

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE HEAVENLY VISION OF GOD'S ETERNAL ECONOMY—
THE CONTROLLING VISION OF OUR LIFE AND WORK
FOR THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST**

Message One

The Recovery of the Eternal Economy of God

Scripture Reading: Acts 26:16-19; 1 Tim. 1:3-6; 6:3-4; 2 Cor. 11:2-3; 2 Tim. 4:22

I. *Recovery* means the restoration or return to a normal condition after a damage or a loss has been incurred:

- A. Because the church has become degraded through the many centuries of its history, it needs to be restored according to God's original intention—Gen. 2:7-25; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2; 18-21; 22:1-2, 17a.
- B. *Recovery* means to go back to the beginning; we need to go back to the beginning, receiving the Lord's grace to go back to God's original intention, to what God ordained in the beginning—Matt. 19:8.
- C. Concerning the church with Christ as her content, beauty, and glory, our vision should be governed not by the present situation or by traditional practice but by God's original intention and standard as revealed in the Scriptures according to the present advance of His recovery:
 - 1. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of Christ as our center, reality, life, and everything in His full ministry of incarnation, inclusion, and intensification—Col. 1:17b, 18b; Psa. 80:1, 15, 17-19; John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 2:4-5, 7, 17; 3:7-8, 12-13, 17-22; 4:5; 5:6; John 6:57; 14:21, 23; 21:15-17.
 - 2. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the oneness of the Body of Christ—John 17:11, 21, 21-23; Eph. 4:3-4a; Rev. 1:11.
 - 3. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the function of all the members of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:15-16; Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; 1 Cor. 14:1, 4b, 12, 26, 31, 39.
- D. For a person to leave the Lord's recovery means that he has never seen what the Lord's recovery is; if we have not seen a vision of the Lord's recovery, we actually are not in the Lord's recovery—Acts 26:13-19; cf. Gen. 13:14-18.
- E. God's eternal economy was unveiled through the apostles, but because the believers lost the proper understanding of God's eternal economy, there is the need for it to be recovered by the Lord:
 - 1. The words *recovery* and *economy* refer to one thing as seen from two different viewpoints; with God it is a matter of economy; with us it is a matter of recovery—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10; 3:9.
 - 2. There is a strong and solid principle that whenever the majority of the people of God fail to carry out God's purpose, God comes in to have a recovery; His recovery is always with the minority, with a remnant of overcomers, not with the majority—2 Kings 22:8; Ezra 1:3-11; Neh. 2:11, 17; Rev. 3:21; 18:4.

II. We must walk in the truth of the heavenly vision of God's eternal economy, of the mark of God's eternal economy, and of the goal of God's eternal economy; this vision must be renewed in us day by day to be the controlling vision of all our life, work, and activity—Prov. 29:18a; Acts 26:16-19; 1 John 1:7; 3 John 3-4:

- A. God's economy is "in faith," (1 Tim. 1:3-5), and "faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1, 5-7, 26-27):
 - 1. The wonderful Jesus is "the Author and Perfecter of our faith" (12:2), and faith is to believe that "God is" (11:6), and we are not (Gen. 5:22-24).
 - 2. Thus, we may say that the Lord's recovery is to recover us from things that are seen to things that are not seen; hence, we need to be those who exercise our spirit of faith to walk by faith and not by sight—2 Cor. 4:13, 16-18.

- B. God's eternal economy is His plan to dispense Himself into His chosen, predestinated, and redeemed people as their life, their life supply, and their everything to produce, constitute, and build up the organic Body of Christ—1 Tim. 1:3-6; 6:3-4; 2 Cor. 11:2-3; Titus 1:9; Col. 2:19.
- C. God's eternal economy is to make man the same as He is in life and nature but not in the Godhead and to make Himself one with man and man one with Him, thus to be enlarged and expanded in His expression, that all His divine attributes may be expressed in human virtues—John 1:12-13; 3:15-16; 2 Pet. 1:4; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2.
- D. The mark of God's eternal economy, the strategic and central point of God's eternal economy, is the indwelling, subjective Christ as the Spirit in our spirit, our mingled spirit—2 Cor. 3:17; 2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17:
 - 1. We must be narrowed down to and even zeroed in on the all-inclusive divine Spirit in our human spirit that we may be kept from missing the mark of the divine economy—1 Tim. 1:6; Mal. 2:15-16; Rom. 1:9; 8:4, 6; Gal. 5:25; Phil. 3:3; 2 Cor. 2:13.
 - 2. In the "blueprint" of God's original intention, man is the center of the entire universe, and the center of man is his spirit—Gen. 2:7; Prov. 20:27:
 - a. The heavens are for the earth, the earth is for man, and man was created by God with a spirit that he may contact God, receive God, contain God, worship God, live God, fulfill God's purpose for God, express God, and be one with God—Zech. 12:1; John 4:24.
 - b. Without God being the Spirit and without our having a spirit to contact God, to be one with God, the whole universe is empty and we are nothing—Eccl. 1:2; 3:11; Job 32:8; cf. Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7.
 - 3. Christ as the life-giving Spirit can be everything to us when we live in and exercise our spirit; to live in our soul is to live in the principle of antichrist—Zech. 4:6; 12:1; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17; 1 John 2:18-19.
 - 4. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the oneness in our spirit; to be in our spirit is to be in Jerusalem, the place of simplicity and oneness, whereas to be in our mind is to be in Babylon, the place of confusion and division—John 4:24; Eph. 2:22; Rom. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:6-7.
 - 5. Our spirit is a "country" of grace to swallow up race for the one new man; our mind is a "country" of quarreling; to enjoy the Lord as the Spirit being in our spirit is to have grace with us; when this is lost, the degradation of the church is present—4:22; Gal. 6:18; 5:15; Col. 3:10-11.
- E. The goal of God's eternal economy is the reality of the organic Body of Christ, consummating in the New Jerusalem—Eph. 1:22-23; Rev. 21:2-3, 9-10:
 - 1. Without the local churches, there is no practical expression of the Body of Christ and there can be no reality of the Body of Christ—1:10-13; 2:7.
 - 2. God's eternal economy is to obtain the Body of Christ; any work outside of this is not on the central lane of God's eternal economy—Eph. 4:1-6, 11-16.
 - 3. We must follow the footsteps of the apostle Paul to bring all the saints into the blending life of the entire Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:24; Rom. 16:1-20.
 - 4. For the Lord's recovery in this age, we must cooperate with the Lord to be the overcomers as today's Zion in today's Jerusalem (the church life) for the building up of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem—Rev. 3:21-22; 14:1-5; Judg. 5:15-16, 31.
- F. Teachings that differ from the unique and healthy teaching of God's eternal economy, the teaching of the apostles, separate us from the genuine appreciation, love, and enjoyment of the precious person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as our life and our everything—1 Tim. 1:3-4; Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 11:2-3.
- G. Today we can be in one accord because we have only one vision, the vision of the eternal economy of God—Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 1:9-10; Jer. 32:39.

- H. We in the Lord's recovery must have a clear vision of God's eternal economy and then be governed, controlled, and directed by this vision, for we are here to carry out God's eternal economy in His recovery—Acts 26:18-19; Prov. 29:18a.

III. The eternal economy of God (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 1 Cor. 9:17; Acts 26:19, 22) is the great answer to the great question concerning God's purpose in His creation of man and in His dealing with His chosen people (Gen. 1:26; Job 10:13; cf. Eph. 3:9):

- A. The mystery hidden in God's heart is God's eternal economy (1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4), which is God's eternal intention with His heart's desire to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity as the Father in the Son by the Spirit into His chosen people to be their life and nature that they may be the same as He is as His duplication (Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2) to become an organism, the Body of Christ as the new man (Eph. 2:15-16), for God's fullness, God's expression (1:22-23; 3:19), which will consummate in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2—22:5).
- B. God's intention was not to judge Job or punish him but to tear him down and then rebuild him with Himself to make Job a new man in God's new creation; Job's sufferings were not God's judgment but God's stripping and consuming that God might gain Job so that he might gain God more—2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Phil. 3:8, 12-14.
- C. God becoming man that man might become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead for the producing and building up of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem is the essence of the entire Bible, the "diamond" in the "box" of the Bible, the eternal economy of God—Gen. 1:26; John 12:24; Rom. 8:29.
- D. God became man through incarnation by participating in man's humanity; man becomes God in life and nature but not in the Godhead through transformation by participating in God's divinity—John 1:14; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:4; 2 Pet. 1:4; Phil. 2:5; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:10; Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:19; 1 John 3:2; John 1:12-13.
- E. This divine-human romance is the subject of the entire Bible, the content of God's eternal economy, and the secret of the entire universe—S. S. 1:1; 6:13; cf. Hab. 1:1; 2:4; Rom. 1:17:
1. Christ is divine and human, and His transformed lover is human and divine; they are the same in life and nature, perfectly matching each other.
 2. The Triune God consummated to be the Husband and the tripartite man transformed to be the bride are to be one couple, a corporate, great God-man—Rev. 21:2, 9; 22:17a.
 3. The work in the Lord's recovery is His genuine work to prepare His bride—1 Cor. 3:9, 12; 15:10, 58; 16:10; 2 Cor. 3:2-3, 6, 8-9; 4:16-18; 5:18-20; 11:2-3.
- F. God and man will become one entity, and that one entity is the mingling of divinity with humanity, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the conclusion of the entire Bible—Rev. 21:3, 22, 2, 9; cf. Lev. 2:4-5; Psalms 92:10.

Message Two

The Recovery of Loving the Lord Jesus for the Carrying Out of God's Economy

Scripture Reading: Rev. 2:4-5; Eph. 6:24; Psalms 110:3; 22:3

I. God's economy is in the sphere and element of faith, and faith operates through love (Gal. 5:6); the degradation of the church begins with our leaving the first love toward the Lord; nothing but love can keep us in a proper relationship with the Lord (Rev. 2:4-7):

- A. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to repent and do the first works; the first works are works that issue from the first love—v. 5; 1 Thes. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:5.
- B. The content of the church life depends on the enjoyment of Christ; the more we enjoy Him, the richer the content will be, but to enjoy Christ requires us to love Him with the first love.
- C. If we leave our first love toward the Lord and do not do the first works, we will miss the enjoyment of Christ and lose the testimony of Jesus; consequently, the lampstand will be removed from us—Rev. 2:1, 4-7.
- D. These three things—loving the Lord, enjoying the Lord, and being the testimony of the Lord—go together.

II. "As it is written, 'Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But to us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God'—1 Cor. 2:9-10:

- A. To realize and participate in the deep and hidden things God has ordained and prepared for us requires us not only to believe in Him but also to love Him; to love Him is the indispensable requirement.
- B. "The deep things of God," "the depths of God," are Christ in many aspects as our eternal portion, foreordained, prepared, and given to us freely by God
- C. God is love; we love because He first loved us; God's love within us becomes our love toward Him, and it is with this love that we love Him—1 John 4:9-10.
- D. Our loving God makes us those who are blessed of God to share the divine blessings that He has ordained and prepared for us, which are beyond our apprehension; our not loving the Lord makes us those who are accursed, set apart to a curse—1 Cor. 2:9; 16:22.

III. To love the Lord with the first love, the best love, is to give the Lord the preeminence, the first place, in all things, being constrained by His love to regard and take Him as everything in our life—Rev. 2:4; Col. 1:18b; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Mark 12:30; Psalms 73:25-26; 80:17-19:

- A. The beginning of love in everyone toward the Lord is a vision of His person; the leaving of the first love toward the Lord is the source of and main reason for the failure of the church throughout the ages; nothing but love can keep us in a proper relationship with the Lord—Phil. 3:8; Matt. 26:6-13; Eph. 3:16-19; 6:24; Rev. 2:4-5; cf. 3:20:
 - 1. In Song of Songs the Lord's banner over us is love, which means that love is our motto and that everything we do is based on our love for the Lord; the seeker in Song of Songs is also "sick with love," meaning that she is joyous in the Lord as love, to the point of exhaustion—2:4-5.
 - 2. God's love in Christ is a banner spreading over us, displaying, exhibiting, that we who are loved by God are always more than conquerors—Rom. 8:31-39.
 - 3. We have a love that conquers everything if we live in His love.

- B. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to have a personal, affectionate, private, and spiritual relationship with the Lord—S. S. 1:1-4.
- C. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to live a day-by-day life of morning revival so that we may satisfy Christ by being His young men like the dew from the womb of the dawn (Psa. 110:3), so that we may have the tongue of an instructed one to know how to sustain the weary with a word (Isa. 50:4-5), and so that we may fellowship with God, seeking God's will and pleasure for His gospel service (Mark 1:35).
- D. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to live a day-by-day life of consecration, becoming today's Nazarites, who are fully separated unto God and saturated with God in order to bless the children of God by dispensing God in His Divine Trinity into them—Psa. 110:3; Num. 6:1-9, 22-27.
- E. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to live a life of prayer—1 Sam. 12:23; Matt. 6:6; 14:22-23; Dan. 6:10; 2:17-18; 1 Tim. 2:1; 2 Tim. 1:3; 1 Thes. 5:17.
- F. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to love, treasure, and muse on God's word—Psa. 119:11, 14-15, 23, 48, 72, 78, 97, 99, 111, 113, 119, 127, 140, 147-148, 159, 162-163, 165, 167.
- G. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to be governed by the direct, firsthand presence of the Lord—Exo. 33:11, 14; 13:21-22; 2 Cor. 2:10.
- H. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to love the church in the church-loving Christ—Eph. 5:25; 2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Cor. 16:24.
- I. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to love the ministry that builds up the church and that betroths us to Christ—2 Cor. 8:5; 11:2-3; 1 John 1:3; Eph. 4:11-12.
- J. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to live and walk by the Spirit, to serve by the Spirit, and to minister the Spirit—Gal. 5:25; Phil. 3:3; 2 Cor. 3:6; Zech. 4:6; Judg. 9:9; cf. 1 Sam. 2:30b.
- K. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to take Him as the fountain of living waters; God's intention in His economy is to be the fountain, the source, of living waters to dispense Himself into His chosen people for their satisfaction and enjoyment to produce the church, God's counterpart, as God's increase, God's enlargement, to be God's fullness for His expression—Jer. 2:13; John 4:14b.
- L. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to eat Him as the tree of life; eating Christ as the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life—Rev. 2:7.
- M. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to continually come to Him to contact Him, take Him, receive Him, taste Him, and enjoy Him—Isa. 57:20, footnote 1.
- N. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to take Him as our centrality—our holding center—and our universality—our everything; we need to take Him as the center, content, and circumference of our personal universe—Col. 1:17b, 18b.
- O. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to aspire and determine to gain the honor of pleasing Him in all things—2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10; Heb. 11:5-6.
- P. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to have a clear sky like awesome crystal with God's sapphire throne above it; this means that there is nothing between us and the Lord and that we are filled with the heavenly atmosphere,

condition, and situation of His ruling presence—allowing Him to rule and reign within us—Ezek. 1:22, 26.

- Q. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to hold Him as the Head, staying intimately connected to Him and enthroning Him as the ruler and decider of everything in our life—Col. 2:19.
- R. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to ask for the counsel of Jehovah in every detail of our Christian life and work—Josh. 9:14; Phil. 4:6-7.
- S. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to give the flow of life, the flow of the Lord Jesus within us, the preeminence in all that we are and do; then He is the shining One, the redeeming One, the reigning One, the flowing One, and the supplying One within us—Ezek. 47:1; Rev. 22:1-2.
- T. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to be dominated, governed, directed, led, and moved by our mingled spirit, caring for the rest in our spirit by being His captives and by praying, “Lord, make me Your captive. Never let me win. Defeat me all the time”—2 Cor. 2:13-14.
- U. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to enthrone Him with our praises; praise is the highest work carried out by God’s children—Psa. 22:3; 119:164; 34:1.

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Message Three

Running the Christian Race So That We May Obtain the Prize for the Fulfillment of God's Eternal Economy

Scripture Reading: Heb. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Rom. 12:3; S. S. 1:4; Jer. 31:3

I. God's eternal economy is God's household administration, which is to dispense Himself in Christ into His chosen and redeemed people so that He may have a house to express Himself, which house is the church, the Body of Christ; God's economy is initiated and developed in the sphere of faith—1 Tim. 1:3-6; 3:15:

- A. The Christian life is a life of faith, a life of believing (Gal. 3:2, 14); we do not live according to what we see (2 Cor. 4:16-18; 1 Pet. 1:8; Heb. 11:27); we live according to what we believe; our walk is by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7):
- B. Believing is exercising our spirit of faith (4:13) to substantiate the divine facts (Heb. 11:1); once we believe by saying Amen to God's word, we substantiate the divine facts, and we have them; Amen does not mean a wish for something to be accomplished, but a declaration that it will surely be accomplished, and that there is no doubt about it; when we believe, we are accepting what the Lord has already promised to do (1 Cor. 14:15; 2 Cor. 1:20; Neh. 8:1-8; Rev. 3:14).

II. "Therefore let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, put away every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and run with endurance the race which is set before us"—Heb. 12:1:

- A. The cloud is for leading people to follow the Lord (Num. 9:15-22), and the Lord is in the cloud to be with the people (Exo. 13:21-22); in Greek *witnesses* implies the sense of martyrs (Acts 1:8):
 - 1. With the people of faith, we can have the Lord's presence and His leading; all the people of faith, the church people, are the cloud; the best way to seek the Lord's presence is to come to the church.
 - 2. If anyone is seeking the Lord's leading, he must follow the cloud, the church; the Lord is in the cloud, meaning that He is with the people of faith.
 - 3. Since we are the people of faith, we are today's cloud, and people can follow the Lord by following us; those who seek Him can find His presence with us—cf. 1 Cor. 14:24-25; Psa. 36:8-9; 16:11.
- B. The Christian life is a race; every saved Christian must run the race to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24); the prize is not salvation in the common sense (Eph. 2:8; 1 Cor. 3:15) but a reward in a special sense (Heb. 10:35; 1 Cor. 3:14); the apostle Paul ran the race and won the prize (9:26-27; Phil. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:7-8):
 - 1. An encumbrance is a weight, burden, or impediment; the runners of the race strip off every unnecessary weight, every encumbering burden, that nothing may impede them from winning the race.
 - 2. The unique entangling sin in this context was the willful sin of forsaking the assembling together with the saints, of giving up the new covenant way in God's economy, and of going back to Judaism (Heb. 10:26); both the encumbering weight and the entangling sin would have frustrated the Hebrew believers and restrained them from running the heavenly race in the new covenant way of following Jesus.
- C. We need to run with endurance, asking the Lord to direct our hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ—2 Thes. 3:5:
 - 1. This love is our love toward God, issuing from the love of God (1 John 4:19) that has been poured out in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).
 - 2. This endurance is to endure with the endurance of Christ that we have enjoyed and experienced—cf. Rev. 1:9.

III. “Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God”—Heb. 12:2:

- A. We can live the Christian life, run the Christian race, by looking away unto Jesus with undivided attention by turning away from every other object:
 - 1. The wonderful Jesus, who is enthroned in heaven and crowned with glory and honor (2:9), is the greatest attraction in the universe.
 - 2. He is like an immense magnet drawing all His seekers to Him—S. S. 1:4; Hosea 11:4; Jer. 31:3.
 - 3. It is by being attracted by His charming beauty (loveliness, pleasantness, delightfulness) that we look away from all things other than Him—Psa. 27:4.
 - 4. Without such a charming object, how could we look away from so many distracting things on earth?
- B. Jesus is the Author of faith, the Originator, the Inaugurator, the source, and the cause of faith; in our natural man we have no believing ability, but when we look away unto Jesus, He as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) transfuses us with Himself, with His believing element.
- C. Then, spontaneously, a kind of believing arises in our being, and we have the faith to believe in Him; this faith is not of ourselves but of Him who imparts Himself as the believing element into us that He may believe for us.
- D. Faith is Christ Himself believing for us in a very subjective way; He transfuses us with Himself, working Himself into us, until He, the very person, becomes the believing element in our being.
- E. Thus, it is not we who believe; it is He who believes within us; in this way He makes us a believing being (cf. Acts 6:5; 11:22-24a); apparently it is our believing, but actually it is His believing; this is genuine faith.
- F. Faith is a substantiating ability, a sixth sense, the sense by which we substantiate, give substance to, the things unseen or hoped for—Heb. 11:1:
 - 1. Substantiating is the ability that enables us to realize a substance.
 - 2. The function of our five senses is to substantiate the things of the outside world, transferring all the objective items into us to become our subjective experience.
 - 3. As the eye is to seeing, the ear to hearing, and the nose to smelling, so faith, our spirit of faith, is the organ whereby we substantiate everything in the unseen spiritual world into us—2 Cor. 4:13.
 - 4. In the divine and mystical realm of the consummated Spirit, we can exercise our spirit of faith with the spiritual senses of seeing the Lord (Eph. 1:18; Matt. 5:8; Job 42:5), hearing Him (Gal. 3:2; Rev. 2:7a), touching Him (Matt. 9:21; 14:36; John 4:24), tasting Him (Psa. 34:8; 1 Pet. 2:2-3), and smelling Him, being permeated with Him to such an extent that we become “a fragrance of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15), with our Christian walk in love being a sweet-smelling savor to God (Eph. 5:2); furthermore, as His loving seekers, we eventually become mature in life to the extent that we have a spiritual intuition and olfactory sense of high and sharp discernment in order to discern the things that are of God and are not of God (S. S. 7:4b; Phil. 1:9).
- G. Faith, as the substantiation of things hoped for, assures and convinces us of things not seen; therefore, faith is the evidence, the proof, of things unseen—Heb. 11:1:
 - 1. “We were saved in hope. But a hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly await it through endurance”—Rom. 8:24-25.
 - 2. Our life should be a life of hope, which accompanies and abides with faith (1 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 13:13); we should be those who “walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham” (Rom. 4:12), who “beyond hope believed in hope” (v. 18).

3. We need to exercise our spirit of faith in order to walk by faith and not by that which is seen (2 Cor. 4:13; 5:7); we do not regard, look at, “the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (4:18).
 4. The Christian life is a life of things unseen; the degradation of the church is the degradation from unseen things to seen things—Heb. 11:27; 1 Pet. 1:8; Gal. 6:10.
 5. The Lord’s recovery is to recover His church from things seen to things unseen.
- H. Jesus is the Perfecter, the Finisher, the Completer, of our faith—Heb. 12:2a:
1. As we look away unto Him continually, He will finish and complete the faith that we need for the running of the heavenly race—v. 1.
 2. We all have the same faith in quality, but the quantity of faith we have depends upon how much we contact the living God so that we may have Him increased in us—Rom. 12:3:
 - a. Faith in the progressing stage comes through our contacting the Triune God, who is faith in us—1 Thes. 5:17.
 - b. The way to receive such a faith is to contact its source, the Lord, the processed and consummated God, by calling on Him, praying to Him, and pray-reading His word—Heb. 4:16; Rom. 10:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Eph. 6:17-18; Heb. 4:2.
 - c. When we contact Him, He is overflowing within us, and there is a mutuality of faith among us; we are encouraged through the faith that is in one another—Rom. 1:12; Philem. 6.
 3. Our regenerated spirit, our spirit of faith, is the victory that overcomes the Satan-organized-and-usurped world—1 John 5:4; John 3:6; 2 Cor. 4:13; 1 John 5:18.
 4. The great irrepressible and unlimited power of faith motivates thousands to suffer for the Lord, risk their lives, and become overcoming sent ones and martyrs for the carrying out of God’s eternal economy, which is in faith—Luke 18:8; Phil. 2:30; Rom. 16:3-4; Acts 20:24; 1 Tim. 1:4; Heb. 12:3; cf. Judg. 8:4.
- I. According to Hebrews 12:2, for the joy set before Him, Jesus “endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God”:
1. The Lord Jesus knew that through His death He would be glorified in resurrection (Luke 24:25-26) and that His divine life would be released to produce many brothers for His expression (John 12:23-24; Rom. 8:29); for the joy set before Him (John 16:20-22), He despised the shame and volunteered to be delivered to the Satan-usurped leaders of the Jews and Gentiles and to be condemned by them to death.
 2. Therefore, God highly exalted Him to the heavens, seated Him at His right hand (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-35), bestowed on Him the name which is above every name (Phil. 2:9-10), made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), and crowned Him with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9).
 3. If we look away unto Him as such a wonderful and all-inclusive One, He will minister Himself as heaven, life, and strength into us, transfusing and infusing us with all that He is, so that we may be able to run the heavenly race and live the heavenly life on earth; in this way He will carry us through all the lifelong pathway of faith and lead and bring us into glory—2 Cor. 3:16, 18; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8.

Message Four

The Divine Dispensing for the Divine Economy Being the Process of Dispositional Sanctification as Our Beautification to Become the Holy and Glorious Bride for Christ

Scripture Reading: Rom. 6:19, 22; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9; 1 Thes. 5:23; S. S. 8:13-14

I. The will of God is our sanctification; to be sanctified is to be made holy, which is to be separated unto God and saturated with God as the Holy One, the One who is different, distinct, from everything that is common—1 Thes. 4:3a; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Eph. 1:4-5; 5:25-27.

II. There are three aspects of sanctification in the Scriptures:

- A. There is the Spirit's sanctification in seeking the God-chosen people before they repent and believe—1 Pet. 1:2; cf. Luke 15:8-10.
- B. There is the positional sanctification by the blood of Christ at the time of the believers' believing—Heb. 13:12; 9:13-14; 10:29; cf. Luke 15:4-7.
- C. There is the Spirit's dispositional sanctification in the believers' full course of their Christian life—1 Thes. 5:23-24; Rom. 15:16b; 6:19, 22; cf. Luke 15:11-32; Rom. 5:10; Rev. 22:14; 2 Pet. 1:4.

III. Ephesians 5:25-27 reveals the entirety of God's complete salvation in presenting Christ to us in three stages:

- A. In the past, Christ as the Redeemer gave Himself up for the church for our judicial redemption—"Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"—v. 25.
- B. In the present, Christ as the life-giving Spirit is dispositionally sanctifying the church by saturating her with His element so that she may be His counterpart; this is organic salvation as bride beautification and bride preparation—"That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word"—v. 26.
- C. In the future, Christ as the Bridegroom will present the church to Himself as His counterpart for His satisfaction—"That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish"—this is our glorification for bride presentation—v. 27.
- D. In the past, Christ gave Himself up for the church; in the present, He is sanctifying the church; and in the future, He will present the church to Himself as His counterpart for His satisfaction; therefore, His loving the church is to sanctify her, and His sanctifying the church is for His presenting the church to Himself glorious.

IV. The Lord's primary work in the recovery is His genuine work to prepare His bride; apart from the continual, dispositional sanctification spoken of in Ephesians 5:26, there is no way for the bride to be prepared and, hence, no way for Revelation 19:7-9 to be fulfilled; the divine dispensing for the divine economy is the process of dispositional sanctification (1 Thes. 5:23-24) as our beautification to become the beautiful, holy, and glorious bride for Christ:

- A. Christ as the life-giving Spirit sanctifies the church by cleansing her according to the washing of the water in the word; according to the divine concept, *water* here refers to the flowing life of God typified by flowing water (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4; John 7:37-39; Rev. 7:17; 21:6; 22:1, 17); we are now in such a washing process in order that the church may be holy and without blemish.
- B. The Greek word for *washing* in Ephesians 5:26 is literally *laver*; in the Old Testament the priests used the laver to wash away their earthly defilement (Exo. 30:18-21); day by day, morning and evening, we need to come to the Bible and be cleansed by the laver of the water in the word.

- C. Paul uses the Greek word *rhema* when he speaks of the word with its washing process (Eph. 5:26); *logos* is God's Word objectively recorded in the Bible; *rhema* is the word of God spoken to us on a specific occasion (Mark 14:72; Luke 1:35-38; 5:5; 24:1-8).
 - D. As the life-giving Spirit, Christ is the speaking Spirit; whatever He speaks is the word that washes us; this does not refer to *logos*, the constant word, but to *rhema*, which denotes an instant word, the word that the Lord presently speaks to us—Matt. 4:4; John 6:63; Rev. 2:7; 22:17a; cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Matt. 13:14-15; Acts 28:25-31.
 - E. The *rhema* reveals something to us personally and directly; it shows us what we need to deal with and what we need to be cleansed from (the laver of bronze was a mirror that could reflect and expose—Exo. 38:8); the important thing for each one of us is this—is God speaking His word to me today?
 - F. One thing that we always treasure is that the Lord still speaks to us personally and directly today; true growth in life depends upon our receiving the word directly from God; only His speaking in us has true spiritual value—Heb. 3:7-11, 15; 4:7; Psalms 95:7-8.
 - G. The central point of our prayers should be our longing for the Lord's speaking, which enables us to fulfill the goal of His eternal economy according to His heart's desire to have a bride as His counterpart—Rev. 2:7; cf. 1 Sam. 3:1, 21; Amos 3:7.
 - H. In a very practical sense, the Lord's presence is one with His speaking; whenever He speaks, we realize His presence within us; Christ's speaking is the very presence of the life-giving Spirit.
 - I. The speaking of the indwelling Christ as the life-giving Spirit within us is the cleansing water that deposits a new element into us to replace the old element in our nature and disposition; this metabolic cleansing causes a genuine and inward change in life, which is the reality of dispositional sanctification and transformation.
- V. Ephesians 5:27 reveals that the church as the bride of Christ will eventually become a glorious church, a God-expressing church, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish":**
- A. The beauty of the bride comes from the very Christ who is wrought into the church and who is then expressed through the church; our only beauty is the shining out of Christ from within us—Isa. 60:1, 5a; 2 Cor. 3:15-18; cf. Exo. 28:2.
 - B. For the bride to be prepared means that she is clothed in "fine linen, bright and clean," which is "the righteousnesses of the saints" (Rev. 19:8); this fine linen is the beauty of the bride.
 - C. On the day of his wedding, a bridegroom cares much more for the beauty of his bride than for her ability; the Lord Jesus, our God, cares primarily for the beauty of Himself expressed through our humanity; we need to be beautified by Christ day by day so that we can be prepared to be presented to Him as His lovely bride.
 - D. Whenever we take time to behold the beauty of the Lord in His word by pray-reading and musing upon His word (Eph. 6:17-18; Psalms 119:15), He becomes our beauty, and we are beautified by Him to become the house of His beauty so that He also may be beautified (27:4; 2 Cor. 3:18; Isa. 60:7b, 9b, 13b, 19b, 21b).
 - E. The washing of the water in the word in Ephesians 5:26 deals mainly with spots and wrinkles; spots refer to something of the natural life, and wrinkles are related to oldness; only the water of life can metabolically wash away such defects by the transformation of life.
 - F. To be holy is to be saturated with Christ and transformed by Christ, and to be without blemish is to be spotless and without wrinkle, having nothing of the natural life of our old man—cf. S. S. 4:7.
 - G. Also, the church will not have "any such things," which means that she will not have "this or that kind of defect"; God will bring the church to the place where nothing can be said against her in any respect—Eph. 5:27.

VI. Ephesians 5:26-27 matches Song of Songs 8:13-14; both reveal that it is by the Lord's speaking to us that we are prepared to be His glorious bride with the desire for His second coming—"O you who dwell in the gardens, / My companions listen for your voice; / Let me hear it. / Make haste, my beloved, / And be like a gazelle or a young hart / Upon the mountains of spices":

- A. In Song of Songs the loving seeker of Christ asks Him who dwells in the believers as His gardens to let her hear His voice while her companions listen for His voice—8:13; cf. 4:13-16; 5:1; 6:2:
 - 1. This indicates that in the work that we as the lovers of Christ do for Him as our Beloved, we need to maintain our fellowship with Him, always listening to Him—Luke 10:38-42.
 - 2. Our lives depend on the Lord's words, and our work depends on His commands (Rev. 2:7; 1 Sam. 3:9-10; cf. Isa. 50:4-5; Exo. 21:6); without the Lord's words we will not have any revelation, light, or personal knowledge of Christ as our King (Isa. 6:1, 5), our Lord (2 Cor. 5:14-15), our Head (Col. 2:19), and our Husband (2 Cor. 11:2); the life of the believers hinges totally upon the Lord's speaking (Eph. 5:26-27).
- B. As the concluding prayer of this poetic book, the lover of Christ prays that her Beloved would make haste to come back in the power of His resurrection (gazelle and young hart) to set up His sweet and beautiful kingdom (mountains of spices), which will fill the whole earth—S. S. 8:14; Rev. 11:15; Dan. 2:35:
 - 1. Such a prayer portrays the union and communion between Christ as the Bridegroom and His lovers as the bride in their bridal love, in the way that the prayer of John, a lover of Christ, as the concluding word of the Holy Scriptures, reveals God's eternal economy concerning Christ and the church in His divine love—Rev. 22:20.
 - 2. "Come, Lord Jesus!" is the last prayer in the Bible (v. 20); the entire Bible concludes with the desire for the Lord's coming expressed as a prayer.
 - 3. "When He comes, faith will be turned to facts, and praise will replace prayer. Love will consummate in a shadowless perfection, and we will serve Him in the sinless domain. What a day that will be! Lord Jesus, come quickly!" (Watchman Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 23, "The Song of Songs," p. 126).