

THE RECOVERY OF THE PRIESTHOOD FOR GOD'S BUILDING

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One

The Priesthood and the Kingship for God's Building

Scripture Reading: Zech. 6:11-15; Gen. 1:26; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Heb. 4:16; Rev. 22:1

- I. The visions in Zechariah of comfort, consolation, and encouragement are confirmed by the crowning of Joshua the high priest—typifying Christ in His priesthood—linked with Zerubbabel the governor of Judah—typifying Christ as the Shoot of David in His kingship—6:11-15:**
- A. Christ is the Shoot of Jehovah, referring to His divinity; *the Shoot of Jehovah* denotes that through His incarnation Christ is a new development of Jehovah God for the Triune God to branch Himself out in His divinity into humanity; this is for Jehovah God's increase and spread in the universe—Isa. 4:2; 7:14; Matt. 1:22-23.
 - B. Christ is also the Shoot of David (typified by Zerubbabel), referring to His humanity and royal faithfulness—Zech. 3:8; Jer. 23:5.
 - C. Christ, typified in Zechariah 6:11-13 by two persons, Joshua and Zerubbabel, is the unique One to hold the two offices of the priesthood and the kingship in God's administration for the building up of the church as the temple of God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12, 17; 2 Cor. 6:16).
 - D. "The counsel of peace will be between the two of them" (Zech. 6:13b); *between the two* means between the priesthood and the kingship (cf. 1:1; Ezra 5:1).
- II. The focus of Hebrews is the heavenly Christ, and the main point of the heavenly Christ is that He is both the High Priest and the King (the King of righteousness and the King of peace), as typified by Melchizedek—5:10; 7:1-3, 28; 8:1-2:**
- A. Christ is not only the King with power and authority but also the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek—2:17; 4:14; 5:6, 10; 6:20; 8:1; 9:11; Psa. 110:1-4:
 - 1. Christ's heavenly ministry in His ascension includes both His kingship and His priesthood for the building up of the church as the temple of Jehovah, the temple of God—Heb. 7:1-2; Zech. 6:13, 15; 1 Cor. 3:16-17.
 - 2. As the King, Christ has the scepter to rule over the earth and to manage our affairs, and as the High Priest, He is interceding for us and taking care of our case before God—Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25-26; 9:24; Acts 5:31; Rom. 8:34; Rev. 1:12-13.
 - B. As the kingly High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, Christ ministers God into us as our supply to fulfill God's eternal purpose—Heb. 7:1-2; 8:1-2; Gen. 14:18-20:
 - 1. In His earthly ministry Christ was a High Priest according to the order of Aaron for the putting away of sin—Heb. 9:14, 26.

2. Then, in His heavenly ministry Christ was designated a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:6, 10), not to offer sacrifices for sin but to minister to us the very God who was processed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, signified by the bread and the wine (Matt. 26:26-28), as our life supply to nourish, refresh, sustain, comfort, and strengthen us so that we may be saved to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25).
- C. Christ's kingly priesthood is for fighting against God's enemies to bring in righteousness and peace so that He may minister the processed Triune God into us as our daily supply and enjoyment—vv. 1-2; Gen. 14:18-20.
- D. Christ's divine priesthood is for saving us to the uttermost in His life unto glorification from all the by-products of death, such as vanity, groaning, sighing, decay, bondage, corruption, and slavery; His divine priesthood is the absence of death and the presence of life—Heb. 7:25, 28; Rom. 5:10; 8:19, 21, 23, 30.

III. The priesthood and the kingship are for God's image and dominion; the priesthood causes man to have the image of God, and the kingship causes man to have the dominion of God to accomplish God's original intention:

- A. There are two main aspects in the creation of man: image and dominion (Gen. 1:26); image is for the expression of God, and dominion is for the representation of God to deal with His enemy.
- B. The priesthood is for the expression of God; the priests enjoy the Lord, and they become His expression, manifestation, habitation, and dwelling place (His spiritual house as His holy priesthood)—1 Pet. 2:5:
 1. The line of "image" is the line of the priesthood, because only when man draws near to God and allows God to flow through him can God be expressed in His image.
 2. The priesthood is for contacting God to be mingled with God and to be transformed into and conformed to Christ's image for His expression—2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:28-29.
- C. The kingship is for the Lord's authority, His dominion; the kings represent God with His authority to deal with His enemy—Matt. 28:19-20; Rom. 16:20:
 1. The line of "dominion" is the line of the kingship, because a king receives authority from God in order to reign for God.
 2. The kingship is for reigning in life (by the abundance of grace and the inward reigning of grace) over Satan, sin, and death to represent God with His dominion for His kingdom—5:17, 21.
- D. The redemption accomplished through Christ's blood "made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father"—Rev. 1:5b-6a.
- E. In the millennium the overcomers will be priests, drawing near to God and Christ, and they will also be kings, reigning over the nations with Christ—2:26-27; 20:4, 6.
- F. The believers who are defeated will forfeit this reward; however, after being dealt with in the millennium, these defeated ones will participate in the blessing of this reward in that they will serve God in the priesthood and represent God in the kingship as the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth—22:3, 5:
 1. When the New Jerusalem is manifested, the holy city is like jasper (21:11,

18a); jasper denotes the image of God, because God's appearance is like jasper (4:3); in the holy city the water of life—the Spirit of life—flows to fill the city with God; hence, the image of God, the expression of God, is fully realized.

2. Furthermore, those who are a part of the New Jerusalem will reign as kings and exercise God's authority for eternity—22:5.

IV. The throne and the river of water of life in Revelation 22:1 speak of Christ being both the King and the Priest:

- A. According to the picture of the New Jerusalem, the authority of the throne and the fellowship of life, the flow of life (v. 1), are for the building of the New Jerusalem; this corresponds to Zechariah 6:12-13, which speaks of the offices of the priesthood and the kingship converging in Joshua and Zerubbabel, who are types of the Lord Jesus, for the sake of the building of God's temple:
 1. The river of water of life, the flow of life, is the divine fellowship of being saturated and soaked with God for His holy priesthood with His image, His expression—1 Pet. 2:5.
 2. The throne of God and of the Lamb is the rule and headship of Christ as the embodiment of God for His royal priesthood with His dominion, His kingdom—v. 9.
- B. The priests draw near to God, enter into the Holy of Holies to touch the throne of God, and allow God as rivers of living water to flow through them and into other persons (John 7:37-39a); the flowing of the water of life from the throne into us and out from us is the only way that builds up the church of God.
- C. In Hebrews Christ as the Priest brings the believers into the Holy of Holies, that is, into fellowship with God (2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 5:6; 7:1); in Matthew Christ as the King is Emmanuel, God with us, the One who joins God with man and brings the authority of God to man (1:1, 23; 2:6):
 1. Hebrews speaks of the building of a city (11:9-10, 16; 12:22), whereas the Gospel of Matthew speaks of the building of the church (16:18); the building of the church and the building of the city are the same thing.
 2. Christ is both the Priest and the King for God's building; in Christ there is the fellowship of the priesthood and the authority of the kingship, both of which are for God's building; on the one hand, Christ flows out the fellowship of life to us for God's image, and on the other hand, He brings us under the authority of the throne for God's dominion.
- D. First Peter 2:9 reveals that the redeemed ones are a "royal priesthood"; the word *royal* means that we have the position and authority of a king (the throne), and the word *priesthood* indicates that we have the fellowship of life (the river of water of life).
- E. Everyone among us should be a royal priest (v. 9), one who has the flow of life from the throne; in every one of us there should be an expression of both the priesthood and the kingship; God's intention for His people is to make them a kingdom of priests (Exo. 19:4, 6; Rev. 5:10).

V. According to Hebrews 4:16, the way to minister as a priest is simply to come forward to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace for timely help:

- A. We should compare Hebrews 4:16 with Revelation 22:1, which says that the river of water of life proceeds out of the throne of God.
- B. When we come forward to behold God and contact Him by praying in our spirit to touch His throne, we experience the Spirit flowing in us, flowing through us, and supplying us.
- C. This supply, this flow of the Spirit of life, is the timely help, which is the mercy and grace of God; mercy and grace refer to God flowing through us and being gained by us.
- D. Timely help is the living God, the flowing God, coming into us and flowing through us to refresh, water, and supply us; whenever, by the Lord's blood (Heb. 10:19-20), we come forward and touch the throne of grace, God flows to refresh and water us, and we experience indescribable joy, no matter how harsh the circumstances are (1 Pet. 1:8).
- E. To the believers this throne is the throne of grace, but to God's enemy it is the throne of authority; the throne of grace is related to the priesthood, and the throne of authority is related to the kingship:
 - 1. Out from the throne of God flows the river of water of life for grace (Rev. 22:1) and the river of fire for judgment (Dan. 7:9-10).
 - 2. The flow of the river of water of life produces the New Jerusalem as a city of water, but the river of the fire of God's judgment flows into the lake of fire.
 - 3. When we touch the throne of grace and allow the water of life to flow through us, we receive mercy and grace for timely help; then we can touch His throne of authority so that He can judge the improper situations within us.
- F. God wants us to enter into the Holy of Holies, our spirit, in order to touch the throne of grace and allow the water of life to flow through us; this flow will bring us into the fellowship with God and will cause us to be built up in His life to be His dwelling place, His spiritual house, His holy and royal priesthood—1 Pet. 2:5, 9.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE CONTENT OF THE HOLY CITY—A THRONE AND LIVING WATER

Chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation present a clear picture of the content of the New Jerusalem, the holy city. The throne of God and of the Lamb is at the center of the city; it is the peak of the city. A river of water of life proceeds out of the throne and flows throughout the entire city (v. 1). There is one street in the city, and the river is in the middle of the street. On this side and on that side of the river of life is the tree of life (v. 2). Although chapters 21 and 22 speak of many things, the main content is the throne of God and of the Lamb and the river of water of life that proceeds out of the throne. All the other items supplement these two items. For example, the tree of life and the street follow the flow of the river. Even the matters of God being light and the Lamb being the lamp are related to the flow of the river of life (v. 3; John 1:4). Without the flowing of the river of water of life, there would be no shining of light. Also, the matter of God and the Lamb being the temple is

related to the throne (Rev. 21:22). God and the Lamb being the temple refers to the presence of God and the Lamb, and the presence of God and the Lamb cannot be separated from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Without the throne of God and of the Lamb, there would be no presence of God and the Lamb. Therefore, the main content of the New Jerusalem is the throne of God and of the Lamb and the river of water of life that proceeds out of the throne.

THE THRONE AND THE FLOWING WATER SIGNIFYING AUTHORITY AND FELLOWSHIP

The throne and the flowing water of life signify authority and fellowship. The throne of God and of the Lamb signifies authority, whereas the flow of the water of life signifies the fellowship of life. God is God, and He is the Lamb (John 1:36). He is also life (11:25). The New Jerusalem speaks of Christ, who came as the Lamb of God to accomplish redemption through His death and to release His divine life. This picture begins with the Lamb and ends with life; it speaks of Christ coming as the Lamb of God for the purpose of flowing out Himself as life (10:10). This picture is quite profound; it presents the clear revelation in the Bible through a sign presented in a simple writing style. The whole Bible shows that God desires to be received by us and to mingle Himself with us in Christ. In order to make this receiving and mingling possible, God released Himself as life through the death of Christ as the Lamb (Rev. 5:6). Through His death, we can receive Him as life. Hence, Christ is the Lamb as well as life.

In the Gospel of John and in Revelation, the apostle John consistently presents the matter of Christ being the Lamb and being life. The Gospel of John begins by speaking of Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29). The Gospel of John also records the Lord's words concerning His coming so that we may have life (10:10). This promise is confirmed by the Lord's speaking in chapter 7, when He stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (vv. 37-38). John also presents a unique record of the Lord's death, revealing that blood and water came out of His side when He was crucified (19:34). Blood is for redemption, and water signifies the impartation of life. The sign of the New Jerusalem shows that God in Christ as the Lamb flows out as life into man. John repeatedly speaks of the relationship between the water of life and the Lamb (Rev. 7:17; 21:6; 22:1). All these verses speak of Christ as the Lamb being slain in order to release the divine life so that it can flow into man. This is the aspect of fellowship.

THE COORDINATION OF THE THRONE AND THE LIVING WATER

According to the picture in Revelation, the river of water of life flows out of the throne. This, in turn, signifies that the flow of life, the fellowship of life, conveys the authority of the throne. The authority of the throne is present wherever the river flows. Authority and fellowship, the two main components of the New Jerusalem, are coordinated. The authority of the throne flows to every part of the city through the fellowship of life; the entire city is in fellowship and under authority.

On one hand, the authority of the throne is located at the center of the city, and on the other hand, the fellowship of the river of water of life flows throughout the entire city. This picture shows that the flow of the river of water of life brings the authority of the throne throughout the entire city. In the New Jerusalem there is not only authority but also fellowship; fellowship is coordinated with authority, and authority is blended with fellowship.

Everything in the New Jerusalem depends upon the coordination of fellowship and authority. The water that the thirsty can drink is related to the coordination of fellowship and authority; the food in the city, that is, the fruits from the tree of life, is related to the coordination of fellowship and authority. Even the street in the city is related to the coordination of fellowship and authority. Everything related to our living, our way, and our experience of the presence of God depends upon the coordination between fellowship and authority. Without the coordination of fellowship and authority in this city, there would be no food, no drink, and no street.

In the church today, our spiritual food, our spiritual drink, our spiritual path, and our experience of the presence of God depend upon the coordination of fellowship and authority. If there is a full coordination between fellowship and authority in a local church, the church will be filled with living water, food, and God's way. There will not only be water for drinking, food for eating, and a pathway for walking but also the presence of God. Without such a coordination of fellowship and authority, the temple for God's dwelling will be lacking, and His presence will not be apparent. The aspect of God being the light and Christ being the lamp to shine out the glory of God is also related to the coordination between fellowship and authority. Without this coordination, knowing God as light and Christ as the lamp would not be possible. Everything in the New Jerusalem depends upon the throne and the river of water of life. There is no lack wherever the throne and the river of water of life are present.

THE THRONE AND THE LIVING WATER PRODUCING GOLD, PEARL, AND PRECIOUS STONES

The city is pure gold, the gates are pearl, and the foundations of the wall and the wall itself are precious stones (21:18-21). The city is built with these three materials because there is a flow of life with authority in the city. The flow of the river of water of life produces gold, pearl, and precious stones. This is clearly seen in Genesis 2:10-12, which speaks of a river producing gold, bdellium, which is a pearl-like material produced from the resin of a tree, and onyx, which is a precious stone. Hence, without the flow of the living water, there would be no gold, pearl, and precious stones.

Verses 8 and 9 speak of God putting man in the garden with the tree of life. Verses 10 through 14 speak of the river that went forth from Eden in four branches, and then verses 16 and 17 return to speak of the tree of life. Verses 10 through 14 are an inserted word concerning the flowing of water. The implication of this picture is that when man receives life from the tree of life, life will flow within him and result in gold, pearl, and precious stones. Hence, in order for the church to be full of gold, pearl, and precious stones, it must have the flow of the river of water of life, that is,

the fellowship of life. If there is no flow of God's Spirit and God's life in a local church, it will be difficult for such a church to produce much gold, pearl, or precious stones. These three precious materials can only come out of the flow of life. If we want to pay attention to God's building, we must pay attention to the flow of life.

Today the Lamb of God is emphasized very much in the preaching in Christianity. Everywhere we can hear people say, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" However, it is rare to hear people speak of the Lamb releasing God's life so that we may receive His life and be built up as the church. There is little speaking concerning the flow of His life in the church, and there is even less speaking concerning the flow of life bringing the authority of the throne and the fellowship of life to every member so that the church may be full of authority and the fellowship of life. The church must have the fellowship of life that comes with authority so that gold, pearl, and precious stones can be produced for the building. This is the ultimate goal of Christ being the Lamb of God.

**THE THRONE AND THE LIVING WATER
SPEAKING OF THE LORD HOLDING THE OFFICES
OF THE KINGSHIP AND THE PRIESTHOOD**

Revelation 22 is a picture that portrays how the redeemed Israelites in the Old Testament age and the saints in the New Testament age are built into a city, the New Jerusalem. The Bible concludes with the throne of God and of the Lamb being the center among God's people; this throne is also the center of the whole Bible.

The river of water of life that proceeds out from the throne of God and of the Lamb is Christ as the Lamb of God who was put to death and who was released as the Spirit in resurrection in order to flow as life into those who are redeemed. Christ is the way, the reality, and the life of the redeemed, just as He is the way, the reality, and the life of the New Jerusalem. All these items flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb, which is at the center of the New Jerusalem. As the way, the reality, and the life of God's people, Christ brings God's authority, the authority of the throne, to God's people. The throne and the water of life speak of Christ being both the King and the Priest. He came to be the way, the reality, and the life so that the redeemed could have fellowship with God and blend with one another. The water of life points to the aspect of Christ as the Priest. He also brings the authority of the throne to the redeemed. The throne points to the aspect of Christ as the King. The fellowship of life and the authority of the throne are related to the offices of the priesthood and the kingship, both of which belong to the Lord.

According to the picture of the New Jerusalem, the authority of the throne and the fellowship of life are for the building of the New Jerusalem. This corresponds to Zechariah 6:12-13, which speaks of the offices of the priesthood and the kingship converging in Joshua, who is a type of the Lord Jesus, for the sake of the building of God's temple.

In the New Testament the book of Hebrews deals particularly with the aspect of Christ as the Priest. This book shows that Christ, as the Priest, enables us to enjoy God as our way, our reality, and our life. He brings the believers into the Holy of Holies, that is, into fellowship with God (2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 5:6; 7:1). In the New

Testament the Gospel of Matthew deals particularly with the aspect of Christ as the King. This book shows us that Christ is Emmanuel, joining God with man and bringing the authority of God to man (1:1, 23; 2:6). Although Hebrews speaks of Christ as the Priest and the Gospel of Matthew speaks of Christ as the King, both books speak of the matter of building. Hebrews speaks of the building of a city (11:9-10, 16; 12:22), whereas the Gospel of Matthew speaks of the building of the church (16:18). The building of the church and the building of the city are the same thing.

Christ is the Priest for God's building, and Christ is the King for God's building. These are not two separate matters. Although Hebrews speaks in a detailed way concerning the Lord Jesus as a priest, it speaks of the Lord Jesus being a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, who is the king of Salem (6:20—7:1). Hence, the Lord as a priest is also a king. Similarly, although the Gospel of Matthew shows that Christ is the King, there is also an indication of His being a priest. For example, He came to shepherd His people Israel and to serve (2:6; 20:28). These examples speak of His being a priest. In Christ there is both the fellowship of the priesthood and the authority of the kingship, both of which are for God's building.

The Lamb of God was with the Israelites in the Old Testament in type and with the church of the New Testament in fulfillment. With the redeeming Lamb there is a flow of the water of life into man. As Christ flows out God's life, He also brings the redeemed under God's throne. On one hand, He flows out the fellowship of life to us, and on the other hand, He brings us under the authority of the throne. He is both the Priest and the King. Revelation 21 and 22 present such a descriptive picture.

In principle, the elements in this descriptive picture were present when the tabernacle was erected at Mount Sinai. The tabernacle speaks of Christ as the center of God's people. As the Passover lamb, He was killed so that the Israelites could have fellowship with God in God's building. Furthermore, He brought God's authority to man. As a result of the building of the tabernacle, God's people had the fellowship of God's life and the authority of God's throne. They were able to enjoy all that God is and has and to be built up together as God's dwelling place. Hence, when the Israelites built the tabernacle, it was a miniature of the New Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem, which the Israelites built in the land of Canaan, also was a miniature of the New Jerusalem. In Ezekiel 47 the prophet Ezekiel saw a river flowing out of God's temple in Jerusalem, and wherever this river went, everything lived and prospered (vv. 9, 12). God's purpose will be fulfilled when the New Jerusalem is manifested in the new heaven and the new earth. All the elements in the picture of the tabernacle and the picture of the New Jerusalem point to Christ being life to God's people, which brings them under the authority of the throne to be built up together as God's dwelling place.

THE REDEEMED HAVING THE OFFICES OF THE KINGSHIP AND THE PRIESTHOOD

According to the Bible, in addition to Christ, who has the offices of the kingship and the priesthood, the redeemed ones have both offices as well. First Peter 2:9 reveals that the redeemed ones are a "royal priesthood." The word *royal* means that we have the position and authority of a king. The word *priesthood* indicates that we

have the fellowship of life. Revelation 5:10 speaks of God making us priests to reign on the earth. We are joined to Christ, and we have the offices of the kingship and the priesthood. Thus, we are able to meet God's need for the building.

BEING OPEN FOR THE RELEASE OF THE SPIRIT

Now that we have seen the need for the priesthood to balance the kingship, that is, for fellowship to balance authority, we must open ourselves and release our spirit so that the Spirit of life can flow freely among us. The best way to open ourselves and to release our spirit is to pray. Once we open ourselves to pray, our spirit will be released to supply others. If all the saints open themselves to pray and release their spirits in the meeting, we will experience the living water of life gushing forth and flowing in the meeting, and the whole meeting will be an expression of the New Jerusalem.

Some may be concerned about the topic of our prayer, but we should not be concerned about this. The topic of our prayer can be according to our situation at any given time. For example, since we are currently considering the matter of opening and releasing our spirit to fellowship, we can ask the Lord to open our spirit, release our spirit, and blend our spirits together. Having a particular topic is not the most important aspect of prayer. The most important aspect is to genuinely open up our spirit and exercise our spirit to pray. We need to use our spirit in addition to our mouth. We must release our spirit. If our spirit is released, even a seemingly insignificant topic will become a very good topic. For example, a number of brothers who come together to pray may not have a specific topic, but just their coming together is an adequate topic. They can open their spirits and pray, "Lord, we thank You and praise You for gathering us together. We ask You to lead us so that we may touch You in this meeting. Lord, cause us to open to You so that none of us will be closed in our spirit and so that You may operate freely among us." This kind of prayer is quite adequate.

If our spirits are open, there is no limit to the topics of our prayer. Worshipping God can be a topic, giving thanks to God and praising God can be a topic, and building can be a topic, even the biggest topic. When we come together, we can pray for the building. We can say to the Lord, "We would like to be built up, and we would like the church to be built up. We are willing to have a part in the building. Shine on us and show us what is not fit in us for the building. We are willing to let You remove it. We are willing to receive the breaking and dealing from Your hand." These are all possible topics. Hence, the topic of our prayer is not important. What is important is whether or not we will open up our spirit. Whenever we gather with the saints, we must always open ourselves.

When we speak of opening ourselves, we may think that this means to be blunt with others or even to point out their mistakes. This is not the meaning of being open. Being open means that our spirit comes forth. Whenever we come and meet together, we must be open to allow God's Spirit to flow into us and to flow through us. If the brothers and sisters are open in a meeting and allow the Holy Spirit to flow into and pass through them freely, our meeting will be full of supply.

In the past, our problem was that our spirits were not open. When we came to a meeting, our spirits were closed. This was true not only in meetings involving a message, but even in our prayer meetings and bread-breaking meetings. Our preference has been to be independent, watching others and receiving some blessing from them. We never had the thought that every meeting was an opportunity to open ourselves to God and to open ourselves to God's children. Hence, in the meetings our spirits were closed, and the flow of life was cut off with no avenue to flow out. As a result, there was a shortage of spiritual food and living water in the meeting, and people were neither fed nor watered. Moreover, there was even a sense of being unable to go on, because God's presence was not with us.

Such an abnormal condition in a church meeting is related to the fact that the water of life has no way to flow out. Our meetings should not be like a person who has all kinds of diseases because there is a problem of poor blood circulation. We need to focus on clearing a way for the circulation of the fellowship of life in the church. If the river of water of life is flowing through the church, there will be the bread of life and the living water of life; there will also be the presence of God and the way of God. Furthermore, this flow will issue in gold, pearl, and precious stones, ultimately consummating in God's building. (*The Priesthood and God's Building*, pp. 27-35)