

VITAL FACTORS FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH LIFE, Week 2

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

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

- 2 Corinthians 3:3 Since you are being manifested that you are a **letter of Christ ministered by us**, inscribed not with ink but with the **Spirit of the living God**; not in tablets of stone but in **tablets of hearts of flesh**.
- 2 Corinthians 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, **ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit**; for the letter kills, **but the Spirit gives life**.
- 2 Corinthians 3:8 How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory?
- 2 Corinthians 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, **we do not lose heart**;
- 2 Corinthians 5:18 But all things are out from God, **who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation**;
- 2 Corinthians 5:19 Namely, that God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself, not accounting their offenses to them, **and has put in us the word of reconciliation**.
- 2 Corinthians 5:20 **On behalf of Christ then we are ambassadors**, as God entreats you through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, **Be reconciled to God**.
- 2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a **pure virgin to Christ**.
- 2 Corinthians 11:3 But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ.
- 1 Timothy 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones **not to teach different things**
- 1 Timothy 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, **which produce questionings** rather than God's economy, which is in faith.
- 1 Timothy 1:18 This charge I commit to you, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you might **war the good warfare**,
- Revelation 22:1 And he showed me a **river of water of life**, bright as crystal, **proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street**.
- Revelation 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**.
- Revelation 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**.
- Revelation 22:17 **And the Spirit and the bride say, Come!** And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely.

There is only one blueprint and one master builder in the proper, correct building. The only master builder is the architect who has the blueprint in his hand. This is true in every age. **The Lord issues the blueprint, the revelation, and the utterance, and through one man He supervises and completes the building work**. All those who do not build, speak, or serve according to the blueprint released by the Lord through that man are void of light and revelation and are not serving according to the vision. Today in the Lord's recovery some are preaching and publishing messages. The portions in their messages that impart light, revelation, and the life supply invariably derive their source from this ministry in the Lord's recovery. Other than those portions there is no revelation or vision in their writings.

Some have criticized us for not reading anything by outsiders or the denominations. But I would ask, why do so many enjoy reading the messages put out by this ministry? This ministry produces nothing but gold and diamonds. You can compare and see. For this reason, my dear brothers and sisters, **today we are fighting the good fight for the truth**. We are bearing on our shoulders the commission of this age. This is our vision. We need to be clear about this, and **we need to serve God according to this vision**. (*The Vision of the Age, chapter 1*)

Day 1

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

Ephesians 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him,

I. In every age there is the vision of that age, and since we have the completed vision of the age through the ministry of the age, we need to serve God according to this vision and closely follow it—Acts 26:19; Eph. 1:17; 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:6:

- A. Today we can be in one accord because we have only one vision, an up-to-date, all-inheriting vision, the [vision of the eternal economy of God](#)—Eph. 1:17; 3:2, 9; Rev. 21:10; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Rom. 15:6; 1 Cor. 1:10; Acts 26:13-19; Phil. 3:13-14.
- B. The [governing vision of the Bible is the heavenly vision of God’s eternal economy](#), which is God’s eternal intention with His heart’s desire to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity as the Father in the Son by the Spirit into His chosen people to be their life and nature that they may be the same as He is as His duplication, to become an organism, the Body of Christ as the new man for God’s fullness, God’s expression, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem—Eph. 1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:15-16; 3:19; Rev. 3:12, 21; 21:2, 9-10; Acts 26:19.
- C. “I [W. L.] told Brother Nee, ‘Even if one day you do not take this way, I will still take this way. I am not taking this way because of you, and I will not leave this way because of you. I have seen that this is the Lord’s way. I have seen the vision’”—The Vision of the Age, p. 50.

Day 2

Revelation 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 22:1-2 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

II. The vision that the Lord has given to us in His present recovery is the all-inclusive vision of God’s eternal economy with its ultimate consummation—the [vision of the New Jerusalem](#)—Prov. 29:18a; Acts 26:18-19; 22:15; Rev. 21:2, 9-11:

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

Day 3

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

Romans 8:30 And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

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

- E. As we **experience** each section of God's organic salvation, we **go up level by level** until we become beings in the New Jerusalem—Rom. 5:10, 17, 21; 8:10, 6, 11; Rev. 22:1-2; cf. Jer. 18:15; Micah 5:2:
1. We are **regenerated** by participating in God's **life** to become **God's species**, **God's children**, for **God's sonship**—John 1:12-13; Rev. 21:7; 22:14b.
 2. We are **sanctified** by participating in God's **nature** to become as **holy as the holy city**—1 Thes. 5:23; Eph. 5:26.
 3. We are **renewed** by participating in God's **mind** to become as **new as the New Jerusalem**—2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:23.
 4. We are **transformed** by participating in God's **being** to be constituted with the Triune God as **gold, silver (pearl)**, and **precious stones**—1 Cor. 3:12; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2; Rev. 21:18-21.
 5. We are **conformed** to the image of the firstborn Son of God by participating in God's **image** to have the **appearance of the New Jerusalem**—Rom. 8:28-29; Rev. 21:11; 4:3.
 6. We are **glorified** by participating in God's **glory** to be **completely permeated with the glory of the New Jerusalem**—Rom. 8:21; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 21:11.

In order for Christ to create the new man, He had to do something more than merely terminate the negative things. He also had to release the divine life from within Him so that it could be imparted into the redeemed persons. **The God-men, as this kind of men, not only constitute the new man to be the constituents of the New Jerusalem**; they also build up the Body of Christ for the building of the New Jerusalem. How glorious it is that we are now building up the New Jerusalem! Are you not such a builder? We all are co-builders, building an eternal dwelling place for ourselves.

The God-men not only build up the Body of Christ but also **become the overcomers to consummate the New Jerusalem**. The consummation of the New Jerusalem requires both maturity and increase. The building up of the church as the Body of Christ **needs maturity**—the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Otherwise, we may have the building without the consummation. (*The God-men, chapter 4*)

Day 4

2 Corinthians 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Corinthians 3:8-9 How shall the ministry of the Spirit not be more in glory? For if there is glory with the ministry of condemnation, much more the ministry of righteousness abounds with glory.

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

- A. The ministry of the Spirit is the ministry of the new covenant to deify us by **inscribing our hearts with the Spirit of the living God** as the divine and mystical "ink," making us the **living letters of Christ**—this is the highest peak of the divine revelation—2 Cor. 3:3, 6, 8, 18; 4:1; Isa. 42:6; 49:6; Psa. 45:1-2:
1. By the ministry of the Spirit, we are "Christified" to become the **city of life** and the **bride of Christ**; thus, the Spirit as the consummated Triune God marries the bride as the transformed tripartite church to live a life that is the mingling of God and man as one spirit, a life that is superexcellent and that overflows with blessings and joy—Rom. 5:10; Rev. 2:7; 22:1-2, 17a.
 2. In order to be constituted the ministers of the new covenant for the building up of the Body of Christ, we must experience all the aspects of the all-inclusive Spirit in 2 Corinthians—the **anointing Spirit**, the **sealing Spirit**, the **pledging Spirit** (1:21-22; 5:5), the **inscribing Spirit** (3:3), the **life-giving Spirit** (v. 6), the **ministering Spirit** (v. 8), the **freeing Spirit** (v. 17), the **transforming Spirit** (v. 18), and the **transmitting Spirit** (13:14).
- B. The ministry of righteousness is the ministry of Christ as our **objective righteousness for our justification** and as our **subjective righteousness "embroidered" into us** by the transforming work of the Spirit for the living out and genuine expression of Christ—this is the God-man living—3:9; Psa. 45:13-14; Rom. 8:4; Psa. 23:3:
1. By the ministry of righteousness, we **receive Christ as our objective righteousness** and **enjoy Him as our subjective righteousness** to become the New Jerusalem as the new creation of righteousness in the new heaven and new earth—1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9; 2 Pet. 3:13; cf. Isa. 33:22.
 2. **Objective righteousness** (Christ given to us) **issues in grace** (Christ enjoyed by us), and **grace issues in subjective righteousness** (Christ lived out of us)—Rom. 5:1-2, 17-18; Luke 15:22-23.
 3. The power of grace operates in us and produces subjective righteousness, making us **right with God, with others**, and even **with ourselves**; it not only subdues sin but also overcomes Satan, sin, and death in our being, causing us to reign in life—2 Tim. 2:1; Rom. 5:17, 21.

4. The righteousness we receive for our justification is objective and enables us to [meet the requirements of the righteous God](#), whereas the righteousnesses of the overcoming saints are subjective and enable them to [meet the requirements of the overcoming Christ](#)—Rev. 22:14; 19:7-8.

Day 5

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

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

- C. The ministry of reconciliation is the ministry of reconciling the world to Christ through the forgiveness of sins for their judicial redemption and the reconciling of the believers to Christ that they might be [persons who live in the spirit](#), in the Holy of Holies, for their organic salvation—this is shepherding people according to God—2 Cor. 5:18-21; 1 Pet. 5:1-6; Heb. 13:20:
1. The Lord's present recovery is to [bring us into the reality of Christ's pneumatic shepherding](#) in Psalm 23 as the issue of His redeeming death and church-producing resurrection in Psalm 22 and as the accomplishing factor of His coming as the King to establish His kingdom in Psalm 24.
 2. By the ministry of reconciliation, we are shepherded into God to enjoy Him as the springs of waters of life so that we may become the [eternal Zion](#) as the [corporate Holy of Holies](#), the place where God is—Rev. 7:14, 17; 14:1; 21:16, 22; Psa. 20:2; 24:1, 3, 7-10; 48:2; 50:2; 87:2; 125:1; Ezek. 48:35b.
 3. The ministry of reconciliation is the apostolic ministry [in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry](#) to shepherd the flock of God for building up the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem according to God's eternal economy—John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28-29; Rev. 1:12-13.

Psalm 23 implies that this Shepherd is the One who became a man, who died for us to redeem us and wash away our sins, and who entered into resurrection to [become a life-giving Spirit to regenerate us](#). As such a One, He can change our nature. Since He has taken these three steps—1) incarnation; 2) crucifixion for redemption; and 3) resurrection for regenerating—He is altogether qualified, equipped, and suitable to be our Shepherd. He is not only God but also a man. He is not only divine but also human. He died for our sins, He was resurrected, and in His resurrection He became a life-giving Spirit.

The Lord Jesus today is the Spirit. [As the life-giving Spirit, He is our Shepherd inwardly](#). He is not only with us but also within us. We were snakes and scorpions, but we have been redeemed, we have been washed in His blood, and we have been resurrected and regenerated. As those who have been redeemed, washed, resurrected, and regenerated, we are the sheep of God's flock, the church. By Jehovah, the Triune God, being incarnated, crucified, and resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit, He is qualified to be our Shepherd. [By His redeeming, washing, resurrecting, and regenerating us, we are qualified to be His flock](#). He is qualified to be our Shepherd, and we are also qualified to be His flock. Psalm 23 is altogether a psalm on Christ as the Shepherd in His resurrection. (*Life-Study of Psalms, chapter 11*)

Day 6

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

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

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

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

- C. It **prepares the overcomers to be Christ's bride**, His "queen," in Himself as the "royal abode" and in the local churches as the "palaces of ivory" to consummate in the New Jerusalem as the "King's palace"; it betroths us to Christ, stirring up our love for Him in the simplicity and the purity toward Christ, to make us His queen—Psa. 45:1-15; Rev. 21:2, 9-10; 2 Cor. 11:2-3.
- D. It **strengthens us** to follow Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings on the pathway to glory, the way of the cross, for the manifestation and multiplication of life—John 12:24-26; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 4:10-11, 16-18; 11:23-33.
- E. It **dispenses Christ as grace, truth, life**, and the **Spirit** into us for our revelation of Christ, our enjoyment of Christ, and our growth in life that we may be saved in life to reign in life—1:12, 24; Phil. 1:25; Rom. 5:10, 17.
- F. It **sanctifies us** through the word of the truth and the washing of the water in the word; it also shepherds us with the cherishing and nourishing presence of the pneumatic Christ—John 17:17; Eph. 5:26, 29-30; Rev. 1:12-13.
- G. It **tears down hierarchy and blends us into one**, making us all brothers of Christ, slaves of Christ, and members of Christ to be the one Body of Christ in reality; it also tears down the high places and exalts Christ alone to make Christ everything in the church—Matt. 23:8-12; 1 Cor. 12:24; Deut. 12:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:5; 10:3-5; Col. 3:10-11.
- H. It **brings all of us into function to practice the God-ordained way and leads us to follow the Lamb** wherever He may go for the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to the whole inhabited earth—Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 4:11-12; Rev. 14:4; Matt. 24:14.
- I. It **brings us into a new revival** of living out the New Jerusalem and working out the New Jerusalem to gain the reality of the Body of Christ as the highest peak in God's economy—2 Cor. 3:6, 8-9; 5:18-20; Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 4:4-6, 16.

We need to be very clear that the foundation of all the denominations and the factor that produces each denomination are their **different ministries**. If all the Christians today would be willing for the Lord to take away their different ministries, they would all be one. **The basic factor of all the divisions, their very root, is different ministries**. Ministries that are different may be very sound, even very scriptural, but they are something that Paul says was brought in secretly at the time of Galatians 2. This thing crept in as early as the time of Paul. Paul, Peter, and James were all there, and a ministry of another kind was trying to come in. In 1 Timothy 1 Paul charged Timothy to remain in Ephesus to take care of one thing: to charge certain ones not to teach different things, which means not to teach according to another ministry. At that time the different teaching was the teaching of the law. In Galatians 2 what was trying to creep in was the law.

All of us today need to be on the alert. **We need to realize that Satan could use any one of us to bring in some other kind of teaching that may be scriptural**. At Paul's time it could not be considered heretical to teach the law according to the Old Testament. The law had been given by God and unveiled by God. If I had been there teaching Gnosticism, then I would have been a heretic. On the other hand, if I had been there teaching the law of Moses, no one could have said that my teaching was heretical. In fact, the law of Moses was scriptural. Nevertheless, such teaching would have been different from the teaching concerning God's economy as it was presented by Paul. **We need to be very careful because Satan is subtle**. All of us need to be alert not only to watch over others but to watch over ourselves. (*Elders' Training, Book 01: The Ministry of the New Testament, chapter 1*)