

(John 19:34; Rom. 5:10; Rev. 22:1-2, 14, 19):

Week 41

The Tree of Life

Hymns: E971

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:7-9; Rev. 2:4-5, 7; 22:2, 14; 2 Cor. 4:5; 5:14-15

- Gen. 2:7 Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.
- Gen. 2:8 And Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there He put the man whom He had formed.
- Gen. 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- 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. 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
- Rev. 22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city.
- 2 Cor. 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.
- 2 Cor. 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;
- 2 Cor. 5:15 And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

§ Day 1

- I. Christ as life is the reality of the tree of life, which is the center of the universe; life is the goal of God's creation (Gen. 1:26-28, 31; 2:7-9) and the goal of God's complete salvation**

- A. In the Bible the tree of life always signifies Christ as the embodiment of all the riches of God for our food; God's placing man in front of the tree of life indicates that God wanted man to receive Him as man's life by eating Him organically and by assimilating Him metabolically, that God might become the very constituent of man's being—Col. 2:9; Gen. 2:9; John 1:4; 10:10; 14:6; 15:1; 6:35, 57, 63; 1 Cor. 15:45b.

§ Day 2

- B. In Revelation 2:7 the tree of life signifies the crucified (implied in the tree as a piece of wood—1 Pet. 2:24) and resurrected (implied in the life of God—John 11:25) Christ, who today is in the church, the consummation of which is the New Jerusalem, in which the crucified and resurrected Christ will be the tree of life for the nourishment of all God's redeemed people for eternity (Rev. 22:2, 14).

§ Day 3

II. We need to see the obstacles that God's life encounters in man:

- A. The first problem that God's life encounters in us is that we do not realize the darkness of our human concepts:
1. We need to see that the only thing that matters in the Christian life is how we take care of the living Christ in us—Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:19; Phil. 1:19-21; Eph. 4:13; 2 Cor. 3:18.
 2. Being a Christian means not taking anything other than Christ as our aim; many people have difficulty in their spiritual life after they are saved because they do not know the pathway of life, and they do not take Christ as their life.

B. The second problem that life encounters in us is hypocrisy—Matt. 6:2, 5; 7:5; 23:13-29:

1. A person's spirituality is not determined by outward appearance but by how he takes care of the indwelling Christ.
2. Our natural goodness is false spirituality and is actually a great hindrance to life; the expression of life involves the rejection of our natural disposition and preference, and simply allowing Christ to operate in us and break us.
3. If we always do things according to our disposition and natural being, the outcome will always be hypocrisy.

C. The third problem that life encounters in us is rebellion:

1. Christ operates and moves in us in order to make us clear about His will and requirements for us and about His leading and dealing with us.
2. However, if we do not obey but go against the feeling within, not accepting His leading or paying the price, this unwillingness and opposition are rebellion.
3. The sin that we commit the most frequently and most severely is not outward and visible; rather, it is the sin of disobeying the sense of Christ in us; Christ is living in us, and He is constantly giving us an inward sense of life—Rom. 8:6; 1 John 2:27.

D. The fourth problem that life encounters in us is our natural capability:

1. Many brothers and sisters truly love the Lord, are zealous for the Lord, and are very godly; nevertheless, their greatest problem is the strength and greatness of their capabilities and abilities; consequently, Christ has no ground or way in them.
2. We may be capable and talented, but we do not consider these things as sin or filthiness; instead of despising our natural capabilities, we treasure

them; if they remain unbroken in us, they will become a problem to Christ's life.

- E. There is one solution to all these obstacles in us—we must pass through the cross and let the cross break us; if we want Christ's life to be unhindered in us, we must experience the breaking of the cross and allow these obstacles to be dealt with and removed—Matt. 16:24-25.**

§ Day 4

III. In order for us to eat Christ as the tree of life, we must give Him the first place in all things, which is to love Him with the first love, being constrained by His love to regard and take Him as everything in our life—Rev. 2:4-5; Col. 1:18b; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Mark 12:30; Psa. 73:25-26; 80:17-19:

- A. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to eat Him as the tree of life; eating Christ as the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life—Rev. 2:7; John 6:57, 63.**
- B. The content of the church life depends on the enjoyment of Christ; the more we enjoy Him, the richer the content will be; but to eat Christ as the tree of life, to enjoy Him as our life supply, requires us to love Him with the first love—Rev. 2:4-5.**
- C. On the one hand, strictly speaking, to eat of the tree of life in the Paradise of God in Revelation 2:7 refers to the particular enjoyment of Christ as our life supply in the New Jerusalem in the coming millennial kingdom.**
- D. On the other hand, we are enjoying the crucified and resurrected Christ as the tree of life, the food supply in our spirit, as a foretaste today in the**

church; every local church is a paradise of God, where Christ is the tree of life for us to enjoy.

- E. When we give the Lord the first place in everything and maintain our eating of the crucified and resurrected Christ as the tree of life throughout the day, the church, no matter what its condition may be, becomes paradise to us; thus, our feeling and our attitude toward the church depend upon our situation.
- F. "If we do not enjoy Christ as the tree of life in the church life today, surely we will not participate in the tree of life in the kingdom age. According to my experience, today the church in Anaheim is a paradise to me"—The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," p. 157.
- G. The intrinsic reason for the desolation and degradation of the church is that Christ is not exalted by God's people; they do not give Him the preeminence, the first place, in everything; whenever God's people exalt Christ, giving Him the preeminence in every aspect of their living, there is restoration and revival—Psa. 80:17-19.

§ Day 5

- H. Christ must have the first place not only in our living but also in all our messages; "we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake"—2 Cor. 4:5; cf. Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 12:2; Psa. 80:1, 17-19; 110:1-7:
 - 1. In our work we should continually draw people back to the center and let them see that "Christ is Lord"; we must give the Lord Jesus His place on the throne—cf. S. S. 1:1-4; Isa. 6:1, 3; John 12:41.
 - 2. In order to give such a message, we ourselves must be broken by God and allow Christ to have the first place in us; our message is just our person—2

Cor. 4:10-13; John 12:24-26; cf. Luke 12:49-50.

- 3. The Lord's "well done" surpasses all the praises of the world; the smiling face of heaven surpasses all the angry faces of the earth; the comfort of heaven surpasses all the tears of the earth—Matt. 25:21, 23; Jer. 1:7-9, 18-19; Dan. 4:26.
- I. In order to give Christ the first place in all things, we must have an affectionate love for Him as our King; then our tongue will be the pen of a ready writer, ready to write our love for Him and our praise to Him with our experience and enjoyment of Him according to all that He is—Psa. 45:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:3, 6.
- J. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to take Him as our centrality—our holding center—and our universality—our everything; we need to take Him as the center, content, and circumference of our personal universe—Col. 1:17b, 18b.

§ Day 6

- K. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to behold His beauty and to ask for the counsel of Jehovah in every detail of our Christian life and work—Psa. 27:4; Josh. 9:14; Phil. 4:6-7.
- L. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to be dominated, governed, directed, led, and moved by our mingled spirit, caring for the rest in our spirit by being His captives and by praying, "Lord, conquer me. Make me Your captive. Never let me win. Defeat me all the time"—2 Cor. 2:13-14.
- M. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to have a clear sky like awesome crystal with God's sapphire throne above it; this means that there is nothing between us and the

Lord and that we are filled with the heavenly atmosphere, condition, and situation of His ruling presence—taking Him as our King and allowing Him to rule and reign within us—Ezek. 1:22, 26.

N. Only Christ the King reigning on the earth with the overcomers as His helpers in the kingship can solve the problems of today's world (Isa. 42:1-4); Christ's name will be remembered in all generations and praised by the nations through His overcoming and co-reigning saints (Psa. 45:16-17; Rev. 2:26).

O. The overcomers, who are typified by Zion, are the beachhead through which the Lord will return to possess the whole earth—Psa. 48:2; Dan. 2:34-35.

P. "Lift up your heads, O gates; / And be lifted up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in. / Who is the King of glory? / Jehovah strong and mighty! / Jehovah mighty in battle!... / Who is this King of glory? / Jehovah of hosts— / He is the King of glory!"—Psa. 24:7-8, 10:

1. The gates are of the cities of the nations; the doors are of the houses of the people, and Christ is the Desire of all the nations (Hag. 2:7); all the nations, in a general way, are expecting Christ to come, but Christ will not come quickly according to our human concept (2 Pet. 3:8-9); thus, we need to lift up our heads and await and expect His coming with long endurance.
2. The King of glory is Jehovah of hosts (that is, of armies), the consummated Triune God embodied in the victorious and overcoming Christ (Luke 21:27; Matt. 25:31); Jehovah is Jesus, and Jesus is the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Triune God, who is strong in fighting and is victorious (1:21; Rev. 5:5).
3. He is the One who will come back in resurrection with His overcomers to possess the entire earth as His kingdom—Dan. 2:34-35; 7:13-14; Joel 3:11; Rev. 11:15; 19:13-14.

Q. Christ as the One on the throne of God has the appearance of sardius (its red color signifying redemption) and jasper (its dark green color signifying life in its richness); thus, when we submit ourselves to Christ's headship and are under His throne, we are the beneficiaries of all that He is in His judicial redemption and His organic salvation so that we may bear the same appearance of the God of glory in His rich life—4:3; 21:10-11a; Rom. 5:10.

R. Those who wash their robes in the redeeming blood of Christ have the right to enjoy the tree of life as their eternal portion in the holy city, the Paradise of God, in eternity—Rev. 22:14; 2:7.

WEEK 41 — DAY 1

Morning Nourishment

Gen. 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Col. 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

The Old Testament speaks of creation, and the New Testament speaks of redemption. Both in creation and redemption God's purpose and center is life...Although God created many things of such diversity and variety, His purpose and final goal are simply life. If we read the first two chapters of Genesis and meditate quietly before God on His creation, we will see that God's creation involves life and produces life. Life is the center and goal of God's creation. In the beginning God created all things out of nothing. (CWWL, 1953, vol. 1, "Knowing Life and the Church," p. 113)

Today's Reading

In the orderly process of His creation, God first created inanimate objects, and then He created organic things. Furthermore, the creation of living beings started at the lowest level of life and advanced step by step to higher levels of life. Ultimately, the highest level of life created by God was man. Man is the highest life in God's creation, because the Bible says that God created man in His own image and according to His own likeness (Gen. 1:26-27)...Furthermore, God also gave man the authority to have dominion over all things (vv. 26, 28). Thus, among all created things, man is like God because he has God's image; he also represents God because he has God's authority. God saw everything that He had made, and it was very good (v. 31). In this vast universe, among all the myriads of created things, God obtained a man with His image and authority, who could express His glory and represent His authority. This satisfied God!

God rested on the seventh day after He finished His work of creation (2:2). Many people think that God was at rest and satisfied because everything was finished at this point. However, even at this point God had not reached the purpose of His creation. If we continue reading, we will see that there were still many considerations. After God created man, He put him in the garden of Eden (v. 8). In the center of the garden was the tree of life (v. 9). The tree of life is very special. The first time life is spoken of in the Bible is in relation to the tree of life. This shows that God was still not satisfied, because He had not yet reached His goal, even though He had created everything and even though man had been prepared to express and represent God. What is God's goal? God's goal is life. God brought the man that He created to the tree of life and put him in front of life.

He guided and directed man to the tree of life, hoping that man would contact the tree so that life could be imparted into him. God did these things in order to show that life is the goal and purpose of His creation. If man does not come to life and life does not come into man, God's creation of man would have no meaning, purpose, or result.

The entire Bible shows the goal of life...As Christians, we have Christ as our life (Col. 3:4). He is in us to save us and be our life. This life is Christ Himself, who is God Himself. This life will lead us into eternity, which means that even in eternity everything will be related to life. Revelation shows that in eternity we will contact the river of water of life and the tree of life. The river of water of life proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and on this side and on that side of the river is the tree of life (22:1-2). In eternity we will contact and see life...All the believers are connected to God in life; thus, the believers and God are one in His life. In other words, just as life is in God, life is also in us. (CWWL, 1953, vol. 1, "Knowing Life and the Church," pp. 113-114, 116)

Further Reading: Life-study of Genesis, msg. 11; CWWL, 1953, vol. 1, "Knowing Life and the Church," ch. 1

WEEK 41 — DAY 2

Morning Nourishment

Rev. 2:7 ...To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

1 Pet. 2:24 Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness...

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live.

For the proper church life and the recovery of the church life, that is, for the proper growth in the Christian life, what we need is not merely the mental apprehension of teachings but the eating of the Lord as the bread of life in our spirit (John 6:57). Even the words of the Scripture should not be considered merely as doctrines to teach our mind but as food to nourish our spirit (Matt. 4:4; Heb. 5:12-14). Here in Revelation the Lord promised to give the overcomer to eat of the tree of life. This points back to Genesis 2:8-9 and 16, which concerns the matter of eating ordained by God. In the epistle to the church in Pergamos, the Lord promised the overcomer that he would eat of the hidden manna (Rev. 2:17), which refers to the eating of manna by the children of Israel in the wilderness (Exo. 16:14-16, 31). And in the epistle to the church in Laodicea, the Lord promised to dine with the one who opens the door to Him (Rev. 3:20)... This indicates that the Lord desires to recover the eating of the proper food by God's people, the food ordained by God and typified by the tree of life, the manna, and the produce of the good land, all of which are types of the various aspects of Christ as food to us. (Life-study of Revelation, pp. 117-118)

Today's Reading

In Greek the word for tree [in Revelation 2:7], as in 1 Peter 2:24, means "wood"; it is not the word usually used for tree. In the Bible the tree of

life always signifies Christ as the embodiment of all the riches of God (Col. 2:9) for our food (Gen. 2:9; 3:22, 24; Rev. 22:2, 14, 19). In Revelation 2:7 it signifies the crucified (implied in the tree as a piece of wood—1 Pet. 2:24) and resurrected (implied in the life of God—John 11:25) Christ, who today is in the church, the consummation of which will be the New Jerusalem, in which the crucified and resurrected Christ will be the tree of life for the nourishment of all of God's redeemed people for eternity (Rev. 22:2, 14).

The promise to the overcomers in the church in Ephesus was to eat of the tree of life. The tree of life is in the Paradise of God..."The Paradise of God" in Revelation 2:7 is the New Jerusalem..., of which the church is a foretaste today...We are enjoying the crucified and resurrected Christ as the tree of life...as a foretaste today in the church. This enjoyment of the foretaste will usher us into the full taste...in the New Jerusalem for eternity. The promise of eating the tree of life given to the overcomers in Ephesus indicates that they will eat Christ in the church life today and eat Him as the tree of life in the New Jerusalem for eternity. Our experience confirms this.

The enjoyment of Christ as the tree of life in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth will be the common portion of all of God's redeemed people, whereas the particular enjoyment of Him as the tree of life in the New Jerusalem in the coming millennial kingdom is a reward given only to the overcoming believers. If we overcome all the distractions in the church's degradation to enjoy Christ as the tree of life in the church today, we will be thus rewarded. Otherwise, we will miss this particular enjoyment in the coming kingdom, though we will still enjoy Christ as the tree of life in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and the new earth for eternity.

The tree of life always brings us back to the beginning where there is nothing but God Himself. There is no work, labor, endurance, or anything else—only God Himself. In the church life, again and again we need to be brought back to the beginning, forgetting all other things and enjoying God Himself as the tree of life. (Life-study of Revelation, pp. 118-121)

Further Reading: Life-study of Revelation, msg. 10

WEEK 41 — DAY 3

Morning Nourishment

Gal. 1:15-16 But when it pleased God...to reveal His Son in me...

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 of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

The first problem that God's life encounters in us is that we do not realize the darkness of our human concepts...Most Christians think that they should be zealous and forsake the world once they become Christians. From man's view, this sounds very logical. But without God's life, this is not practical. The day we were saved, we received a living Christ, who became our life in us.

Being a Christian means not taking anything other than Christ as our aim. Many people have difficulty in their spiritual life after they are saved because they do not know the pathway of life, and they do not take Christ as their life. (CWWL, 1953, vol. 1, "Knowing Life and the Church," pp. 133, 135)

Today's Reading

The second problem that life encounters in us is hypocrisy...A person's spirituality is not determined by outward appearance but by how he takes care of Christ. The expression of life involves the rejection of our natural disposition and preference and simply allowing Christ to operate in us and break us. Then our actions through the inner operation of Christ will be of life. If we always do things according to our disposition and natural being, the outcome will always be hypocrisy.

The third problem that life encounters in us is rebellion. Christ operates and moves in us in order to make us clear about His will and requirements

for us and about His leading and dealing with us. However, if we do not obey but go against the feeling within, not accepting His leading or paying the price, this unwillingness and opposition are rebellion.

Our unwillingness to do things according to His will is clearly rebellion. Many of us commit this sin every day. The sin that we commit the most frequently and most severely is not an outward and visible sin; rather, it is the sin of disobeying the sense of Christ in us. Christ is living in us, and He is constantly giving us an inward sense of life. We should obey Him, but we often disobey Him.

The fourth problem that life encounters in us is our natural capability. Our natural being, disposition, and self are all problems that prevent God's life from coming out of us. However, the problem of our natural capability and ability is even more serious, and it is a strong obstacle that prevents God's life from flowing out of us. Many brothers and sisters truly love the Lord, are zealous for the Lord, and are very godly. Nevertheless, their greatest problem is the strength and greatness of their capabilities and abilities. Consequently, Christ has no ground or way in them. There are many brothers and sisters like this among us. They are capable and talented, but they do not consider these things as sin or filthiness. They even think that these are good and useful things to the church. They think that they need such capabilities and talent in order to serve God. They do not despise their natural capabilities; instead, they treasure them. If these capabilities remain unbroken in them, they will become a problem to Christ's life.

There is one solution to all these obstacles in us—we must pass through the cross and let the cross break us. If we want Christ's life to be unhindered in us, we must experience the breaking of the cross and allow these obstacles to be dealt with and removed. This will allow Christ's life to be lived out from us. (CWWL, 1953, vol. 1, "Knowing Life and the Church," pp. 135-136, 138-140)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1953, vol. 1, "Knowing Life and the Church," ch. 3

WEEK 41 — DAY 4

Morning Nourishment

Rev. 2:4-5 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love. 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.

Col. 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things.

God's original intention was that man should eat of the tree of life (Gen. 2:9, 16). Because of the fall the way to the tree of life was closed to man (3:22-24). Through the redemption of Christ the way by which man could touch the tree of life, which is God Himself in Christ as life to man, was opened again (Heb. 10:19-20). But in the church's degradation, religion crept in with its knowledge to distract the believers in Christ from eating Him as the tree of life. Hence, the Lord promised to grant the overcomers to eat of Himself as the tree of life in the Paradise of God, as a reward. This is an incentive for them to leave religion with its knowledge and return to the enjoyment of Himself. This promise of the Lord restores the church to God's original intention according to His economy. What the Lord wants the overcomers to do is what the whole church should do in God's economy. Because of the church's degradation, the Lord came to call the overcomers to replace the church in the accomplishing of God's economy. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 4171)

Today's Reading

The eating of the tree of life not only was God's original intention concerning man but also will be the eternal issue of God's redemption. All God's redeemed people will enjoy the tree of life, which is Christ with all the divine riches as the redeemed's eternal portion for eternity (Rev. 22:2, 14,

19)...The Lord in His wisdom made the enjoyment of Himself in the coming kingdom a reward in order to encourage His believers to overcome religion's distracting knowledge in teachings and return to the enjoyment of Himself as the life supply in the church life today for the accomplishing of God's economy.

Eating the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life. The content of the church life depends on the enjoyment of Christ...But to enjoy Christ requires us to love Him with the first love. The first love will bring us to the tree of life...When we give our first love to the Lord Jesus, He will give us to eat of the tree of life...To love Him with the first love, the best love, is to give the Lord the first place in all things. In order to give Him the preeminence, we must be willing to be adjusted, to be broken, and to be made nothing so that the Lord can have a way in us, through us, and among us for the building up of His organic Body. We should pray, "O Lord Jesus, I love You first, and I love You best. My first love belongs to you. O Lord Jesus, I give the priority of my love to You." If we leave our first love toward the Lord, we will miss the enjoyment of Christ and lose the testimony of Jesus; consequently, the lampstand will be removed from us. These three things—loving the Lord, enjoying the Lord, and being the testimony of the Lord—go together.

When we overcome to return to Christ as our first love by giving Him the preeminence in every way and in everything, we will enjoy Him as life and will shine forth the divine light as the lampstand to keep the testimony of Jesus (1:9; 12:17) in our locality. We will testify of Christ's person as God and man as well as Christ's human living, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, descension, and second appearing. The shining of the light is a testimony. In every aspect of our daily life we should be shining forth Christ. This shining is the shining of the lampstand. We need love, life, light, and the lampstand. Then we will be rewarded by the Lord with what we live and are in Him. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 4171-4172)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 409; CWWL, 1991-1992, vol. 4, "The Overcomers," chs. 2—3; CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," ch. 11

WEEK 41 — DAY 5

Morning Nourishment

Eph. 2:10 For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them.

2 Cor. 4:5 ...We do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.

[In Ephesians 2:10] “good works” are just Christ. The goal of God’s work is Christ, and we should walk in this work...We often work because of our interest, not because of Christ. Many times men run to and fro to work for a name for themselves. They have worked, but they have not served God. God’s work from eternity to eternity has always been with the view that His Son would have the first place in all things. Therefore, our work should also be for Christ. If God does not purify our intent and motive, we cannot receive God’s blessing. We work not for sinners but for Christ. How successful our work is depends on how much Christ is in it...Our work should not be for our own increase, our own group, or our own message; rather, we should work for Christ. As long as God gains something, we should rejoice. When we see God gaining something, even if it is not through our hands, we should be happy for it. (CWWN, vol. 11, pp. 750-751)

Today’s Reading

Christ should also have the first place in our messages. We “preach... Christ Jesus as Lord” (2 Cor. 4:5). “For I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Christ is the center of God’s plan and the center of God’s goal. The cross is the center of God’s work. The work of the cross is to accomplish God’s goal. The cross works to eliminate all that issues from the flesh in order that Christ may

have the first place. Our central message should not be the dispensations, the prophecies, the types, the kingdom, baptism, forsaking denominations, speaking in tongues, keeping the Sabbath, or holiness, etc. Our central message should be Christ. The centrality of God is Christ.

After a person is saved, we should help him to consecrate himself to be a slave of Christ, so that he receives Christ as his Lord in all things. All the truths in the Bible are related like a wheel with spokes and a hub, having Christ as the center. We are not neglecting the truths outside the center; rather, we need to link these truths with the center. Concerning any truth we should know two things: (1) we should know about this truth, and (2) we should know how this truth relates to the center. We should pay attention to the center. Of course, this does not mean we do not speak of other truths. Paul said, “I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Later he also said, “But we do speak wisdom among those who are full-grown” (v. 6). It is only after a person has consecrated himself and received Christ as his Lord that we can speak to him the truths concerning his building up. In our work we should continually draw people back to the center and let them see that “Christ is Lord.” We cannot do this work in an objective way. We ourselves must be the first to be broken by God and allow Christ to have the first place in us, before we can lead others to receive Christ as Lord and allow Christ to have the first place in them. We must live out a life of giving Christ the first place before we can spread this message. Our message is just our person. We should allow Christ to have the first place in the small things in our daily life before we can preach the message of the centrality of Christ. I only wish that every one of us would give the Lord Jesus His place on the throne!...The Lord’s “well done” surpasses all the praises of the world. The smiling face of heaven surpasses all the angry faces of the earth. The comfort of heaven surpasses the tears of the earth. The hidden manna is enjoyed in eternity. (CWWN, vol. 11, pp. 752-753)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1964, vol. 1, “The Centrality and Universality of Christ,” ch. 1; CWWN, vol. 4, pp. 291-308; CWWN, vol. 11, pp. 731-753; Life-study of Daniel, msg. 12

WEEK 41 — DAY 6

Morning Nourishment

Psa. 45:16-17 In the place of Your fathers will be Your sons; You will make them princes in all the earth. I will cause Your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore the peoples will praise You forever and ever.

[In Psalm 45:16] fathers signifies Christ's forefathers in the flesh, sons signifies the overcomers of Christ as His descendants, and princes signifies the overcomers of Christ as His co-kings, who will reign with Christ over the nations.

No one can solve the problems of today's world. Only Christ the King can solve these problems. When Christ reigns on earth, the overcomers will be His helpers in the kingship, His co-kings. The sons of Christ, the overcomers, will be the princes reigning with Christ over the nations.

We need to see not only the beauty of Christ that is in Christ Himself and the beauty of Christ that is in the church but also the beauty of Christ that is in all His descendants, all His members, as the princes. If we see Christ's beauty in these three ways, we will have a complete view, the full picture, of His beauty.

[Verse 17] reveals that Christ's name will be remembered in all generations through the overcoming saints, and Christ will be praised by the nations through His overcoming and co-reigning saints. (Life-study of the Psalms, 2nd ed., pp. 267-268)

Today's Reading

Psalm 24:7-10...shows us the victorious Christ as the coming King in God's eternal kingdom. Verse 7 says, "Lift up your heads, O gates; / And be lifted up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in." The gates are of the cities of the nations. The doors are of the houses of the people. The long enduring doors indicate waiting and expecting with long endurance (Phil. 3:20; 1 Cor.

1:7). This indicates that the people of the earth have been waiting and expecting Christ's second coming. In Haggai 2:7 we are told that Christ is the Desire of all the nations. All the nations, in a general way, are expecting Christ to come, but Christ will not come quickly according to our human concept. Thus, we need to lift up our heads and await and expect His coming with long endurance.

Because we must wait for His coming with long endurance, we have a tendency to drop our heads in discouragement. This is why the psalmist says, "Lift up your heads." If we expected someone dear to us to come and he does not come, we would drop our heads. But if we received a phone call from him, telling us that he is coming, we would lift up our heads; that is, we would be encouraged to expect his coming.

We have to lift up our heads, because the King of glory will come in (Psa. 24:7, 9; Luke 21:27; Matt. 25:31). We must get ready to welcome Him. Psalm 24:8 asks, "Who is the King of glory?" The King of glory is "Jehovah strong and mighty! / Jehovah mighty in battle!" Jehovah is Jesus, and Jesus is the embodiment of the Triune God in resurrection. He is the One who is strong in fighting and victorious.

Verse 7 says, "Be lifted up," but verse 9 says, "Lift up." To be lifted up means that we are still weak, needing someone to move us. But to lift up means that we have become stronger. We can act to lift up ourselves. The King of glory, whom we welcome, is Jehovah of hosts...Jehovah is the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Triune God. He is the One in His resurrection coming back to possess the entire earth, to take it as His kingdom. The King of glory is Jehovah of hosts, the consummated Triune God embodied in the victorious and coming Christ (v. 10).

We have seen that Psalm 23 reveals Christ as the Shepherd in His resurrection and that Psalm 24 reveals Christ as the King in God's kingdom... Hallelujah for our Christ being our Shepherd today and our King in the future! (Life-study of the Psalms, 2nd ed., pp. 149-150)

Further Reading: Life-study of the Psalms, msgs. 11—12, 20—21, 31; Life-study of Ezekiel, msg. 11; Life-study of Joshua, msg. 9; CWWL, 1967, vol. 2, "An Autobiography of a Person in the Spirit," ch. 3

WEEK 41 — HYMN

God's eternal purpose

Ultimate Manifestation — God's Eternal Purpose

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2. God in His own image
Hath created man,
That he may be able
To fulfill His plan;
That he may receive Him
As the tree of life
To become His fulness
As to man the wife.

3. In His life's rich flowing
Man will be transformed
Into precious substance
And to Him conformed.
Thus will man be builded
As His counterpart,
Thus to be His dwelling,
Satisfy His heart.

4. 'Tis the holy city,
New Jerusalem;
With His saints God mingles,
Makes His home with them.
He becomes their content,
His expression they;
They shall share His glory,
One with Him for aye.

5. He's the very center,
Ruling on the throne;
By His life the power,
Saints are kept in one.
By His light of glory,
They are kept in light,
Harmony enjoying
In divine delight.

6. He's their living water,
And their food supply;
All their thirst and hunger
He doth satisfy.
He's for them the temple,
In Himself they live,
In His constant presence
Worship ever give.

Composition for prophecy with main point and sub-points:

[illegible]