

**LOVING THE LORD AND LOVING ONE ANOTHER
FOR THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH
AS THE BODY OF CHRIST**

(Lord's Day—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight

**Taking the God-ordained Pathway for the Church—
the Way of Philadelphia—according to the Lord's
Up-to-date and Ultimate Recovery
to Bring Us into a New Revival to Turn the Age**

EM Hymns 893, God's Eternal Economy

Scripture Reading: Rev. 3:7-22

- Rev 3:7 And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens:
- Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.
- Rev 3:9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, those who call themselves Jews and are not, but lie-behold, I will cause them to come and fall prostrate before your feet and to know that I have loved you.
- Rev 3:10 Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.
- Rev 3:11 I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown.
- Rev 3:12 He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.
- Rev 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.
- Rev 3:14 And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God:
- Rev 3:15 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.
- Rev 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.
- Rev 3:17 Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,
- Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.
- Rev 3:19 As many as I love I rebuke and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent.
- Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.
- Rev 3:21 He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.
- Rev 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

I. We need to see, live, and practice “the present truth,” the “up-to-date” truth, in order to change the age and bring Christ back; we need to hear what the Spirit is speaking to the churches, the voice of God in the present hour—2 Pet. 1:12; Rev. 2:7; Matt. 16:18; Gen. 2:22; Eph. 5:25-27; cf. John 1:23; S. S. 8:13-14:

- 2 Pet 1:12 Therefore I will be ready always to remind you concerning these things, even though you know them and have been established in the present truth.
- Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.
- Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

- Gen 2:22 And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.
- Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her
- Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
- Eph 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.
- John 1:23 He said, I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord!" as Isaiah the prophet said.
- S. S. 8:13 O you who dwell in the gardens, / My companions listen for your voice; / Let me hear it.
- S. S. 8:14 Make haste, my beloved, / And be like a gazelle or a young hart / Upon the mountains of spices.
- A. All the truths are in the Bible, but through man's foolishness, unfaithfulness, negligence, disobedience, and degradation, many truths were lost and hidden from man—cf. 2 Kings 22:8-11; 23:24-25.
- 2 Kings 22:8 Then Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.
- 2 Kings 22:9 And Shaphan the scribe came to the king and brought back word to the king and said, Your servants have emptied out the money which was found in the house and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who have the oversight of the house of Jehovah.
- 2 Kings 22:10 And Shaphan the scribe reported to the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book. And Shaphan read it aloud before the king.
- 2 Kings 22:11 And when the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes.
- 2 Kings 23:24 And moreover Josiah utterly removed the mediums and the soothsayers and the teraphim and the idols and all the detestable things that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest found in the house of Jehovah.
- 2 Kings 23:25 And before him there was no king like him who turned to Jehovah with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might according to all the law of Moses, and after him no one has risen up like him.
- B. These freshly revealed truths are not God's new inventions; rather, they are man's new discoveries; every worker of the Lord should inquire before God as to what the present truth is—Eph. 1:17; Ezek. 1:1-3; Rev. 1:10; 21:10.
- 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,
- Ezek 1:1 Now in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth of the month, while I was among the captives by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.
- Ezek 1:2 On the fifth of the month (it was the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity)
- Ezek 1:3 The word of Jehovah came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of Jehovah was upon him there.
- Rev 1:10 I was in spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,
- Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
- C. God's truths are cumulative; later truths do not negate the former ones; what we see today are the cumulative revelations of God; today we are living in the tide of God's will, which is a continuation of all the past works of God in the previous ages; may God be gracious to us so that we do not become castaways of "the present truth"—1 Cor. 9:27; cf. 2 Cor. 3:3, 6, 8-9; 5:18-21.
- 1 Cor 9:27 But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest perhaps having preached to others, I myself may become disapproved.
- 2 Cor 3:3 Since you are being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone but in tablets of hearts of flesh.
- 2 Cor 3:6 Who has also 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.
- 2 Cor 3:8 How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory?
- 2 Cor 3:9 For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.

- 2 Cor 5:18 But all things are out from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
- 2 Cor 5:19 Namely, that God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself, not accounting their offenses to them, and has put in us the word of reconciliation.
- 2 Cor 5:20 On behalf of Christ then we are ambassadors, as God entreats you through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God.
- 2 Cor 5:21 Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

D. The present truth of the Lord's up-to-date and ultimate recovery is to bring us into a new revival to turn the age by our choosing to take the way of Philadelphia; only the recovered church, the church of brotherly love, signified by the church in Philadelphia, can fulfill God's eternal purpose and satisfy His heart's desire—Rev. 1:1-3; 3:7-13; *Hymns*, #880.

- Rev 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show to His slaves the things that must quickly take place; and He made it known by signs, sending it by His angel to His slave John,
- Rev 1:2 Who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, even all that he saw.
- Rev 1:3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it, for the time is near.
- Rev 3:7 And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens:
- Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.
- Rev 3:9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, those who call themselves Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will cause them to come and fall prostrate before your feet and to know that I have loved you.
- Rev 3:10 Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.
- Rev 3:11 I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown.
- Rev 3:12 He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.
- Rev 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.
- Hymns*, #880
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| 1 | To the foe my word is always, "No,"
That His plan and all His counsel
When Thine orders I'm obeying,
To fulfill Thy plan eternal | To the Father it is "Yes,"
Be accomplished with success;
Grant me, Lord, authority
Thru the Spirit's power in me. |
| 2 | To the foe my word is always, "No,"
'Tis my attitude eternal;
Lest while walking in obedience
When I'm list'ning to Thine orders, | To the Father it is, "Yes";
May the Lord protect and bless,
Satan undermine the way;
Grant me mercy, Lord, I pray. |
| 3 | To the foe my word is always, "No,"
I completely would obey Him,
If the Lord will save and keep me,
Then no trials shall prevent me, | To the Father it is, "Yes";
Though deep suffering may oppress.
As I forward press with Him,
Nor will opposition grim. |

II. The characteristic of the overcomers in Philadelphia (vv. 7-13) is their aspiration to arrive at the highest peak of the divine revelation of God's economy—this highest peak is God becoming man to make man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead so that the Body of Christ can be produced, the bride can be prepared, and the New Jerusalem can be consummated:

- Rev 3:7 And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens:

Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

Rev 3:9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, those who call themselves Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will cause them to come and fall prostrate before your feet and to know that I have loved you.

Rev 3:10 Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.

Rev 3:11 I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown.

Rev 3:12 He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Rev 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

A. Even though the churches in Asia, in a general sense, had turned away from the apostle Paul's ministry (2 Tim. 1:15), one church was unique and was highly appraised by the Lord—the church in Philadelphia; the Lord highly appraised them and even appreciated them because they kept His word, which means that they did not turn away from the word of the apostle Paul's healthy teaching of God's economy, the highest peak of the divine revelation—Rev. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3:

2 Tim 1:15 This you know, that all who are in Asia turned away from me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

1 Tim 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

1 Tim 6:3 If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,

1. God's eternal economy is to make man the same as He is in life and nature but not in the Godhead and to make Himself one with man and man one with Him, thus to be enlarged and expanded in His expression, that all His divine attributes may be expressed in human virtues.

2. God's eternal economy is His plan to dispense Himself into His chosen, predestinated, and redeemed people as their life, their life supply, and their everything to produce, constitute, and build up the organic Body of Christ—1:3-6; 6:3-4; 2 Cor. 11:2-3; Titus 1:9; Col. 2:19.

1 Tim 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

1 Tim 1:5 But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience and out of unfeigned faith;

1 Tim 1:6 From which things some, having misaimed, have turned aside to vain talking,

1 Tim 6:3 If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,

1 Tim 6:4 He is blinded with pride, understanding nothing, but is diseased with questionings and contentions of words, out of which come envy, strife, slanders, evil suspicions,

2 Cor 11:2 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.

2 Cor 11:3 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.

Titus 1:9 Holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching of the apostles, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who oppose.

Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

- B. Those in Philadelphia are “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21) by pray-reading and musing upon His word to treasure up His word in their heart (Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:11, 15); they lift up their hands unto the word of God, indicating that they receive it warmly and gladly and that they say Amen to it (v. 48; Neh. 8:5-6).

Luke 12:21 So is he who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.

Eph 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,

Eph 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

Psa 119:11 In my heart I have treasured up Your word / That I might not sin against You.

Psa 119:15 I will muse upon Your precepts / And regard Your ways.

Psa 119:48 And I will lift up my hand to Your commandments, which I love; / And I will muse upon Your statutes.

Neh 8:5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

Neh 8:6 And Ezra blessed Jehovah the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground.

- C. For the overcomers to be pillars in the temple means that they will be pillars in the Triune God, for the temple is “the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb”; God is built into them to make them living and precious stones, and they are built into God to make them pillars of stone in God for their incorporation with God as the mutual abode of God and man—Rev. 3:12a; 21:22, 3; Psa. 90:1; John 14:23; cf. 1 Kings 7:17.

Rev 3:12a He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, ...

Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.

Psa 90:1 O Lord, You have been our dwelling place / In all generations.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.

1 Kings 7:17 There were nets of checker work with wreaths of chain work for the capitals that were at the top of the pillars, seven for the one capital, and seven for the second capital.

- D. That the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the Lord’s new name are written upon the overcomer indicates that the overcomer is possessed by God, by the New Jerusalem, and by the Lord and that God Himself, His city (the New Jerusalem), and the Lord Himself all belong to him.

- E. That the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the Lord’s new name are written upon the overcomers indicates that what God is, the nature of the New Jerusalem, and the person of the Lord have all been wrought into them, labeling them with the Triune God as their “name badge” and making them God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead—Rev. 3:12b; 22:4b.

Rev 3:12b ... and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Rev 22:4b ... and His name will be on their forehead.

III. The characteristic of the overcomers in Philadelphia is their endeavoring to enter into the God-man living by enjoying the riches of Christ as their indwelling treasure—Eph. 3:8; 2 Cor. 4:7:

Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God

and not out of us.

- A. In Isaiah 22 God fired Shebna, a steward in the house of the king (vv. 15-19), and replaced him with Eliakim, a type of the all-inclusive Christ as the Steward in God's house, the One upon whose shoulder the key of the house of God is set (vv. 20-25; Rev. 3:7-8); Christ has the key to control the door of God's treasury, in which are the riches of God in Christ for our enjoyment (1 Thes. 5:16-19; 1 John 1:7, 9; cf. Ezek. 1:22, 26):

Isa 22 be omitted.

Isa 22:15 Thus says the Lord Jehovah of hosts: / Get up, go to this steward, / To Shebna, who is over the king's house, saying,

Isa 22:16 What are you doing here, and whom do you have here / That you have hewn a tomb for yourself here, / As he who has hewn a tomb on the heights, / As he who has cut out a resting place for himself in the rock?

Isa 22:17 Jehovah soon throws you far away, O mighty one, / And He grasps you firmly;

Isa 22:18 He will wind you up tightly; / Like a ball He will toss you into a wide land. / There you will die; and there the chariots of your glory / Will become the disgrace of the house of your master.

Isa 22:19 And I will drive you from your position, / And from your standing He will pull you down.

Isa 22:20 And in that day / I will call to My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah,

Isa 22:21 And I will clothe him with your tunic, / And I will strengthen him with your girding sash, / And I will put your dominion into his hand; / And he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem / And to the house of Judah.

Isa 22:22 And I will set the key of the house of David upon his shoulder

Isa 22:23 And I will drive him as a peg into a sure place, / And he will become a throne of glory for his father's house.

Isa 22:24 And they will hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all the smallest vessels, from the bowls to all the jars.

Isa 22:25 In that day, declares Jehovah of hosts, the peg driven into the sure place will be removed, even cut away, and it will fall; and the burden that was upon it will be cut down; for Jehovah has spoken.

Rev 3:7 And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens:

Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

1 Thes 5:16 Always rejoice,

1 Thes 5:17 Unceasingly pray,

1 Thes 5:18 In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thes 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit;

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Ezek 1:22 And over the heads of the living creature there was the likeness of an expanse, like the sight of awesome crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

Ezek 1:26 And above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, like the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was One in appearance like a man, above it.

1. When God created us, He hired us, and when He put us on the cross, crucifying us with Christ, He fired us—Gal. 2:20.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

2. Whatever or whoever is not Christ, God fires; God has replaced everything in His Old Testament economy with Christ—Mark 1:1-8; Matt. 17:3-5; Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 10:5-10; 11:5-6.

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,

- Mark 1:2 Even as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way,
- Mark 1:3 A voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight His paths."
- Mark 1:4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins.
- Mark 1:5 And all the region of Judea went out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.
- Mark 1:6 And John was clothed in camel's hair and had a leather girdle around his loins, and he ate locusts and wild honey.
- Mark 1:7 And he preached, saying, He who is stronger than I comes after me, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.
- Mark 1:8 I have baptized you in water, but He Himself will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.
- Matt 17:3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with Him.
- Matt 17:4 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You are willing, I will make three tents here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah.
- Matt 17:5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight. Hear Him!
- Col 2:16 Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbath,
- Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ.
- Heb 10:5 Therefore, coming into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.
- Heb 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You did not delight.
- Heb 10:7 Then I said, Behold, I have come (in the roll of the book it is written concerning Me) to do Your will, O God."
- Heb 10:8 Saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You did not desire nor delight in" (which are offered according to the law),
- Heb 10:9 He then has said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the first that He may establish the second,
- Heb 10:10 By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
- Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God.
- Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
3. The real church life is a life in which all the saints are fired and replaced with Christ, making Christ everything in the church; all of us are Shebnas, who should be removed and replaced by Christ as the real Eliakim to make us His duplication as stewards of the mysteries of God and the varied grace of God—Col. 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:10.
- Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.
- 1 Cor 4:1 A man should account us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.
- 1 Pet 4:10 Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.
4. In the New Testament Christ's replacing of us is altogether a matter of a grafted life; as wild olive branches, we have been grafted into Christ as the cultivated olive tree (Rom. 11:17, 24); thus, we are united with Christ, and in this union Christ replaces us.
- Rom 11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and became a fellow partaker of the root of fatness of the olive tree,

- Rom 11:24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree and were grafted contrary to nature into the cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree!
5. Because we have been joined to Christ, and Christ joined Himself to us, uniting Himself with us, when He died on the cross, we died with Him and were terminated; now in our organic union with Christ, He replaces us by living in us, with us, by us, and through us—6:6; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:19-21a; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- Rom 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;
- Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
- Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
- 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
6. We live, yet not we, but Christ lives in us, and we live by the faith of the Son of God; this indicates a union with Christ; on the one hand, we are fired, and on the other hand, we are not expelled, for Christ comes to live in us, with us, by us, and through us (Gal. 2:20); thus, the all-inclusive Christ as Immanuel (Isa. 7:14) replaces everything and becomes everything in God's economy (Col. 3:10-11).
- Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive and will bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel.
- Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.
- B. In order to enjoy the riches of God in Christ as the treasure, we need to remain in the touch with the Lord, staying in contact with the Lord according to the sense of life and exercising ourselves to be poor in spirit and pure in heart—2 Cor. 2:10; Rom. 8:6; 10:12-13; Col. 3:16; Matt. 5:3, 8.
- 2 Cor 2:10 But whom you forgive anything, I also forgive; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, it is for your sake in the person of Christ;
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- Rom 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;
- Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
- Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.
- Matt 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
- Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- C. In order to enjoy the riches of God in Christ as the treasure, we need to use the "keys" of denying the self, taking up the cross, and losing the soul-life—Rev. 3:7; Isa. 22:15-24; Matt. 16:18-19, 24-25; 17:5, 8.
- Rev 3:7 And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens:

Isa 22:15 Thus says the Lord Jehovah of hosts: / Get up, go to this steward, / To Shebna, who is over the king's house, saying,
 Isa 22:16 What are you doing here, and whom do you have here / That you have hewn a tomb for yourself here, / As he who has hewn a tomb on the heights, / As he who has cut out a resting place for himself in the rock?
 Isa 22:17 Jehovah soon throws you far away, O mighty one, / And He grasps you firmly;
 Isa 22:18 He will wind you up tightly; / Like a ball He will toss you into a wide land. / There you will die; and there the chariots of your glory / Will become the disgrace of the house of your master.
 Isa 22:19 And I will drive you from your position, / And from your standing He will pull you down.
 Isa 22:20 And in that day / I will call to My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah,
 Isa 22:21 And I will clothe him with your tunic, / And I will strengthen him with your girding sash, / And I will put your dominion into his hand; / And he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem / And to the house of Judah.
 Isa 22:22 And I will set the key of the house of David upon his shoulder
 Isa 22:23 And I will drive him as a peg into a sure place, / And he will become a throne of glory for his father's house.
 Isa 22:24 And they will hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all the smallest vessels, from the bowls to all the jars.
 Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
 Matt 16:19 I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in the heavens.
 Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
 Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
 Matt 17:5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight. Hear Him!
 Matt 17:8 And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

D. The Lord's using the key of David to open the door for the spread of His recovery is objective to us, but Christ is also using the key of David to subjectively open the door in our inner being for us to be transformed and built into the house of God as a pillar with the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the new name of the Lord—Rev. 2:17; 3:12; cf. 21:22:

Rev 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except he who receives it.

Rev 3:12 He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

1. *The name of My God* indicates that the pillar is God; *the name of the city of My God* indicates that the pillar is the New Jerusalem; and *My new name* indicates that the pillar is Christ in a new significance; the overcomer as a pillar becomes God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead, he becomes a constituent of the New Jerusalem, and he becomes Christ in a new experiential sense—3:12.

Rev 3:12 He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

2. The New Jerusalem is the new Christ; as God's enlargement and expansion, we are Christ in a new sense as the New Jerusalem; the new Christ is not the same as He was in the four Gospels; the bride, who is the increase of the Bridegroom, is the New

Jerusalem, including all of God's regenerated ones—John 3:29-30; Rev. 21:9-10.

John 3:29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

Rev 21:9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

3. For us to be built into God, become a constituent of the New Jerusalem, and become a part of the new Christ is humanly impossible, but the law of the Spirit of life within us contains an element that deals with impossibility—Rom. 8:2; Luke 18:27; cf. Gen. 28:12-19; John 1:51.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Luke 18:27 But He said, The things that are impossible with men are possible with God.

Gen 28:12 And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

Gen 28:13 And there was Jehovah, standing above it; and He said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, I will give to you and to your seed.

Gen 28:14 And your seed will be as the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and in your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed.

Gen 28:15 And, behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will cause you to return to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

Gen 28:16 And Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I did not know it.

Gen 28:17 And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Gen 28:18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning and took the stone that he had put under his head, and he set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

Gen 28:19 And he called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz previously.

John 1:51 And He said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, You shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

- E. The overcomers in Philadelphia pay more attention to life than to work, caring more about quality than quantity (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12); they have “a little power” with the realization that what pleases the Lord is not their doing much for Him but their doing their best for Him with what they have (Rev. 3:8; Mark 14:8).

1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,

Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

Mark 14:8 She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.

- F. The overcomers in Philadelphia do not deny the Lord's name; they have abandoned all names other than that of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they call upon the name of the Lord, who is rich to all who call upon Him (Rom. 10:9-10, 12-13); they openly confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11), and they do not preach themselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and themselves as the believers' slaves for Jesus' sake (2 Cor. 4:5).

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

Rom 10:10 For with the heart there is believing unto righteousness, and with the mouth there is confession unto salvation.

- Rom 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;
- Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
- Phil 2:11 And every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.
- 2 Cor 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.

IV. The characteristic of the overcomers in Philadelphia is their brotherly love; love prevails among them so that they shepherd people according to God (1 Pet. 5:2) by cherishing them with the cheering presence of God and nourishing them with the healthy teaching of the economy of God (Eph. 4:11; 5:29; Acts 20:28):

- 1 Pet 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly;
- Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
- Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church,
- 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.

A. The Lord's recovery with Philadelphia is a recovery in quality, a recovery of the original substance of the church, the inner substance of God, which is love (1 John 4:8); to stand on the genuine ground of oneness, the ground of the church, is to choose to love all the brothers (Rev. 3:7a; cf. 2:4, 7).

- 1 John 4:8 He who does not love has not known God, because God is love.
- Rev 3:7a And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: ...
- Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.
- Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

B. The Lord's recovery is a recovery of loving the Lord Jesus; the overcomers in Philadelphia stand on the genuine ground of oneness and keep themselves in the love of God to love the Lord and love all the brothers—Jude 20-21; 2 Cor. 5:14; John 12:3; Luke 7:47; 1 John 3:14-16; cf. Psa. 133.

- Jude 20 But you, beloved, building up yourselves upon your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,
- Jude 21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.
- 2 Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;
- John 12:3 Then Mary took a pound of ointment, of very valuable pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.
- Luke 7:47 For this reason I say to you, Her sins which are many are forgiven, because she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, he loves little.
- 1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death.
- 1 John 3:15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.
- 1 John 3:16 In this we know love, that He laid down His life on our behalf, and we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers.
- Psa 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is / For brothers to dwell in unity!
- Psa 133:2 It is like the fine oil upon the head / That ran down upon the beard, / Upon Aaron's beard, / That ran down upon the hem of his garments;
- Psa 133:3 Like the dew of Hermon / That came down upon the mountains of Zion. / For there Jehovah commanded the blessing: / Life forever.

- C. The overcomers in Philadelphia keep the Lord's word in His unique New Testament ministry (Rev. 3:8), which brings them into the genuine appreciation, love, and enjoyment of the precious person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as their life and everything (2 Cor. 11:2-3).
- Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.
- 2 Cor 11:2 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.
- 2 Cor 11:3 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.
- D. In order to minister life to others and maintain our victory for the building up of the church, we must have a revived living and a labor in shepherding that flow out from our love for the Lord and for the brothers—John 21:15-17.
- John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.
- John 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.
- John 21:17 He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.
- E. "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God, and everyone who loves has been begotten of God and knows God. He who does not love has not known God, because God is love"—1 John 4:7-8.
- F. "We know and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him"—v. 16.
- G. God first loved us in that He infused us with His love and generated within us the love with which we love Him and the brothers—vv. 19-21.
- 1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.
- 1 John 4:20 If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.
- 1 John 4:21 And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God love his brother also.
- H. Brother Lee's intention for the international elders' conference in April 1997:
1. Do not lord it over the flock of God that has been allotted to you; the churches are God's possession, allotted to the elders as their allotment, their portion, entrusted to them by God for their care—1 Pet. 5:2-3.
- 1 Pet 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly;
- 1 Pet 5:3 Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.
2. Be willing to be a slave to the saints—Matt. 20:26-27; Mark 10:42-45.
- Matt 20:26 It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant,
- Matt 20:27 And whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave;
- Mark 10:42 And Jesus called them to Him and said to them, You know that those who are esteemed as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.
- Mark 10:43 But it is not so among you; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant,
- Mark 10:44 And whoever wants to be first among you shall be the slave of all.
- Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.
- 3. The elders should shepherd one another and love one another to be a model of the Body life.
- 4. The elders should take care of the saints in everything and in every way for the dispensing of Christ into them.

5. The elders should contact and visit the saints and invite them to their homes for meals.
- I. Brother Lee's final word to the elders in Anaheim: "The elders need to love one another, their wives need to love one another, and they need to love one another's children."

V. In order to continue in the way of Philadelphia, we must be saved from the way of Laodicea, which is a degraded and distorted Philadelphia—Rev. 3:14-22:

- Rev 3:14 And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God:
- Rev 3:15 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.
- Rev 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.
- Rev 3:17 Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,
- Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.
- Rev 3:19 As many as I love I rebuke and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent.
- Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.
- Rev 3:21 He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.
- Rev 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.
- A. Laodicea still remembers its history but has lost its former life; we must always remember that all that matters is God's present presence—Exo. 33:14; 2 Cor. 2:10.
- Exo 33:14 And He said, My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.
- 2 Cor 2:10 But whom you forgive anything, I also forgive; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, it is for your sake in the person of Christ;
- B. Laodicea means to know everything but in reality to be fervent about nothing; in name it has everything, but it cannot sacrifice its life for anything; it remembers its former glory but forgets its present condition before God; formerly, it was Philadelphia, but today it is Laodicea, full of lukewarmness and spiritual pride—Rev. 3:15-17.
- Rev 3:15 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.
- Rev 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.
- Rev 3:17 Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,
- C. If we want to continue in the way of Philadelphia, we need to humble ourselves before God and pay the price to gain more of the Triune God as gold, white garments, and eyesalve; then we can be one with the Lord as the leading Overcomer within us in order to sit with Him on His throne in the millennial kingdom—vv. 18, 21.
- Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.
- Rev 3:21 He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

The Sixth Church—Philadelphia

Next comes the sixth church; it has the name Philadelphia. *Phil* means "love" and *adelphia* means "brotherly." *Philadelphia* means "brotherly love."

Returning to Brotherly Love

Among the seven churches, this is the only one which does not receive any rebuke from the Lord.

The Roman Catholic Church was rebuked, and so were the Protestant churches. Only Philadelphia is not rebuked. One only finds praise in Philadelphia.

What are the characteristics of Philadelphia? Revelation 3:8 says, "I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name." This is the characteristic of Philadelphia. The characteristic of Thyatira is the teaching of a woman. The characteristic of Sardis is a union between the church and the world and a constant need for separation; it is a continuous struggle between life and death. But the characteristic of Philadelphia is brotherly love. Here is a return to brotherly love. There is no worldliness here because all are brothers. There is no need to struggle to separate oneself from death. It is a return to the original state of brotherhood. Here we find brotherly love.

Just as Sardis comes out of Thyatira, Philadelphia comes out of Sardis. The Protestants came out of the Roman Catholic Church, and Philadelphia came out of the Protestants. This was clearly a new move of the Holy Spirit. This new move attracted people from the dead Sardis and put them on the ground of brotherly love. In other words, they stood on the Body ground. They did not recognize any other relationship except the relationship of brothers. They did not recognize any other fellowship except the fellowship of love. This is Philadelphia.

Keeping the Lord's Word

Philadelphia had two characteristics: They kept the Lord's word, and they did not deny the Lord's name. Here was a group of people who were led by God to keep His word. God opened up the Word to them, and others were able to understand His Word through them. They had no creed, doctrine, or tradition, only the Word of God. At the time of Philadelphia, we find a group of people returning fully to the Word of the Lord, who did not recognize any other authority, doctrine, or creed.

A man can understand and even preach a doctrine, but this does not mean that he understands the Bible. He can memorize creeds and proclaim his faith in them, but this does not mean that he understands the Bible. The Lord would have given us creeds long ago if the church needed them. Today men analyze the Bible and condense its teachings into creeds. Creeds are limited, but the Bible is unlimited. Creeds are simple, while the Bible is complicated. A foolish man can understand creeds if he studies them. But a foolish man cannot understand the Bible. Only a certain type of people can understand the Bible. Only under certain conditions can a man understand God's Word. Creeds open a wide door and anyone can go in. But the door to God's Word is not that wide, and only those with life can enter it. The door of the creeds is so wide that a smart mind is all one needs to enter it. But God's Word is not that simple. Unless a man has life and is single before the Lord, he will not see or understand His Word.

Many people think that God's Word is too narrow. They want to broaden it so that they can bring more people into it. But those in Philadelphia rejected all creeds and doctrines. They turned back to the Word of the Lord. The Lord said, "You...have kept My word." In church history, there was never an age when men understood God's Word more than those in Philadelphia. In Philadelphia God's Word was given its rightful place. In other ages men accepted creeds and traditions. But Philadelphia accepted nothing other than God's Word. It returned to His Word and walked in it. In church history there was never a time when the ministry of the Word was as rich as that which we find in Philadelphia.

Not Denying the Lord's Name

The Lord said, "You...have not denied My name" (v. 8). This is another characteristic of Philadelphia. In the long history of the church throughout the ages, the name of the Lord Jesus has always been last in importance. Men pay attention to names of saints, such as Peter and other apostles. They pay attention to names they like or to names of doctrines and nations. Many say proudly, "I am a Lutheran," or "I am a Wesleyan." Oh, the names of men! Many claim proudly, "I am a Coptic" (of a place), or "I am an Anglican" (meaning British). These are names of countries. These names have divided God's children into divisions! It is as if the name of Christ were not enough to separate us from

the world.

If someone asks you, “Who are you?” and you answer, “I am a Christian,” he will not be satisfied. He will ask again, “What kind of Christian are you?” I remember once when I was in another country, a man asked me, “What are you really?” I said, “I am a Christian.” He said, “This is meaningless!”

The Lord’s Name Being Enough

To the Lord, His name is enough for His children. But we have to wait until Philadelphia before we see men who are satisfied with the Lord’s name alone. There is no need to have so many divisive names. His name alone is enough! The Lord takes note that they “have not denied My name.” This is what He cares for.

There was never a time in church history when men loathed other names as much as they did in Philadelphia. When one returns to Philadelphia, all other names are denied! Philadelphia has abolished all other names and has exalted only the name of Christ. Please bear in mind that the Lord cares for this one thing. This one thing is the basis for His praise. This is something pleasing to Him. Do not belittle this and do not be careless about it. The Lord takes the time to point out that they have confessed His name and have not denied His name. He pays attention to this and praises it!

The Question of Overcoming

Some brothers have asked, “What have the overcomers in Philadelphia overcome?” Do you see the problem posed by this question? The overcomers in Ephesus overcame forsaking their first love. The overcomers in Smyrna overcame the outward threat of death. The overcomers in Pergamos overcame the bondage and temptations of the world. The overcomers in Thyatira overcame the teaching of the woman. The overcomers in Sardis overcame spiritual death—the condition of being living in name and dead in reality. The overcomers of Laodicea overcame lukewarmness and vainglory. But what do the overcomers in Philadelphia overcome? The entire epistle to them shows only the Lord’s pleasure in what they have done. Of the seven epistles, this is the only one which has the Lord’s full approval. What is there to overcome if the Lord is fully pleased? It is a church fully approved and rated as the best; it is altogether according to the Lord’s heart’s desire. But the Lord has a promise for the overcomers in the church in Philadelphia. What do they have to overcome? There is nothing to overcome because there is no problem with this church.

Holding Fast What You Have

But the Lord has a warning here. Verse 11 says, “I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown.” This is the only warning in the entire epistle. Those in Philadelphia are reminded to hold fast what they have. In other words, they have what is right, and they should not lose it. They should not be weary of doing the same things for a long time and should not ask for a change. They should not contemplate doing something new after all the years of doing the same things. They have to hold fast what they have and not let it go! This is the only warning for Philadelphia. The Lord has only one charge for Philadelphia—to hold fast what they have. What they have done is right and is blessed by the Lord; therefore, they should continue in it.

If Philadelphia does not hold fast what it has, God will raise up others to take away its crown. The crown has already been given to Philadelphia. But others will come and take its crown if it does not hold it fast. This is the only warning to Philadelphia. Philadelphia overcomes by not losing what it has. This is different from the other six churches. We must pay attention to the Lord’s Word. There is only one church which meets the Lord’s standard—Philadelphia. Her characteristic is keeping the Lord’s word and not denying His name. We must not overlook these two matters.

The Seventh Church—Laodicea

Five of the seven churches were rebuked. One did not receive a rebuke, and one received only

praise. The one which received only praise was Philadelphia. Catholicism, Protestantism, and Philadelphia will all remain until the Lord Jesus comes again. The last church, the seventh one, Laodicea, also will continue until the Lord Jesus comes again. Since Sardis came out of Thyatira and Philadelphia came out of Sardis, Laodicea naturally has to come out of Philadelphia. One begets the other.

Laodicea Being the Result of Philadelphia's Degradation

This is where the issue lies today. Once Philadelphia fails, it becomes Laodicea. Do not think that Protestantism is Laodicea. It is altogether wrong to think this way. Protestantism is Sardis, not Laodicea. Protestantism can only be Sardis today; it cannot be Laodicea. No Bible reader should be so foolish as to think that Protestantism is Laodicea. No, Protestantism is Sardis. After Philadelphia has fallen, it becomes Laodicea. Sardis came out of Thyatira, and it was one step beyond Thyatira. Philadelphia came out of Sardis, and it was one step beyond Sardis. Laodicea, however, comes out of Philadelphia, but it is one step behind Philadelphia. These four churches will remain until the Lord Jesus comes again.

Laodicea is a distorted Philadelphia. When brotherly love is gone, Philadelphia immediately turns into the opinions of many. This is the meaning of the word *Laodicea*. Laodicea was a city whose name came from a Roman prince, Entiochus. He had a wife whose name was Laodios. He took his wife's name, dropped the *os* and added *kea* or *cea* to become *Laodikea* or *Laodicea*. *Lao* in Greek means "many people," and *dikea* or *dicea* means "opinion."

As soon as Philadelphia becomes degraded, the "brothers" become the "many people," and its "brotherly love" becomes "the opinions of the many." Love has degenerated into opinion. Brotherly love is something living, but the opinion of many people is something dead. When brotherly love is lost, the Body relationship is lost. The fellowship of life is cut off as well, leaving only the opinion of men. The opinion of the Lord is lost, and the only things left are the vote of the majority, ballots, and the show of hands. Once Philadelphia falls, it becomes Laodicea.

Lukewarmness and Spiritual Pride

Revelation 3:15 says, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot." This is the characteristic of Laodicea. Verse 17 says, "Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." These are the characteristics of Laodicea. In the eyes of the Lord, the characteristics of Laodicea are lukewarmness and spiritual pride. It is bad enough for it to say, "I am wealthy," but it continues, saying, "and have become rich." The two statements are evil enough, yet it goes on to say that it has "need of nothing." In the eyes of the Lord it is "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." Where does spiritual pride come from? It comes from history. Some were once rich, and they think that they are still rich. The Lord was once merciful to them, and they remember their history. But now they have lost that reality.

The Life That Was Present Being Lost Today

There is hardly any person in Protestantism today who boasts of his own spiritual riches. I have met many Protestant leaders overseas as well as Protestant pastors in China. They all say, "We are poor! We are poor!" It is hard to find a proud person in Sardis. There is only one group of proud people—those who were Philadelphia and who had once kept God's word and not denied His name. Yet the life which they once had is lost. They still remember their history, but they have lost their former life! They remember that they were once wealthy and had become rich and had need of nothing. But they are now poor and blind! There is only one group of people who can boast of their riches—fallen Philadelphia, the Philadelphia which has lost its power and life.

Learning to Humble Ourselves before God

Brothers and sisters, if you want to continue in the way of Philadelphia, remember to humble yourselves before God. Sometimes I hear some brothers say, “God’s blessing is with us.” God’s blessing is with us, but we must be careful when we say this. As soon as we are not careful, we have the flavor of Laodicea: “We are wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing.” Let me say that the day we take this position, we have become Laodicea.

Please bear in mind that we have nothing that we have not received. Those around us may be full of death, but we do not need to be conscious of the fact that we are full of life. Those around us may be poor, but we do not need to be conscious of the fact that we are rich. Those who live before the Lord will not be conscious of their own riches. May the Lord be merciful to us that we may learn to live before Him. May we be rich and yet not know that we are rich. It was better for Moses not to know that his face was shining, even though it did shine! Once a person knows himself, he becomes Laodicea, and the result is lukewarmness. Laodicea means to know everything, but in reality to be fervent about nothing. In name it has everything, but it cannot sacrifice its life for anything. It remembers its former glory but forgets its present condition before God. Formerly, it was Philadelphia; today it is Laodicea.

CHOOSING FOR OURSELVES THE PATHWAY OF THE CHURCH

Today I present these four churches to us all. The last three came out of Roman Catholicism, and all four will remain until the Lord Jesus comes again. Today every child of God has to choose the pathway he should take with regard to the church. Do you want to be a Roman Catholic? Do you want to be a Protestant? Do you want to follow the oneness of Roman Catholicism? Do you want to follow the many denominations of Protestantism? Or do you want to take the way of Philadelphia? Or were you once Philadelphia but are now living in the shadow of history and boasting of your former glory, thus becoming Laodicean? When a person becomes proud, forsakes the way of life, and neglects reality, while reminiscing on his history and his own riches, the only thing left will be the opinions of many. Among such ones there can only be discussion and consensus. It appears to be a democratic society but bears no resemblance to the Body relationship. If you do not know the binding, authority, and life of the Body, you do not know brotherly love.

These four churches will remain with us. We must be faithful to continue in Philadelphia. Do not be curious about Roman Catholicism. Those who are curious will always suffer loss. Do not touch the denominations in Protestantism. This is not God’s way. The Bible shows us clearly that the Protestant movement as a whole had God’s blessing, but that there are also many things which the Lord condemns and rebukes. We do not need to delve into these things or ask about them.

We must learn to stand on the ground of Philadelphia. Always keep the Lord’s word and never deny His name. Hold fast the brotherly stand and never be proud! Do not be proud in the face of Catholicism, Protestantism, or the denominations. Once you are proud, you become Laodicea and are no longer Philadelphia! As soon as you show your pride before them, you are no longer Philadelphia but Laodicea. Which way do you want to take? May God bless His children and may the brothers take the upright path with regard to the church.

The God-ordained pathway for the church is the way of Philadelphia. I may not have tens of thousands of cases to prove that the best of God’s children speak the same thing and take this same way. But I have hundreds of cases to prove what I am saying. Once the general issue of Protestantism is settled, we need not nit-pick the minor issues. Similarly, once the overall issue of Roman Catholicism is settled, we do not have to be so concerned about its minor issues. The Roman Catholic Church has twenty-one different organizations in China. There is no need to involve ourselves with the Catholic Church, and there is no need to learn about the organizations of its different daughters. Once the overall issue of Roman Catholicism is settled, these twenty-one organizations are no longer a problem. Likewise, once the general issue of Protestantism is settled, we do not need to deal with all of its fifteen hundred denominations one by one.

The Lord’s way is unique. It is the way of Philadelphia. Walk on this way, but be careful not to be

proud. Once we take the way of Philadelphia, the greatest temptation is to become proud and say, “We are better than you are. Our truths are clearer than yours, and we understand them better than you do! We have only the Lord’s name and we are different!” Once we become proud, we fall into Laodicea. Those who follow the Lord have no pride. The Lord will spew the proud ones out of His mouth. May the Lord be merciful to us! This is a warning to all of us: We must not be proud in our speaking! A person must live before the Lord continually before he can refrain from proud words. Only those who live before God continually will not consider themselves rich. Only they will not be proud! (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 50, “Messages for Building Up New Believers (3),” pp. 779-787)