

Week Eleven

The Vision of the All-sufficient One— the Divine View of God's People

MC Hymns: 977, 1226

Scripture Reading: Num. 23:7-12, 19-26; 24:3-9; Rev. 21:9-10; Acts 26:19

Outline

Day 1

- I. We should never underestimate the value of having a proper view of a certain matter; the view changes us; it affects our entire being—Rev. 21:9-10; Acts 26:19.
- II. In the Bible vision denotes an extraordinary scene; it refers to a special kind of seeing—a glorious, inward seeing—and to the spiritual scenery we see from God—Ezek. 1:1, 4-28; Dan. 7:1, 9-10, 13-14:
 - A. In order to have a vision, we need revelation, light, and sight—Eph. 1:17-18a.
 - B. The heavenly vision governs us, restricts us, controls us, directs us, preserves us, revolutionizes us, keeps us in the genuine oneness, and gives us the boldness to go on—Prov. 29:18a.
 - C. Under the heavenly vision we are directed toward God's destination, and our life is controlled according to God's economy—Phil. 3:13-14; 1 Tim. 1:4.
- III. Like Balaam, a Gentile prophet who was brought into a vision, we need to see the vision of the All-sufficient One and have a divine view of God's people—Num. 23:7-12, 19-26; 24:3-9:

- A. The prophet Balaam heard the words of God and saw the vision of the All-sufficient One—v. 4; Gen. 17:1, footnote 2.**
- B. “From the top of the rocks I see him, / And from the hills I behold him. / Here is a people who live alone / And do not reckon themselves among the nations”—Num. 23:9:**
1. This word indicates that the children of Israel were a holy people, a sanctified people set apart from the nations.
 2. The same is true of the church—1 Cor. 3:17; Eph. 1:4; 5:27; 1 Pet. 2:9.
- C. “Who can count the dust of Jacob, / Or number the fourth part of Israel? / Let me die the death of the upright, / And let my latter end be like theirs!”—Num. 23:10:**
1. Balaam’s word in verse 10a was a blessing of abundant increase.
 2. His word in verse 10b was a word of great blessing and appreciation.
- D. “He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, / Nor has He seen trouble in Israel; / Jehovah their God is with them, / And the shout of a king is among them”—v. 21:**
1. This word was spoken not according to the human view but according to the divine view.
 2. In the sight of God, Israel is without fault:
 - a. In themselves God’s people have many defects.
 - b. In God’s redemption and in Christ they have no defects.
 3. When God looks at His people, He does not see them according to what they are in themselves but according to what they are in Christ—cf. 2 Cor. 5:16-17.

Day 2

- E. “How fair are your tents, O Jacob, / Your tabernacles, O Israel!”—Num. 24:5:**
1. Balaam’s first parable reveals that Israel is holy (23:9); the second, that Israel is perfect (v. 21); and the third, that Israel is beautiful, as indicated

by the word fair (24:5).

2. This will be the actual condition of Israel in the millennium:
 - a. God promised that the descendants of Abraham would be a blessing to all the nations—Gen. 12:2-3.
 - b. Eventually, the Jews will be fully blessed by God, and they will be a blessing to the entire human race—Isa. 2:2-3; Zech. 8:20-23.
3. Balaam's parables also indicate that in its standing the church is holy, in the sight of God the church is perfect, and in appearance the church is beautiful, fair—cf. Eph. 5:27:
 - a. The church is sanctified, perfect, and beautiful when it is full of Christ—3:15-21; 4:13, 15.
 - b. Christ is the content, the constituent, and every part of the church as the new man—Col. 3:10-11.

F. “Like valleys they are spread forth, / Like gardens beside a river, / Like aloes which Jehovah has planted, / Like cedars beside water. / Water shall flow from his buckets, / And his seed shall be in many waters” —Num. 24:6-7a:

1. The word concerning valleys and gardens in verse 6 and concerning water flowing from buckets in verse 7 reveals figuratively that the church has valleys (Rev. 2:9-10), that the church is like a garden (1 Cor. 3:9b), and that in the church there is an abundance of water (12:13; cf. John 7:38-39).
2. These are some of the riches concerning the church.

G. Balaam's word in Numbers 24:7b about Jacob's king being higher than Agag and about Jacob's kingdom being exalted is a prophecy that eventually has its fulfillment in Christ.

Day 3

H. “Blessed is everyone who blesses you, / And cursed is everyone who curses you” —v. 9b:

1. Instead of cursing God's people, Balaam, speaking on behalf of God, altogether blessed them.

2. To bless a person is to speak well of him, to speak positively concerning him—Eph. 1:3.
3. The more we praise the Lord for His people and speak well of them in faith, the more we put ourselves under God's blessing:
 - a. Those who speak positively concerning the church receive the blessing.
 - b. Those who speak negatively put themselves under a curse.

Day 4 & Day 5

IV. We need to have a vision concerning the church and see that the church is "Christly," "resurrectionly," and heavenly; these adjectives describe the facts conveyed in the Bible—vv. 17-23; 2:5-6:

A. The church is a matter in Christ, in resurrection, and in ascension in the heavenlies—vv. 5-6:

1. After Christ terminated the entire old creation through His all-inclusive death, the church was produced in His resurrection; the church is absolutely in resurrection, a new creation created in Christ's resurrection and by the resurrected Christ—1 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 2:6.
2. The church has been resurrected with Christ, and now the church is in ascension, in the heavenlies, with Christ—v. 6.
3. The church is of Christ, the church is of resurrection, and the church is of the heavens.

B. Such a vision will govern us to the uttermost and rule out everything that is not Christly (of Christ), resurrectionly (of resurrection), or heavenly (of the heavens)—Acts 26:19.

V. We need to learn that the way we look at God's people is a serious matter:

A. Joseph's two dreams, both from God, unveiled to him God's divine view concerning the nature, position, function, and goal of God's people on earth—Gen. 37:5-9:

1. In his first dream Joseph saw sheaves in the field (vv. 7-8); if we see this

heavenly dream, then we see that in God's view all His people are sheaves full of life to produce food for the meal offering to satisfy God and man (Lev. 2:4-5).

2. In his second dream Joseph saw the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowing down to him; in God's eternal view, His people are heavenly bodies full of light—Gen. 37:9; cf. Rev. 12:1.
3. If we praise the Lord for His saints being full of life and light, we will be the first to participate in life—Gen. 12:2-3; Num. 24:9.

Day 6

B. In Numbers 33, the record of the forty-two stations of the journey of the Israelites from the land of slavery to the land of rest, there is no mention of the failures of the people:

1. If we had only the record in Numbers 33, we would think that in their journey the children of Israel were altogether aggressive, positive, and successful, going from station to station until they reached their goal—the land of rest:
 - a. After reading Numbers 1 through 32, we may have the opinion that there was nothing good with the children of Israel.
 - b. Numbers 33 shows that in the eyes of God the record regarding them is positive.
 - c. This indicates that, in His view, God always considers His people in a positive way.
2. We need to view the church in a heavenly way and realize that all the local churches are parts of the coming New Jerusalem—Rev. 1:10-12, 20; 21:2, 9-11.
3. If we have God's view of His people, we will see them as God sees them—chosen, redeemed, saved from the bondage of the fall, enjoying Christ, being built up with the Triune God, formed into an army to fight for God, and prepared by God to possess the all-inclusive Christ as the good land—Eph. 1:4-7, 11-12; 2:6, 8, 13-16, 21-22; 3:8, 15-21; 4:12-13, 16, 23-24; 5:27; 6:10-18.

WEEK 11 — DAY 1

Morning Nourishment

Num. 23:9 ...Here is a people who live alone and do not reckon themselves among the nations.

21 He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen trouble in Israel; Jehovah their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them.

1 Pet. 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession...

[In Numbers 23:9] the word about the children of Israel's dwelling alone and not reckoning themselves among the nations indicates that they were a holy, sanctified people, a people set apart from the nations. This indicates that the church is composed of a separate people, a particular people, a people sanctified to God. The church is not mixed with the nations but stands alone. [In verse 10] we see the blessing of increase. Jacob, like the dust, will be numberless, countless. No one will be able to count even the fourth part of Israel. The first parable was a blessing upon the children of Israel as a separate people, a particular and special class of people who dwell alone and who are not reckoned among the nations. Because this people will be blessed with abundant increase, no one will be able to number them. After uttering this great blessing, Balaam expressed his appreciation of Israel. (Life-study of Numbers, pp. 253, 264, 253)

Today's Reading

One of the most striking lines in [Balaam's second] parable is in Numbers 23:21: "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, / Nor has He seen trouble in Israel." How could Balaam speak such a word, since Israel was not perfect and since God could see all the iniquities of His people? The answer is that this word was spoken not according to the human view but according to the divine view. God's view is different from our view. If we realize this, we will be careful whenever we speak of the defects of the saints. According to our view, a certain saint may have many defects, but

according to God's view, this saint is perfect.

How can we reconcile the word in verse 21 with the obvious fact that the children of Israel had many iniquities? This apparent contradiction is reconciled by the fact that God's redeemed people have a twofold status: their status in themselves and their status in God's redemption. This is our situation as believers today. In ourselves we have many defects, but in God's redemption and in Christ we have no defects. When God looks at us, He does not see us according to what we are in ourselves but according to what we are in Christ. God does not look at what His redeemed people are in themselves. We may even say that He has forgotten what we are in ourselves. Our basis for saying this is that God has forgiven us, and when God forgives, He forgets (Heb. 8:12). God has put us all into Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). Since He has put us into Christ, when He looks at us, He sees us in Christ. God's view of us is that in Christ we do not have any iniquity. The principle is the same with God's view of the church life. According to our view, the church life may be very poor. But according to God's view, the church life is glorious. God has not beheld iniquity in the church.

Numbers 23:21 says that God has not seen trouble in Israel. Here the word trouble means hard things, evil things that cause people to be troubled. This kind of trouble is even worse than iniquity. In the sight of God, there was neither iniquity nor trouble in His people Israel. In the same principle, God does not see iniquity or trouble in the church life, because the church is in Christ. In Christ we have been chosen, redeemed, and saved from the bondage of the fall. Therefore, according to God's view, we have been brought out of the fall, out of condemnation, and out of ourselves. Therefore, we may say that in Christ the church life is glorious....In ourselves the church life is not glorious, but in Christ the church life truly is glorious. (Life-study of Numbers, pp. 254-255)

Further Reading: Life-study of Numbers, msgs. 34-35

WEEK 11 — DAY 2

Morning Nourishment

Num. 24:5 How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your tabernacles, O Israel!

Eph. 5:27 ...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.

1 Cor. 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body...and were all given to drink one Spirit.

3:9 ...You are God's cultivated land, God's building.

Everything depends on our vision. The Lord told Balaam, the Gentile prophet,"He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, / Nor has He seen trouble in Israel" (Num. 23:21). In the eyes of the Lord,"How fair are your tents, O Jacob, / Your tabernacles, O Israel!" (24:5). God always sees through the valleys to the goal. Of course, if we are in a valley, we may bemoan the fact. But that is not the end—that is just an underpass on the highway to the goal. We must drive through the underpass to the goal upon the high mountain. We must learn to see through things to the goal, not only with insight but also with foresight. The church can never be defeated. We are wrong if we say that the church is always defeated. The church will eventually be victorious! (CWWL, 1964, vol. 4,"The Vision of God's Building," pp. 265-266)

Today's Reading

The Spirit of God came upon Balaam, and he took up his parable and said,"Balaam the son of Beor declares, / And the man whose eye is opened declares; / He declares, he who hears the words of God, / Who sees the vision of the All-sufficient One, / Falling down, but having his eyes uncovered" (Num. 24:3b-4). The phrases whose eye is opened and who hears the speaking of God indicate that the prophet was on the alert. His falling down with his eyes uncovered indicates that he cooperated with

God.

[The word in verse 5] reminds us of Balaam's word concerning Israel in his first two parables. In the first parable he said, "Here is a people who live alone / And do not reckon themselves among the nations" (23:9b). This word indicates that Israel is a holy people, a people separated, or sanctified, unto God. In the sight of God, Israel stands alone. According to God's view, Israel, even today, is not reckoned among the nations. If we have God's view, we will regard Israel as a particular and separate people, as a sanctified and holy nation. In his second parable Balaam said, "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, / Nor has He seen trouble in Israel" (Num. 23:21a). This means that, in the sight of God, Israel is without fault.

The first parable reveals that Israel is holy, and the second, that Israel is perfect....According to the third parable, Israel is beautiful. Israel's beauty is indicated by the word fair [24:5]. In the sight of God, Israel is holy, sinless, and beautiful. In standing she is holy, in kind she is perfect, and in appearance she is beautiful. This reveals that God has chosen, redeemed, saved, separated, uplifted, perfected, and beautified this people. According to the Bible, this will be the actual situation of Israel during the millennium. The Jews are not welcomed by the nations in this age, but they will be welcomed by the nations after the Lord Jesus comes back. God promised that the descendants of Abraham would be a blessing to all the nations (Gen. 12:2-3). Eventually the Jews will be fully blessed by God, and they will be a blessing to the entire human race.

[In Numbers 24:6] Israel is likened to valleys, which usually are green, and to gardens beside a river. Aloe is a plant known for its healing effect. (The Lord Jesus was buried with aloes—John 19:39.) After the coming back of the Lord Jesus, Israel will be a healing to the nations, and that healing will be a great blessing. Numbers 24:7a...indicates that Israel will have an abundant supply of water. The water of a country is related to the riches of that country. The more water a nation has, the more riches it will have. Without water, the land would be a desert. (Life-study of Numbers, pp. 258-259)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1964, vol. 4, "The Vision of God's Building," ch. 11; Truth Lessons—Level Four, vol. 2, lsn. 25

WEEK 11 — DAY 3

Morning Nourishment

Num. 24:9 ...Blessed is everyone who blesses you, and cursed is everyone who curses you.

Eph. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

Something happened in a prayer meeting in Shanghai in the early 1940s that helped me to see God's people as He sees them. In that meeting an experienced sister co-worker, troubled by the low state of the church, cried out to the Lord on behalf of the church. As she prayed, she sighed and groaned because of the poor condition of the church. When she finished praying, Brother Nee broke forth in praise to the Lord and gave Him thanks that the church is never weak or low, but always high. The congregation was shocked. Then Brother Nee helped us to understand the significance of Balaam's prophecy regarding the children of Israel. Balaam was hired by Balak to curse the children of Israel. But instead of cursing God's people, Balaam blessed them. Speaking on behalf of God, Balaam said, "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, / Nor has he seen trouble in Israel" (Num. 23:21). Furthermore, in Numbers 24:5 Balaam said, "How fair are your tents, O Jacob, / Your tabernacles, O Israel!" According to these verses, God did not see iniquity or perverseness, trouble, in Israel. Instead, He saw only goodness, fairness, and beauty. The same is true regarding the church today. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 78-79)

Today's Reading

If you praise the Lord for the church life and speak well concerning it, you will put yourself under God's blessing. During all the years I have been in the church life, I have not seen one person who spoke negatively about the church who was under God's blessing. On the contrary, all who have said that the church was poor, low, or dead have been under a curse. Those who speak positively about the church, declaring that the church is lovely

and that it is God's house, receive the blessing. This is not mere doctrine; it is a testimony that can be verified by the experiences of many saints.

Sometimes when I am disappointed over the church and do not think positively about it, the Lord within warns me to be careful. Immediately I ask the Lord to cleanse me, and I begin to declare how wonderful the church is. Even though the church may cause me trouble, I still love the church. The more I speak this positive way, the more I am under God's blessing. Whose word about the church is right, yours or the Lord's? In eternity, the Lord's word will prove to be right, for in eternity the church will be marvelous, glorious, and transcendent. All the enemy's accusations regarding the church are lies. To say that the church is poor or dead is to utter a devilish lie....The church is uplifted and very living. Do not see deeper than the Lord sees.... Are you wiser or more perceptive than God? The Bible declares that the Lord does not behold perverseness in Israel. But you claim to see perverseness in the church. Which do you choose to believe, the Lord's sight or yours? If we stand with the Lord's estimation of the church, we shall be kept from falling from the blessing into the curse.

Whenever I speak to the leading ones concerning the church in a way that is not positive, I have regrets later.... If I try to excuse myself by saying that I was not condemning the church but simply speaking the facts, I am even more troubled within.... Therefore, I can testify from experience that it is not an easy matter to touch the church. Whenever we touch it, we must do so in a positive way. Then we shall receive the blessing.

The Old Testament reveals that many times God came in to rebuke and to reprove the children of Israel. But when the Gentiles attacked God's people, the Gentiles suffered loss sooner or later. In His eyes, the children of Israel were redeemed, sanctified, transformed, and built up, and God had His dwelling place among them.

Be careful of your natural sight. If God does not see iniquity or perverseness in the church, then how can you see it? When God is merciful, He abounds in mercy. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 79-81)

Further Reading: Life-study of Exodus, msg. 7

WEEK 11 — DAY 4

Morning Nourishment

Gen. 37:6-7 ...Listen to this dream which I have had: There we were, binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly my sheaf rose up and remained standing; and then your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf.

12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

In Genesis 37:2 we are told that Joseph brought to his father an evil report regarding his brothers....In chapter 37 we see the hatred and anger of Joseph's brothers, and in chapter 38 we see Judah's lust. Joseph saw the evil of his brothers and reported it to his father. But Joseph had two dreams (37:5-9). In the first dream Joseph saw sheaves in the field. This dream reveals that, at the most, Joseph was just a sheaf and that, at the worst, his brothers also were sheaves. God gave Joseph this dream, and in it he had God's view of his brothers....God came to give Joseph a dream, and He seemed to say,"Joseph, in My eyes you are the same as your brothers, and they are just as good as you are. You are a sheaf; and they also are sheaves. The only difference between you and them is that I have chosen you to reign. But this does not mean that you are better than they are." (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 1414-1415)

Today's Reading

If we do not have experience, we shall not be able to understand the word in the Bible regarding Joseph's dream of the sheaves. When you first come into the church life, you may say,"How wonderful the church life is! The brothers and sisters are all marvelous! How I love the church!" However, the more you love the church and care for the saints, the more "gophers," "turtles," and "scorpions" you will see. Then you will say,"...Lord, the situation in the church is pitiful...." At such a time you need a heavenly dream. When the dream comes, the Lord will tell you,"You are not

any better, and the others are not worse than you. You are all sheaves of life in Me. There are no 'gophers,' 'scorpions,' or 'turtles' among My people. All are sheaves full of life." If I had not seen such a heavenly dream, I would have quit long ago. But I have seen the dream. I have seen that I am a sheaf and that all those who in my eyes are "gophers" are sheaves also.

Years ago, I prayed many accusing prayers to the Lord; I reported to Him the evils I had seen. In my prayers I said, "Lord, I have given up my job and consecrated my life and my future for this work. But, Lord, look at this people!" Eventually, however, the dream came, and the Lord said to me, "You are not better than they. At the most, you are just a sheaf, and, at the worst, they also are sheaves." At the beginning I was troubled and argued with the Lord, saying, "Lord, You are not thorough. You are superficial. Don't You see their heart?" But the Lord said, "I don't look at them from your view. I see them from My view. In the New Jerusalem there are no 'gophers' and 'scorpions.'"

Elijah complained against Israel saying, "The children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword; and I alone am left, and they seek to take my life" (1 Kings 19:10). Elijah was accusing Israel before God. Being displeased with this, the Lord replied, "Yet I have left Myself seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18). Do not go to the Lord in the way of accusing others before Him. Instead, you should say to Him, "Lord, since You see no iniquity, I do not choose to see any either. All the 'gophers' and 'scorpions' are sheaves, and I love them."

However, this is not easy to do. You may even think that I am teaching you to lie....But who is right—God or you? And what about the dream? If you have seen the heavenly dream, then you have seen that in God's view all His people are sheaves full of life to produce food for the meal offering to satisfy God and man. (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 1415-1416)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1956, vol. 2, "Three Aspects of the Church, Book 3: The Organization of the Church," chs. 5-6

WEEK 11 — DAY 5

Morning Nourishment

Gen. 37:9 And he had still another dream...: There were the sun and the moon and eleven stars, bowing down to me.

Rev. 12:1 And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon underneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

Eph. 5:8 For you were once darkness but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light.

In the Bible there is the principle of confirmation by two witnesses. Thus, Joseph had two dreams. In Joseph's second dream he saw the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowing down to him (Gen. 37:9). This indicates that in the eyes of God all the condemned and accused people are full of light....The reigning aspect of the maturity of life never condemns others. Rather, it shepherds and appreciates them. It says,"Oh, the church life and all the saints are wonderful! The saints are sheaves full of life. How nourishing and satisfying they are! Furthermore, they are heavenly luminaries full of light." If you say that it is a lie to speak this way and that you cannot do it, it means that you have not seen the dream, the vision. (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 1416-1417)

Today's Reading

[If you] have been in the church life a long time, do you still feel...the saints are wonderful? If you are honest, you will admit that you have criticized certain saints to your wife or husband.... Years ago, according to your natural view, all the saints were so good. But today you need the view of the heavenly dream. In Genesis 37 there are two dreams. One is of sheaves full of life, and the other of the heavenly host full of light. This is God's view, the heavenly view, of His people. Because I have this heavenly view, I am greatly encouraged. I am not working with "gophers" and "scorpions." I am serving the sheaves, I am under the sun and moon,

and I am walking among the stars. The dream Joseph saw is similar to the vision in Revelation 12, where God's people are signified by the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and with the crown of twelve stars upon her head. We need such a vision to see God's people from the heavenly viewpoint.

One thing is certain: Whoever condemns the church or blames the saints will suffer the loss of life. There is not one exception to this. You may be right, and the church may actually be wrong. The condition of the saints may be that of "gophers" and "scorpions." But if you condemn them, you will suffer the loss of life. However, if you say, "Lord, I praise You because Your people are full of life and light," you will be the first to participate in life. For this reason, I dare not say that the brothers and sisters are not good. Rather, I always say, "Praise the Lord! How good the saints are!" When I do this, I enjoy life. But if I were to criticize the brothers and sisters, I would immediately suffer death. No one who speaks negatively concerning the church or the saints enjoys life. On the contrary, all those who speak negatively suffer death. We need to say, "Praise the Lord, my brother will be a heavenly light! If he is not so today, he will be in the future." With God there is no time element. There is no clock in heaven, only eternity. As God views His people from the standpoint of eternity, He sees them all as sheaves full of life and as the sun, moon, and stars full of light.

Genesis 37 begins by telling us how Jacob loved his dear son Joseph, and how Joseph reported the evils of his brothers to his father. Then we are told about Joseph's dreams (37:5-10)... Joseph's dreams reveal the actual situation of God's people in His eyes. God's people are all sheaves of life. A sheaf is a bundle of wheat full of life and life supply....Do not say, "I don't like the Israelites, because they are so evil."...At [Balaam's] time, Israel actually was evil. Nevertheless, Balaam, under the control of God, said that God had not beheld iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel (Num. 23:21)...In God's eyes all His chosen people are sheaves of life, full of life supply. Furthermore, God's people are like stars shining in the sky. (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 1417-1418, 1423-1424)

Further Reading: Life-study of Genesis, msgs. 110-111; CWWL, 1984, vol. 2, "Elders' Training, Book 2: The Vision of the Lord's Recovery," ch. 3

WEEK 11 – DAY 6

Morning Nourishment

Rev. 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Although God's people are positioned in heaven as the sun, the moon, and the stars, they are living on earth as sheaves (Phil. 3:20; 2:15), for sheaves grow in the field. Today we are the heavenly people living on earth.

We are God's people. I have been encouraged, strengthened, and edified by this. I have complete faith in you all, and I expect to see you all in the New Jerusalem. I like to have an eternal view, not the view from the earth. I do not want to view things according to my limited sight. Rather, I would use the divine telescope. If you say that the brothers and sisters are so bad, it means that you are extremely shortsighted. But if you use the divine telescope to see through time, you will behold the New Jerusalem where there is nothing but sheaves and stars. In the New Jerusalem there are no "gophers" or "scorpions." There, everything is full of life and light.

The more mature in life you become, the less you will speak negatively concerning the saints or the church....One day the heavenly dream will come, and your view will be revolutionized. You will realize that you dare not say anything negative concerning the church or the saints. On the contrary, you will say, "This is the church, and this is God's people. In God's eyes the believers are all sheaves. They are also the sun, the moon, and the stars." (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 1418-1420)

Today's Reading

In this message I would...like to say a word concerning the stations of the journey made by the children of Israel. According to Numbers 33:1-49, there were a total of forty-two stations, from the land of slavery to the land

of rest. The record of these forty-two stations does not mention anything about the failures of the people. If we had only the record in Numbers 33, we would think that in their journey the children of Israel were altogether aggressive, positive, and successful, going from one station to another until they reached their goal—the land of rest. As a result of our reading of Numbers 1 through 33, we may have the opinion that there was nothing good with the children of Israel. But chapter 33 shows us that in the eyes of God the record regarding them is positive. This indicates that, in His view, God always considers His people in a positive way. God looks at His people not from the angle of the bad but from the angle of the good.

You need to be mindful of this whenever you are tempted to criticize a particular local church. Whether the church is marvelous or pitiful actually does not depend on what the church is; rather, it depends on what you are. If you have a negative attitude and view the church from a negative angle, you will not see anything good in the church. If you have a positive attitude and view the church from a positive angle, you will say that the church is marvelous. Concerning the church life in our locality, we should not be defeated or disappointed, and we should not lose heart. We need to view the churches in a heavenly way and realize that all the local churches are parts of the coming New Jerusalem.

From our study of the book of Numbers, we need to learn that the way we look at God's people is a serious matter. Perhaps in your eyes God's people are not very good. But God sees them as chosen, redeemed, saved from the bondage of the fall, enjoying Christ, being built up with the Triune God, formed into an army to fight for God, and prepared by God to possess the all-inclusive Christ as the good land. If we see God's people in this way, we will not lose heart or be discouraged concerning the church life. (Life-study of Numbers, pp. 234-235)

Further Reading: Life-study of Numbers, msg. 31

<< **WEEK 11 — HYMN** >>

Hymns, #852 Thy dwelling place, O Lord, I love

The Church—Her Attraction

- 1 Thy dwelling-place, O Lord, I love;
It is Thy Church so blessed,
It is Thy joy and heart's delight
And where Thy heart finds rest.**
- 2 For her, Thyself Thou gavest, Lord,
That she be Thine, complete;
For her, I too my body give,
Thy heart's desire to meet.**
- 3 For her, Thou hast become my life,
That she my living be;
For her, I would forsake myself,
That she be filled with Thee.**
- 4 The Church is Thy beloved Bride,
Thou in Thy Body seen;
She is my joy and heart's desire,
The one on whom I lean.**
- 5 In her, Thy full supply, O Lord,
Thou dost to me impart;
In her am I possessed by Thee
To satisfy Thy heart.**
- 6 Thy dwelling-place, O Lord, I love;
It is Thy Church, Thy home;**

**In it I would forever live
And never longer roam.**