

## WEEK 2 — OUTLINE

### The Apostolic Ministry in Cooperation with Christ's Heavenly Ministry to Shepherd the Church of God as His Flock for the Building Up of the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: John 10:11, 16; 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Heb. 13:20; Rev. 1:13; 2:1, 7

#### « DAY 1 »

- I. Psalms 22 through 24 are a group of psalms revealing Christ from His crucifixion through His shepherding to His kingship in the coming age:
  - A. Psalm 23, which concerns Christ as the Shepherd in His resurrection and ascension, is the bridge between Christ's redeeming death and His church-producing resurrection in Psalm 22 and Christ's coming back as the King, who will regain the entire earth through the church as His Body in Psalm 24.
  - B. In His heavenly ministry Christ is shepherding people, and we need to cooperate with Him by shepherding people; if this fellowship is received by us, there will be a big revival on the earth to bring the Lord back.
- II. John 21 reveals the apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry; it is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John:
  - A. The Gospel of John has twenty-one chapters, but it actually ends with chapter 20.
  - B. The entire book covers the earthly ministry of Christ, beginning with His incarnation as the Word of God to become a man in the flesh (1:14) and ending with His resurrection as the last Adam to become the life-giving Spirit (20:22); hence, chapter 21 should be an appendix.
  - C. Although it is correct to say this, it is more intrinsic to say that John 21 is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John; it consummates the entire Gospel of John by showing that Christ's heavenly ministry and the apostles' ministry on the earth cooperate together to carry out God's economy.

#### « DAY 2 »

- III. In John 10:10-11 and 16 the Lord unveiled to the disciples that He was the good Shepherd who came that the sheep might have life abundantly and that He had other sheep (the Gentiles) which He must lead to join with them (the Jewish believers) to be one flock (one church) under one Shepherd:
  - A. The Lord's shepherding was firstly in His earthly ministry (Matt. 9:36; cf. 10:1-6).

B. The Lord's shepherding is secondly in His heavenly ministry (1 Pet. 5:4) to take care of the church of God, issuing in His Body.

#### IV. The Lord commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep:

A. When the Lord stayed with His disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension, in one of His appearances, He commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep in His absence, while He is in the heavens (John 21:15-17).

B. This is to incorporate the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock, which is the church that issues in the Body of Christ.

C. Later, in the book of Acts, Peter said, "We will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word" (6:4); this is to cooperate with Christ's heavenly ministry of intercession (Heb. 7:25) and of ministering God into His people (8:2).

D. Peter was so impressed with this commission of the Lord that in his first book he told the believers that they were like sheep being led astray, but they had now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls (1 Pet. 2:25):

1. Christ indwells us to be our life and everything, but He is also overseeing, observing, the condition and situation of our inner being.

2. He shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our inner being and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our soul, our real person (cf. Heb. 13:17).

E. Peter exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock of God among them so that when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, they, the faithful elders, will receive the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

F. Peter's word indicates that the heavenly ministry of Christ is mainly to shepherd the church of God as His flock, which issues in His Body.

### « DAY 3 »

#### V. The following words of the apostle Paul also show the incorporation of the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock:

A. In Acts 20:28 Paul told the elders in Ephesus, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained [or purchased] through His own blood."

B. Paul said, "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (v. 29); the apostle did not care for his own life (v. 24), but he was very concerned for the future of the church, which was a treasure to him and to God.

C. Paul says in Hebrews 13:20, "God...brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant":

1.The eternal covenant is the covenant of the new testament to gain a flock, which is the church issuing in the Body and consummating the New Jerusalem; the eternal covenant of God is to consummate the New Jerusalem by the shepherding.

2.God raised up our Lord from the dead to be the great Shepherd to consummate the New Jerusalem according to God’s eternal covenant.

VI. The main purpose and goal of the apostolic ministry incorporated with Christ’s heavenly ministry are to build up the Body of Christ, which will consummate the New Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God (cf. Eph. 3:2, 8-9; 1 Pet. 5:10).

VII. The matter of shepherding God’s flock for the main purpose and ultimate consummation of the eternal economy of God is even referred to in Song of Songs:

A.“Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock [for satisfaction]? / Where do you make it lie down at noon [for rest]?” (1:7a).

B.“Go forth on the footsteps of the flock, / And pasture your young goats / By the shepherds’ tents” (v. 8b).

C.“My beloved is mine, and I am his; / He pastures his flock among the lilies [the seekers of Christ who live a life of trusting in God with a single heart]” (2:16).

D. “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine; / He pastures his flock among the lilies” (6:3).

VIII. To shepherd the believers is very crucial for their growth in life; we must take the shepherding way to preach the gospel and revive the church:

A.We should pray, “Lord, I want to be revived; from today I want to be a shepherd; I want to go to feed people, to shepherd people, and to flock people together.”

B.In John 10 and 21 the Lord used three words concerning shepherding: feed, shepherd, and flock (10:16; 21:15-16); we can also use the word flock as a verb.

C.All the churches have to learn how to flock together so that they can be blent together; the elders and co-workers should take the lead to practice this.

## « DAY 4 »

IX. The organic maintenance of the golden lampstand is Christ’s heavenly ministry to cherish the churches in His humanity and nourish the churches in His divinity to produce the overcomers through His organic shepherding (Rev. 1:13; 2:7; John 10:11, 14; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Heb. 13:20):

A.The Son of Man is in His humanity, the golden girdle signifies His divinity, and breasts are a sign of love:

1. Christ was girded at the loins, strengthened for the divine work (Exo. 28:4; Dan. 10:5) to produce the churches, but now He is girded about at the breasts, caring for the churches that He has produced by His love (Rev. 1:13).
2. The golden girdle signifies Christ's divinity as His divine energy, and the breasts signify that this golden energy is exercised and motivated by and with His love to nourish the churches.

## « DAY 5 »

B. Christ takes care of the churches in His humanity as the Son of Man to cherish them (v. 13a):

1. He dresses the lamps of the lampstands to make them proper, cherishing us that we may be happy, pleasant, and comfortable (Exo. 30:7; cf. Psa. 42:5, 11):
  - a. The Lord's presence provides an atmosphere of tenderness and warmth to cherish our being, giving us rest, comfort, healing, cleansing, and encouragement.
  - b. We can enjoy the cherishing atmosphere of the Lord's presence in the church to receive the nourishing supply of life (Eph. 5:29; cf. 1 Tim. 4:6; Eph. 4:11).
2. He trims the wicks of the lamps of the lampstand, cutting off all the negative things, which frustrate our shining (Exo. 25:38):
  - a. The charred part of the wick, the snuff, signifies things that are not according to God's purpose, which need to be cut off, such as our flesh, our natural man, our self, and our old creation.
  - b. He trims away all the differences among the churches (the wrongdoings, shortages, failures, and defects) so that they may be the same in essence, appearance, and expression (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 12:18; Phil. 2:2).

C. Christ takes care of the churches in His divinity with His divine love, signified by the golden girdle on His breasts, to nourish the churches (Rev. 1:13b):

## « DAY 6 »

1. He nourishes us with Himself as the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry of three stages so that we may grow and mature in the divine life to be His overcomers to accomplish His eternal economy.
  2. As the walking Christ, He gets to know the condition of each church, and as the speaking Spirit, He trims and fills the lampstands with fresh oil, the supply of the Spirit (2:1, 7; cf. Exo. 27:20-21; Zech. 4:6, 11-14).
  3. To participate in His move and enjoy His care, we must be in the churches.
- X. Through Christ's wonderful shepherding, we will enjoy Him as our blessings both today and for eternity (Isa. 49:10; Rev. 7:9-17).

# « WEEK 2 — DAY 1 »

## Morning Nourishment

Psa. 22:22 I will declare Your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

23:1 Jehovah is my Shepherd; I will lack nothing.

24:9-10 Lift up your heads, O gates; and lift up, O long enduring doors; and the King of glory will come in. Who is this King of glory? Jehovah of hosts—He is the King of glory! Selah

Psalms 22—24 are a group of psalms revealing Christ from His crucifixion to His kingship in the coming age. In Psalm 22 we see Christ's death, His resurrection, and His many brothers produced in His resurrection to form His church. Psalm 23 is concerning Christ as the Shepherd. This Shepherd today is in His resurrection. Psalm 24 is concerning Christ as the coming King in God's kingdom. Thus, in these three psalms, we have Christ crucified, Christ resurrected, Christ producing the church, Christ being the Shepherd and shepherding His flock, the church, and Christ coming back to be the King. (Life-study of the Psalms, p. 137)

## Today's Reading

According to Psalm 23, Christ shepherds us in five stages: (1) the enjoyment of Christ as the green pastures and of the Spirit as the waters of rest (v. 2); (2) the revival and transformation on the paths of righteousness (v. 3); (3) the experience of the resurrected pneumatic Christ while walking through the valley of the shadow of death (v. 4); (4) the deeper and higher enjoyment of the resurrected Christ in fighting against the adversaries (v. 5); and (5) the lifelong enjoyment of the divine goodness and kindness in the house of Jehovah (v. 6). (Psa. 23:1, footnote 1)

By being incarnated, crucified, and resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), Christ as Jehovah (John 8:24), the Triune God (Exo. 3:14), is qualified to be our Shepherd. By His redeeming, washing, resurrecting, and regenerating us, we are qualified to be His flock. To enjoy Christ's shepherding, we need to be in the flock, that is, in the church. (Psa. 23:1, footnote 2)

If all the churches receive this teaching to participate in Christ's wonderful shepherding, there will be a big revival in the recovery....Shepherding and teaching should be like two feet for our move with the Lord. Our shepherding should always be with teaching, and our teaching should always be with shepherding.

John 21 reveals the apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry. In His heavenly ministry Christ is shepherding people, and we need to cooperate with Him by shepherding people. Without shepherding, our work for the Lord cannot be effective. We must learn all the truths so that we may have something to speak and go to contact people to shepherd them.

Shepherding is something divine. In order to be a shepherd, we must be a witness of Christ, a member of Christ, and a brother of Christ, sharing His sonship. Then we will participate in the oracle of the sonship to become a prophet. As a prophet for God's oracle, we will speak for the Lord. Meanwhile, we need to shepherd people. This is the way to be fruitful, to have the multiplication and the increase. If this kind of fellowship is received by us, I believe there will be a big revival on the earth, not by a few spiritual giants but by the many members of Christ's Body being shepherds who follow the steps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining fallen people. (The Vital Groups, p. 40)

The entire Gospel of John covers the earthly ministry of Christ, beginning with His incarnation as the Word of God to become a man in the flesh (1:1-14) and ending with His resurrection as the last Adam to become the life-giving Spirit (ch. 20); hence, chapter 21 should be an appendix. Although it is correct to say this, it is more intrinsic to say that John 21 is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John. Without chapter 21, John is not completed. It consummates the entire Gospel of John by showing that Christ's heavenly ministry and the apostles' ministry on the earth cooperate together to carry out God's New Testament economy. (Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, p. 130)

Further Reading: The Vital Groups, msg. 4

## « WEEK 2 — DAY 2 »

### Morning Nourishment

John 10:10-11 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly. I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.

In John 10:10, 11, and 16 the Lord unveiled to the disciples that He was the good Shepherd who came that the sheep might have life abundantly and that He had other sheep (the Gentiles) which He must lead to join with them (the Jewish believers) to be one flock (one church) under one Shepherd.

The Lord's shepherding was firstly in His earthly ministry (Matt. 9:36). The Lord saw the Israelites as sheep harassed by their leaders; they were cast away like sheep not having a shepherd. The Lord as the Shepherd of God's elect prayed, and God told His sent One to appoint twelve apostles that they might take care of the sheep of God (Matt. 10:1-6).

The Lord's shepherding is secondly in His heavenly ministry (1 Pet. 5:4) to take care of the church of God, issuing in His Body. When He was on the earth, He was shepherding. After His resurrection and ascension to the heavens, He is still shepherding. (Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, pp. 130-131)

### Today's Reading

When the Lord stayed with His disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension, in one of His appearances, He commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep in His absence, while He is in the heavens (John 21:15-17). Shepherding implies feeding, but it includes much more than feeding. To shepherd is to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock.

This is to incorporate the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock, which is the church that issues in the Body of Christ.

Peter was so impressed with this commission of the Lord that in his first book he told the believers that they were like sheep being led astray, but they had now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer (Christ) of their souls (1 Pet. 2:25). Christ's shepherding of His flock includes His caring for their outward things and also their inner being, their souls. He takes care of the things concerning their souls by overseeing their souls. Christ indwells us to be our life and everything, but He is also overseeing, observing, the condition and situation of our inner being. He shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our inner being and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our soul, our real person....Peter exhorted the elders to shepherd the flock of God among them so that when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, they, the faithful elders, will receive the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:1-4)....Peter's word indicates that the heavenly ministry of Christ is mainly to shepherd the church of God as His flock, which issues in His Body.

The main purpose and goal of the apostolic ministry incorporated with Christ's heavenly ministry are to build up the Body of Christ, which will consummate the New Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God.

In view of the eternal economy of God, there is the tendency through the whole writing of John to have the church of God issuing in the Body of Christ for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy. Its judicial section qualifies and positions the believers to carry out its organic section by the divine life of the processed and consummated Triune God. But today most Christians are just lingering in its judicial section and are satisfied with it, paying very little attention to its organic section and missing the critical point of the fulfillment of the eternal economy of God. The critical need of the Lord's recovery today is not to be held back by the satisfaction of its judicial section but to press forward to carry out its organic section so that there may be the possibility of accomplishing the eternal economy of God. (Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, pp. 131-133, 137)

Further Reading: Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, msg. 13

## « WEEK 2 — DAY 3 »

### Morning Nourishment

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

Heb. 13:20 Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant.

The following words of the apostle Paul confirm [the incorporation of the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock]....In Acts 20:28 Paul told the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God...." Although Paul was on an urgent trip back to Jerusalem, while he was journeying he sent word for the elders in Ephesus to come to him. Then he gave them a long word recorded in Acts 20....Paul said that "fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (v. 29). The flock is the church. (Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, pp. 131-132)

### Today's Reading

Paul said in Hebrews 13:20, "God...brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant." The eternal covenant is the covenant of the new testament to gain a flock, which is the church issuing in the Body and consummating the New Jerusalem. The eternal covenant of God is to consummate the New Jerusalem by the shepherding. God raised up our Lord from the dead to be the great Shepherd to consummate the New Jerusalem according to God's eternal covenant.

This matter of shepherding God's flock for the main purpose and ultimate consummation of the eternal economy of God is even referred to in Song of Songs. In this book Christ shepherds His seeker and pursuer.

In Song of Songs 1:7a the seeker says, "Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock [for satisfaction]? / Where do you make it lie down at noon [for rest]?"

The Shepherd responds to the seeker by saying, "Go forth on the footsteps of the flock, / And pasture your young goats / By the shepherds' tents" (1:8b). Under the Lord as the Chief Shepherd there are many other shepherds. The many shepherds pasture their young by their tents, that is, where they live.

Song of Songs 2:16 says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his; / He pastures his flock among the lilies [the seekers of Christ who live a life of trusting in God with a single heart]." The Lord is pasturing all His seekers as lilies, taking care of them, feeding them, and shepherding them that they may grow.

Song of Songs 6:3 says, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; / He pastures his flock among the lilies." To shepherd the believers is very crucial for their growth in life.

I hope that we would pray, "Lord, I want to be revived. From today I want to be a shepherd. I want to go to feed people, to shepherd people, and to flock people together." In John 10 and 21 the Lord used three words concerning shepherding: feed, shepherd, and flock. He said, "Feed My lambs," and, "Shepherd My sheep" (21:15-16). He also said, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd" (10:16). The other sheep are the Gentile believers who would be joined together with the Jewish believers to be one flock. The Lord used the word flock here as a noun. I also like to use it as a verb. We should learn to feed, to shepherd, and to flock together. All the churches have to learn how to flock together so that they can be blent together. In the atmosphere of flocking, people are subdued, convinced, nourished, and stirred up by the Lord. All the nearby churches should be flocked together for the saints to be shepherded and stirred up. The elders and co-workers should take the lead to practice this. (Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, pp. 132-134, 137)

Further Reading: Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, msg. 13

## « WEEK 2 — DAY 4 »

### Morning Nourishment

Rev. 1:12-13 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle.

Christ today is in the midst of the churches. On one hand, as the High Priest, He is interceding in the heavens for the churches (Heb. 9:24; 7:25-26; Rom. 8:34), and on the other hand, He is walking in the midst of the churches to care for them. To participate in His move and enjoy His care, we must be in the churches. (Rev. 1:13, footnote 1)

Christ as the Son of Man is not only for the accomplishing of redemption but also for the church life, because the church is composed of human beings....His dealings here with the churches are based on His humanity. In His humanity He was altogether victorious and successful in bearing the testimony of God. The churches also, being in humanity, surely can be victorious and successful in bearing the testimony of God. (Rev. 1:13, footnote 2)

### Today's Reading

Christ is the best model of cherishing and nourishing as seen in Revelation 1....Verses 12 and 13...[show] that Christ is taking care of the lampstands by being the Son of Man with a long garment. This garment is the priestly robe (Exo. 28:33-35), which shows that Christ is our great High Priest.

He is also girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle. This girdle is a long piece of gold. The girdle and the gold are not two separate things. The girdle is the gold. The golden girdle is one piece of gold to become a belt. The Son of Man is in His humanity, and the golden girdle signifies His divinity. This golden girdle is on His breasts, and the breasts are a sign of love.

The priests in the Old Testament were girded at the loins for their ministry (Exo. 28:4). In Daniel 10:5 Christ also is girded at His loins, with fine gold. To be girded at the loins is to be strengthened for the work. Christ has finished His divine work in producing the churches. Now by His love He is caring for the churches which He has produced. This is why He is girded at the breasts. Today Christ is our High Priest taking care of His churches established by His labor. But now He takes care of the churches with the girdle not on His loins but on His breasts, signifying love. I hope we all could realize that in these days even among us, Christ is wearing a golden girdle on His breasts.

The golden girdle is a sign, signifying Christ's divinity becoming His energy. Christ's energy is totally His divinity. A piece of gold is now a girdle. The totality of Christ in His divinity has become a girdle. The golden girdle signifies Christ's divinity becoming His energy, and the breasts signify that this golden energy is exercised and motivated by His love. His divine energy is exercised by and with His love to nourish the churches. (The Vital Groups, pp. 105-106)

The churches, signified by the seven golden lampstands, are the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:2, 9) in the divine nature, shining in the dark night locally yet collectively. The churches should be of the divine nature—golden. They should be the stands, even the lampstands, that bear the lamp with the oil (Christ as the life-giving Spirit) and shine in the darkness individually and collectively. They are individual lampstands locally, yet at the same time they are a group, a collection, of lampstands universally. They not only are shining locally but also are bearing universally the same testimony both to the localities and to the universe. They are of the same nature and in the same shape. They bear the same lamp for the same purpose and are fully identified with one another, not having any individual distinctiveness. The differences among the seven churches recorded in Revelation 2 and 3 are all of a negative nature, not a positive one. Negatively, in their failures, the churches are different and separate from one another; but positively, in their nature, shape, and purpose, they are absolutely identical and are connected to one another. (Rev. 1:20, footnote 1)

Further Reading: The Vital Groups, msg. 11



## « WEEK 2 — DAY 5 »

### Morning Nourishment

Exo. 25:37 And you shall make its lamps, seven; and set up its lamps to give light to the area in front of it.

27:21 In the Tent of Meeting, outside the veil which is before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall maintain it [the lampstand] in order from evening to morning before Jehovah...

30:7-8 ...Every morning when he dresses the lamps....And when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight...

Christ takes care of the churches as the lampstands in His humanity as “the Son of Man” to cherish them (Rev. 1:13a). Christ as our High Priest takes care of the churches He has established first in His humanity to cherish the churches, to make the churches happy, pleasant, and comfortable.

He does this by dressing the lamps of the lampstand. The high priest in the Old Testament dressed the lamps of the lampstands every morning (Exo. 30:7). To dress the lamps is to make them proper. (The Vital Groups, p. 106)

### Today's Reading

Christ cares for the lampstands by trimming the wicks of the lamps of the lampstand, just as the priest did according to the type in the Old Testament (Exo. 25:38). When the wick was burned out, it became charred and black, so the priest had to come to cut off the black part of the wick....The charred part of the wick, the snuff, signifies things that are not according to God's purpose which need to be cut off, such as our flesh, our natural man, our self, and our old creation. All the lampstands are organic. They are living lampstands. Since each church is a living lampstand, each church has much feeling. A church with charred wicks will not feel comfortable.

Our Christ is the same as we are. He has been tempted in everything like us, so He can easily be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses [Heb 4:15]. This means that He always sympathizes with our weaknesses in His humanity. He is the High Priest in His humanity taking care of us by cherishing us all the time.

Christ, as the High Priest, takes care of the churches as the lampstands in His divinity with His divine love, signified by the golden girdle on His breasts, to nourish the churches (Rev. 1:13b). Christ is not only human but also divine....His divinity as the divine energy nourishes the churches in many ways.

Revelation 2 and 3 reveal Christ's care for the lampstands. On the one hand, He trims the wicks of the church lamps, cutting away all the wrongdoings, shortages, failures, and defects mentioned in the seven epistles to the seven churches. Christ did the best trimming work in His humanity to cherish the churches. On the other hand, in each of these seven epistles, we see Christ's nourishing. (The Vital Groups, pp. 106-107)

In the Old Testament there was the lampstand in the tabernacle. Every morning these lamps were trimmed by having their charred wicks snuffed (Exo. 30:7). In addition, they were kept supplied with oil (27:20). To trim is to cut off the charred ends, which would no longer burn brightly; to add oil is to supply what is needed. In Revelation 2 and 3 our High Priest was trimming the seven lampstands. He was cutting away those things that were not needed and that frustrated the shining. At the same time He was supplying the oil that was needed and that would make the lampstands burn brightly. The seven lampstands were receiving His trimming and His infilling.

Our old religious concepts are against God's economy and need to be trimmed away. These concepts are black, charred, and dark. They are one of the things that hinder the shining of the local churches. Thus, we need our High Priest to step in and trim them away.

Lukewarmness must be trimmed away, along with religion, worldliness, and the evils of Jezebel. Morning by morning the priests did this trimming work. (CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, “The Mending Ministry of John,” pp. 356-357, 359)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, “The Mending Ministry of John,” ch. 14

## « WEEK 2 — DAY 6 »

### Morning Nourishment

Rev. 2:1 ...These things says...He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches...

Isa. 49:10 They will not hunger or thirst; neither the scorching heat nor the sun will strike them; for He who has compassion on them will lead them and will guide them beside the springs of water.

In the first epistle to the church at Ephesus, Christ says, “To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7)...If we do not enjoy Christ as the tree of life in the church life today, surely we will not participate in the tree of life in the kingdom age...If I do not eat Christ here today, I will not eat Him in the kingdom age. I have to eat here first.

In the seventh epistle...He promised to dine with the ones who would open the door to Him (3:20). We can see that this is the nourishing of Christ in His divinity exercised by and with His love.

He is also the High Priest with His divinity as the “energy belt” to nourish us with Himself as the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry of three stages...His nourishing the churches in His divinity is so that the churches may grow and mature in His divine life and become the overcomers in His sevenfold intensification. (The Vital Groups, pp. 107-109)

### Today's Reading

Our Christ today is our High Priest. In His humanity He is easily touched with the feeling of our weaknesses. He sympathizes with our weakness because He was tempted in all respects like us. He is cherishing us in His humanity. Meanwhile, He is nourishing us in His divinity with all the positive aspects of His person revealed in the seven epistles to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. He is taking care of the churches in the recovery in both ways. In His humanity He is cherishing us to make us proper so that we may be happy, pleasant, and comfortable. In His divinity He is nourishing us so that we may grow and mature in the divine life to be His overcomers to accomplish His eternal economy. (The Vital Groups, p. 109)

The outcome of our High Priest's ministering in the churches is that a number of overcomers are brought forth....We are now under this ministry. Christ is busy walking through the churches and speaking. As He walks through the churches, He speaks to everyone.

His speaking is according to what He is and also according to the condition of the church. In every epistle He begins by saying who and what He is. Then He also speaks in every case according to what the church is. His speaking is both practical and equipping.

In His walking He is Christ. In His speaking He is the Spirit. At the beginning of each of the seven epistles it is the Lord who speaks (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). At the end it is the Spirit speaking to the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

Your experience will confirm this. When Christ came and walked through the church in your locality, you were enlightened and rebuked. The walking Christ became the speaking Spirit. Christ is the Spirit. By His speaking you are supplied with the tree of life and the hidden manna. Then you are transformed. Little by little the muddy things are washed away, and you become a white stone, justified, accepted, and approved by God for the building up of His dwelling place, which consummates in the New Jerusalem. Christ today is busy ministering His heavenly priesthood. (CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, “The Mending Ministry of John,” pp. 353-354)

We can never improve ourselves. We need a Shepherd to feed us all the time. What a restful enjoyment this is!

If we believe in God's word, we can be satisfied, and we can have God's sheltering and the Lord's shepherding [Isa. 49:10]. God has promised that we can enjoy these three items of blessings today. (CWWN, vol. 37, pp. 10-11)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, “The Mending Ministry of John,” ch. 13; CWWN, vol. 37, ch. 2

## « WEEK 2 — HYMN

### Hymns, #1221

1

Jesus, our wonderful Shepherd  
Brought us right out of the fold  
Into His pasture so plenteous,  
Into His riches untold.  
Glorious church life,  
Feasting from such a rich store!  
Here where we're dwelling in oneness  
God commands life evermore.

2

In the divisions He sought us,  
Weary and famished for food;  
Into the good land He brought us,  
Oh, to our spirit how good!

3

Jesus Himself is our pasture,  
He is the food that we eat;  
We as His sheep are fed richly  
Each time, whenever we meet.

4

Dwell we here on a high mountain,  
Wet with the morning-fresh dew,  
Slaking our thirst at the fountain,  
Water so living and new.

5

Christ is our rest and enjoyment,  
Here we have nothing to fear;  
Here all the sheep dwell securely,  
Kept by His presence so dear.