

HWMR: CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OUTLINES FIRST AND SECOND CHRONICLES, EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER, (Week 10)

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

**THE CENTRAL AND CRUCIAL POINT OF THE RECOVERY BOOKS OF
EZRA AND NEHEMIAH—THE PROPER AND ADEQUATE LEADERSHIP
IN THE LORD’S RECOVERY**

- Nehemiah 8:1 And all the people gathered as one man in the open area that was before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel.
- Nehemiah 8:2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.
- Nehemiah 8:3 And he read in it before the open area that was before the Water Gate from first light until midday in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.
- Nehemiah 8:4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a wooden platform that had been made for that purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah and Shema and Anaiah and Uriah and Hilkiah and Maaseiah at his right hand; and at his left hand, Pedaiah and Mishael and Malchijah and Hashum and Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.
- Nehemiah 8:5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up.
- Nehemiah 8:6 And Ezra blessed Jehovah the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground.
- Nehemiah 8:7 Also Jeshua and Bani and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites helped the people understand the law; and the people stood in their place.
- Nehemiah 8:8 And they read in the book, in the law of God, interpreting and giving the sense, so that they understood the reading.
- Nehemiah 8:9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who helped the people understand said to all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; do not mourn or weep. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.
- Nehemiah 8:10 Then he said to them, Go your way; eat the fat, and drink the sweet wine, and send portions to him for whom nothing has been prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.
- Nehemiah 13:14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not blot out my loyal deeds, which I have done for the house of my God and for its services.
- Nehemiah 13:29 Remember them, O my God; for they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites.
- Nehemiah 13:30 Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign. And I appointed duties for the priests and the Levites, each in his work,
- Nehemiah 13:31 And for the wood offering, at the appointed times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.
- Matthew 20:25 But Jesus called them to Him and said, You know that the rulers of the

	Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them.
Matthew 20:26	It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant,
Matthew 20:27	And whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave;
Matthew 20:28	Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.
Matthew 23:8	But you, do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.
Matthew 23:9	And do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father, He who is in the heavens.
Matthew 23:10	Neither be called instructors, because One is your Instructor, the Christ.
Matthew 23:11	And the greatest among you shall be your servant.
Matthew 23:12	And he who will exalt himself shall be humbled, and he who will humble himself shall be exalted.
Matthew 23:13	But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you close off the kingdom of the heavens in the face of men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to enter.
Hebrews 13:7	Remember the ones leading you, who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith.

Day 1 & Day 2

<i>Matthew 20:25-28</i>	<i>- But Jesus called them to Him and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant, And whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave; Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.</i>
<i>1 Timothy 1:3-4</i>	<i>- 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. Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.</i>

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

- A. The Lord's concept of leadership is the **opposite** of the natural concept; among God's people there is actually no leadership in the natural sense—Matt. 20:25-28; 23:8-13:
 1. In God's New Testament economy, leadership means slavery; anyone who would be a leader must be **willing** to be a slave—Mark 10:35-45.
 2. A leadership is shaped by the **growth in life** and is an issue of the need; if there is no need, no leadership can be manifested—1 Pet. 5:1-3.
 3. In order to set aside the human concept of leadership, God ordained that the leadership among His people **should depend always upon spiritual capacity**—Acts 13:2, 9; 14:12; Gal. 2:11-14.
 4. There is no organized leadership in the Lord's recovery, and there is no unifying organization; instead, there is **one Head** who gives orders to all the members directly, and there is **one organism**, the Body—Eph. 1:22-23.
- B. According to the New Testament, the authority of the apostles is **spiritual** and is in their **ministry of the word**—Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 13:5-6; 1 Thes. 2:13:

1. They have no authority in position to interfere with the church affairs; **only the word ministered** by them has authority—Col. 4:16; Heb. 13:7.
 2. The churches follow the apostles because the apostles have the **New Testament teaching**—Phil. 2:12; Acts 20:17-36.
 3. If a church goes astray or is misled, the apostles have the obligation and responsibility to deal with the situation according to God's word, which has authority—vv. 26-27; 2 Cor. 10:6; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:2.
 4. The leadership is produced, strengthened, and restricted in the **apostles' teaching**—Titus 1:9.
- C. In the New Testament there is **one ministry with one leadership**—Acts 1:17, 25; 2 Cor. 4:1:
1. Today's Christianity is divided because there are so many leaderships; because the ministry is one, there **should not be more than one leadership**.
 2. There is one leadership since God, the Lord, and the Spirit are all one; the one leadership is for the **keeping of the oneness** of the Spirit for the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:3-6.

The theocratic government in the churches in the New Testament is **through the Spirit** who dwells in the spirits of the apostles and the elders, both of whom are the New Testament priests, with the revelation of the New Testament teaching. The Urim and Thummim on the breastplate of the high priest in the Old Testament typify the unveiling Spirit, the Holy Spirit, indwelling our receiving spirit, our regenerated spirit. **These two spirits mingled together are today's Urim and Thummim**. Whenever the apostles and the elders as the New Testament priests come to the Lord and wait on Him for His administration in the church, **they will surely receive some light and some word from the Lord**. By this way we have God's speaking in the administration of the church to carry out His theocratic government.

This theocratic government is also through the **coordination of the New Testament prophets**. In a local church there should always be some prophets to strengthen our inner feeling. This is the New Testament theocratic government for God's administration in the church to carry out His New Testament economy.

Now we need to consider the practical application of this fellowship in a local church. Whenever the elders of a local church come to the Lord, they come as priests. **Because they bear the responsibility of the eldership, they want to know how to take the lead, how to teach, how to shepherd, how to oversee, and how to be patterns**. Therefore, they have to pray together, to wait on the Lord. As they pray and fellowship, the indwelling Spirit will speak and enlighten them inwardly. In their regenerated spirit they will receive something of the Lord. Then they will realize how the Lord wants them to take the lead, to shepherd, to oversee, and to be patterns. Because this may not be so adequate or strong, there are the prophets in the churches. The prophets' speaking strengthens the elders' understanding of the will of God. The functioning of the elders and the prophets in this way constitutes a kind of government for the administration of God in His church to fulfill His eternal purpose.

God's theocratic government in the churches in the New Testament is according to the **life-giving Spirit as the consummation of the Triune God indwelling the leading ones**. When the leading ones go to the Lord to seek His leading, they receive some inner understanding. When the prophets prophesy, what they say strengthens the feeling of the leading ones. The result of this divine coordination of the New Testament priests and prophets in the Body of Christ is the **God-commanded blessing**. I hope that all of us can now have a clear view concerning the New Testament leadership, including the headship of Christ, the leadership in the church life, the leadership in the ministry, and God's government in the administration of the churches. (*The Apostles' Teaching and the New Testament Leadership, chapter 2*)

Day 3

2 Corinthians 13:10 - Therefore I write these things while being absent in order that when present I would not have to use severity, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for overthrowing.

1 Corinthians 4:17 - Because of this I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.

3. The New Testament shows us God's delegated authority in the leading ones in the ministry, an **authority that is for building up**—2 Cor. 13:10:
 - a. God's delegated authority was in the teaching of the leading ones—1 Cor. 4:17b-21; 7:17b; 11:2; 16:1; 2 Thes. 3:6, 9, 12, 14.
 - b. Teaching the same thing everywhere in every church was the demonstration of Paul's delegated authority—1 Cor. 4:17b.

D. The leadership in the New Testament ministry is in the **New Testament teaching** more than in the leading ones of the New Testament ministry themselves—Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:10.

Day 4

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

Ephesians 3:3-4 - That by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief, By which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ,

Proverbs 29:18 - Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; / But happy is he who keeps the law.

Day 5

Ephesians 4:3-4 - Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace: One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

Colossians 3:10-11 - And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

Ephesians 4:16 - Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

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

- A. God's eternal economy was unveiled through the apostles, but because the believers lost the proper understanding of it, there is the need for it to be recovered by the Lord; God's eternal economy (Gk. *oikonomia*) is **His household administration to dispense Himself in Christ into His chosen people so that He may have a house to express Himself, which house is the church, the Body of Christ**—Eph. 3:2, 8-9; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 3:15; Eph. 1:10; 2:21-22; 1 Pet. 4:10.

- B. *Recovery* means the **restoration** or **return** to a normal condition after a damage or loss has been incurred; *recovery* means to **go back to God's original intention** and standard as revealed in the Scriptures, which is according to the present advance of His recovery of the contents of God's eternal economy:
1. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of **Christ** as our center, reality, life, and everything in His full ministry of incarnation, inclusion, and intensification—Col. 1:17b, 18b; Psalms 80:1, 15, 17-19; John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 2:4-5, 7, 17; 3:7-8, 12-13, 17-22; 4:5, 5:6; John 6:57; 14:21, 23; 21:15-17; cf. Jer. 32:39.
 2. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the **oneness of the Body of Christ**—John 17:11, 21-23; Eph. 4:3-4a; Rev. 1:11.
 3. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of the **function of all the members of the Body of Christ**—Eph. 4:15-16; Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; 1 Cor. 14:1, 4b, 12, 26, 31, 39; Jer. 31:33-34 (see footnote 1 on v. 33).
- C. This vision must be **renewed in us day by day** to be the controlling vision of all our life, work, and activity—1 John 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:9; Isa. 2:5; Psalm 119:105; 36:8-9.
- D. For a person to leave the Lord's recovery means that he has **never seen what the Lord's recovery is**; if we have not seen a vision of the Lord's recovery, we actually are not in the Lord's recovery—Acts 26:13-19; cf. Gen. 13:14-18.
- E. We in the Lord's recovery **must have a clear vision of God's eternal economy** and then be governed, controlled, and directed by this vision, for we are here to carry out God's eternal economy in His recovery.
- F. The leadership in the Lord's recovery is the **leadership of the God-given vision** of God's eternal economy that restricts us, directs us, and controls us so that confusion and division are avoided—Prov. 29:18a.
- G. Read the supplement from *The Vision of the Age*.

The New Testament leadership comprises the **elders** in the church and those who take the **lead in the ministry**. It is not right to say that there is no leadership in the church. Even in the proper family life there is a leadership. When the parents are away from home, the oldest brother or sister is left as a leader for the other children. If both the parents and the older children are away, a baby sitter is left with the remaining children to be a leader for them. In every situation there is the need for a leader. **In the church life the elders take the lead diligently**. All the elders are the leading ones in the church. Without leaders we could not have an orderly church life with so many arrangements. Rather, we would have confusion in the church life.

The leadership in the church life is carried out by the elders' **laboring in teaching the saints and their shepherding the church as the flock of God, overseeing it according to God, and becoming patterns of the flock, not lording it over the flock**. The leaders in the church must take the lead in all things. They must be the leading sheep, the head sheep, in the flock. When the sheep at the head of the flock move, the rest of the sheep follow. However, when the sheep in the front do nothing, the whole flock stops. If the restrooms in the meeting hall need to be cleaned, the elders should take the lead to clean them. The elders should also be the first ones to go out to visit people for the gospel by knocking on their doors. If the elders go out to preach the gospel, many in the church will follow them. If, on the other hand, the elders do not take the lead to go out but simply exhort the other saints to do it, not many of the saints will go. The way to be an elder is not to command others but to take the lead. If the elders labor in teaching and if they shepherd, oversee, and are patterns of the flock, all the saints will respect and obey them as leaders. (*The Apostles' Teaching and the New Testament Leadership, chapter 2*)

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

- A. In the Lord's recovery we have the **leadership** of the one controlling vision in the one ministry through those who bring in the vision—Eph. 3:3-5, 9; Col. 1:24-29:
1. Paul said that he and his co-workers were "**servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God**" (1 Cor. 4:1); they were stewards, dispensing the heavenly vision of the mysteries of God to the believers; these mysteries are Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ (Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4; 5:32); this dispensing service, the stewardship, is the ministry of the apostles (3:2, 8-9).
 2. "It is sought in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2); like Paul, we need to be "shown mercy by the Lord to be faithful" (7:25b; 1 Tim. 1:12) so that we may be **faithful slaves**, who habitually give the household of God spiritual food, ministering the word of God and Christ as the life supply to the believers in the church (Matt. 24:45-47); we want to be those who are **faithful over the Lord's work** in this age so that we may participate in the Lord's joy in the next age, with the realization that the Lord's appraisal and reward are not related to the size and quantity of our work but to our faithfulness in using His gift to the fullest extent (25:21-23; cf. Rev. 3:8).
- B. Only under the leadership of faithful persons such as Nehemiah and Ezra could Israel be **reconstituted** to be the testimony of God, the **expression** of God on earth, a people **absolutely different** from the Gentile nations; this is a type of what God wants the church to be today—Neh. 13:14, 29-31; 1 Tim. 3:15.

Day 6

- Nehemiah 8:2-3* - And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read in it before the open area that was before the Water Gate from first light until midday in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.
- Luke 10:1* - Now after these things, the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to come.
- Romans 12:5* - So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

- C. Nehemiah knew that without Ezra he **could not reconstitute** the people of God:
1. In reconstituting the nation, Nehemiah realized that he **did not know God's Word**.
 2. Ezra was renowned for his knowledge of the Word of God, and Nehemiah was **willing** to turn to him for help.
- D. According to the divine principle, the proper representation of the Body is always by those who are **matched with others**—1 Cor. 1:1; Exo. 4:14b-16:
1. To be alone is to be individualistic, but to be sent forth with another is to be **sent according to the principle of the Body**—Luke 10:1; Acts 13:1-3; Rom. 12:5; 1 Thes. 1:1.
 2. To act **individualistically** is to **violate** the principle of the Body.
 3. In the Lord's recovery there is an urgent need for the true work of building up the Body; however, this building work can be carried out only by co-workers who have been **matched**—Phil. 2:19-22.

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

We have seen one aspect of the truth concerning leadership, the aspect that in God’s New Testament economy there is **no official, permanent leadership**. Now we need to consider another aspect. Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.” **We all need to obey the leading ones**. This does not mean that the elders exercise authority over us; it means that as those who are older and more experienced, they take the lead, and **we need to follow them**. To obey means to follow.

Regarding elders, Peter says, “Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3). The elders are to take the lead **by being patterns**, not by lording it over the saints. If the elders see that the floor has not been vacuumed, they should not sit on the throne and summon the servants to vacuum it for them. Instead, they should take the lead to vacuum the floor and thereby set an example for others to follow.

Although the elders should not lord it over God’s flock, Peter does say, “Younger men, be subject to elders” (v. 5). Moreover, there are times when the older ones need to submit to the younger ones. As Peter says, “All of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another” (v. 5). Thus, not only the young ones submit to the older ones, **but all**, including the older ones, **submit to one another in humility**. What a beautiful picture this is! It is absolutely different from the natural concept of leadership in the fallen mentality. The leadership in the church is not that of Nimrod, who built the city of Babel. Rather, it is a **leadership that builds up the Body**. (*Truth Messages, chapter 3*)

Supplement from *The Vision of the Age*:

CLOSELY FOLLOWING THE COMPLETED VISION OF THIS AGE

In order for us to serve God today, our vision must extend all the way from the first vision of Adam in Genesis to the ultimate vision of the manifestation of the church, the New Jerusalem. This and this alone is the complete vision. It is not until today that this vision has been fully opened to us.

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

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

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

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

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

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