

Message Ten
**The Central and Crucial Point
of the Recovery Books of Ezra and Nehemiah—
the Proper and Adequate Leadership
in the Lord’s Recovery**

RA Hymns: 538

Scripture Reading: Neh. 8:1-10; 13:14, 29-31;
Matt. 20:25-28; 23:8-13; Heb. 13:7

- Neh 8:1 And all the people gathered as one man in the open area that was before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel.
- Neh 8:2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.
- Neh 8:3 And he read in it before the open area that was before the Water Gate from first light until midday in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.
- Neh 8:4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a wooden platform that had been made for that purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah and Shema and Anaiah and Uriah and Hilkiyah and Maaseiah at his right hand; and at his left hand, Pedaiah and Mishael and Malchijah and Hashum and Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.
- 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.
- Neh 8:7 Also Jeshua and Bani and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites helped the people understand the law; and the people stood in their place.
- Neh 8:8 And they read in the book, in the law of God, interpreting and giving the sense, so that they understood the reading.
- Neh 8:9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who helped the people understand said to all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; do not mourn or weep. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.
- Neh 8:10 Then he said to them, Go your way; eat the fat, and drink the sweet wine, and send portions to him for whom nothing has been prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.
- Neh 13:14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not blot out my loyal deeds, which I have done for the house of my God and for its services.
- Neh 13:29 Remember them, O my God; for they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites.
- Neh 13:30 Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign. And I appointed duties for the priests and the Levites, each in his work,
- Neh 13:31 And for the wood offering, at the appointed times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.
- Matt 20:25 But Jesus called them to Him and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them.
- 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;
- Matt 20:28 Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.
- Matt 23:8 But you, do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.
- Matt 23:9 And do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father, He who is in the heavens.
- Matt 23:10 Neither be called instructors, because One is your Instructor, the Christ.
- Matt 23:11 And the greatest among you shall be your servant.
- Matt 23:12 And he who will exalt himself shall be humbled, and he who will humble himself shall be exalted.

- Matt 23:13 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you close off the kingdom of the heavens in the face of men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to enter.
- Heb 13:7 Remember the ones leading you, who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith.

I. In God's eternal economy and in the Lord's recovery, leadership depends upon spiritual capacity; the leadership is not official, permanent, organizational, or hierarchical—1 Thes. 1:5; 2:1-14; 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24:

- 1 Thes 1:5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, even as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.
- 1 Thes 2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers, our entrance toward you, that it has not been in vain.
- 1 Thes 2:2 But having suffered previously and having been outrageously treated, even as you know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle.
- 1 Thes 2:3 For our exhortation is not out of deception nor out of uncleanness nor in guile;
- 1 Thes 2:4 But even as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who proves our hearts.
- 1 Thes 2:5 For neither were we found at any time with flattering speech, even as you know, nor with a pretext for covetousness; God is witness.
- 1 Thes 2:6 Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ.
- 1 Thes 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.
- 1 Thes 2:8 Yearning in this way over you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us.
- 1 Thes 2:9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and travail: While working night and day so as not to be burdensome to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.
- 1 Thes 2:10 You are witnesses, as well as God, how in a holy and righteous and blameless manner we conducted ourselves toward you who believe,
- 1 Thes 2:11 Just as you know how we were to each one of you, as a father to his own children, exhorting you and consoling you and testifying,
- 1 Thes 2:12 So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.
- 1 Thes 2:13 And because of this we also thank God unceasingly that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but even as it truly is, the word of God, which also operates in you who believe.
- 1 Thes 2:14 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus, for you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they also from the Jews,
- 1 Thes 5:12 Furthermore we ask you, brothers, to acknowledge those who labor among you and take the lead among you in the Lord and admonish you,
- 1 Thes 5:13 And to regard them most highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.
- Heb 13:7 Remember the ones leading you, who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith.
- Heb 13:17 Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.
- Heb 13:24 Greet all the ones leading you and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.
- A. The Lord's concept of leadership is the opposite of the natural concept; among God's people there is actually no leadership in the natural sense—Matt. 20:25-28; 23:8-13:
- Matt 20:25 But Jesus called them to Him and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them.
- 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;

- Matt 20:28 Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.
- Matt 23:8 But you, do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.
- Matt 23:9 And do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father, He who is in the heavens.
- Matt 23:10 Neither be called instructors, because One is your Instructor, the Christ.
- Matt 23:11 And the greatest among you shall be your servant.
- Matt 23:12 And he who will exalt himself shall be humbled, and he who will humble himself shall be exalted.
- Matt 23:13 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you close off the kingdom of the heavens in the face of men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to enter.

1. In God's New Testament economy, leadership means slavery; anyone who would be a leader must be willing to be a slave—Mark 10:35-45.

- Mark 10:35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying to Him, Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask You.
- Mark 10:36 And He said to them, What do you want Me to do for you?
- Mark 10:37 And they said to Him, Grant to us to sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory.
- Mark 10:38 But Jesus said to them, You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup which I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?
- Mark 10:39 And they said to Him, We are able. And Jesus said to them, The cup which I drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you shall be baptized.
- Mark 10:40 But to sit on My right or on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.
- Mark 10:41 And when the ten heard this, they began to be indignant concerning James and John.
- 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.

2. A leadership is shaped by the growth in life and is an issue of the need; if there is no need, no leadership can be manifested—1 Pet. 5:1-3.

- 1 Pet 5:1 Therefore the elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory to be revealed:
- 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.

3. In order to set aside the human concept of leadership, God ordained that the leadership among His people should depend always upon spiritual capacity—Acts 13:2, 9; 14:12; Gal. 2:11-14.

- Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.
- Acts 13:9 But Saul, who is also Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him
- Acts 14:12 And they called Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, since he was the one who took the lead in the discourse.
- Gal 2:11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.
- Gal 2:12 For before some came from James, he continually ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to shrink back and separate himself, fearing those of the circumcision.

- Gal 2:13 And the rest of the Jews also joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away in their hypocrisy.
- Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they were not walking in a straightforward way in relation to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like the Jews?
4. There is no organized leadership in the Lord's recovery, and there is no unifying organization; instead, there is one Head who gives orders to all the members directly, and there is one organism, the Body—Eph. 1:22-23.
- Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
- B. According to the New Testament, the authority of the apostles is spiritual and is in their ministry of the word—Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 13:5-6; 1 Thes. 2:13:
- Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.
- 2 Cor 13:5 Test yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves. Or do you not realize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are disapproved?
- 2 Cor 13:6 But I hope that you will know that we are not disapproved.
- 1 Thes 2:13 And because of this we also thank God unceasingly that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but even as it truly is, the word of God, which also operates in you who believe.
1. They have no authority in position to interfere with the church affairs; only the word ministered by them has authority—Col. 4:16; Heb. 13:7.
- Col 4:16 And when this letter is read among you, cause that it be read in the church of the Laodiceans also, and that you also read the one from Laodicea.
- Heb 13:7 Remember the ones leading you, who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith.
2. The churches follow the apostles because the apostles have the New Testament teaching—Phil. 2:12; Acts 20:17-36.
- Phil 2:12 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;
- Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent word to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.
- Acts 20:18 And when they came to him, he said to them, You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you all the time,
- Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews;
- Acts 20:20 How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house,
- Acts 20:21 Solemnly testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance unto God and faith in our Lord Jesus.
- Acts 20:22 And now, behold, I am going bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what will meet me there,
- Acts 20:23 Except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in city after city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.
- Acts 20:24 But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God.
- Acts 20:25 And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will see my face no more.
- Acts 20:26 Therefore I testify to you on this day that I am clean from the blood of all men,
- Acts 20:27 For I did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God.
- 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.

- Acts 20:29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.
- Acts 20:30 And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them.
- Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.
- Acts 20:32 And now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified.
- Acts 20:33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing.
- Acts 20:34 You yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my needs and to those who are with me.
- Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you by example that toiling in this way we ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.
- Acts 20:36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down with them all and prayed.
3. If a church goes astray or is misled, the apostles have the obligation and responsibility to deal with the situation according to God's word, which has authority—vv. 26-27; 2 Cor. 10:6; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:2.
- Acts 20:26 Therefore I testify to you on this day that I am clean from the blood of all men,
- Acts 20:27 For I did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God.
- 2 Cor 10:6 And we are ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.
- 2 Tim 1:13 Hold a pattern of the healthy words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.
- 2 Tim 4:2 Proclaim the word; be ready in season and out of season; convict, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching.
4. The leadership is produced, strengthened, and restricted in the apostles' teaching—Titus 1:9.
- 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.
- C. In the New Testament there is one ministry with one leadership—Acts 1:17, 25; 2 Cor. 4:1:
- Acts 1:17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his portion of this ministry.
- Acts 1:25 To take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.
- 2 Cor 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;
1. Today's Christianity is divided because there are so many leaderships; because the ministry is one, there should not be more than one leadership.
2. There is one leadership since God, the Lord, and the Spirit are all one; the one leadership is for the keeping of the oneness of the Spirit for the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:3-6.
- Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:
- Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
- Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;
- Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
3. The New Testament shows us God's delegated authority in the leading ones in the ministry, an authority that is for building up—2 Cor. 13:10:
- 2 Cor 13:10 Therefore I write these things while being absent in order that when present I would not have to use severity, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for overthrowing.
- a. God's delegated authority was in the teaching of the leading ones—1 Cor. 4:17b-21; 7:17b; 11:2; 16:1; 2 Thes. 3:6, 9, 12, 14.
- 1 Cor 4:17b ... who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.
- 1 Cor 4:18 Now some have become puffed up as though I were not coming to you.

- 1 Cor 4:19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will ascertain not the speech of those who are puffed up but the power.
- 1 Cor 4:20 For the kingdom of God is not in speech but in power.
- 1 Cor 4:21 What do you want? Should I come to you with a rod or in love and a spirit of meekness?
- 1 Cor 7:17b ... And so I direct in all the churches.
- 1 Cor 11:2 But I praise you because in all things you have remembered me and hold fast the things that I have handed down even as I handed them down to you.
- 1 Cor 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, just as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also do.
- 2 Thes 3:6 Now we charge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother walking disorderly and not according to the things which were handed down to you and which you received from us.
- 2 Thes 3:9 Not because we do not have the right, but in order that we might give ourselves to you as a pattern that you might imitate us.
- 2 Thes 3:12 Now such ones we charge and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work with quietness and eat their own bread.
- 2 Thes 3:14 And if anyone does not obey our word through this letter, mark this one so as not to mingle with him, in order that he may be ashamed.
- b. Teaching the same thing everywhere in every church was the demonstration of Paul’s delegated authority—1 Cor. 4:17b.
 - 1 Cor 4:17b ... who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.
- D. The leadership in the New Testament ministry is in the New Testament teaching more than in the leading ones of the New Testament ministry themselves—Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:10.
 - Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.
 - 2 Tim 3:10 But you have closely followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, endurance,

II. The leadership in the New Testament ministry is the leadership of the controlling vision of God’s eternal economy, not the leadership of a controlling person; the apostle Paul declared, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision”—Acts 26:19:

- A. God’s eternal economy was unveiled through the apostles, but because the believers lost the proper understanding of it, there is the need for it to be recovered by the Lord; God’s eternal economy (Gk. *oikonomia*) is His household administration to dispense Himself in Christ into His chosen people so that He may have a house to express Himself, which house is the church, the Body of Christ—Eph. 3:2, 8-9; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 3:15; Eph. 1:10; 2:21-22; 1 Pet. 4:10.
 - Eph 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,
 - 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
 - Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,
 - 1 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 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
 - Eph 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

- Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
- Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
- 1 Pet 4:10 Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

B. *Recovery* means the restoration or return to a normal condition after a damage or a loss has been incurred; *recovery* means to go back to God's original intention and standard as revealed in the Scriptures, which is according to the present advance of His recovery of the contents of God's eternal economy:

1. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of Christ as our center, reality, life, and everything in His full ministry of incarnation, inclusion, and intensification—Col. 1:17b, 18b; Psa. 80:1, 15, 17-19; John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 2:4-5, 7, 17; 3:7-8, 12-13, 17-22; 4:5; 5:6; John 6:57; 14:21, 23; 21:15-17; cf. Jer. 32:39.

Col 1:17b ... and all things cohere in Him;

Col 1:18b ... He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Psa 80:1 O Shepherd of Israel, give ear, / You who lead Joseph like a flock; / You who are enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth.

Psa 80:15 Even the stock which Your right hand has planted / And the son whom You have strengthened for Yourself.

Psa 80:17 Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, / Upon the son of man whom You have strengthened for Yourself;

Psa 80:18 Then we will not turn back from You. / Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.

Psa 80:19 O Jehovah God of hosts, restore us; / Cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.

Rev 2:5 Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.

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.

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 3:7 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 3:12 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 3:17 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.
- Rev 4:5 And out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;
- Rev 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.
- John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
- John 14:21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, he is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.
- 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.
- 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.
- Jer 32:39 And I will give them one heart and one way, to fear Me all the days, for their own good and for the good of their children after them.
2. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the oneness of the Body of Christ—John 17:11, 21-23; Eph. 4:3-4a; Rev. 1:11.
- John 17:11 And I am no longer in the world; yet they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given to Me, that they may be one even as We are.
- John 17:21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.
- John 17:22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;
- John 17:23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.
- Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:
- Eph 4:4a One Body and one Spirit, ...
- Rev 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.
3. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the function of all the members of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:15-16; Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; 1 Cor. 14:1, 4b, 12, 26, 31, 39; Jer. 31:33-34 (see footnote 1 on v. 33).
- Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

Rom 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

1 Pet 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

1 Cor 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

1 Cor 14:4b ... but he who prophesies builds up the church.

1 Cor 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.

1 Cor 14:26 What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

1 Cor 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

1 Cor 14:39 So then, my brothers, desire earnestly the prophesying, and do not forbid the speaking in tongues.

Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Jehovah: I will put My ¹law in their inward parts and write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

note 1 31:331 (law) See note 101 in Heb. 8. The center, the content, and the reality of the new covenant is the inner law of life (Rom. 8:2). In its essence, this law refers to the divine life, and the divine life is the Triune God, who is embodied in the all-inclusive Christ (Col. 2:9) and realized as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), and who has been processed and consummated to become everything to His chosen people.

According to its life, the law of the new covenant is the Triune God, and according to its function, it is the almighty divine capacity. This divine capacity can do everything in us for the carrying out of God's economy. According to this capacity we can know God, live God, and be constituted with God in His life and nature that we may become His increase, His enlargement, to be His fullness for His eternal expression (Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19-21). Furthermore, the capacity of the inner law of life constitutes us the members of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:30) with all kinds of functions (Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:11, 16).

Jer 31:34 And they will no longer teach, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for all of them will know Me, from the little one among them even to the great one among them, declares Jehovah, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

C. This vision must be renewed in us day by day to be the controlling vision of all our life, work, and activity—1 John 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:9; Isa. 2:5; Psa. 119:105; 36:8-9.

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 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Isa 2:5 House of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of Jehovah.

Psa 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet / And a light to my path.

Psa 36:8 They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, / And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures.

Psa 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light.

D. For a person to leave the Lord's recovery means that he has never seen what the Lord's recovery is; if we have not seen a vision of the Lord's recovery, we actually are not in the Lord's recovery—Acts 26:13-19; cf. Gen. 13:14-18.

Acts 26:13 At midday, on the way, I saw, O King, a light from heaven beyond the brightness of the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me.

- Acts 26:14 And when we all fell to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.
- Acts 26:15 And I said, Who are You, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.
- Acts 26:16 But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;
- Acts 26:17 Delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I send you,
- Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.
- Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
- Gen 13:14 And Jehovah said to Abram after Lot had separated from him, Now lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward;
- Gen 13:15 For all the land that you see I will give to you and to your seed forever.
- Gen 13:16 And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then your seed can also be numbered.
- Gen 13:17 Rise up; walk through the land according to its length and its breadth, for I will give it to you.
- Gen 13:18 And Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to Jehovah.
- E. We in the Lord's recovery must have a clear vision of God's eternal economy and then be governed, controlled, and directed by this vision, for we are here to carry out God's eternal economy in His recovery.
- F. The leadership in the Lord's recovery is the leadership of the God-given vision of God's eternal economy that restricts us, directs us, and controls us so that confusion and division are avoided—Prov. 29:18a.
Prov 29:18a Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; ...
- G. Read the supplement from *The Vision of the Age*.

III. The central and crucial point of the recovery books of Ezra and Nehemiah is the proper and adequate leadership—Neh. 8:1-10:

- Neh 8:1 And all the people gathered as one man in the open area that was before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel.
- Neh 8:2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.
- Neh 8:3 And he read in it before the open area that was before the Water Gate from first light until midday in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.
- Neh 8:4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a wooden platform that had been made for that purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah and Shema and Anaiah and Uriah and Hilkiyah and Maaseiah at his right hand; and at his left hand, Pedaiah and Mishael and Malchijah and Hashum and Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.
- 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.
- Neh 8:7 Also Jeshua and Bani and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites helped the people understand the law; and the people stood in their place.
- Neh 8:8 And they read in the book, in the law of God, interpreting and giving the sense, so that they understood the reading.
- Neh 8:9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who helped the people understand said to all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; do not mourn or weep. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.

Neh 8:10 Then he said to them, Go your way; eat the fat, and drink the sweet wine, and send portions to him for whom nothing has been prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.

A. In the Lord's recovery we have the leadership of the one controlling vision in the one ministry through those who bring in the vision—Eph. 3:3-5, 9; Col. 1:24-29:

Eph 3:3 That by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief,

Eph 3:4 By which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ,

Eph 3:5 Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit,

Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

Col 1:24 I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body, which is the church;

Col 1:25 Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

Col 1:26 The mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations but now has been manifested to His saints;

Col 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,

Col 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;

Col 1:29 For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.

1. Paul said that he and his co-workers were “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1); they were stewards, dispensing the heavenly vision of the mysteries of God to the believers; these mysteries are Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ (Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4; 5:32); this dispensing service, the stewardship, is the ministry of the apostles (3:2, 8-9).

Col 2:2 That their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ,

Eph 3:4 By which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ,

Eph 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

Eph 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

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

Eph 3:9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

2. “It is sought in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2); like Paul, we need to be “shown mercy by the Lord to be faithful” (7:25b; 1 Tim. 1:12) so that we may be faithful slaves, who habitually give the household of God spiritual food, ministering the word of God and Christ as the life supply to the believers in the church (Matt. 24:45-47); we want to be those who are faithful over the Lord's work in this age so that we may participate in the Lord's joy in the next age, with the realization that the Lord's appraisal and reward are not related to the size and quantity of our work but to our faithfulness in using His gift to the fullest extent (25:21-23; cf. Rev. 3:8).

1 Tim 1:12 I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord, that He has counted me faithful, appointing me to the ministry,

Matt 24:45 Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time?

Matt 24:46 Blessed is that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.

Matt 24:47 Truly I say to you that he will set him over all his possessions.

Matt 25:21 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

Matt 25:22 And he who had received the two talents also came and said, Master, you delivered to me two talents; behold, I have gained another two talents.

Matt 25:23 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

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.

B. Only under the leadership of faithful persons such as Nehemiah and Ezra could Israel be reconstituted to be the testimony of God, the expression of God on earth, a people absolutely different from the Gentile nations; this is a type of what God wants the church to be today—Neh. 13:14, 29-31; 1 Tim. 3:15.

Neh 13:14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not blot out my loyal deeds, which I have done for the house of my God and for its services.

Neh 13:29 Remember them, O my God; for they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites.

Neh 13:30 Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign. And I appointed duties for the priests and the Levites, each in his work,

Neh 13:31 And for the wood offering, at the appointed times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

C. Nehemiah knew that without Ezra he could not reconstitute the people of God:

1. In reconstituting the nation, Nehemiah realized that he did not know God's Word.

2. Ezra was renowned for his knowledge of the Word of God, and Nehemiah was willing to turn to him for help.

D. According to the divine principle, the proper representation of the Body is always by those who are matched with others—1 Cor. 1:1; Exo. 4:14b-16:

1 Cor 1:1 Paul, a called apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Sosthenes the brother,
Exo 4:14b ... I know that he can certainly speak. And even now he is coming out to meet you; and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.

Exo 4:15 And you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do.

Exo 4:16 And he shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be as God to him.

1. To be alone is to be individualistic, but to be sent forth with another is to be sent according to the principle of the Body—Luke 10:1; Acts 13:1-3; Rom. 12:5; 1 Thes. 1:1.

Luke 10:1 Now after these things, the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to come.

Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

Acts 13:3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

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

1 Thes 1:1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

2. To act individualistically is to violate the principle of the Body.

3. In the Lord's recovery there is an urgent need for the true work of building up the Body; however, this building work can be carried out only by co-workers who have been matched—Phil. 2:19-22.

Phil 2:19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged by knowing the things concerning you.

Phil 2:20 For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you;
Phil 2:21 For all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.
Phil 2:22 But you know his approvedness, that as a child with a father he has served with me unto the gospel.

- E. “The Lord has shown me that He has prepared many brothers who will serve as fellow slaves with me in a blended way. I feel that this is the Lord’s sovereign provision for His Body, and the up-to-date way to fulfill His ministry”—Witness Lee, March 24, 1997 (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994–1997*, vol. 5, “A Letter of Fellowship with Thanks,” p. 525).

Supplement from *The Vision of the Age*:

CLOSELY FOLLOWING THE COMPLETED VISION OF THIS AGE

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. This and this alone is the complete vision. It is not until today that this vision has been fully opened to us.

In the National Palace Museum in Taipei, there is a painting on a long scroll called “The River Scene at Ching-Ming Festival.” It describes in detail the culture, life, and way of the Chinese people at the time of the painting. It is not enough to see only the first few portions of that long scroll. One has to go all the way from one end to the other end before he can have a clear picture, or “vision,” of the entire spectrum of life in China. In the same way we have our own painting, our “River Scene at Ching-Ming,” in our service to God. It begins from Adam’s vision of the tree of life in the garden of Eden and extends all the way to the New Jerusalem with the tree of life. The New Jerusalem is the last scene of the vision. After that there is nothing more to be seen.

... We are serving God according to the last scene, which includes all the previous scenes...

Since we have the up-to-date and ultimate vision, we should closely follow after it. We are absolutely not following a man; rather, we are following a vision. It is grossly wrong to say that we are following a certain person. We are following a vision that belongs to the present age. It is God’s consummate vision.

The Lord’s recovery was brought to us through our dear Brother Nee. Because of this he became a target of attack. In 1934 he was married in Hangchow. Some took this opportunity to stir up a storm. He became very sad, so one day I went to him to comfort him, saying, “Brother Nee, you know that between the two of us, there is no natural relationship. I do not take the way that you are taking or preach what you are preaching out of a natural friendship with you. The two of us are widely separated from each other. I am a northerner, and you are a southerner. Today I am taking the same pathway not because I am following you as a person. I am following the way that you are taking. Brother Nee, I would like you to know that even if one day you do not take this way, I will still take this way.” I said this because the storm affected some, and they decided not to take this way anymore. In other words, many people were following a man. When the man seemed to have changed, they turned away. But 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.”

Fifty-two years have passed. Today I do not regret at all what I have done. During the past fifty-two years I have seen the same story repeat itself again and again. Some people came and left. One scene changed, and another scene came along. Since the beginning of our work in Taiwan, during the past three decades we have witnessed some major crises. Even brothers whom I led to salvation and who went through my own training have left the Lord’s recovery. The vision has never changed, but the persons have indeed changed, and those who follow the vision also have changed. I would say a sober word to all of you from the bottom of my heart. By the Lord’s mercy I can stand here today to

bring you this vision. I hope that you are not following me as a person; I hope that by the Lord's mercy you are following the vision that I have shown you...

I would like to relate to you one fact. It is the Lord's mercy that He has revealed to me the vision. I advise you not to follow me but to follow this vision, which Brother Nee and all the servants of the Lord throughout the ages have left to us and which I have handed to you. This is indeed the vision that extends from the first scene of Adam to the last scene of the New Jerusalem. (pp. 48-50)