part of traditional Christianity.

We all need to see the central vision in Paul's completing ministry. The leading brothers need to spend time to study Paul's fourteen Epistles and fellowship concerning the Lord's central vision. Paul's Epistles have never been as opened as they are today. The Lord has given us the principles that are the keys to fully open His Word. Just as a house is built according to a blueprint that places doors in certain locations to allow access into the house, the Bible was written in a regulated way according to certain divine principles. In order to unlock and rightly interpret and expound the Bible, we must know the correct principles. The Lord has given us these principles. The opening of the Lord's Word also depends on His mercy. When the Word is properly opened, a genuine believer will unmistakably recognize that it has been opened. Today the entire Bible is opened, and the seekers who receive the ministry that is according to the opened Word receive the benefit and the profit.

At this time the Lord is carrying out His ultimate recovery. There will be nothing left to be recovered. This is the highest peak of the Lord's recovery. The highest peak of the Bible is Paul's completing ministry. John's mending ministry strengthens and confirms Paul's completing ministry. These two ministries are like a single mountain with two peaks. Sooner or later, the Lord will carry out the highest peak of His recovery. If we fail Him, He will be forced to wait and gain another people who will find and treasure what we have spoken and published but failed to appreciate or experience. Although I am concerned for the present recovery, the leading brothers, and the result of my ministry, I am comforted by knowing that if this generation fails the Lord, all the truths are printed and will remain for another generation to pick up and carry out. As long as the truth is released, it will not return vainly. This principle is found in Isaiah 55:10-11: "Just as the rain comes down / And the snow from heaven, / And does not return there, / Until it waters the earth / And makes it bear and sprout forth, / That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; / So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; / It will not return to Me vainly, / But it will accomplish what I delight in, / And it will prosper in the matter to which I have sent it." Whether this truth accomplishes its purpose today or we fail and delay it, someday it will prevail to accomplish its goal.

What the Lord and the churches need today is for us to carry out the truth that the Lord has opened to us in His Word. Otherwise, we can only do an ordinary Christian work. Our goal should not be to exercise our human wisdom and politeness to avoid problems. If we do this, we will obscure the truth. Politeness never gains anyone. No friendship is built upon politeness. Real friendship is built upon frankness. If we avoid offending others at all cost, organized Christianity may welcome us, but we will gain no one for the Lord's recovery. Paul was persecuted because of his frankness. I believe that he was arrested and martyred in the first persecution under Nero because he would not "politely" hide himself. However, he gained much for the Lord's purpose.

Although the Plymouth Brethren were used by the Lord to recover certain truths, they became absolutely habitual. The way they meet and do things, such as preaching the gospel, is no longer a result of their inner revelation or zeal but because of their habitual practices. The same thing may happen with us. We should meet and function not merely out of habit but because our vision is an inner motivation that causes us to be fresh and burning in spirit. We need to have a new start, a new development of the inner life. If we become habitual, we

will be like the children of Israel, who wandered in the wilderness for many years. We should not take things for granted as we meet and function. In order to avoid becoming old and falling into habitual practices, we should exhort one another. Paul says in Hebrews 3:13, "Exhort one another each day, as long as it is called 'today.'" (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1982*, vol. 1, "The Ministry of the New Covenant," pp. 151-156)