

SERVICE FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

Serving with a Vision, according to Revelation, and in the Body for the Building Up of the House of God

RK Hymns: 913

Scripture Reading: Acts 9:1-6, 15, 20-22; 22:6-10, 14-15; 26:16, 18-19;
Gal. 1:13-14; Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 2:21-22

- Acts 9:1 But Saul, still breathing threatening and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest
- Acts 9:2 And asked for letters from him to Damascus for the synagogues, so that if he found any who were of the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- Acts 9:3 And as he went, he drew near to Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.
- Acts 9:4 And he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?
- Acts 9:5 And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.
- Acts 9:6 But rise up and enter into the city, and it will be told to you what you must do.
- Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
- Acts 9:20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, that this One is the Son of God.
- Acts 9:21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, Is this not the one who ravaged those who call upon this name in Jerusalem and came here for this, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests?
- Acts 9:22 But Saul was all the more empowered, and he confounded the Jews dwelling in Damascus by proving that this One is the Christ.
- Acts 22:6 And as I journeyed and drew near to Damascus about midday, suddenly a great light flashed out of heaven around me;
- Acts 22:7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?
- Acts 22:8 And I answered, Who are You, Lord? And He said to me, I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you persecute.
- Acts 22:9 And those who were with me beheld the light, but did not hear the voice of the One who was speaking to me.
- Acts 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Rise up and go into Damascus, and there it will be told to you concerning all the things which have been appointed to you to do.
- Acts 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers has previously appointed you to know His will and to see the righteous One and to hear the voice from His mouth;
- Acts 22:15 For you will be a witness to Him unto all men of the things which you have seen and heard.
- Acts 26:16 But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;
- Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.
- Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
- Gal 1:13 For you have heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism, that I persecuted the church of God excessively and ravaged it.
- Gal 1:14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my race, being more abundantly a zealot for the traditions of my fathers.
- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
- Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

I. Our service to God must be with a vision and according to revelation—Acts 9:1-6, 15, 20-22; 22:6-10, 14-15; 26:16, 18-19:

- Acts 9:1 But Saul, still breathing threatening and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest
- Acts 9:2 And asked for letters from him to Damascus for the synagogues, so that if he found any who were of the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- Acts 9:3 And as he went, he drew near to Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.
- Acts 9:4 And he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?
- Acts 9:5 And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.
- Acts 9:6 But rise up and enter into the city, and it will be told to you what you must do.
- Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
- Acts 9:20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, that this One is the Son of God.
- Acts 9:21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, Is this not the one who ravaged those who call upon this name in Jerusalem and came here for this, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests?
- Acts 9:22 But Saul was all the more empowered, and he confounded the Jews dwelling in Damascus by proving that this One is the Christ.
- Acts 22:6 And as I journeyed and drew near to Damascus about midday, suddenly a great light flashed out of heaven around me;
- Acts 22:7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?
- Acts 22:8 And I answered, Who are You, Lord? And He said to me, I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you persecute.
- Acts 22:9 And those who were with me beheld the light, but did not hear the voice of the One who was speaking to me.
- Acts 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Rise up and go into Damascus, and there it will be told to you concerning all the things which have been appointed to you to do.
- Acts 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers has previously appointed you to know His will and to see the righteous One and to hear the voice from His mouth;
- Acts 22:15 For you will be a witness to Him unto all men of the things which you have seen and heard.
- Acts 26:16 But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;
- Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.
- Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
- A. Before the Lord appeared to Paul and a light from heaven shined upon him, his zealous service to God was actually in opposition to God and according to Satan's instigation—9:1; Gal. 1:13-14:
- Acts 9:1 But Saul, still breathing threatening and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest
- Gal 1:13 For you have heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism, that I persecuted the church of God excessively and ravaged it.
- Gal 1:14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my race, being more abundantly a zealot for the traditions of my fathers.
1. It is possible for us to repeat Paul's mistakes, for our service to God can be used as an instrument of Satan to destroy God's move—John 16:2.
John 16:2 They will put you out of the synagogues; but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.
 2. Before Paul encountered the great light on the road to Damascus, he had tradition, knowledge of religion, and zeal but no vision or revelation—Gal. 1:13-14.
Gal 1:13 For you have heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism, that I persecuted

- the church of God excessively and ravaged it.
- Gal 1:14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my race, being more abundantly a zealot for the traditions of my fathers.
3. Paul asked the Lord two questions: the first—"Who are You, Lord?"—relates to knowing the Lord; the second—"What shall I do, Lord?"—relates to receiving the Lord's vision—Acts 22:8, 10.

Acts 22:8 And I answered, Who are You, Lord? And He said to me, I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you persecute.

Acts 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Rise up and go into Damascus, and there it will be told to you concerning all the things which have been appointed to you to do.
 4. In Acts 22:10 Paul began to have a vision that cut him off from his previous service and brought him into the New Testament service.

Acts 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Rise up and go into Damascus, and there it will be told to you concerning all the things which have been appointed to you to do.
 5. Paul's way of serving God came from a heavenly vision; when he saw this vision, the things of the Old Testament came to an end, and he began to take the New Testament way—26:18-19.

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.

Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
- B. Our service to God may be according to revelation, or it may be natural—Gal. 2:1-2; Eph. 1:17; 3:3, 5:
- Gal 2:1 Then after a period of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus with me also.
- Gal 2:2 And I went up according to revelation, and I laid before them the gospel which I proclaim among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of repute, lest perhaps I should be running, or had run, in vain.
- Eph 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him,
- Eph 3:3 That by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief,
- Eph 3:5 Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit,
1. Service according to revelation involves meeting God, being shined on by God, receiving revelation from God, and being burdened in spirit by God—Acts 26:16, 18-19; 22:14-15.

Acts 26:16 But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.

Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

Acts 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers has previously appointed you to know His will and to see the righteous One and to hear the voice from His mouth;

Acts 22:15 For you will be a witness to Him unto all men of the things which you have seen and heard.
 2. Natural service is according to our own ideas, views, traditions, or regulations; it may also come from imitating others, and it is often initiated simply to meet the need of a certain situation—1 Cor. 2:14.

1 Cor 2:14 But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually.

3. We should not have outward acts of service to the Lord without inward revelation; our inward revelation must govern our outward acts—Gal. 1:13-14; 2:1-2.
 - Gal 1:13 For you have heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism, that I persecuted the church of God excessively and ravaged it.
 - Gal 1:14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my race, being more abundantly a zealot for the traditions of my fathers.
 - Gal 2:1 Then after a period of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus with me also.
 - Gal 2:2 And I went up according to revelation, and I laid before them the gospel which I proclaim among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of repute, lest perhaps I should be running, or had run, in vain.
- C. Vision and revelation are the way and the life of service—Acts 26:19; Eph. 3:3, 5, 9:
- Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
 - Eph 3:3 That by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief,
 - Eph 3:5 Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit,
 - Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,
1. We need a vision for the way of service and a revelation for the life of service; the way to serve God comes from the vision, and the life to serve God comes from revelation.
 2. It was necessary for Paul to change both his outward way and his inner life; his old way was unacceptable, and his old life had to be terminated—Phil. 3:4-8.
 - Phil 3:4 Though I myself have something to be confident of in the flesh as well. If any other man thinks that he has confidence in the flesh, I more:
 - Phil 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day; of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;
 - Phil 3:6 As to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law, become blameless.
 - Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
 - Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
 3. The way of Paul's preaching came from the heavenly vision, and the content of his preaching came from revelation; his way was heavenly, and his content was the living Christ Himself—Acts 22:14-15; 26:16, 18-19.
 - Acts 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers has previously appointed you to know His will and to see the righteous One and to hear the voice from His mouth;
 - Acts 22:15 For you will be a witness to Him unto all men of the things which you have seen and heard.
 - Acts 26:16 But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;
 - Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.
 - Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

II. As believers in Christ, we are members of the Body of Christ, and we serve God in the Body—Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:14-27:

- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- 1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.

- 1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?
- 1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.
- 1 Cor 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?
- 1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
- 1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
- 1 Cor 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.
- 1 Cor 12:23 And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,
- 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
- 1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.
- 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
- A. When we come to the matter of serving the Lord, we need to be clear that we need the Body; it is crucial for us to realize that we cannot serve without the Body or have spiritual life outside the Body—Rom. 12:4-5; Phil. 1:19.
- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- B. The entire Christian living is a living in the Body, and the entire Christian serving is a service carried out in the Body—1 Cor. 12:12-13.
- 1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
- 1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.
- C. In the New Testament the service is not touched clearly and definitely until Romans 12; it is here that the matter of service is revealed, and it is presented as a matter of the Body and in the Body—vv. 4-11.
- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- Rom 12:6 And having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;
- Rom 12:7 Or service, let us be faithful in that service; or he who teaches, in that teaching;
- Rom 12:8 Or he who exhorts, in that exhortation; he who gives, in simplicity; he who leads, in diligence; he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness.
- Rom 12:9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.
- Rom 12:10 Love one another warmly in brotherly love; take the lead in showing honor one to another.
- Rom 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.
- D. With respect to serving in the church, the emphasis is on the setting for service, but with respect to serving in the Body, the emphasis is on the coordination in service.
- E. According to the New Testament, the believers are members one of another and are coordinated in one Body—vv. 4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 14; Eph. 5:30:

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.

Eph 5:30 Because we are members of His Body.

1. To know the Body of Christ is to realize that we are only members and that we cannot do anything without others.

2. A Christian is not a complete entity; he is merely a member of the Body, a part.

3. When we serve the Lord, we should serve in the position of a member, in coordination with others—1 Cor. 12:18.

1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.

F. If we have seen the Body, we will no longer be divisive, we will not be individualistic or independent, and we will be willing to be blended, without any complaining, murmuring, or criticism but with love, forgiveness, sympathy, forbearance, and long-suffering; it is with such a Body life that there is a real impact in our service—Eph. 1:17-23; 5:23, 30.

Eph 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him,

Eph 1:18 The eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Eph 1:19 And what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength,

Eph 1:20 Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,

Eph 1:21 Far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come;

Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Eph 5:23 For a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the Body.

Eph 5:30 Because we are members of His Body.

III. Our service is for the building up of the house of God—2:21-22; John 2:14-17; 14:2; Hag. 1:2-11:

Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

John 2:14 And He found in the temple those selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers sitting there.

John 2:15 And having made a whip out of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, as well as the sheep and the oxen, and He poured out the money of the moneychangers and overturned their tables.

John 2:16 And to those who were selling the doves He said, Take these things away from here; do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise.

John 2:17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of Your house shall devour Me."

John 14:2 In My Father's house are many abodes; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

Hag 1:2 Thus says Jehovah of hosts, saying, This people says, The time has not come, the time for the house of Jehovah to be built.

Hag 1:3 Then the word of Jehovah came through Haggai the prophet, saying,

Hag 1:4 Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled-up houses, while this house lies waste?

Hag 1:5 Now therefore thus says Jehovah of hosts, Consider your ways.

Hag 1:6 You have sown much, but you bring in little; you eat, but there is no satisfaction; you drink,

- but there is no being filled with drink; you dress yourselves, but there is no warmth in doing so; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put them into a bag with holes.
- Hag 1:7 Thus says Jehovah of hosts, Consider your ways.
- Hag 1:8 Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it and will be glorified, says Jehovah.
- Hag 1:9 You looked for much, and yet it amounted to little; and when you brought it home, I blew on it. Why? declares Jehovah of hosts. Because of My house that lies waste while you each run to your own house.
- Hag 1:10 Therefore over you the heavens withhold their dew, and the earth withholds its yield.
- Hag 1:11 Indeed I called for a drought upon the land and upon the mountains and upon the grain and upon the new wine and upon the fresh oil and upon that which the ground brings forth and upon man and upon beast and upon all the toil of the hands.
- A. God wants saved and edified believers to be coordinated and built together as His dwelling place—Eph. 2:21-22:
- Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
- Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
1. Leading people to be saved and leading believers to grow in life are merely procedures; God's ultimate goal is the building up of His house.
 2. God's built-up house reveals and expresses God, gives Him the glory He deserves, and accomplishes His will so that He can have rest—John 14:2.
John 14:2 In My Father's house are many abodes; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.
 3. God wants the gospel to be preached fervently, and He also wants the believers to pursue spirituality so that His house, the church, the Body of Christ, may be built up.
- B. We need to care for the building up of God's house—2:14-17; 2 Cor. 11:28:
- John 2:14 And He found in the temple those selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers sitting there.
- John 2:15 And having made a whip out of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, as well as the sheep and the oxen, and He poured out the money of the moneychangers and overturned their tables.
- John 2:16 And to those who were selling the doves He said, Take these things away from here; do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise.
- John 2:17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of Your house shall devour Me."
- 2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which have not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.
1. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, the center of His work was to build a house for God; hence, He was devoured by the zeal of God's house—John 2:17.
John 2:17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of Your house shall devour Me."
 2. The apostles labored for the building up of the house of God—2 Cor. 11:28.
2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which have not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.
 3. Most believers take care of their personal needs and consider themselves to be the center and the starting point—Phil. 2:20-21:
Phil 2:20 For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you;
Phil 2:21 For all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.
 - a. Concerning both the material realm and the spiritual realm, human beings are selfish and always want to gain something for themselves instead of considering what God desires—Matt. 6:8-13, 19-34.
Matt 6:8 Therefore do not be like them, for your Father knows the things that you have need of before you ask Him.
Matt 6:9 You then pray in this way: Our Father who is in the heavens, Your name be sanctified;
Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.

Matt 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.
 Matt 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
 Matt 6:13 And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.
 Matt 6:19 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves dig through and steal.
 Matt 6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not dig through nor steal.
 Matt 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
 Matt 6:22 The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light;
 Matt 6:23 But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be dark. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!
 Matt 6:24 No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.
 Matt 6:25 Because of this, I say to you, Do not be anxious for your life, what you should eat or what you should drink; nor for your body, what you should put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than clothing?
 Matt 6:26 Look at the birds of heaven. They do not sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father nourishes them. Are you not of more value than they?
 Matt 6:27 Who among you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature?
 Matt 6:28 And why are you anxious concerning clothing? Consider well the lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not toil, neither do they spin thread.
 Matt 6:29 But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these.
 Matt 6:30 And if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is cast into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you, you of little faith?
 Matt 6:31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed?
 Matt 6:32 For all these things the Gentiles are anxiously seeking. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
 Matt 6:33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
 Matt 6:34 Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself; sufficient for the day is its own evil.

b. If we want to be Christians who match God's desire and meet His need in this age, we cannot be trapped in ourselves; we must come out of ourselves to care for God's need—Hag. 1:2-11:

Hag 1:2 Thus says Jehovah of hosts, saying, This people says, The time has not come, the time for the house of Jehovah to be built.
 Hag 1:3 Then the word of Jehovah came through Haggai the prophet, saying,
 Hag 1:4 Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled-up houses, while this house lies waste?
 Hag 1:5 Now therefore thus says Jehovah of hosts, Consider your ways.
 Hag 1:6 You have sown much, but you bring in little; you eat, but there is no satisfaction; you drink, but there is no being filled with drink; you dress yourselves, but there is no warmth in doing so; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put them into a bag with holes.
 Hag 1:7 Thus says Jehovah of hosts, Consider your ways.
 Hag 1:8 Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it and will be glorified, says Jehovah.
 Hag 1:9 You looked for much, and yet it amounted to little; and when you brought it home, I blew on it. Why? declares Jehovah of hosts. Because of My house that lies waste while you each run to your own house.
 Hag 1:10 Therefore over you the heavens withhold their dew, and the earth

- withholds its yield.
- Hag 1:11 Indeed I called for a drought upon the land and upon the mountains and upon the grain and upon the new wine and upon the fresh oil and upon that which the ground brings forth and upon man and upon beast and upon all the toil of the hands.
- (1) God desires that we come out of ourselves and be delivered from our selfishness in order to care for the building up of His house—Phil. 2:21; Hag. 1:2-11.
- Phil 2:21 For all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.
- Hag 1:2 Thus says Jehovah of hosts, saying, This people says, The time has not come, the time for the house of Jehovah to be built.
- Hag 1:3 Then the word of Jehovah came through Haggai the prophet, saying,
- Hag 1:4 Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled-up houses, while this house lies waste?
- Hag 1:5 Now therefore thus says Jehovah of hosts, Consider your ways.
- Hag 1:6 You have sown much, but you bring in little; you eat, but there is no satisfaction; you drink, but there is no being filled with drink; you dress yourselves, but there is no warmth in doing so; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put them into a bag with holes.
- Hag 1:7 Thus says Jehovah of hosts, Consider your ways.
- Hag 1:8 Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it and will be glorified, says Jehovah.
- Hag 1:9 You looked for much, and yet it amounted to little; and when you brought it home, I blew on it. Why? declares Jehovah of hosts. Because of My house that lies waste while you each run to your own house.
- Hag 1:10 Therefore over you the heavens withhold their dew, and the earth withholds its yield.
- Hag 1:11 Indeed I called for a drought upon the land and upon the mountains and upon the grain and upon the new wine and upon the fresh oil and upon that which the ground brings forth and upon man and upon beast and upon all the toil of the hands.
- (2) Instead of focusing on ourselves, we must care for the house of God.
4. We must not focus on anything other than the work of God to build His house—Eph. 2:21-22.
- Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
- Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
5. We serve God with a vision, according to revelation, and in the Body for the building up of the church as the house of God—John 14:2; 1 Tim. 3:15.
- John 14:2 In My Father's house are many abodes; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.
- 1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

VISION AND REVELATION BEING THE WAY AND THE LIFE OF SERVICE

We need a vision for the way of our service and a revelation for the life of our service. Saul's way of serving God was not sinful, but it was a way that was according to the Old Testament, Judaism, and the law. When the heavenly light flashed around him, he knew that he could no longer take his old way. His old practices had to be abandoned, and he turned completely in his way of serving God. He did not pursue his former course; rather, he stopped. Nevertheless, it was not enough for him to change

his outward way; his inner life also needed to change. His old way was unacceptable, and his old life had to be terminated.

Many in Christianity focus on the light that flashed around Paul on his way to Damascus, but few focus on the light of life that he received. Many speak of Paul's not being disobedient to the heavenly vision, but they miss his word in Galatians 1:16 concerning God revealing His Son in him. Working for the Lord involves more than an outward way or practice; it involves the matter of an inner life as well.

For example, some argue whether baptism should be by immersion or by sprinkling. I often tell people that baptism is not merely a practice; it is a matter that speaks of knowing the Lord inwardly in His death and resurrection. It is pointless if we merely make a change in an outward practice, but our inner life remains unchanged. If we change the broth but not the medicine in the broth, there will be no impact on the person who is sick. There is no value in changing outward things if there is no inward change. We need vision for our outward way and revelation for our inner life. Our way must be heavenly, whereas our life must be Christ.

A friend in the Lord once asked me, "Why does your church not take interest in social issues? It is as if you are floating in the air above the earth." I replied, "I am a servant of God in order to speak for God; how can I take an interest in social issues? How can I be involved with earthly matters?" A heavenly vision always makes people heavenly. The church is heavenly, and it should not be defiled by earthly things. Social customs and worldly practices are earthly, human matters; they are not matters related to the church. Although the church walks on the earth, she is not earthly; she walks a heavenly way on earth. The life of the church is also heavenly; it is Christ Himself. The church has a heavenly way and the life of Christ.

We must have vision and revelation in order to serve God. The way to serve God comes from the vision, and the life to serve God comes from revelation. Nothing human should be brought into the service to God, that is, nothing from our past, nothing that is Chinese, nothing that is foreign, nothing that is old, and even nothing that is new. No religious system, no person, no human method, no social practice, and no personal ideas are allowed in the service to the Lord. In his service as Saul, Paul brought the things from the Old Testament into his service, the things given by God to his fathers. From a human perspective, there is nothing better than the things that Saul brought into his service. We can bring in things that are Socratic or Confucian in nature, but these things cannot compare to the things of the Old Testament, Judaism, and the law, things that God wanted Saul to abandon. If God did not want these things, how could He have any regard for things that are merely social, worldly, and human? Simply because something reflects a current trend does not mean that it should be brought into the service of the church. The heavenly vision stops the earthly practices and methods of God's serving ones. The heavenly vision adjusts us.

In contrast, revelation causes us to know Christ inwardly. Men such as Socrates, Confucius, Mencius, and even Bertrand Russell have spoken many words. However, we do not preach the words of men; we preach Christ Himself. Christ is the Word. John 1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh" (vv. 1, 14). The Word in these verses is not objective but subjective. We are not preaching dead letters, dead teachings, dead creeds, or dead doctrines. We are preaching the living Jesus, the living Christ, that is, the Lord Himself. Our speaking cannot be understood by mere mental exercise or outward Bible reading; rather, God must reveal His Son in us so that we may know the Son of God who is our life. This was the content of Paul's preaching. The way of his preaching came from a heavenly vision, and the content of his preaching came from revelation. His way was heavenly, and his content was the living Christ Himself.

Some Christian groups show films at their gospel meetings to boost their low attendance, and they advertise in order to increase the number of attendees. Then they show the film after the message so that attendees have to listen to the message first. This often causes the attendees to murmur about

being forced to listen to a message. Some even leave before the film starts. When the film is finally shown, the content of the message is forgotten. When I speak to the brothers about this, I ask, “Why do they do this?” Certainly this practice does not come from a heavenly vision. We should preach the living Lord Himself, and our way of preaching should be heavenly and spiritual. Even if other Christian groups take the worldly way of using films to appeal to people, we should not adopt this practice.

Recently, the brothers and sisters have formed gospel teams and are going out with bass drums to preach the gospel enthusiastically. Nevertheless, within me there is a question: “Is this sounding of bass drums according to a heavenly vision? Can it withstand the shining of the heavenly vision? Is the practice of gathering people through the sounding of a bass drum heavenly or earthly? Is there a heavenly power that is unsettling people and inclining them to hear the gospel, or are we merely summoning a crowd with drums?” Some brothers say, “Drumming is right; on the day of Pentecost men were gathered by a sound out of heaven as in Acts 2:2.” Yes, they were gathered by sounds, but where did the sound originate from—heaven or earth?

This does not mean that we must never use drums; I am even responsible for starting gospel teams in 1948 in Shanghai and Nanking. Strictly speaking, the only question that matters is whether our way has a heavenly source. I am not against the going out of gospel teams, but we must see a vision and have a revelation in our service. We cannot bring worldly ways, human methods, social practices, or even ancient or modern ways into the service. We must not bring any human ways into the service.

It is not enough to have an outward way; we must also have life inwardly. God wants us to preach outwardly according to His inner life. God does not need us to preach the doctrine of baptism but to preach the reality of baptism, which is the crucified and resurrected Christ who is our life. With a heavenly vision the way to serve God will be clear, and with revelation the content of our service will be proper.

NEEDING A VISION TO SERVE THE LORD

All God’s serving ones must have a vision. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, every serving one of God had a vision. Abel offered sheep based on vision and revelation. Cain’s offering of the fruit of the ground, however, was not according to vision or revelation. Many Bible readers feel that God was unfair to Cain. Both brothers brought an offering, but God had regard only for Abel’s offering, not for Cain’s offering (Gen. 4:3-6). When I first read this account, I felt that way, but gradually I realized that Abel offered sheep according to a vision, whereas Cain offered something out of himself. Abel’s offering was based on a vision; God showed him the way, and he made an offering according to God’s way. Thus, his offering was accepted by God (3:21; Heb. 11:4). Cain followed his own way with no regard for God’s heart. Thus, God could not accept his offering. This can be likened to a servant doing something with no regard for his master’s instructions. No master would hire such a servant.

Noah built the ark because he received a vision from God, not because he had a personal dream. In regard to the ark, he did according to all that God commanded him (Gen. 6:13-22). Similarly, Abraham’s decision to leave Ur of the Chaldeans was not initiated by a personal decision but by a vision that he received from God (12:1-4).

The children of Israel were brought out of Egypt by Moses because he was sent by God, who said to him, “I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt” (Exo. 3:10). Later, God established the passover and, through Moses, instructed the children of Israel to prepare the lamb, to put its blood on the doorposts and lintel, and to eat the flesh of the lamb and the unleavened bread with their loins girded, sandals on their feet, and a staff in their hand (12:1-14) so that they could go out from the Egyptians (11:1-8; 14:1-31). All this was according to a vision that God gave to Moses. God commanded him, and he brought the children of Israel out according to

God's command. After bringing the children of Israel into the wilderness, Moses did not presume to set up the tabernacle, altar, Ark, and golden lampstand according to his own pattern. Rather, he received revelation from God during the forty days that he was in God's presence. Moses built according to this heavenly pattern, and he set up the priesthood according to God's instruction (24:12, 17-18; 25:1—31:11; 35:1—40:38). This involved service with revelation.

When Joshua succeeded Moses, God said to him, "Arise, and cross over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them, to the children of Israel...Be strong and take courage, for you will cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give to them" (Josh. 1:2, 6). When God revealed, Joshua acted. Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel also were prophets with vision. No prophet served God without vision and revelation.

This was the situation in the Old Testament, but even more it was the situation in the New Testament. The Gospels record the Lord Jesus leading His disciples for three and a half years, giving them vision and revelation so that they would receive heavenly sight. When the Lord died and resurrected, the Spirit of reality guided the disciples further into all the reality (John 16:13). The Epistles of Paul are full of vision and revelation (2 Cor. 12:1; Eph. 3:3-5). This is especially true of Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, which was written by the apostle John. *Revelation* in Greek means "an unveiling of a mystery that has been hidden." The Lord showed John great revelations through many visions and signs, which became the content of the book of Revelation. Hence, the New Testament, from the Gospels to Revelation, is full of visions and revelations that God gave to man. We must have vision and revelation in order to serve God today. (*The Vision, Ministry, and Leading of the Lord's Serving Ones*, pp. 10-15)