

Week Two

The Factor of Closely Following the Completed Vision of the Age through the Ministry of the Age

Hymns:

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 3:3, 6, 8; 4:1; 5:18-20; 11:2-3; 1 Tim. 1:3-4, 18; Rev. 22:1-2, 14, 17a

Outline

Day 1

- I. In every age there is the vision of that age, and since we have the completed vision of the age through the ministry of the age, we need to serve God according to this vision and closely follow it—Acts 26:19; Eph. 1:17; 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:6:
 - A. Today we can be in one accord because we have only one vision, an up-to-date, all-inheriting vision, the vision of the eternal economy of God—Eph. 1:17; 3:2, 9; Rev. 21:10; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Rom. 15:6; 1 Cor. 1:10; Acts 26:13-19; Phil. 3:13-14.
 - B. The governing vision of the Bible is the heavenly vision of God's eternal economy, which is God's eternal intention with His heart's desire to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity as the Father in the Son by the Spirit into His chosen people to be their life and nature that they may be the same as He is as His duplication, to become an organism, the Body of Christ as the new man for God's fullness, God's expression, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem—Eph. 1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:15-16; 3:19; Rev. 3:12, 21; 21:2, 9-10; Acts 26:19.
 - C. "I [W. L.] told Brother Nee, 'Even if one day you do not take this way, I will still take this way. I am not taking this way because of

you, and I will not leave this way because of you. I have seen that this is the Lord's way. I have seen the vision"—The Vision of the Age, p. 50.

Day 2

- II. The vision that the Lord has given to us in His present recovery is the all-inclusive vision of God's eternal economy with its ultimate consummation—the vision of the New Jerusalem—Prov. 29:18a; Acts 26:18-19; 22:15; Rev. 21:2, 9-11:**
- A. The totality of what the Bible reveals to us is the New Jerusalem; the New Jerusalem is the total composition of the entire revelation of the Bible—Gen. 28:10-22; John 1:1, 14, 29, 32, 42, 51; Rev. 21:3, 22.**
 - B. Our living out the New Jerusalem is for us to become the New Jerusalem, and our working out the New Jerusalem is for us to build the New Jerusalem by the flowing Triune God—Jer. 2:13; John 4:14b; 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1-2a.**
 - C. Every local church should be a miniature of the New Jerusalem, and every believer should be “a little New Jerusalem”; whatever is ascribed to the New Jerusalem should be both our corporate and personal experience—21:3, 22-23; 22:1-2, 14, 17; 3:12.**
 - D. The New Jerusalem is the embodiment of God's complete salvation with its judicial and organic aspects—Rom. 5:10; Rev. 22:14:**
 - 1. God's full salvation is a composition of God's righteousness as the base and God's life as the consummation—Rom. 1:16-17; 5:10, 17-18, 21; Luke 15:22-23; cf. Jer. 2:13; 13:23; 17:9; 23:5-6; 31:33.**
 - 2. The entire New Jerusalem is a matter of life built on the foundation of righteousness—Rev. 21:14, 19-20; 22:1; cf. Gen. 9:8-17; Psa. 89:14.**

Day 3

- E. As we experience each section of God's organic salvation, we go**

up level by level until we become beings in the New Jerusalem—Rom. 5:10, 17, 21; 8:10, 6, 11; Rev. 22:1-2; cf. Jer. 18:15; Micah 5:2:

1. We are regenerated by participating in God's life to become God's species, God's children, for God's sonship—John 1:12-13; Rev. 21:7; 22:14b.
2. We are sanctified by participating in God's nature to become as holy as the holy city—1 Thes. 5:23; Eph. 5:26.
3. We are renewed by participating in God's mind to become as new as the New Jerusalem—2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:23.
4. We are transformed by participating in God's being to be constituted with the Triune God as gold, silver (pearl), and precious stones—1 Cor. 3:12; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2; Rev. 21:18-21.
5. We are conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God by participating in God's image to have the appearance of the New Jerusalem—Rom. 8:28-29; Rev. 21:11; 4:3.
6. We are glorified by participating in God's glory to be completely permeated with the glory of the New Jerusalem—Rom. 8:21; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 21:11.

Day 4

III. To live out and work out the New Jerusalem is to live out and work out God's complete salvation according to the intrinsic essence and totality of the unique New Testament ministry, the ministry of the age, for the reality of the Body of Christ and a new revival—Phil. 1:19; 2:13; Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 4:11-12, 16:

- A. The ministry of the Spirit is the ministry of the new covenant to deify us by inscribing our hearts with the Spirit of the living God as the divine and mystical "ink," making us the living letters of Christ—this is the highest peak of the divine revelation—2 Cor. 3:3, 6, 8, 18; 4:1; Isa. 42:6; 49:6; Psa. 45:1-2:**
1. By the ministry of the Spirit, we are "Christified" to become the city of life and the bride of Christ; thus, the Spirit as the consummated Triune God marries the bride as the transformed tripartite church to live a life that is

the mingling of God and man as one spirit, a life that is superexcellent and that overflows with blessings and joy—Rom. 5:10; Rev. 2:7; 22:1-2, 17a.

2. In order to be constituted the ministers of the new covenant for the building up of the Body of Christ, we must experience all the aspects of the all-inclusive Spirit in 2 Corinthians—the anointing Spirit, the sealing Spirit, the pledging Spirit (1:21-22; 5:5), the inscribing Spirit (3:3), the life-giving Spirit (v. 6), the ministering Spirit (v. 8), the freeing Spirit (v. 17), the transforming Spirit (v. 18), and the transmitting Spirit (13:14).

B. The ministry of righteousness is the ministry of Christ as our objective righteousness for our justification and as our subjective righteousness “embroidered” into us by the transforming work of the Spirit for the living out and genuine expression of Christ—this is the God-man living—3:9; Psa. 45:13-14; Rom. 8:4; Psa. 23:3:

1. By the ministry of righteousness, we receive Christ as our objective righteousness and enjoy Him as our subjective righteousness to become the New Jerusalem as the new creation of righteousness in the new heaven and new earth—1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9; 2 Pet. 3:13; cf. Isa. 33:22.
2. Objective righteousness (Christ given to us) issues in grace (Christ enjoyed by us), and grace issues in subjective righteousness (Christ lived out of us)—Rom. 5:1-2, 17-18; Luke 15:22-23.
3. The power of grace operates in us and produces subjective righteousness, making us right with God, with others, and even with ourselves; it not only subdues sin but also overcomes Satan, sin, and death in our being, causing us to reign in life—2 Tim. 2:1; Rom. 5:17, 21.
4. The righteousness we receive for our justification is objective and enables us to meet the requirements of the righteous God, whereas the righteousnesses of the overcoming saints are subjective and enable them to meet the requirements of the overcoming Christ—Rev. 22:14; 19:7-8.

Day 5

C. The ministry of reconciliation is the ministry of reconciling the world to Christ through the forgiveness of sins for their judicial redemption and the reconciling of the believers to Christ that

they might be persons who live in the spirit, in the Holy of Holies, for their organic salvation—this is shepherding people according to God—2 Cor. 5:18-21; 1 Pet. 5:1-6; Heb. 13:20:

1. The Lord's present recovery is to bring us into the reality of Christ's pneumatic shepherding in Psalm 23 as the issue of His redeeming death and church-producing resurrection in Psalm 22 and as the accomplishing factor of His coming as the King to establish His kingdom in Psalm 24.
2. By the ministry of reconciliation, we are shepherded into God to enjoy Him as the springs of waters of life so that we may become the eternal Zion as the corporate Holy of Holies, the place where God is—Rev. 7:14, 17; 14:1; 21:16, 22; Psa. 20:2; 24:1, 3, 7-10; 48:2; 50:2; 87:2; 125:1; Ezek. 48:35b.
3. The ministry of reconciliation is the apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry to shepherd the flock of God for building up the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem according to God's eternal economy—John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28-29; Rev. 1:12-13.

Day 6

IV. The Lord's recovery brings us back to the unique ministry of the New Testament; this ministry (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:1) has the following characteristics:

- A. It ministers the healthy teaching of God's economy and wars the good warfare against the different and strange teachings of the dissenters with the strange fire of man's natural enthusiasm, natural affection, natural strength, and natural ability—1 Tim. 1:3-4, 18; Heb. 13:9; 2 Tim. 2:1-15; Lev. 10:1-11.
- B. It produces the local churches as the golden lampstands to be the testimony of Jesus with the same essence, appearance, and expression, and it builds up the one Body of Christ by the one Spirit, perfecting all of us into the oneness of the Triune God—Rev. 1:10-13, 20; John 17:23; Eph. 4:1-4, 11-13; Zech. 4:6.
- C. It prepares the overcomers to be Christ's bride, His "queen," in Himself as the "royal abode" and in the local churches as the "palaces of ivory" to consummate in the New Jerusalem as the

“King’s palace”; it betroths us to Christ, stirring up our love for Him in the simplicity and the purity toward Christ, to make us His queen—Psa. 45:1-15; Rev. 21:2, 9-10; 2 Cor. 11:2-3.

- D. It strengthens us to follow Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings on the pathway to glory, the way of the cross, for the manifestation and multiplication of life—John 12:24-26; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 4:10-11, 16-18; 11:23-33.**
- E. It dispenses Christ as grace, truth, life, and the Spirit into us for our revelation of Christ, our enjoyment of Christ, and our growth in life that we may be saved in life to reign in life—1:12, 24; Phil. 1:25; Rom. 5:10, 17.**
- F. It sanctifies us through the word of the truth and the washing of the water in the word; it also shepherds us with the cherishing and nourishing presence of the pneumatic Christ—John 17:17; Eph. 5:26, 29-30; Rev. 1:12-13.**
- G. It tears down hierarchy and blends us into one, making us all brothers of Christ, slaves of Christ, and members of Christ to be the one Body of Christ in reality; it also tears down the high places and exalts Christ alone to make Christ everything in the church—Matt. 23:8-12; 1 Cor. 12:24; Deut. 12:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:5; 10:3-5; Col. 3:10-11.**
- H. It brings all of us into function to practice the God-ordained way and leads us to follow the Lamb wherever He may go for the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to the whole inhabited earth—Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 4:11-12; Rev. 14:4; Matt. 24:14.**
- I. It brings us into a new revival of living out the New Jerusalem and working out the New Jerusalem to gain the reality of the Body of Christ as the highest peak in God’s economy—2 Cor. 3:6, 8-9; 5:18-20; Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 4:4-6, 16.**

WEEK 2 — DAY 1

Morning Nourishment

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

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.

During the past nineteen hundred years, countless numbers of Christians have been serving God.... Some... are serving according to the vision revealed in the New Testament Gospels, which has to do only with the earthly ministry of Jesus. Some serve without any vision at all. In order to serve God according to the up-to-date vision, we need to come up to the level of Paul's very last Epistles. In fact, we need to come up to the level of the epistles to the seven churches in Revelation as well as the revelation that covers all the ages, including the kingdom, the new heaven and new earth, and the ultimate consummation of the church—the New Jerusalem. Simply put, in order for us to serve God today, our vision must extend all the way from the first vision of Adam in Genesis to the ultimate vision of the manifestation of the church, the New Jerusalem.

Today we can be in one accord because we have only one vision and one view. We are all in this up-to-date, all-inheriting vision. (The Vision of the Age, pp. 48, 54)

Today's Reading

I truly believe that the vision Saul saw on the way to Damascus was more advanced than the one Peter saw. In the New Testament records concerning Peter and in his own Epistles, we do not see any mention of the Triune God working Himself into us to make us His duplication. We do not see anything about the believers being built up into the Body of Christ to be one with the Triune God as His organism. But on the way to Damascus, Paul saw a vision. The Lord said to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). The "Me" here is a corporate Me; it includes the Lord Jesus and

all His believers. Although the word Me is a small word, it speaks of a great vision.

Paul's vision was indeed profound. At the beginning of Galatians, he refers to the Son of God (1:16). When we speak of the Son of God, we have to realize that this involves the Triune God. The Triune God was revealed to Paul, and Paul became one of His members. All the members together with Paul were constituted to become His Body and were joined to Him to become an enlarged "Me." Although the vision Paul saw at the beginning was so high and profound, he did not take up his ministry immediately. In Acts 13 a few prophets and teachers were serving the Lord and fasting together in Antioch. It was then that the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (v. 2). It was not until then that Paul became clear concerning the vision he had received earlier and was sent to fulfill the ministry that he had received.

Both Barnabas and Saul were Jews, yet they were sent to preach the gospel throughout the Gentile lands. This was not a small vision. In his own time Peter was sent only to make a brief contact with a Gentile and to visit his home. Here Paul received a serious commission: "Go, for I will send you forth far away to the Gentiles" (22:21). This means he was to go to the Gentile lands, nation by nation and city by city. This is a great vision: "That in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the Body and fellow partakers of the promise through the gospel" (Eph. 3:6).

The Lord's recovery was brought to us through our dear Brother Nee. Because of this he became a target of attack. In 1934... I told Brother Nee, "Even if one day you do not take this way, I will still take this way. I am not taking this way because of you, and I will not leave this way because of you. I have seen that this is the Lord's way. I have seen the vision." (The Vision of the Age, pp. 42-43, 49-50)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1986, vol. 2, "Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 1: The Vision and Definite Steps for the Practice of the New Way," chs. 1-3

WEEK 2 — DAY 2

Morning Nourishment

Rev. 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.

22:1-2 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life...

The sixty-six books of the Bible consummate in the New Jerusalem. The totality of all the positive things recorded in the sixty-six books of the Bible is the New Jerusalem. On the one hand, we may say that the Bible unveils to us the central line of the divine revelation, which is God's economy and God's dispensing. On the other hand, we may say in brief that the totality of what the Bible reveals to us is the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the total composition of the entire revelation of the Bible. (Life-study of Isaiah, p. 348)

Today's Reading

God is the One who had a purpose and who made a plan in eternity past and who created all things for the fulfillment of His plan. The Lamb is the One who redeemed us, the One who has accomplished a full redemption to fulfill God's plan. Thus, the throne of God and of the Lamb [in Revelation 22:1] denotes that this throne is to carry out God's plan through Christ's redemption. Both God's plan and Christ's redemption are being carried out through this throne. The throne is the very source from which the river of water of life flows, and it flows with the tree of life growing in it (v. 2). The throne for the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose is to flow out God Himself so that by this flow of life His purpose could be accomplished.

Do not think that the New Jerusalem is merely something objective in the future for a certain group of people. We have to realize that what is

recorded in Revelation 21 and 22 should be experienced by us today in a very personal way. Experientially speaking, every proper and normal Christian is “a little New Jerusalem.” Whatever is ascribed to the New Jerusalem corporately should be experienced by us individually and personally. With and in each one of us are the three gates of the Divine Trinity. Furthermore, in each one of us there must be the throne of God and of the Lamb. We must enthrone Him in our heart and in our spirit. In other words, in the very center of our being there should be the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In our Christian experience the unique item should be the throne of the One who purposed and of the One who redeemed. Such a throne must be set up in our entire being, and this should be the center of our Christian life. This means that we would accept the God who purposed and the Christ who redeemed us as our Head, Lord, and authority. We should be willing to subject ourselves to such a headship. We adore Him as the Lord, and we take Him as our authority. We enthrone Him in our being and in our Christian life.

We are not here living for ourselves. We are living and existing for the accomplishment of God’s purpose, to carry out what Christ has accomplished. Therefore, we experience the One on the throne in His headship and lordship, and we submit ourselves to such an authority. In our daily life, in our family life, in our marriage life, in our business life, and in our church life the center must be God’s throne. Everything should be subjected to His headship. Whenever we would subject ourselves to this headship, we immediately sense something full of God’s riches flowing within us. This is the flow of the Triune God as life, the life supply, and everything to our being. Within us we sense such a flow, and this flow is from the throne of God and of the Lamb as the water of life. (CWWL, 1984, vol. 3, “God’s New Testament Economy,” pp. 459-460)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, “Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John,” chs. 13-14, 16; CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 2, “The God-men,” ch. 4

WEEK 2 — DAY 3

Morning Nourishment

John 3:15 That everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life.

Rom. 8:30 ...Those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Rev. 21:11 Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

The co-workers must see that we should do only one work, which is to make God's chosen people regenerated ones, sanctified ones, renewed ones (the new man), transformed ones, conformed ones (those conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God), and glorified ones. All those who will be in the New Jerusalem are this kind of people. We go up level by level until we reach the highest point, where we become the same. There is no more flesh and no more natural being. All are in the spirit. All are in the kingdom of the heavens, and all are beings of the New Jerusalem. [We] should only do the work of the New Jerusalem. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, p. 529)

Today's Reading

First, as the God-men, we have the divine right to participate in God's life. John 3:15 tells us that everyone who believes into the Lord Jesus will have eternal life. Eternal life is the divine life, the life of God.... Through regeneration He has put, has dispensed, His life into our being.

As God-men, we also have the divine right to participate in God's nature. [In] Ephesians 1:4...we see that God chose us in Christ with a particular purpose—to make us holy. Holy means not only sanctified, separated unto God, but also different, distinct, from everything common.... For us, God's chosen ones, to be holy is to partake of God's divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

Because we have become God-men through regeneration, we also have the right to participate in God's mind. This means that we, who are human,

can have a divine mind. Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." We need to let Christ's mind be our mind.

Next, the God-men have the divine right to participate in God's being. Our basis for saying this is Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 3:18 about our being transformed into the Lord's image "even as from the Lord Spirit." This indicates that the work of transformation is done not by something of the Lord Spirit but by the Lord Spirit Himself. Hence, we are being transformed with God's very being.

As God-men, we also have the divine right to participate in God's image. Second Corinthians 3:18 says that we are being "transformed into the same image." This is the image of the resurrected and glorified Christ. In God's creation man was made in God's image in an outward way, but the image into which we are being transformed is something inward. To be transformed into the same image is to be conformed to the resurrected and glorified Christ, as the firstborn Son of God, to be made the same as He is (Rom. 8:29).

Eventually, we will be brought into God's glory to participate in His glory. Hebrews 2:10 says that God is leading many sons into glory. Paul refers to this in Romans 8:30: "Those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified." Glorification is the step in God's complete salvation in which God will completely saturate our body with the glory of His life and nature. In this way He will transfigure our body, conforming it to the resurrected, glorious body of His Son (Phil. 3:21). This is the ultimate step in God's organic salvation, wherein God obtains a full expression, which will be manifested ultimately in the New Jerusalem. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, "Incarnation, Inclusion, and Intensification," pp. 214-217)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 1, "Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans," msgs. 5-6

WEEK 2 — DAY 4

Morning Nourishment

2 Cor. 3:6 [God]...made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

8-9 How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory? For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.

In 2 Corinthian 3:3...the word with indicates that the spiritual ink, the Spirit of the living God, is an essence, an element, used by the one doing the inscribing or the writing.... The Spirit is neither the writer nor the instrument used for writing; rather, the Spirit is the essence, the element, the substance, used in writing. The Spirit of the living God, who is the living God Himself, is not an instrument, such as a pen, but an element...with which the apostles minister Christ as the content for the writing of living letters that convey Christ.

The ministry of the new covenant is not that of mere teaching. None of your teachers in school ever inscribed an essence into your being. They may have put concepts into you, but they did not deposit the essence of anything into you. However, the new covenant ministry does more than merely teach us; it inscribes us. Furthermore, this new covenant ministry inscribes us not with concepts, knowledge, or theology, but with an essence, with something real and substantial.... Through the new covenant ministry Christ has been inscribed into us. A divine essence has been written into our being, and this essence is the Spirit. (Life-study of 2 Corinthians, pp. 216-217)

Today's Reading

The Spirit is the anointing Spirit and the sealing Spirit. This Spirit is also in our hearts as a pledge, a foretaste (2 Cor. 1:21-22).... In chapter 3 there are five aspects of this subjective Spirit. First, He is the writing Spirit

(v. 3); then He is the life-giving Spirit (v. 6). He is also the ministering Spirit, who always ministers something of Christ into us (v. 8). He is the liberating Spirit (v. 17) to liberate us from all the things that bind us. He liberates us from the bondage of doctrines, the letter, the written codes and regulations. He delivers us by taking away all the veils so that we can behold and reflect Christ with an unveiled face. Then He is the transforming Spirit [v. 18]. This wonderful Spirit transmits all the riches of Christ with the fullness of the Father into us. (CWWL, 1969, vol. 1, "The Experience of Christ as Life for the Building Up of the Church," p. 384)

Objective righteousness is Christ as God's righteousness given to us to be our righteousness, and this righteousness erases God's righteous judgment on us, the sinners. Adam brought judgment to us through sin. Christ as righteousness erases this judgment. Judgment comes from sin, but righteousness comes from grace. Grace is also Christ. It is God in the Son to be enjoyed by us. Objective righteousness issues in grace, and grace issues in subjective righteousness. Eventually, all three—objective righteousness, grace, and subjective righteousness—are Christ Himself. Objective righteousness is Christ given to us, grace is Christ enjoyed by us, and subjective righteousness is Christ lived out of us. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 1, "Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans," p. 264)

[In Revelation 19:8] the word righteousnesses refers to Christ as our subjective righteousness, Christ lived out of us. The righteousness (Christ) that we received for our salvation (1 Cor. 1:30) is objective and enables us to meet the requirement of the righteous God, whereas the righteousnesses of the overcoming believers are subjective (Phil. 3:9) and enable them to meet the requirement of the overcoming Christ. If we would have these righteousnesses, we must have Christ Himself lived out of us to be our subjective righteousnesses. (Life-study of the Psalms, pp. 265-266)

Further Reading: Life-study of 2 Corinthians, msg. 25-29; CWWL, 1969, vol. 1, "The Experience of Christ as Life for the Building Up of the Church," chs. 8-9

WEEK 2 — DAY 5

Morning Nourishment

2 Cor. 5:18-21 ...God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation;...and has put in us the word of reconciliation. On behalf of Christ then we are ambassadors...; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God. Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18 through 20 Paul goes on to speak of the ministry of reconciliation.... Paul's word in verse 20 about being reconciled to God is not directed to sinners; it is directed to the believers in Corinth. These believers had already been reconciled to God partially. However, they had not been fully reconciled to Him.... In 1 Corinthians 1 Paul refers to them as saints, as those who had been called by God into the fellowship of His Son. Therefore, they surely had been reconciled to God to some degree. (Life-study of 2 Corinthians, pp. 321-322)

Today's Reading

The believers at Corinth, after being reconciled to God partially, still lived in the flesh, in the outward man. Between them and God there was the separating veil of the flesh, of the natural man. This veil corresponds to the veil inside the tabernacle, the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, not to the veil at the entrance to the Holy Place. The Corinthian believers may have been in the Holy Place, but they were not in the Holy of Holies, ...where God is. Therefore, they had not been reconciled to God in full. In 2 Corinthians 5:19 it is the world that is to be reconciled to God. In verse 20 it is the believers, those who have already been reconciled to God, who are to be reconciled to Him further. This clearly indicates that there are two steps for people to be fully reconciled to God. The first step is as sinners to be reconciled to God from sin. For this purpose Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3) that they may be forgiven by God. This is the objective

aspect of Christ's death. In this aspect He bore our sins on the cross that God might judge them upon Him for us. The second step is as believers living in the natural life to be reconciled to God from the flesh. For this purpose Christ died for us—the persons—that we may live to Him in resurrection life (2 Cor. 5:14-15). This is the subjective aspect of Christ's death. In this aspect for us He was made sin to be judged and done away with by God that we may become the righteousness of God in Him. By the two aspects of His death He has fully reconciled God's chosen people to God.

These two steps of reconciliation are clearly portrayed by the two veils of the tabernacle. The first veil is called the screen (Exo. 26:36). A sinner was brought to God through the reconciliation of the atoning blood to enter into the Holy Place by passing this screen. This typifies the first step of reconciliation. The second veil (Exo. 26:31-35; Heb. 9:3) still separated him from God who is in the Holy of Holies. This veil needed to be rent that he might be brought to God in the Holy of Holies. This is the second step of reconciliation. The Corinthian believers had been reconciled to God, for they had passed through the first veil and had entered into the Holy Place. But they still lived in the flesh. They needed to pass the second veil, which has already been rent (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 10:20), to enter into the Holy of Holies to live with God in their spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). The goal of this Epistle is to bring them here that they may be persons in the spirit (1 Cor. 2:14), in the Holy of Holies. This is what the apostle means by saying, "Be reconciled to God."

Although the Corinthians had been saved and reconciled to God halfway, they still lived in the flesh; that is, they lived in the soul, the outward man, the natural being. The veil of the flesh, of the natural man, still separated them from God. This means that their natural being was a separating veil. Therefore, they needed the second step of reconciliation. (Life-study of 2 Corinthians, pp. 322-324)

Further Reading: Life-study of 2 Corinthians, msg. 37; Life-study of the Psalms, msgs. 11, 20-21

WEEK 2 — DAY 6

Morning Nourishment

2 Cor. 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart.

11:2-3 For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ.

Paul's word in [2 Corinthians 11:2]...touches our heart in a deep way and stirs up our love for the Lord Jesus.... After reading a portion of a life-study message, you once again begin to feel that as the Bridegroom the Lord Jesus is lovely and precious. Spontaneously you say, "O Lord Jesus, dear Bridegroom, I love You. Lord, thank You for Your word, for Your ministry, and for Your recovery"...The genuine ministry stirs up our love for the Lord Jesus as our Bridegroom.

We need to see from 11:2 that we have been betrothed to one husband in order to be presented as a pure virgin to Christ. Therefore, we should say, "Our dear Lord Jesus is our unique Husband, and I am part of His virgin. I don't care for doctrine or theology. I care only for the ministry that ministers Christ to me. He is the pleasant and dear One whom I love."

In chapter 11 Paul... reminds the believers at Corinth that he has engaged them to one Husband, not to present them as students of theology, but to present them as a pure virgin to Christ. (Life-study of 2 Corinthians, pp. 462-463)

Today's Reading

Whenever there is the preaching of the genuine gospel and the real Jesus with a sincere spirit, the Lord Jesus will be ministered to others so that they may appreciate Him, love Him, follow Him, and take Him as everything. Throughout the centuries, many have preached from the Bible

and taught the Bible, but their preaching and teaching nevertheless distracted the believers from the precious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In principle, such ones distract the believers in the same way as that taken by the serpent in Genesis 3. (Life-study of 2 Corinthians, pp. 467-468)

Psalm 45:8b says, "From palaces of ivory, harpstrings have made You glad." In this verse palaces signify local churches; ivory signifies the resurrection life of Christ (John 19:36); and harpstrings signify praises. The local churches, which are beautiful in the eyes of the Lord and which are His expression, are built with the resurrection life of Christ, and from the local churches are the praises that make Him glad. As we praise the Lord, we need to appreciate what He is in His virtues and what He has done to produce the church to be His expression. In a very real sense, Christ's garments, His virtues, have produced the church as His expression, and both His garments and the church are full of sweetness.

[In Psalm 45] the king typifies Christ, ...the queen typifies the church, and...those around the queen typify the believers. In type, this queen is not a single, individual person—she is corporate.... The believers are both the constituents of the queen and the honorable and beautiful women.

The situation is the same in Revelation 19:7 and 9a. Verse 7 says, "Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." This verse speaks of the wife of the Lamb. However, verse 9a says, "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb." This verse speaks of those who are invited to the Lamb's marriage dinner.... The wife, the bride of Christ, here is not the church but the overcomers.... The guests also are the overcomers. This means that, on the one hand, the overcomers are the bride and that, on the other hand, they are the guests.... The bride of Christ, therefore, is actually the group of overcomers. (Life-study of the Psalms, pp. 256, 260)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1978, vol. 3, "Truth Messages," ch. 4; CWWL, 1984, vol. 2, "Elders' Training, Book 1: The Ministry of the New Testament," ch. 1

<< **WEEK 2 — HYMN** >>

Hymns, #976 O Lord Jesus, Thy redeemed ones

Ultimate Manifestation — The Holy City

- 1 Lord Jesus, Thy redeemed ones
Are Thy Body and Thy Bride;
As Thy fulness, Thine expression,
In her Thou art glorified.
Thou, her all in all forever,
She Thy riches doth declare;
Thou dost fully saturate her
And Thy glory with her share.
- Chorus
Lo, the holy city,
Full of God's bright glory!
It is God's complete expression
In humanity.
- 2 God with man completely blended,
Mystery of godliness.
God in glory, full, resplendent,
Man, His dwelling, doth express.
'Tis a vessel universal
All God's fulness to express;
All His beauty manifesting,
Mingled with His holiness.
- 3 'Tis a living composition
Of the saints He hath transformed;
As the pearls and stones most precious,
To His image they're conformed:
From the throne of God, its center,
Flows the living water free;
Christ the tree of life doth flourish,
Bearing fruit abundantly.

4 'Tis th' eternal golden lampstand,
 Holding Christ, the lamp of light;
God in Christ the light of glory
 As the Spirit shineth bright!
'Tis the ultimate expression-
 Man in God and God in man;
'Tis their mutual habitation,
 Goal of God's eternal plan.

