

Christian Gospel Conference

The Believers in Christ

October 16-18, 2027

Houston, Texas

Key Statements

**The disciples of the Lord
have the real presence of the Triune God as their exceeding joy
to make them persons who are "Jesusly human,"
those who are sweet, charming, and attractive
to those whom they contact, without any deception or hypocrisy.**

**The eternal life is the life of God with the divine nature,
the Triune God is the structure of the New Testament,
and God is a God who hides Himself - the hidden God.**

**By our growth in the divine life in Christ as the living stone,
we are being transformed into precious stones;
through the process of transformation,
the Triune God is being wrought into and structured together with us
to the praise of the glory of His grace
with which He graced us in the Beloved
for us to become the New Jerusalem
as the conclusion of the entire Bible
and the good news to the entire universe**



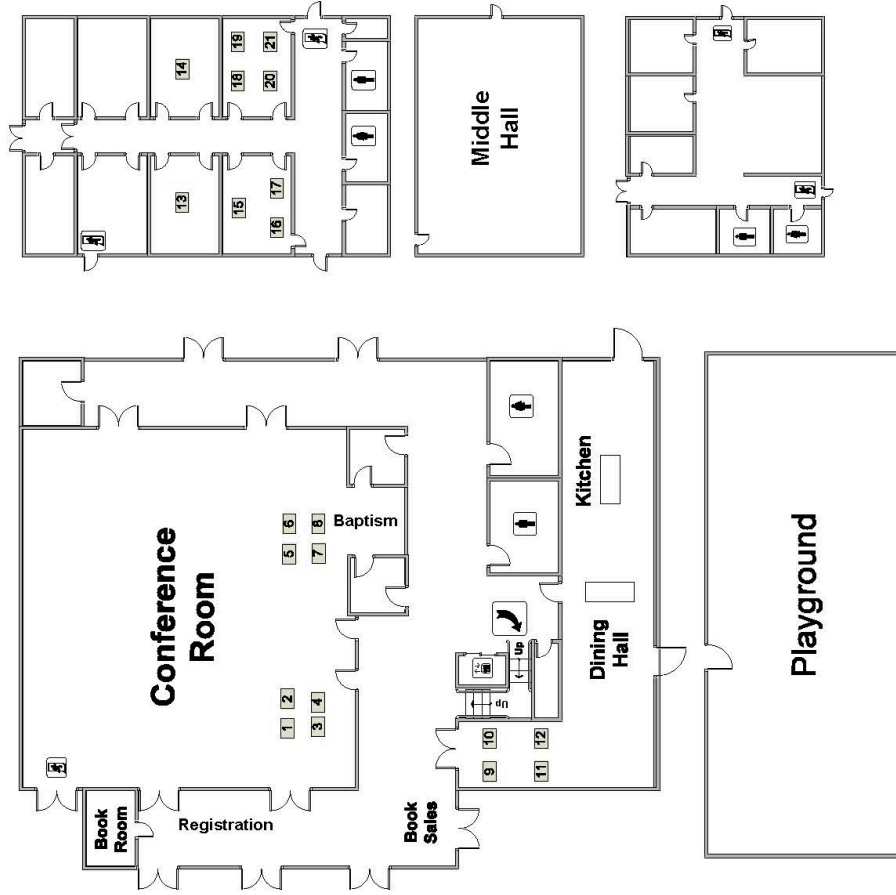
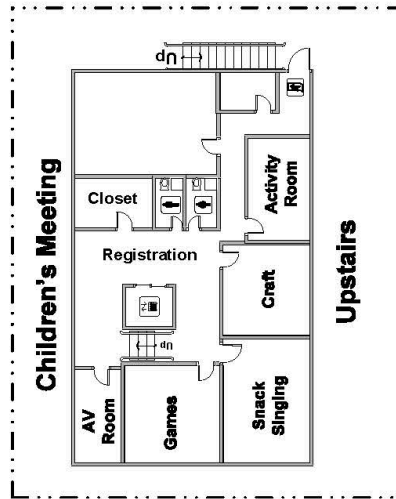
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Conference Schedule

Friday – October 16

7:30 pm - 9:30 pm – Session 1
7:30 – Singing and Message 1 8:20 – Small Groups
9:00 – Greet & Dessert and Hospitality
Dismiss

Saturday – October 17

10:00 am - 12:00 pm – Session 2
10:00 – Singing and Message 2 11:00 – Small Groups
11:45 – Break for Lunch

12:00 pm - 5:00 pm – Break & Gospel Activities 12:00 pm – Lunch
1:30 pm – Gospel Outing / Visitations 4:00 pm – Gospel Reports
5:30 pm – Dinner

6:45 pm - 9:00 pm – Session 3
6:45 – Singing
7:00 – Message 3
8:00 – Ministry Reading in Groups 8:30 – Overflow by Groups
Dismiss

Lord's Day – October 18

9:30 – The Lord's Table
10:00 – Singing and Message 4
11:30 – Overflow
12:00 – Concluding Word
Dismiss

Message One

Disciples, Believers, Saints, and Christians

Scripture Reading: Matt. 5:1; 28:19; 2 Cor. 6:14-16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Pet. 4:16

I. We are disciples of Christ, those who are following and learning Christ according to the reality that is in Jesus, which is the actual condition of the God-man living of Jesus recorded in the four Gospels; this is to experience Christ in His experiences so that we might become His organic reproduction and duplication for Him to have a corporate expression of Himself for His glory in the church and in the New Jerusalem—Matt. 5:1; 28:19; Eph. 4:20-24; 3:21; Isa. 43:7; Rev. 21:11:

- A. We are being discipled from being a natural man to being a God-man, living the divine life by denying our natural life according to the model of Christ as the first God-man; this is to learn Christ and be taught in Him as the reality is in Jesus, to be renewed in the spirit of our mind by the word of God so that we may become a new and corporate God-man—Eph. 4:23; Deut. 17:18-20:
 - 1. “If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free”—John 8:31-32, 36; 15:7.
 - 2. By the prayerful reading of the Scriptures and by having an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the churches through the ministry of the word, we are being discipled by the Lord through being transformed by the renewing of our mind—Eph. 6:17-18; Rev. 2:7; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23.
 - 3. For us to be renewed in our mind is to get rid of all the old concepts concerning the things of the human life through receiving the new thoughts of God by the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and the enlightening of the Holy Spirit—Psa. 119:105, 130.
 - 4. In order to be the Lord’s disciples who are being saved in Christ Himself as life to reign in life over Satan, sin, and death, we must be reconstituted with the holy word of God so that we may be instructed, governed, ruled, and controlled by the word of God—Rom. 5:10, 17; Deut. 17:18-20; 2 Tim. 3:15-17.
- B. To learn Christ is for us to be replaced with Christ by eating Christ; the reality that is in Jesus (the God-man living of the individual Jesus) becomes the reality of the Body of Christ (the God-man living of the corporate Christ) by our eating Christ to enjoy Christ as our supplying, energizing, empowering, and enabling supply, so that we may choose and carry out the will of God for His glory in the church—John 6:57; Isa. 7:14-15; John 17:4; Heb. 5:8; Phil. 2:8; John 6:63; Jer. 15:16; Heb. 4:16; Rom. 5:5, 17; 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:14; Eph. 3:20-21.
- C. We are learning Christ by being awakened by Him morning by morning so that we can have the ear and tongue of an instructed one to sustain the weary with a word; as the Lord’s disciples, His instructed ones, we should rely on Him, trust in His name, and not generate our own light—Isa. 50:4-5, 10-11.
- D. We are learning Christ as the One who is meek and lowly in heart, as the One whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, and as the One who gives us Himself as rest (perfect peace and full satisfaction) for our souls—Matt. 11:28-30.
- E. We are learning Christ as our indwelling secret of sufficiency to express God’s attributes in Christ’s human virtues, living Him for His magnification in every kind of environment, situation, and circumstance—Phil. 4:5-13.

- F. We are learning Christ as the One who desires mercy according to His loving and forgiving heart and His shepherding and seeking spirit—Matt. 9:12-13.
- G. The disciples who followed the Lord for three and a half years saw what He did, how He behaved, and how He spoke; the Spirit of life and of reality who was breathed into them (John 20:22) would guide them into all the reality of what they had observed of the Lord (16:13).
- H. The Lord Jesus was a person living a human life in resurrection, not by Himself but by another source, that is, His Father; when we live in our humanity by another life, by the Christ who indwells us, this kind of living makes us the Lord's genuine disciples.
- I. The disciples of the Lord have the real presence of the Triune God as their exceeding joy to make them persons who are "Jesusly human," those who are sweet, charming, and attractive to those whom they contact, without any deception or hypocrisy—Matt. 1:23; Psa. 43:4; Rom. 14:17; Neh. 8:10; Phil. 1:25; 4:5, 8-9; 1 Tim. 4:15-16.
- J. The followers of Christ were disciplined through Christ's human living on the earth, as the model of a God-man—living God by denying Himself in humanity (John 5:19, 30), revolutionizing their concept concerning man (Phil. 3:10; 1:21a).
- K. "I was in the recovery observing how Brother Watchman Nee acted for eighteen years. All that I observed in him became things discipling me" (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994–1997*, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," p. 76).

II. We are believers in Christ, those who have life and live by the faith of the Son of God; faith annuls us and causes us to live God, to express God, and to minister God into people—2 Cor. 6:14-16; Rom. 1:17; Heb. 11:6; Gal. 2:20:

- A. The believers in Christ (John 3:15-16) have been transferred from Adam into Christ (1 Cor. 15:22), they have been regenerated to be a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), they are united with Christ in His eternal life, and they are joined to Christ to be one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17):
 - 1. As believers in Christ, we have been generated twice; we were generated the first time to be the natural man, but one day we were regenerated to be born anew with the divine, eternal life—John 3:6-7.
 - 2. Our second birth certificate of our spiritual birth is seen in Romans 8:16, which says that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God; our divine and mystical birth certificate is a double spirit, the Spirit with our spirit, which has become one spirit with the Lord.
- B. When man hears Christ, knows Him, appreciates Him, and treasures Him, He causes faith to be generated in man, enabling man to believe in Him; thus, He becomes the faith in man by which man believes in Him—Heb. 12:2.
- C. Faith comes out of the hearing of the word; when we hear Christ and contact Him as the living word of God in the written word of God, He becomes the applied word as the Spirit dispensed into us to be our faith; thus, God embodied in Christ and realized as the Spirit mingled with our spirit is faith—Rom. 10:17; John 1:1; 5:39-40; 6:63.
- D. The hearing of faith awakens our loving appreciation, and the more we love the Lord, the more faith operates to bring us into the riches, the profit, of the all-inclusive Spirit—Gal. 3:2, 5; 5:6.
- E. Romans 12:3 says, "Not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith":

1. To think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think without a sober mind annuls the proper order of the Body life; God gave us the same faith in quality but not in quantity; the matter of quantity depends upon how we grow; if we grow today as the apostle Paul grew, the portion of faith we receive will be greatly enlarged.
 2. How much faith God apportions to us depends upon our attitude; if we are not sober-minded (thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, not considering one another more excellent than ourselves, and thinking that we are something when we are nothing), God would not increase His apportioning of faith to us, and He probably would even decrease it—Phil. 2:2-3; Gal. 6:3; 1 Cor. 8:1-3.
- F. We believers live by faith in the following relationships with Christ:
1. Christ is the vine, and we are His branches—John 15:1-8.
 2. Christ is the Head, and we are His members—1 Cor. 12:27.
 3. Christ is the breath of life, the water of life, and the bread of life, and we are His breathers, eaters, and drinkers—John 20:22; 4:10, 14; 7:37-39a; 6:35, 51-63, 68.
 4. Christ is the Bridegroom, and we are His bride—3:29; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9; 2 Cor. 11:2-3.
 5. Christ is the Father of the orphans, and we are the orphans who have become His children, enjoying His care and deliverance, which imply His rescue and saving every day—John 14:18; Psa. 68:5-6; Isa. 9:6; 22:19-22; John 1:12-13; 14:10; Psa. 107:1-43; 110:4; Rev. 2:1, 7; Heb. 7:25; Rom. 5:10.
 6. Christ is our Physician, and we are His patients, enjoying Him as our Healer to be our forgiveness, enjoyment, joy, satisfaction, and freedom—Exo. 15:23-26; Mark 2:1—3:6.
 7. Christ is the light of the world, and we are His followers so that we may have the light of life and be His diffuser to spread the divine light—John 8:12; Matt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:12-16; 1 John 1:5, 7, 9; Rev. 21:23.

III. We are saints of God, those who have been separated and made holy unto God—Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30; cf. Num. 6:1-9:

- A. We have been sanctified with His redeeming blood positionally—Heb. 13:12.
- B. We are being sanctified with His holy nature dispositionally—2 Thes. 2:13; Heb. 2:10-11; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; 1 Thes. 5:23-24.

IV. We are Christians, Christ-men, those who are one with Christ, having Christ as our bountifully supplying contents in an organic union with Him to live Him for His magnification in our daily life—Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Cor. 4:7; Phil. 1:19-21a:

- A. The goal of being a Christian and the destiny that God has ordained for us in His economy is for us to walk by the Spirit in order to live Christ for God's glory, His expression—Gal. 2:20; 5:16, 25; 6:17; Isa. 43:7; 1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31.
- B. Every Christian on this earth has a special journey that the Lord has assigned to him as a functioning member of Christ for the building up of His Body; he has to take the journey himself; no one else can replace him, nor can he replace anyone else—Acts 13:22, 25, 36; 20:24; 1 Cor. 9:24; 12:14-22; 2 Tim. 4:7-8.

Group Sessions
Ministry Reading for Fellowship and Prayer Together

Message One

Disciples, Believers, Saints and Christians

Disciples

First, the believers are designated as disciples. The term “disciples” is often used in the Gospels and in Acts, but it is not used at all in the Epistles. Matthew 5:1 says, “Seeing the crowds, He went up into the mountain; and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him.” When Christ sat down on the mountain, His disciples, not the crowds, came to Him to be His audience. Eventually, not only the believing Jews but also the disciplined nations became His disciples. In Matthew 5:1 and 2 the Lord Jesus taught the disciples, not the crowds. The crowds that gathered around Him were the outer circle, but His disciples were the inner circle. These disciples were Jewish believers. However, when they were on the mountain listening to the decree of the kingdom’s constitution, they were representatives not of the Jewish people but of the New Testament believers. In Matthew 28:19 the Lord Jesus told His disciples to go and disciple the nations, that is, the Gentiles. This means that the nations would be converted into disciples. Therefore, both the Jewish and Gentile believers are disciples. The audience on the mountain, composed mainly of Jews, represented all the disciples.

Three other verses that refer to the believers as disciples are Matthew 28:16; Acts 6:1; and 21:16. Matthew 28:16 says, “The eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus appointed them.” Acts 6:1 tells us that the disciples were multiplying, and 21:16 speaks of disciples from Caesarea. All these verses indicate that one designation of the believers is that of disciples.

Disciples are those who follow Christ. In His ministry the Lord Jesus told people to repent, for the kingdom of God has drawn near (Mark 1:15; Matt. 4:17). When some repented, or had an inclination to go with Him, He said to them, “Follow Me” (Matt. 4:19; 9:9; 19:21; Luke 9:59). As disciples, the believers follow the Lord Jesus.

Disciples are also those who learn of Christ. In Matthew 11:29 the Lord Jesus says, “Take My yoke on you and learn from Me.” Discipline is required for both following Christ and learning of Him. We cannot follow Him or learn of Him without being disciplined. We especially need to be disciplined in order to learn of Christ.

Believers

Many verses in the New Testament speak of the believers. Acts 5:14 says, “Believers were all the more being added to the Lord.” In 1 Timothy 6:2 Paul gives a charge to slaves whose masters are believers, and in 4:12 he charges Timothy to “be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”

In 2 Corinthians 6:14 Paul exhorts the Corinthian believers not to be “unequally yoked with unbelievers.” Then in the next verse he asks, “What part has a believer with an unbeliever?” The word

“unequally” in verse 14 means diversely; it denotes a difference in kind. This refers to Deuteronomy 22:10, which forbids yoking together two different animals, the clean and the unclean. Today we, the believers, are the clean ones, whereas the unbelievers are unclean. Hence, believers and unbelievers are diverse peoples. They should not be yoked together, because of the believers’ divine nature and holy standing.

Galatians 3:23 and 25 speak of the coming of faith. Verse 23 says, “Before faith came we were guarded under law, being shut up unto the faith which was about to be revealed.” This verse indicates clearly that there was a time when faith came and was revealed. Faith was not to be found in the Old Testament; it came with Jesus Christ. When Christ came, grace came, and faith came also. Faith has come to replace law. Thus, Galatians 3:25 says, “Faith having come, we are no longer under a child-conductor.” According to this verse, now that faith has come we are no longer under the law as our child-conductor. Faith and law cannot co-exist. Before faith came, we were under law. But now that faith has come and has been revealed, this faith replaces law. The law kept us and brought us to Christ, but now in our experience it should be replaced by faith. Faith characterizes those who believe in Christ and distinguishes them from those who keep the law (Acts 6:7; 1 Tim. 3:9). We are not keepers of law—we are believers in Christ.

In the New Testament faith has both a divine aspect and a human aspect. On God’s side the term “the faith” implies that God sent His Son to earth, that Christ died on the cross to accomplish redemption, that He was buried and was resurrected, that in resurrection He released the divine life and has become the life-giving Spirit—all that He might enter into those who believe in Him to be grace, life, power, and everything to them. On our side faith is related to hearing, appreciating, calling, receiving, accepting, joining, partaking, and enjoying. If we do not have faith, all that has been accomplished on God’s side will remain objective and will not be personally related to us. God’s economy to dispense Himself into us is in faith.

The believers are those who have received Christ as their generating life for them to become the children of God. Believing in Christ equals receiving Him. When we believe in Christ, we receive Him. We receive Him by believing in Him.

John 1:12 and 13 say, “As many as received Him, to them He gave authority to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Here we see that believing in the Lord Jesus is equal to receiving Him. If a person truly believes in the Lord’s name, in some way or other he will say, “Lord Jesus.” As long as we call on His name from the depths of our being, we believe in Him. If we believe in Him by calling on His name, this proves that we have received Him. Furthermore, since we have received Him, we have received the authority to become children of God. This authority is Christ Himself as the generating life that makes us children of God for His multiplication and expression.

We have emphasized the fact that to believe in the Lord Jesus is to receive Him. The Lord is receivable. He is now the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), with His complete redemption, waiting for and expecting us to receive Him. Our spirit is the receiving organ. We receive the Lord Spirit (2 Cor.

3:18) into our spirit by believing in Christ. Once we believe in Him, He, as the Spirit, enters into our spirit. Then we are regenerated by Him, the life-giving Spirit, and become one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17).

The believers are those who have believed into Christ as the Son of God to have an organic union with Him. However, certain people believe Christ, but they do not believe in Christ. Genuine believers are those who believe in Christ, even into Christ. Those who merely believe Christ are not believers in the New Testament sense, for they take the Lord Jesus as a pattern, an example, a model, for them to imitate and follow to do certain works for the benefit of society. Because such people do not believe into Christ, they have not entered into the organic union with Christ. We, the genuine believers in Christ, have an organic union with Christ.

. Saints

Many verses in the New Testament speak of the believers as saints. Acts 9:13 and 32 refer respectively to the saints in Jerusalem and to “the saints dwelling at Lydda.” Romans 1:7 says, “To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints.” Romans 8:27 tells us that the Spirit “intercedes for the saints.” Romans 12:13 speaks of “communicating to the needs of the saints,” and 15:25, of the ministry to the saints. The word “saints” denotes those who are holy, separated unto God. We are not only believers in Christ—we are saints of God. We are God’s holy people, a people separated unto God for His purpose.

The term “saints” denotes those who have been separated and made holy unto God. Saints are separated ones, those who have been set apart to God. First Corinthians 1:2 says, “To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints.” The expression “called saints” indicates that the believers in Christ are the called saints; they are not called *to be* saints. This is a positional matter, a sanctification in position with a view to sanctification in disposition.

According to grammar, in 1 Corinthians 1:2 “to the church of God” is in apposition to “to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus.” This indicates that “to the church of God” equals “to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus.” This strongly indicates that the church is a composition of the saints and that the saints are the constituents of the church. The two should not be considered separate entities. Individually, we are the saints; corporately, we are the church.

Christians

The central thought in the Bible is that Christ must be our life and that we must live Him as our living. The goal of being a Christian is to live Christ. Furthermore, the destiny God has ordained for us in His economy is that we live Christ. God’s economy is to dispense Himself into us and to work Himself into us that we may take Christ as our life and life supply in order to live Him. God’s desire is that we live Christ. If we are truly seeking the Lord, the day will come when we shall see that what God desires is not our doing, behavior, or virtues, but Christ. Christ is to be our life, our daily walk, our everything.

The key to living Christ is to realize that, as Christians, the life we have received is Another's, yet it is not lived by Him but by us. There are two persons but one life to be lived. The life is Christ's, yet He wants us to live it out. The two, Christ and we, have one life with one living. We should live Christ by Christ's life. The life is His, and the living is ours. This is the proper Christian life.

Although we and Christ are two, we should not have two lives, nor should we have two livings. The one life that we both have is His, but the living is ours. Our living must be by His life, expressing Him, not ourselves. Therefore, the Christian life is a life involving two persons, but these two persons have only one life and one living. The life is the Lord's, and the living is ours.

Message Two

The Wheat of Life, the Good Seed, the Salt of the Earth, the Light of the World, and the Fishers of Men

Scripture Reading: Matt. 3:12; 13:38; 5:13-16; 4:16-20

I. The believers are symbolized by the wheat of life, which will be gathered into the Lord's barn—Matt. 3:11-12; 13:24-30, 38-42:

- A. The believers as the wheat have the divine life within them; life is God Himself enjoyed by man—Psa. 36:7-9; John 1:4; 10:10; 14:6; 6:63.
- B. If we want Christ's life to be unhindered in us, we must experience the breaking of the cross, the killing death of Christ in the all-inclusive Spirit, so that the following obstacles within us can be dealt with and removed:
 - 1. Being a Christian means taking care of the living Christ in us and not taking anything other than Christ as our aim; the obstacle to this is in not knowing the pathway of life and not taking Christ as our life—Matt. 7:13-14; Phil. 3:8-14; Col. 3:4; Rom. 8:28-29.
 - 2. The second obstacle is hypocrisy; a person's spirituality is not determined by outward appearance but by how he takes care of Christ—Matt. 6:1-6; 15:7-8; John 5:44; 12:42-43; cf. Josh. 7:21.
 - 3. The third obstacle is rebellion; we may be very active and zealous in doing things but still imprison and disobey the living Christ within us by ignoring Him—Lev. 14:9, 14-18; 11:1-2, 46-47; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 15:33.
 - 4. The fourth obstacle is our natural capabilities; if these natural capabilities remain unbroken in us, they will become a problem to Christ's life—2:14-15; 3:12-17; Jude 19-21.

II. The believers are symbolized by the good seed, the sons of the kingdom who are sown by the Lord to grow in His kingdom—Matt. 13:24, 38:

- A. The seed is the word of God (vv. 4, 19; Luke 8:11), Christ Himself (1 Pet. 1:23), sown into us to make us the good seed, the sons of the resurrection (Matt. 13:38; Luke 20:36-38).
- B. The word of God as a grain of wheat dispenses God as life into us to nourish us; also, the word as fire burns us and many of the things in which we have confidence, and the word as a hammer breaks down our self, our natural life, our flesh, our lusts, and our concepts—Jer. 23:28-29.
- C. As the good seed, we must follow the Lord into the ground to die and bear much fruit in resurrection; to die and experience the cross is to deny and reject our soul-life, our natural life, to live by the divine life—John 12:23-26, 31-32.
- D. The sowing of the good seed is martyrdom, for "what you sow is not made alive unless it dies" (1 Cor. 15:36); we can be martyrs physically, psychologically, or spiritually (2 Tim. 4:6; Matt. 16:25; 1 Cor. 16:12; 2 Cor. 2:12-14).

- E. Christ's love of affection constrains us to live and die to Him and makes us martyrs for Him—5:14-15; Rom. 8:35-37; 14:7-9; Rev. 2:10; 12:11.
- F. The putting to death of Jesus in our environment cooperates with the indwelling Spirit to kill our natural man and release the divine life—Rom. 8:2, 13; 2 Cor. 4:10-13; Jer. 48:11.
- G. All our service to the Lord must originate from God, not from ourselves, as we allow His death to operate in us so that His resurrection life can be imparted through us into others—2 Cor. 4:12-13; 1:8-9; 4:5; 10:13:
 - 1. David loved God, feared God, and cooperated with God in order to let God work; although he had the ability to build the temple of God, he stopped when God's word came to him—2 Sam. 7:18, 25, 27; cf. Luke 1:38.
 - 2. David's stopping established a twofold testimony in the universe: first, all the work in this universe should come from God, not from man; second, all that matters is what God does for man, not what man does for God.
 - 3. The builder of the temple and the site of the temple both came out of David's being forgiven of his sins, out of what God did for David—2 Sam. 12:24-25; 24:1-10, 18-25; 1 Chron. 21:18; 2 Chron. 3:1; Psalms. 51.
 - 4. Sister M. E. Barber said, "Whoever cannot stop working for the sake of God cannot work for the sake of God."

III. The believers are the salt of the earth, those who kill and eliminate the earth's germs of corruption and rottenness—Matt. 5:13; cf. Lev. 2:13:

- A. Lot's wife became a pillar of salt and lost her salting function because she took a lingering look backward at Sodom, indicating that she loved and treasured the evil world that God was going to destroy—Gen. 19:15, 24-26; Luke 17:32.
- B. To make a career of following the Lord, we must give all we have and all we can do to it; otherwise, we will be a failure, becoming the tasteless salt and being thrown out of the glorious realm into a sphere of shame—14:31-35; cf. Rev. 3:21; John 16:33.
- C. We should not be disappointed or discouraged but strengthened and enabled to live out the divine economy by the processed and consummated Triune God as the all-sufficient grace—1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; 2 Tim. 4:22; Col. 4:6.

IV. The believers are the light of the world, those who let their light shine before men to dispel the world's darkness—Matt. 5:14-16; Eph. 5:8:

- A. Light is the presence of God; because we have been born of God, we are now light in the Lord and must walk as children of light—1 John 1:5; Eph. 5:8-9.
- B. The way to be saved from obsession, self-deception, is to live in the light, be open to God's shining, and not generate our own light—Psalms. 36:8-9; 80:17-19; 139:23-24; 1 John 1:5, 7, 9; Isaiah. 2:5; 50:10-11:
 - 1. The symptom of a person who is obsessed is that what he thinks and does are totally wrong, yet he thinks and believes that he is totally right—Matt. 6:22-23; Isaiah. 5:20.
 - 2. To have sinned is a matter of defilement; to sin, yet believing that one has not sinned and justifying it, is a matter of darkness—1 John 1:8, 10.

3. The reasons for obsession, self-deception, are loving the darkness rather than the light (John 3:19-20), pride (Obad. 3), not receiving the love of the truth (2 Thes. 2:10-11; Prov. 23:23), and not seeking the glory that is from the only God (John 5:44).
- C. Life comes from the shining of light, light is in the word of God, and light is the inner sense of life—2 Cor. 4:6; Psa. 119:105, 130; Isa. 66:2; John 8:12; Rom. 8:6, 14.
- D. “The lamp of the body is your eye. When your eye is single, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is evil, your body also is dark. Watch out therefore that the light which is in you is not darkness. If therefore your whole body is full of light and does not have any dark part, the whole will be full of light as when the lamp with its rays illuminates you”—Luke 11:34-36.

V. The believers are the fishers of men—Matt. 4:16-20:

- A. To be a fisher of men is to bring men out of the world, signified by the sea with its death waters, into the kingdom of the heavens—Luke 5:10.
- B. The way to bring others out of the world and into the kingdom of the heavens is by preaching the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of God’s complete salvation, to the whole inhabited earth—Matt. 24:14; Luke 4:18-19; Eph. 3:8-9.

Message Two Group Session

The Wheat of Life, the Good Seed, the Salt of the Earth, the Light of the World, and the Fishers of Men

Wheat Of Life

First, the New Testament uses the wheat of life to symbolize the believers. Matthew 3:12 tells us that the Lord Jesus will separate the wheat from the chaff and gather the wheat into His barn: “He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor and will gather His wheat into His barn, but He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Those symbolized by wheat have life within; they are the living children of God. The Lord Jesus will baptize them in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11) and gather them into His barn in heaven by rapture. In order to become children of God, we must be baptized through water into the Spirit. We need to be born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). First, we are baptized through water; then we are baptized in the Spirit. In this way we are regenerated to become children of God, the believers symbolized by the wheat of life, which will be gathered into the Lord’s barn. Those symbolized by chaff, like the tares in Matthew 13:24-30, are without life. The Lord will baptize them in fire, putting them into the lake of fire. Chaff in 3:12 refers to unrepentant Jews, whereas the tares in Matthew 13 refer to nominal Christians. The eternal destiny of both will be the same—perdition in the lake of fire (Matt. 13:40-42).

Good Seed

On the one hand, the Lord Jesus says that the believers are wheat; on the other hand, He tells us that the believers are the good seed. In Matthew 13:38 He says, “The good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom.” In Matthew 13:4 and 19 the seed sown by the Lord was the word of the kingdom. In verses 24 and 38 this seed has developed into the sons of the kingdom. First, the seed was the word sown into humanity. Then it grows into the sons of the kingdom. The seed in verses 4 and 19 is the word with Christ in it as life. This seed now grows in us, the kingdom people, the sons of the kingdom. Therefore, the good seed, as well as the wheat, is the sons of the kingdom, the real believers, those regenerated with the divine life.

Actually, the wheat and the good seed are the same. A farmer will first reap a harvest of wheat. Then he will use some of the better grains as seed for sowing. The principle is the same with us as believers in Christ. First we are the wheat and then, the good seed sown by the Lord.

The sowing of the good seed is a kind of martyrdom, for the seed experiences a real crucifixion and is put to death. Those who are willing to be sown, crucified, in this way will eventually grow, multiply, and be fruitful. But those who are not willing to be sown into the ground, who are not willing to be put to death, will be barren and unfruitful.

Matthew 13:24 says, “The kingdom of the heavens was likened to a man sowing good seed in his field.” The good seed is sown by the Lord Jesus to grow into His kingdom. This kingdom is Christ as the seed of life sown into His believers, God’s chosen people, and developing into a realm which God may rule as His kingdom in His divine life. Its entrance is regeneration (John 3:5), and its development is the believers’ growth in the divine life (2 Pet. 1:3-11). It is the church life today, in which the faithful believers live (Rom. 14:17), and it will develop into the coming kingdom as an inheritance reward (Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5) to the overcoming saints in the millennium (Rev. 20:4, 6). Eventually, it will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal kingdom of God, an eternal realm of the eternal blessing of God’s eternal life for all God’s redeemed to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity (Rev. 21:1-4; 22:1-5).

Salt Of The Earth

Matthew 5:13 says, “You are the salt of the earth.” Here the Lord Jesus is speaking of the people of the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 5:3, 10). In particular, the “you” in 5:13 refers to the overcoming believers in the kingdom life. Furthermore, being the salt of the earth is a corporate matter, not an individual matter. Individually we cannot be the proper salt. It is as a corporate entity that the kingdom people are the salt of the earth. If we separate ourselves from the church life, we cannot be such salt.

For us to be the salt of the earth means that we keep the earth from being fully corrupted. This means that we exercise our influence over the earth created by God to keep it in its original condition. The earth, which was created by God, has become fallen. In a sense, it has become rotten and corrupted. But salt kills germs, eliminates rottenness, and preserves things in their original condition. By nature salt is an element that kills the germs of corruption and eliminates them. Thus, through its killing and preserving function salt brings the earth back to its original condition or keeps it in its original condition. Hence, the function of salt is to preserve what God has created. The entire earth is becoming more and more rotten. Therefore, we must exercise our influence over this corrupted earth. To the corrupted earth the people of the kingdom of the heavens are the element that keeps the earth from being fully corrupted. They have the salting function of killing germs, eliminating rottenness, and keeping things in their original condition or bringing them back to their God-created condition.

The Lord’s intention is to bring this earth back to its original condition. Although we cannot see this in the present age, we shall see it in the next age. When the millennial kingdom comes, the whole earth will be salted. All the germs on earth will be utterly killed, and the whole earth will be not only regained by Christ but also brought back to its God-created condition. This work will be done by the kingdom people.

Wherever the kingdom people are, they should exercise a salting influence over those around them. In our neighborhoods we should exercise our function of killing germs. If we have the nature of the kingdom people revealed in Matthew 5:3-12, we shall be truly salty. If we are poor in spirit, mourning, meek, righteous, merciful, and pure in seeking God, we shall have a salting function. There will be no need to rebuke others or point out their mistakes and shortcomings. They will be salted simply by our presence. This is what it means to be the salt that kills the germs of this corrupted earth.

Light Of The World

In Matthew 5:14a the Lord Jesus says, “You are the light of the world.” This light is also the people of the kingdom of the heavens, the overcoming believers living a kingdom life to shine in the darkness of the world. In nature the kingdom people are the healing salt, and in behavior they are the shining light

In Matthew 5:13 the Lord Jesus speaks of the earth and in verse 14, of the world. For the earth there is the need of salt, but for the world there is the need of light. The darkness is not upon the earth; rather, it is in the world, which denotes human society, a system of Satan. The world, Satan’s system, the dark human society, needs light. The light of the world in verse 14 is the shining of a lamp to enlighten those in darkness. To the darkened world, the people of the kingdom of the heavens are such a light effacing its darkness

Fishers Of Men

The next symbol of the believers, fishers of men, is unusual. The Lord Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, “Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). Immediately they left their nets and followed the King of the kingdom of the heavens to be fishers of men. Eventually, on the day of Pentecost, Peter became the first great fisher for the establishment of the kingdom of the heavens (Acts 2:37-42; 4:4).

To be a fisher of men is to bring men out of the world, signified by the sea with its death waters, into the kingdom of the heavens. This means that to fish for men, “catching men alive” (Luke 5:10), that is, unto life (Acts 11:18), is to bring them into the kingdom. On the day of Pentecost Peter began his ministry of bringing people into the kingdom of the heavens. He brought in all kinds of people, Gentiles as well as Jews. He was a real fisher of men.

To fish for men requires patience. Peter, a quick person, may have learned this in Matthew 17:24-27. After Peter gave a hasty answer concerning Christ’s paying the half-shekel, the Lord Jesus asked him, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth receive custom or poll tax, from their sons or from strangers? And when he said, From strangers, Jesus said to him, Then the sons are free” (vv. 25-26). Then the Lord went on to say, “But that we may not stumble them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel; take that and give it to

them for Me and you” (v. 27). Peter, no doubt, was troubled that he had to go fishing and wait for a fish to appear with a shekel. As a result, Peter may have learned that a fisher of men must have patience. If we would be fishers of men, gaining others for Christ’s increase, we also need patience. We cannot have the increase, the multiplication, in a quick way. Patiently we should contact others again and again until they are “caught” and brought out of the world into the kingdom of the heavens.

Message Three

Living Stones and Sheep

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 2:4-5; Zech. 3:9; 4:10;
John 10:11-16; Ezek. 34:11-31

I. The believers are symbolized by living stones, those who are transformed with Christ's stone nature to be God's spiritual house—1 Pet. 2:4-5:

- A. We, the believers in Christ, are living stones, like Christ, through regeneration and transformation; we were created of clay (Rom. 9:21), but at regeneration we received the seed of the divine life (1 Pet. 1:23-24), which by its growing in us, transforms us into living stones:
 - 1. At Peter's conversion the Lord gave him a new name—Peter—a stone (John 1:42), and when Peter received the revelation concerning Christ, the Lord revealed further that He was the rock—a stone (Matt. 16:16-18).
 - 2. By these two incidents Peter received the impression that both Christ and His believers are stones for God's building—1 Pet. 2:4-5.
- B. Christ is the living stone, the foundation stone, the cornerstone, and the topstone of God's building; after being born of God, the believers in Christ are transformed into living precious stones for the building up of the church as the spiritual house of God—v. 4; 1 Cor. 3:11; Isa. 28:16; Acts 4:11; Zech. 4:7; John 1:12-13, 42; 1 Pet. 2:5-7; 1 Cor. 3:12; Matt. 16:18.
- C. Christ as the stone has seven eyes, which signify the seven Spirits of God, the sevenfold intensified Spirit (Zech. 3:9; 4:10); the sevenfold intensified Spirit is also signified by the seven eyes of the Lamb (Rev. 5:6) and the seven lamps of fire burning before God's throne (4:5):
 - 1. The lamps are for enlightening, searching, exposing, judging, and burning, and the eyes are for infusing; the seven eyes infuse all that the Lamb-stone is into our being to make us His golden lampstand—Zech. 4:2-6, 11-14.
 - 2. The way for us to become living stones is to come to Him and be seen by Him; as the Lord enlightens and judges us, He looks at us and infuses Himself into us for our transformation into His image; we all need to be under the enlightening of the seven lamps, the beholding of the seven eyes, and the life imparting of the sevenfold intensified Spirit.
 - 3. When Christ as the living stone of the grace of God is constituted into our being through our subjective experience of Him, He becomes our pillow for our rest to make us a pillar in God's building—Gen. 28:11-12, 17-19a; Zech. 4:7; Matt. 11:28-30; John 1:16-17, 51.
- D. Eventually, the corporate Christ, Christ with His overcoming bride, will come as a stone to crush the aggregate of human government to bring in God's kingdom—Dan. 2:34-35; Joel 3:11; Rev. 19:11-21; cf. Gen. 1:26:
 - 1. Out of Christ's mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it He might smite the nations—Rev. 19:15a; cf. 1:16; 2:12, 16.

2. In order to be constituted and mingled with Christ to become the corporate smiting stone, His corporate warrior-overcomer, we need the killing word that deals with the enemy; we should pray-read the Word to experience the sword as the killing instrument—Eph. 6:17-18.

II. The believers are symbolized by sheep, those who are under Christ's organic shepherding—John 10:11-16; Psa. 23:1; Matt. 9:36; Heb. 13:20:

- A. The Lord Himself comes as the Shepherd to search for His sheep and seek them out—Ezek. 34:11-31; Luke 15:3-7; Rev. 7:17; John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:3-4.
- B. The Lord brings His sheep to their own land and to the high mountains; the land signifies Christ as the good land of Canaan, and the high mountains signify the resurrected and ascended Christ—Ezek. 34:13-14; Col. 1:12.
- C. The Lord brings His sheep back to the streams, signifying the life-giving Spirit, and He feeds His flock by the streams, signifying His feeding the believers with His riches—Ezek. 34:13; Rev. 22:1-2a; 1 Cor. 12:13; Psa. 36:8.
- D. The Lord brings His sheep back to the good and rich pasture, signifying Christ as our life supply, and causes them to lie down, indicating that He gives them inward rest—Ezek. 34:14-15; Psa. 23:2; John 10:9; Matt. 11:28-30.
- E. The Lord binds up the broken one and strengthens the sick one; through His cherishing and nourishing, He causes every weak sheep to become a horse of majesty in battle—Ezek. 34:16a; Zech. 10:3; 11:7.
- F. The Lord exercises righteous judgments to clear away all the unjust things among God's recovered people; the One who nourishes us and supplies us causes us to have an accurate sense concerning our relationship with others; when we have such a sense, we judge ourselves, and as a result, we have a genuine oneness with the saints as one flock—Ezek. 34:17-22; Col. 3:15.
- G. Christ as the real David is set up as the Shepherd to feed us and cause us to be filled and satisfied; He takes care of us, including all our problems and responsibilities and every aspect of our living; the issue of the Lord's caring for us as our Shepherd is that we obey Him as our King and come under His kingship—Ezek. 34:23; Psa. 23; Rev. 7:17; 22:1-2a.
- H. As we experience the Lord's shepherding and remain under His kingship, we enjoy His covenant of peace, which is secure and unchanging, and are no longer subject to spiritual troubles and disturbances—Ezek. 37:24-28:
 1. Under His shepherding, all the evil beasts, evil persons, are kept away from the Lord's recovered people—34:25a; cf. Acts 20:28-29; Phil. 3:2-3.
 2. The Lord breaks our yoke, delivers us from slavery, and promises that we will not be a prey to the enemy but will dwell in peace and safety—Ezek. 34:25b, 27b-28.
- I. Through the experience of the Lord's shepherding, God's recovered people have God's presence, God is among them, and they are before God; this portrays the perfect fellowship with God—the fellowship in oneness—in the mingling of God and man, in which we are one with God and He is one with us—vv. 30-31.
- J. Through His shepherding, the Lord brings us into the enjoyment of His blessing and causes us to become a source of blessing under the showers of blessing—vv. 26-27a, 29; Gen. 12:2-3; Rom. 15:29; 2 Cor. 1:12, 15; Zech. 10:1:

1. The blessing in Numbers 6:23-27, like that in 2 Corinthians 13:14, is the eternal blessing of the Triune God, which is the Triune God dispensing Himself in His Divine Trinity into us for our enjoyment.
2. In order to receive the Lord's blessing, we must practice the oneness, and the practice of the oneness is the one accord—Psa. 133; Eph. 4:3-4a; Acts 1:14; 2:46; Rom. 15:5-6.

Message Three Group Session

Living Stones and Sheep

Living Stones

In the New Testament the believers are also symbolized by stones and are called living stones (1 Pet. 2:5). These living stones are actually transformed sinners. Once we were sinners, but we are now in the process of being transformed into stones.

According to John 1:42, when the Lord Jesus first looked at Peter, He said, “You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas (which translated means a stone).” The significance of a stone is that it denotes a work of transformation to bring forth material for God’s building (1 Cor. 3:12). The stone in John 1:42 signifies the believers in Christ, after being born of God, regenerated by receiving Him (John 1:12-13) to be transformed into living precious stones. This is for the building of the church, the house of God (Matt. 16:18). How wonderful it is to be transformed into living precious stones for the building of the church!

First Peter 2:5 says, “You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house.” We, the believers in Christ, are living stones, like Christ (v. 4), through regeneration and transformation. We were created of clay (Rom. 9:21). But at regeneration we received the seed of the divine life, which by its growth in us transforms us into living stones. At Peter’s conversion the Lord gave him a new name, Peter—a stone. When Peter received the revelation concerning Christ, the Lord revealed further that He also was the rock—a stone (Matt. 16:16-18). Peter was impressed by these two incidents that both Christ and His believers are stones for God’s building.

According to 1 Peter 2:5, as living stones we are being built up a spiritual house. Although the nourishing milk of the word (v. 2) is for the soul through the mind, it eventually nourishes our spirit. It makes us spiritual, suitable for building up a spiritual house for God.

God’s goal in the believers is to have a house built up with living stones. He does not want separated and scattered stones, nor even a pile of stones merely gathered together. He wants stones built up with one another.

The spiritual house into which we are being built is God’s building. Eventually, this building will consummate in the New Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem there will not be any clay, for all the clay will have been transformed into precious stone. This means that the New Jerusalem is built with precious stones. We are now becoming the precious stones that will be built up into the New Jerusalem.

Sheep

John 10 speaks of the believers as sheep. Both the Jewish and the Gentile believers are sheep with Christ as their Shepherd.

First, the sheep are the Jewish believers who came out of the sheepfold of Judaism through Christ as the door (vv. 2-4, 7-9). The sheepfold in John 10 signifies the law and also Judaism, the religion of the law. Before Christ came, God put His chosen people under the custody of the law. The law was the fold where God's people as the sheep were kept and protected temporarily until the pasture, the permanent place for the sheep, was ready. Christ is the pasture, the permanent place for God's people to stay. Before Christ came, God prepared the law as the sheepfold to keep and confine His chosen people temporarily. However, the Jewish religion utilized the law to form Judaism, which then became the sheepfold.

John 10 reveals that Christ is the door through which God's people leave the fold and come to the pasture. God no longer intends to keep His chosen people in the fold of the law. Rather, He wants them to come out of the law into Christ. Now, during the New Testament age, God intends to bring His people out of the law through Christ as the door. Christ has come, and the pasture is ready. There is no need for the sheep to be confined any longer in the custody of the Judaic law. They must be released from the fold of the law to enjoy the riches of the pasture. Christ is the door through which His believers may come out of any kind of fold and come into Him as the pasture.

Second, the sheep in John 10 are the Gentile believers, who were brought in by Christ to be one flock (the church) with the Jewish believers. Verse 16 says, "I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one shepherd." Here the Lord Jesus reveals that besides the Jewish believers as His sheep kept under the ward of the law He has other sheep which are not of the Jewish fold, which are God's chosen people among the Gentiles and which He must bring in. When this word was spoken by the Lord Jesus, it was a prophecy. This prophecy was fulfilled in Acts when Peter went to preach the gospel to the household of Cornelius, who were Gentiles (Acts 10), and when Paul went to preach the gospel to the Gentile world (Acts 13). Through the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, many were saved unto the Lord out of different tongues, and they all became the Lord's sheep.

The Lord Jesus first called and brought His Jewish believers out of the fold of the Jewish religion, and after Pentecost He saved and brought many Gentile believers out of the Gentile world to make them all, both the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers, one flock under Himself as the one Shepherd. This one flock is the one, universal church, the one Body of Christ (Eph. 2:14-16; 3:6), brought forth by life, which the Lord imparted into us through His death and resurrection. The one flock no longer belongs to the Jewish fold or to the Gentile world, but stands by itself as the church of God set apart from the Jews and the Gentiles (1 Cor. 10:32).

The one flock is very different in nature from a fold. As our Shepherd, Christ has brought us into the flock, where we are in the pasture enjoying Him as our life and life supply.

The sheep in the one flock have Christ as their Shepherd, who laid down His soul life for them that they may have the divine life (vv. 11, 14-15, 16b, 10). In verse 10 the Lord Jesus says, "I came that they may have life and may have it abundantly." And in verse 11 He says, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." In these two verses two different Greek words are used for life. In verse 10 the Greek word is *zoe*, which is the word used in the New Testament for the eternal, divine life. In verse 11 the Greek word is *psuche*, the same word for soul, which means the soulish life, that is, the human life. These verses indicate that the Lord Jesus has two kinds of lives. As a man the Lord has the *psuche* life, the human life, and as God He has the *zoe* life, the divine life. He laid down His soul, His *psuche* life, His human life, to accomplish redemption for His sheep (vv. 15, 17-18) that they may share His *zoe* life, His divine life (v. 10), the eternal life (v. 28), by which they may be formed into one flock under Himself as the one Shepherd. As the good Shepherd He feeds His sheep with the divine life in this way and for this purpose.

The Lord's divine life could not be slain. What was slain in His crucifixion was His human life. In order to be our Savior, He, as a man, laid down His human life to accomplish redemption for us so that we may receive His *zoe* life. He laid down His human life in order that we, after being redeemed, might have His divine life, the eternal life.

The Shepherd, the divine life, and the human life are all for the flock. Those in the flock are fallen ones in need of redemption. As a man the Shepherd had the human life. He sacrificed His human life in order to accomplish redemption for His flock. In this way His flock was redeemed. Then His flock received His divine life, and by this divine life the sheep lived together as the flock. Thus, the flock is formed into one unit, into one entity. This is accomplished not by the human life but by the divine life.

In the human life we are condemned and divided; in the divine life we are accepted and united. In the divine life we all are one entity, meaning that we are one flock under one Shepherd in one life. However, if we live by our human life, we are no longer sheep. A sheep is a regenerated person with the divine life. We all must live by the divine life and thus become genuine, real, and pure sheep. Then we shall be in the flock. If we do not live by the divine life, there can be no flock, for the flock is produced, formed, and maintained by the divine life. In the divine life we are truly one. This is not possible in our human, *psuche* life; it is possible only in the divine, *zoe* life. Now, as redeemed and regenerated ones, we are in the divine life under one Shepherd to be one flock.

Message Four

**Vessels of Mercy unto Honor and Glory,
Grains of Wheat, and Branches of the Vine**

Scripture Reading: Rom. 9:21, 23; Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:7;
John 12:24; 15:1, 4-5, 7

I. The believers in Christ are vessels of mercy unto honor and glory; we are containers of Christ as mercy, honor, and glory—Rom. 9:21, 23:

- A. God's purpose in creating man was to make man His vessel, His earthenware container, to contain and be filled with Christ as life for the building up of the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem as God's great corporate vessel for His expression—Gen. 2:7; Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; Matt. 25:2-4, 8-9; Zech. 4:11-14; cf. Rev. 3:18.
- B. All of Paul's fourteen Epistles can be summed up in two words—*open vessel*:
 - 1. The degree to which God can dispense Himself into us depends on the degree of our openness; God wants us only to love Him and keep ourselves open to Him—2 Kings 4:1-7; Matt. 5:3; John 1:16; Isa. 57:15; 66:1-2.
 - 2. Decadence starts from self-complacency; progress starts from hunger and thirst—Deut. 4:25; Luke 1:53; Phil. 1:25; Rev. 3:16-18.
- C. We were created to be vessels of mercy to contain Christ as the God of mercy—Rom. 9:11-13, 16, 20-21, 23; Lam. 3:21-23; Luke 1:78-79:
 - 1. God's mercy is the most far-reaching of God's attributes, saving us out of our wretched position into a condition that is suitable for His love and grace—Eph. 2:1-4; Heb. 4:16.
 - 2. Because of God's mercy, we responded to the gospel when others did not respond, we received a word about Christ as life when others refused to receive it, and we took the way of the Lord's recovery when others drew back from taking this way—*Hymns*, #296, stanza 3:

He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.

- 3. *Mercy* refers to God's outward doing motivated by our wretched state; *compassion* refers to His inward affection originating in His loving essence—Rom. 9:15; Matt. 9:36.
- 4. We must contact God as the compassionate One every morning so that we may live in the reality of the kingdom in being merciful to others and not judging others—Lam. 3:21-23; Matt. 5:7; 7:1.

- D. We were created to be vessels of honor to contain Christ as the God of honor; vessels of honor are inoculators, those who inoculate others against the decline of the church—2 Tim. 2:20-22; Judg. 9:9; 1 Sam. 2:30:
1. The inoculator is a teacher, a good minister of Christ Jesus, one who is nourished with the words of life and who exercises his spirit to live Christ in his daily life for the church life—2 Tim. 2:2; 1:13-14; 1 Tim. 4:6-7; 6:20.
 2. The inoculator is a soldier, warring against the different teachings of the dissenters to carry out God's economy according to the apostle's ministry and fighting the battle against death, the last enemy of God, by being full of life to reign in life—2 Tim. 2:3-4; 1 Tim. 1:18; Rom. 8:6, 11; 5:17.
 3. The inoculator is an athlete, living the normal church life by fleeing into Christ as his refuge and pursuing Christ as righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart—2 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 6:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:22.
 4. The inoculator is a farmer, working together with God by an all-fitting life to sow the seed of life into people and water them with the Spirit of life by His healthy words—v. 6; 1 Cor. 3:6, 9; 2 Cor. 6:1a; Luke 8:11; John 7:38; 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6.
 5. The inoculator is a workman, cutting straight the word of the truth, unfolding the word of God in its various parts rightly and straightly without distortion (as in carpentry); there is the need of the word of the truth, rightly unfolded, to enlighten the darkened people, inoculate against the poison, swallow up the death, and bring the distracted believers back to the proper track—2 Tim. 2:15; cf. Acts 26:18; Psalms 119:130, 133.
- E. We are vessels of glory to contain Christ as the God of glory:
1. Glory is God Himself expressed and manifested—Jer. 2:11; Acts 7:2; Eph. 1:17; 1 Cor. 2:8; 1 Pet. 4:14; Col. 2:9.
 2. We have this treasure, Christ as the God of glory, dwelling within us, the earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7); "this treasure" indwelling us is "the face of Jesus Christ" (v. 6), the presence of Christ, "the person of Christ" (2:10).
 3. When we turn our heart to the Lord, we are beholding the Lord Spirit as the presence of Christ in our spirit, and we are "being transformed...from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit"—3:16-18.
 4. To behold the glory of the Lord is to see the Lord ourselves; to reflect the glory of the Lord is to enable others to see Him through us—Isa. 60:1, 5.

II. The believers in Christ are grains of wheat—John 12:24:

- A. The many grains of wheat produced through Christ's death and resurrection are for the formation of the one bread—the Body of Christ; the grains of wheat are crushed, mingled with oil, baked in the oven, and blended together into one loaf, signified by the meal offering—1 Cor. 10:17; Lev. 2:4-5.
- B. The Lord, as a grain of wheat falling into the ground, lost His soul-life through death that He might release the fire of His eternal life to the "many grains" in resurrection; we as the many grains must lose our soul-life through death that we may enjoy and

release the fire of the eternal life to others in resurrection—John 12:24-26; Luke 12:49-50; 1 Cor. 15:31, 36; 2 Cor. 4:12.

- C. As grains of wheat falling into the earth to die, our outer man is being broken, consumed, so that our inner man can be renewed day by day—vv. 16, 10-11; Titus 3:5; Eph. 4:23; 5:26.
- D. A Christian who is spiritual for the building up of the Body of Christ must “read” three things every day—he needs to read the Bible, he needs to read his inward sense, and he needs to read his environment and circumstances, which are the people, things, and matters around him—Rom. 8:6; cf. Prov. 16:9.
- E. We may pray and hope that others will change, but the more we pray in this way, the clearer we are that nothing will change; this is the environment that God has created to cause us to be conformed to the image of God’s Son and manifest God’s grace and power—Rom. 8:28-29; cf. 6:3-4; 1 Kings 7:17, 20-22.
- F. We should cooperate with the operating Spirit and accept the environment that God has arranged for us—Phil. 4:12; Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; 1 Cor. 7:24.
- G. We may complain to God, but our complaining may be the best prayer, the most pleasant prayer to God; while we are complaining, God is rejoicing because He is causing all things to work together for good that we may be conformed to the image of His firstborn Son—cf. Ps. 102, title.

III. The believers in Christ are branches of the vine—John 15:1, 4-5:

- A. The vine, which is Christ, with its branches, which are the believers in Christ, is the organism of the Triune God in God’s economy to grow with His riches and to express His divine life—vv. 1-5.
- B. We are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing apart from Christ as the vine; thus, we need to abide in Him, to remain, stay, and dwell in Him, not living by what we are or by what we can do but by the immortal life, which is Christ Himself—14:6a; 2 Cor. 5:4.
- C. To abide in Christ is to abide in His love so that we may love Him and love one another to express the divine life in fruit-bearing—John 15:9-10, 16-17:
 - 1. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”—13:34-35; cf. 1 John 4:18-19.
 - 2. If we love the Lord, we will be filled with Him, and whatever fills us within will come out of us; loving the Lord to the uttermost qualifies, perfects, and equips us to speak forth the Lord—John 21:15-17.
- D. To abide in Christ is to keep ourselves in the fellowship with Him daily and hourly, not allowing anything to come between us and Him; the entire church life depends on the divine fellowship, which is the circulating Triune God working, flowing, communicating, transporting, transmitting, and dispensing all that He is into us for our enjoyment—1 John 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:14.

- E. In order for the Lord to abide in us, we must let His words abide in us; if we abide in His written word by coming to Him for life, His instant words will abide in us as spirit and life—John 15:7; 5:39-40; 8:31; 6:63.
- F. As the branches of Christ, the true vine, we need to live Christ, grow Christ, express Christ, and propagate Christ in every respect; this is to “walk worthily of the Lord to please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and growing by the full knowledge of God”—Col. 1:10.
- G. Fruit-bearing is the overflow of the riches of the inner life; out of the abundance of the inner life there will be a flow that will reach others, penetrating into their lives, so that they may become remaining fruit for the Father’s glorification—John 15:16.