

International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones

April 2025

GENERAL SUBJECT: ONE ACCORD AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Page
Message One: The Continuation of the Book of Acts— the Corporate Continuation of Christ	<u>1</u>
Message Two: One Accord	<u>7</u>
Message Three: Maintaining the One Accord by the Three Substances of the Power in the Lord's Recovery— Prayer, the Spirit, and the Word	<u>11</u>
Message Four: The Resurrected, Ascended, and All-inclusive Christ	<u>20</u>
Message Five: Keeping Ourselves in the One Flow of the Lord's Work for the Spreading of the Church and Receiving the Lord's Mercy to Be Saved from Satan's Schemes	<u>24</u>
Message Six: Grace in Acts	<u>35</u>
Message Seven: Continuing to Live in the Divine History within Human History in the Continuation of the Book of Acts for the Spreading and Building Up of the Church as the Corporate Manifestation of Christ	<u>40</u>
Message Eight: The Divine Trinity and the Kingdom of God	<u>47</u>

ONE ACCORD
AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One
**The Continuation of the Book of Acts—
the Corporate Continuation of Christ**

Scripture Reading: John 5:17; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:13-16; 5:25-27;
Rev. 19:7-9; Acts 9:4-5, 15; 28:31

I. The continuation of the book of Acts is the continuation of Christ with the corporate living of the perfected God-men as the reality of the Body of Christ—28:31:

- A. The Lord said, “My Father is working until now, and I also am working” (John 5:17); this shows that since the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man, God has been working until now, and the Lord also is working.
- B. The book of Acts is a record of the work of God; after Acts 28 many of God’s vessels are still carrying on with His work; His work is continuing and has not stopped.
- C. His work will go on until the kingdom and even until the new heaven and new earth; God is always advancing; He never stops; if we know this and believe in this, we will praise the Lord; even as the New Jerusalem, His slaves will serve Him as priests—Rev. 22:3; cf. Acts 13:36a.
- D. The work of the Holy Spirit in preaching Christ for His propagation, multiplication, and spread through the believers of Christ was not yet completed and needed to be continued for a long period of time.
- E. The word of God is still growing and being multiplied for the increase of Christ— 6:7; 12:24; 19:20:
 - 1. *Grew* in Acts 6:7 refers to the growth in life, indicating that the word of God is a matter of life that grows as a seed sown into man’s heart for the increase of Christ, the growth of God, within us—Mark 4:14; Col. 2:19.
 - 2. *Multiplied* in Acts 12:24 refers to the increase of Christ in numbers; actually, the multiplication of the disciples depends on the growth of the word.
 - 3. New disciples are “added to the Lord” to become the parts of Christ, the members of Christ—5:14; 11:24; Rom. 15:16.
- F. Such an evangelistic work for Christ’s propagation, multiplication, and spread is according to God’s New Testament economy for the producing of many sons for God (8:29) that they might be the members of Christ to constitute His Body (12:5) for the carrying out of God’s eternal plan and the fulfillment of His eternal will; this is revealed in detail in the twenty-one Epistles and the book of Revelation, which follow the book of Acts.
- G. Since God is after a corporate, shining vessel, a vessel of testimony, His children must be brought to the awareness of the Body of Christ and learn to live the Body life; otherwise, they are useless in His hand and can never fulfill His goal—Rom. 12:1-3; 1 Cor. 12:12; Rev. 1:10-12.

II. The continuation of Christ in the book of Acts is prophesied in the Bible:

- A. Isaiah 42:4 says that Christ will come again when He finishes the establishing of God’s justice in the earth, which means to establish God’s salvation as the issue of God’s righteous

- judgment on Christ—see footnote 3.
- B. Isaiah 53:10 prophesies about the continuation of Christ in His resurrection— “He will see a seed, He will extend His days,/And the pleasure of Jehovah will prosper in His hand”:
1. The seed here, a corporate seed, is the church as the Body of Christ, comprising all the believers produced as the many grains by the death of Christ as the one grain and by His reproductive resurrection (John 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:3); Christ as the Servant of Jehovah is the resurrected Life-giver, the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17), to produce a seed for the building up of His Body as His continuation for Jehovah’s pleasure and for Christ’s satisfaction.
 2. For Christ to “extend His days” means that today Christ is extending His days by living in His believers (Gal. 2:20; see footnote 1 on Acts 28:9); His believers as His Body are His extension.
 3. The pleasure of God (Eph. 1:5, 9; Phil. 2:13) is to see many sons born of Him to become the members of Christ, who constitute the church as the Body of Christ, the corporate expression of Christ.
- C. Isaiah 53:11 says that Christ “will see the fruit of the travail of His soul,/And He will be satisfied”; the fruit of the travail of Christ’s soul implies all the items produced in and through Christ’s resurrection as His continuation:
1. As the processed One, the last Adam, Christ became the life-giving Spirit as the reality of the pneumatic Christ for His propagation through life-imparting—1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17.
 2. As the preeminent One, the One who has the first place in all things, Christ became the Firstborn from the dead for the germinating of God’s new creation and for Christ to be the Head of the Body—Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5a.
 3. As the God-man, Christ was begotten of God in His humanity (Acts 13:33) to be the firstborn Son of God in both the divine and human natures, to be a model for conforming many sons to His image (Rom. 8:29b).
 4. As the resurrection life (John 11:25), Christ regenerated all His believers (1 Pet. 1:3), making them His brothers and the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10-12; Rom. 8:29b; John 20:17), who are the members of God’s household to be God’s kingdom (Eph. 2:19; Gal. 6:10) and God’s precious inheritance (Eph. 1:11).
 5. As the one grain of wheat, Christ became the many grains (John 12:24), who are His increase (3:30) and the components of His Body, that is, the one bread, the church (1 Cor. 10:17; Eph. 1:22-23).
 6. Through His life-releasing death and with His life-imparting resurrection, Christ produced a corporate seed as the issue of the travail of His soul, which seed He saw in His resurrection and was satisfied (Isa. 53:10-11; cf. Gal. 3:29).
 7. As the life of the believers, the resurrected Christ is all the members and in all the members of the new man—Col. 3:10-11.
- D. Micah 5:2 prophesies concerning the incarnation of Christ in Bethlehem, and that “His goings forth are from ancient times,/From the days of eternity”:
1. Christ’s going forth, His appearing, is a continuous matter; at the time of His incarnation He began to come forth; after His incarnation, He continued to go forth through His human living, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His outpouring of the consummated Spirit (who is the reality of Christ Himself), and His spreading through the preaching of the gospel to the whole inhabited earth; all of these are great steps in Christ’s going forth.
 2. His going forth has not ceased but is continuing today; Christ’s going forth, His manifestation, will consummate when He comes back with the overcomers as the

mighty ones (Joel 3:11) to defeat Antichrist and cast him into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:19-20), when Satan is cast into the abyss (20:2-3), and when Christ sets up His throne to reign as King (Matt. 25:31, 34, 40); at that time His appearing will be complete.

- E. These Old Testament prophecies culminate in the greatest prophecy in the Bible concerning the continuation of Christ; in Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, “I will build My church”; even today this prophecy still remains unfulfilled:
 - 1. The prophecy on the building up of the church started by the Lord in Matthew 16 is continued by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:13-16, a prophecy concerning the building up of the church in a specific way that remains unfulfilled today.
 - 2. This prophecy may also be seen as the preparation of Christ’s bride, which is still unfulfilled today (Rev. 19:7-9; Eph. 5:25-27); the fulfillment of the Lord’s prophecy concerning the building up of the church and the preparation of His bride will bring Him back; now is the time for the Lord to fulfill His prophecy.

III. The apostle Paul, as a pattern to all the believers, the members of the Body of Christ, lived Christ for His magnification as His continuation—Phil. 1:19-21a; Acts 9:4-5, 15; 26:18-19; 1 Tim. 1:16:

- A. Paul was a disciple of Christ—seeing Christ, hearing Christ, and learning Christ as the reality is in Jesus—Acts 9:1-19, 25-27; 22:14-15; Eph. 4:20-21.
- B. Paul was a chosen vessel of Christ to contain Him, be filled with Him, and overflow with Him for His fullness—Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:7; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19.
- C. Paul was a man of prayer—Acts 9:11; 13:1-3; 14:23; 16:13, 25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2.
- D. Paul depended on the Body, doing everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body—Acts 9:11, 17-18, 25-27; 1 Cor. 1:1; 12:14-27.
- E. Paul practiced calling on the name of the Lord—Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; 2 Tim. 2:22; Rom. 10:12-13; Phil. 2:9-11.
- F. Paul lived by the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus (the Spirit of a man with abundant strength for suffering) for his preaching ministry, a ministry of suffering carried out among human beings and for human beings in the human life for the building up of the Body of Christ—John 7:37-39; Acts 9:16; 16:7, 22-34; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Heb. 6:19-20; 13:13.
- G. Paul lived in his mingled spirit (the divine Spirit mingled with his human spirit as one spirit)—Acts 17:16; 19:21; Rom. 8:4, 6, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- H. Paul was filled with the Spirit of joy, essentially for his existence, and with the Spirit of power, economically for his function—Acts 13:9, 52; Eph. 5:18.
- I. Paul exercised himself to always have a good and pure conscience—Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9.
- J. Paul lived a life of always rejoicing in the Lord, praying unceasingly, and thanking Him in everything—Acts 16:25; 27:35; Phil. 4:4; Col. 3:16; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.
- K. Paul was allied with God and assisted by God to speak the gospel boldly in the name of Jesus to spread the testimony of Jesus unto the uttermost part of the earth—Acts 9:20, 27; 26:22-29; 28:31; 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:2; cf. Rom. 15:24, 28.
- L. Paul cherished the saints in the humanity of Jesus and nourished them in the divinity of Christ with all the truths of God’s eternal economy, displaying in his living the word of the Lord Jesus that it is better to give than to receive—Acts 20:18-38; 1 Thes. 2:1-12.
- M. Paul’s fourth ministry journey (Acts 27—28) shows in a particular way his life of living Christ, magnifying Christ, doing all things in Christ, and pursuing Christ in order to be

found in Christ (Phil. 1:19-21a; 3:8-9, 14; 4:13):

1. All during the apostle's long and unfortunate imprisonment-voyage, the Lord kept the apostle in His ascendancy and enabled him to live a life far beyond the realm of anxiety; this life was fully dignified, with the highest standard of human virtues expressing the most excellent divine attributes—Acts 28:5-9.
2. This was Jesus living again on the earth in His divinely enriched humanity! This was the wonderful, excellent, and mysterious God-man, who lived in the Gospels, continuing to live in the Acts through one of His many members! This was a living witness of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and God-exalted Christ!

IV. The ultimate issue of the church will be the New Jerusalem in eternity future as God's full and eternal expression; this should be the reality and goal of all our gospel preaching today as we follow the pattern of the apostle Paul—"proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered"—28:31.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE CONTINUATION OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

Scripture Reading: Acts 28:30-31; Rev. 1:11-12, 20

There are sixty-six books in the Bible. When we come to the end of many of these books, we can say that the book is finished. There are fifty chapters in Genesis, and when we come to the end, we sense that we have come to the end. The Gospel of Matthew has twenty-eight chapters. When we come to chapter 28, we feel that we have come to the end. When we come to the Romans 16, we also feel that this is the end. When we read Revelation 22, we also feel that this is the end.

But there is one book in the Bible that does not have an end. All the other sixty-five books have an end. But one book does not have an end. This book is the Acts of the Apostles. Why does Acts 28 end the way it does? When you read Acts 28, you feel as if the book has not yet concluded. This book does not have an ending. The Acts of the Apostles is a book without an ending because this book is still being continued. Perhaps the acts of the first-century apostles have ended, but the book of Acts as a whole has not yet ended. Until now we still have the Acts of the Apostles with us. This book has not yet ended.

The Lord said, "My Father is working until now, and I also am working" (John 5:17). This shows that since the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man, God has been working until now, and the Lord is also working. What is the book of Acts? The book of Acts is not a record of the work of Paul or a record of the work of Peter or John. The book of Acts is a record of the work of God. Who can say that God has done no work after Acts 28? Who can say that God's work stopped after Acts 28?

The book of Acts does not have an ending. After chapter 28, many of God's vessels are still carrying on with His work. His work is continuing and has not stopped. Everything was not over after Paul worked in Rome for two years. Paul lived in Rome and was later martyred. None of these things are recorded in the book of Acts. Peter, Paul, and John are three important persons, yet none of their endings were recorded. How can we say that the book of Acts has ended? God's testimony can never be finished. We could say the same thing even if there was a twenty-ninth chapter, or a thirtieth chapter, or even a hundredth chapter. If one wanted to write more, new things could always be added. This is why Acts stops at chapter 28. Although the written record no longer continued after chapter 28, God's work has been going on. The work in the first century was not the peak. For four thousand years God has been working. If we say that Acts 28 was the peak, we must be at the bottom of the hill; we must have come down from the peak. This is not true, because the Lord said, "My Father is working until now, and I also am working" (John 5:17). We should not assume that God's work reached its peak

at the time of Paul, and we should not consider that God's work reached its peak at the time of Martin Luther either. No, the first century was not the end of God's work, nor was the sixteenth century the end of His work. Even the last century was not the end of God's work. His work will go on until the kingdom and even until the new heaven and the new earth. God is always advancing; He never stops. If we know this and believe in this, we will praise our Lord.

Man always has a misconception that his age is the worst age of the church. At the time of Martin Luther some thought this way. At the time of John Wesley some thought this way. We consider Martin Luther's time a marvelous age and John Wesley's time a marvelous age also. While we consider their ages marvelous, some who come fifty years after us will say that we were at a marvelous age. We are afraid that man will stop. But God never stops. Every year, He knows what He is doing, and He knows how much He will work. Every year, He does what He wants to do. He is a God who goes on day by day; He is always advancing. Hallelujah! God is a God who keeps on advancing!

Every time God advances, He finds some vessels. In the book of Acts, God found some vessels. At the time of Martin Luther, God found a vessel, and at the time of John Wesley, He also found a vessel. Every time there is a spiritual revival, God finds some vessels. Where is God's vessel today? It is true that the Father is working until now. But who is continuing to work together with Him? Who can say, "I also am working"? This is the crucial question.

Brothers and sisters, if God grants us light and if we see God's truth, we will admit that God is after the same vessel today that He ordained at the beginning. This vessel is the church. In other words, God is not after an individual vessel today but a corporate one. Since God is after a corporate vessel, His children must be brought to the awareness of the Body of Christ and the Body life. Otherwise, they are useless in His hand and can never fulfill His goal.

Revelation 1 tells us that the churches are golden lampstands. God does not simply say that the churches are golden; He says that the churches are golden lampstands. If the churches are just golden, they cannot satisfy God. God says that the churches are golden lampstands because golden lampstands shine and enlighten. God desires the church to be a shining vessel, a vessel of testimony. From the beginning God has ordained that the church be a lampstand. The church, not individuals, is a lampstand before the Lord. It is not enough just to be golden, and it is not enough just to be of God. There must be the shining for God and the testimony for Him before the church can be considered the lampstand.

Hence, the church exists for God's testimony. Anything that is not golden is not the church, and anything that is not a lampstand is not the church. Anything that does not have life within is not the church, and anything that does not have the testimony within is also not the church. The church must realize what God is doing and what He is after in this age; it must realize what God's testimony on the earth today is. Only then can the church be considered the golden lampstand.

Simply put, God's work is always advancing. He is still seeking this vessel. His vessel today is the same vessel He intended to have at the beginning; the church is this vessel, not single individuals.

Some may ask, What does it mean that the overcomers come out of the church? It is true that there need to be overcomers who come out of the church. But even the testimony of the overcomers is maintained on behalf of the corporate whole; it is not for individuals alone. The overcomers are not men who consider themselves extraordinary, better than others, and who put everyone else aside. The overcomers work on behalf of the whole church. They do the work, while the whole church gains the benefit. The overcomers are not for themselves; they stand on the ground of the church, and they are there to bring the whole church to perfection. They stand on the ground of the church and maintain their stand on behalf of the church. Even the victories of the overcomers are corporate victories.

The vessel God is after is a corporate one. Therefore, we have to learn to live the Body life. In order to live the Body life, we have to deny the natural life and be judged and dealt with by God in a deep way. We must learn obedience, and we must also learn fellowship. In this way, we will have the chance of becoming God's vessel. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 37, pp. 121-124)

ACTS HAVING NO ENDING

[The book of Acts] was not actually ended; rather, it was left open that more may be added. The reason for this must have been that the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching Christ for His propagation, multiplication, and spread through the believers of Christ was not yet completed and needed to be continued for a long period of time. Such an evangelistic work for Christ's propagation, multiplication, and spread is according to God's New Testament economy for the producing of many sons for God (Rom. 8:29) that they might be the members of Christ to constitute His Body (Rom. 12:5) for the carrying out of God's eternal plan and the fulfillment of His eternal will. This is revealed in detail in the twenty-one Epistles and the book of Revelation, which follow this book. The church produced by Christ's propagation and multiplication is the sphere in which God is expressed and in which He reigns in Christ; hence, the church becomes the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, along with Christ's propagation and multiplication, grows out of and spreads from God's life. Acts is a record of the spreading of Christ; it is also a record of the kingdom of God, because the kingdom of God is the expansion of Christ. The gospel that is widely preached in this book is the very Christ as the gospel (5:42), the gospel of Christ, and it is also the kingdom of God as the gospel (8:12), the gospel of the kingdom of God. The preaching of such a gospel will continue and advance until the whole earth becomes the kingdom of Christ (Rev. 11:15).

In the four Gospels God was incarnated, passed through human living, died, and resurrected, thus completing Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God (Col. 2:9). In Acts this embodiment of God, as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), spreads Christ into His believers, i.e., works the processed Triune God into His chosen, redeemed, and transformed people to make them the constituents of the church, through which God may be expressed. The ultimate issue of the church will be the New Jerusalem in eternity future as God's full and eternal expression, which will also be God's eternal kingdom as the sphere in which He reigns in His divine life in eternity forever and ever. This should be the reality and goal of all gospel preaching today. (Acts 28:31, footnote 2)

ONE ACCORD AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two One Accord

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24, 32; 5:12; 15:25; Rom. 15:5-6; 1 Cor. 1:10

I. The genuine one accord in the church is the practice of the oneness of the Body, which is the oneness of the Spirit—Eph. 4:3-6:

- A. The practice of the genuine one accord in the church is the application of the oneness; when the oneness is practiced, it becomes the one accord—Acts 1:14; 2:46.
- B. The landmark that divides the Gospels and the Acts is the one accord among the one hundred twenty—1:14:
 - 1. They had become one in the Body, and in that oneness they continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer—Eph. 4:3-6; Acts 1:14.
 - 2. When the apostles and the believers practiced the church life, they practiced it in one accord—2:46; 4:24, 32; 5:12; 15:25.
- C. If we practice the principle of the Body, we will have the one accord, for the one accord is the Body—Rom. 12:4-5; 15:5-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 20, 27; 1:10.
- D. The one accord is the master key to every blessing in the New Testament—Eph. 1:3; Psalms 133:
 - 1. In order to receive God's blessing, we must practice the oneness by the one accord—v. 1.
 - 2. The blessing of God can come only upon a situation of one accord, the practice of the oneness.

II. One accord refers to the harmony in our inner being, in our mind and will—Acts 1:14:

- A. In Acts 1:14 the Greek word *homothumadon*, translated "one accord," is strong and all-inclusive:
 - 1. This word comes from *homo*, "same," and *thumos*, "mind, will, purpose (soul, heart)," and denotes a harmony of inward feeling in one's entire being.
 - 2. We should be in the same mind and the same will with the same purpose around and within our soul and heart; this means that our entire being is involved.
 - 3. For the one hundred twenty to be in one accord meant that their entire beings were one—v. 14.
- B. In Matthew 18:19 the Greek word *sumphoneo* is used to signify the one accord:
 - 1. This word means "to be in harmony, or accord," and refers to the harmonious sound of musical instruments or voices; the harmony of inward feeling among the believers is like a harmonious melody.
 - 2. When we have the one accord, we become a pleasing melody to God.

III. The practice of the oneness—the one accord—is according to the apostles' teaching—Acts 2:42, 46:

- A. There was one accord among the believers, and those who were in one accord continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching—v. 42.
- B. The apostles taught the same thing to all the saints in all the places and in all the churches;

today we also must teach the same thing in all the churches in every country throughout the earth—1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33b-34; Matt. 28:19-20.

C. The teaching of the apostles is the holding factor of the one accord—Acts 2:42, 46.

IV. In practicing the one accord, we need to be in one spirit with one soul—Phil. 1:27; 2:2, 5; 4:2:

- A. We should be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion; this is to be one in our soul—1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27; 2:2, 5; 4:2.
- B. To be in one accord is to be one in our whole being; this results in our being one in our outward speaking—Rom. 15:5-6:
 - 1. To have one mind and one mouth means that we have only one Head—Christ; we should think with the mind of Christ and speak with the mouth of the Head—Col. 1:18a; Phil. 2:2, 5; 4:2.
 - 2. Whenever we are in one accord, we speak with one mouth—Rom. 15:6.
 - 3. *With one accord* and *with one mouth* mean that even though we are many and all are speaking, we all “speak the same thing”—1 Cor. 1:10.
 - 4. The only way to be with one accord and with one mouth is to allow Christ the room to be everything in our heart and in our mouth so that God may be glorified—Eph. 3:17a, 21.

V. In order to be in one accord we need to have one heart and one way—Jer. 32:39; Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24:

- A. The believers should have one heart—to love God, to seek God, to live God, and to be constituted with God so that we may be His expression—and one way—the Triune God Himself as the inner law of life with its divine capacity—Mark 12:30; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:16-17; Jer. 31:33-34; John 14:6a.
- B. Divisions result from having a heart for something other than Christ and taking a way other than Christ—1 Cor. 1:13a; 2:2; Col. 2:8; Acts 15:35-40.

VI. If we would have one accord, there should be only one “scale” in the church life—Deut. 25:13-16:

- A. To condemn a certain thing in others while justifying the same thing in ourselves indicates that we have different weights and measures, that is, different scales— one scale for measuring others and a different scale for measuring ourselves.
- B. The practice of having different scales is the source of discord, but if we have only one scale, we will keep the oneness and one accord in the church—Eph. 4:1-3; Matt. 7:1-5.

VII. Today we can be in one accord because we have one, all-inclusive vision—the vision of the age—Prov. 29:18a; Acts 26:19:

- A. Many love God and serve Him, but everyone has his own vision; as a result, there is no way to have the one accord.
- B. As long as we have different visions on a minor point, we cannot have the one accord—Phil. 3:15.
- C. The vision that the Lord has given His recovery is an all-inclusive vision—the ultimate consummation of all the visions in the Bible—Rev. 21:2, 10-11.

VIII. For the Lord’s up-to-date move, all the churches need to be in one accord; we should all voice the same thing, trumpet the same thing, teach the same thing, and be the same in practice—Josh. 1:16-18; 6:1-16; Acts 2:42; 4:24, 32; 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33b-34; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

ONE ACCORD IN THE LORD'S MOVE

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:32; Rom. 15:5-6; 1 Cor. 1:10;
Phil. 1:27; 2:2; 4:2; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:15; Rev. 1:4-5a

The one accord is the base, the ground, for our present practice in the Lord's move. Anything that we do, teach, or practice must be absolutely according to the holy Word, which is God's completed revelation. The very great, particular characteristic in the Lord's recovery is to do everything according to the Bible. The matter of being in one accord in the New Testament occupies a very crucial stand for the Lord's move.

THE CONSUMMATED SPIRIT AND THE ONE ACCORD

Many Christians have seen that in the Lord's move the biggest factor is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, who is the biggest factor in the Lord's move in the New Testament today, after the Lord's ascension, is the consummated Spirit, the consummation of the processed and consummated Triune God. The Spirit poured out from the heavens upon the believers in Acts was not merely the Spirit of God, as He was in Genesis 1:2, or merely the Holy Spirit, as He was in Matthew 1:18 and 20. In Genesis 1:2 the Spirit of God brooded over the condemned and judged earth. Through His brooding, the creation in God's plan was brought in. In the Old Testament the Spirit was very much involved with God's old creation.

In the New Testament there is the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 1 this Holy Spirit got involved with something deeper. The Holy Spirit was involved not in the outward, objective creation but in the inward, subjective incarnation. This incarnation was the Triune God conceived in a human being, and the very element to carry this out was the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was not only the means to carry out the incarnation but also the element and essence. To have any conception there is the need of two basic elements with two basic essences. Without these two essences, no conception could be carried out. To carry out the divine conception of Jesus there was the need of two essences—the divine essence and the human essence. The divine essence was the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus, who was God incarnate, lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years and died on the cross to accomplish a full and eternal redemption by dying an all-inclusive death with seven statuses. Then He passed through the tomb and descended into Hades (Acts 2:27). He was resurrected out of death and Hades, and in resurrection He became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). In the evening on the day of His resurrection, He breathed Himself into His disciples for them to receive the Holy Breath, the Holy Spirit. By that time the very Triune God had been wrought into the disciples.

After His resurrection He stayed with the disciples for forty days, and then He met the disciples on a mountain, telling them that all authority had been given to Him in heaven and on earth. He charged them to go and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Matt. 28:16-19). By that time, after His resurrection and His breathing of the Spirit into the disciples, He could tell the disciples to baptize the nations into the name, into the completed person, of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

The name of the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—implies a lot. We should not merely know the Triune God by a term in Matthew 28:19. We have to realize the full implication of this all-inclusive title—*the Father, the Son, and the Spirit*. It implies God's incarnation, Jesus' conception and birth. It implies Jesus' human living on this earth and His all-inclusive death on the cross. It also includes His being in the tomb, in Hades, and in death, and His coming back to the earth through resurrection to become a life-giving Spirit. After this He ascended to the heavens, fully accomplishing the very process for the Triune God to go through to be the consummated Spirit. He

then poured out this Spirit, and this Spirit poured out of the Triune God from the heavens became the strongest factor, on the Lord's side, of His move on this earth.

On one side God's move depends upon Himself as the consummated Spirit. He needs us on the other side so that there could be the possibility of accomplishment. If we do not render Him any kind of cooperation or give Him any kind of response, nothing can happen, regardless of how powerful, dynamic, and mighty the Holy Spirit of the Triune God is. God could do the work of creation by Himself but not the work of the new creation. The new creation work must be carried out in the principle of incarnation, the principle of God being one with man, making one entity out of two elements with no third element produced. The Holy Spirit is the power, the means, and the factor for God's move on this earth, but that is just on one side. There is the need of another side, the human side. There is the need of another factor—the one accord.

If there had been no one accord on the earth in Acts 1, the powerful and dynamic Spirit could have never been poured out. There would have been no vessels to take Him, receive Him, contain Him, and express Him. Thus, the one accord is critical. It is a response to God's doing, a coordination or cooperation offered to God for His move. The Lord's move on God's side depends upon the consummated Spirit and on our side depends upon the one accord. Before the pouring out of the Spirit, there was a group of people praying together with one accord (v. 14). That one accord was a preparation for them to receive the pouring out of the Spirit. After this pouring out, they remained and continued in this one accord along with the three thousand saved on the day of Pentecost (2:46). This one accord was the basic factor of the Lord's move through the entire book of Acts.

Romans is a book on the principles of the Christian life and the church life, yet in 15:6 it charges us with the same thing—one accord. If there is no one accord, it is hard for the church to go on, and it is hard to have the church life. In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks of the one accord again, telling the Corinthians to “speak the same thing” (1:10). In Philippians we are charged strongly and repeatedly that for the proper experience of Christ in the proper church life, the one accord surely is needed (1:27; 2:2; 4:2). The one accord means one mind and one will with one purpose, wrapped up with our soul and heart.

The matter of one accord controls the entire revelation concerning the Lord's move on one side. If there were no Spirit on the Lord's side, it would be impossible for the Lord to move on this earth at all. In the same principle, without the one accord on our side, God cannot move. We have to match God. He is now the consummated Spirit, and we have to say, “Lord, we are ready here as the very one accord. We want to not only render but are also ready to offer to You this one accord.” Immediately there is a kind of marriage, and a couple comes out. Then anything can be done.

THE HOLDING FACTOR OF THE ONE ACCORD

If you expect to have one accord in any kind of society, group, or movement, you need the same kind of thinking that comes out of the same kind of knowledge. The Socialist party stresses socialism. Any political party has its own “ism.” They stress their “ism” in order to have a party, to have what we call the one accord. Without the one accord, no party could accomplish anything. Any society, group, or movement needs this one accord that comes out of the same kind of thought, the same kind of knowledge. Therefore, Acts tells us that, on the one hand, there was one accord among the disciples, and on the other hand, all those who were one in one accord were continuing in the teaching of the apostles (2:42). The teaching of the apostles was the very holding factor of the one accord. If there were more than one teaching, this would damage the holding factor. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1986, vol. 1, “Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move,” pp. 155-158)

ONE ACCORD
AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Three
Maintaining the One Accord
by the Three Substances of the Power in the Lord's Recovery—
Prayer, the Spirit, and the Word

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8, 14; 4:24-31; 6:4, 7; 12:24; 19:20

- I. We can maintain the one accord by prayer, the Spirit, and the Word for God's move; we must be those who are toiling in the Word, laboring in prayer, and being diligent in dealing with the Holy Spirit:**
- A. Prayer, the Spirit, and the Word are the three substances of the power in the Lord's recovery—Acts 1:8, 14; 4:31; 6:4, 7; 12:24; 19:20.
 - B. We must pray that we might have the Spirit as the power to spread the Word— 6:7; 12:24; 19:20; cf. 1 Tim. 5:17-18:
 - 1. We must get ourselves saturated, constituted, and even soaked with the holy Word; if we are burdened to preach the gospel, we must get into the Word and be persons who know the Word—Col. 3:16.
 - 2. We should ask the Lord to bring our entire being into the light and be dealt with by Him to become persons of power, who are full of the Spirit within and without, essentially and economically—Eph. 5:18; Acts 2:38; 5:32b; 4:8, 31; 13:9, 52.
 - C. The early disciples could not have maintained the one accord if they had had different ways, means, agents, or substances for them to carry out the Lord's move on this earth; in order to maintain the unique one accord, we all must learn to do the same thing by the same way—1:14; 4:31.
 - D. We must not think of taking a way other than prayer, the Spirit, and the Word; any other way will cause dissension and division.
- II. Sanctification through the Word results in oneness by dealing with the factors of division; truth sanctifies, and sanctification issues in oneness—John 17:14-24:**
- A. The sanctifying word, the sanctifying Spirit, the sanctifying life, and the sanctifying God are all one; therefore, if we are being sanctified, we are one spontaneously because all the factors of division are taken away.
 - B. In John 17:17-23 we see that sanctification issues in the genuine oneness because this sanctification keeps us in the Triune God; verse 21 says, "That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us":
 - 1. In order to be one, we need to be in the "Us," that is, in the Triune God.
 - 2. The only way to be in the Triune God is by the sanctifying truth that deals with all the factors of division.
 - 3. By being kept in the Triune God, we are one, but whenever we are out of the Triune God, we are divided immediately.
 - 4. We need to contact the Lord every morning, touch the living Word, and have the divine reality infused into our being; as we contact the Lord in this way, the factors of

division are overcome.

5. When the factors of division in us are put to death by the sanctifying truth, we are brought into the genuine oneness, for sanctification keeps us in the Triune God.
 6. Sanctification through the word of the truth results in the oneness of the Body of Christ, which is the enlarged oneness of the Triune God—v. 21.
- C. There are four factors of division:
1. The first of these factors is worldliness; as long as we love the world in a certain aspect, that aspect of worldliness becomes a cause of division—vv. 14-16, 18; 1 John 2:15-17; 5:19.
 2. Another cause of division is ambition; when we contact the Lord through the Word and allow Him to infuse Himself into us, the truth thus imparted into our being kills our ambition—cf. Isa. 14:13.
 3. A third cause of division is self-exaltation; we should be willing to be nobody and to exalt Christ as the only Somebody, the One who has the universal preeminence—Col. 1:18; 2 Cor. 4:5; 3 John 9-11.
 4. The fourth factor of division is opinions and concepts; we should not hold on to our opinion but simply pursue the Lord's goal: the recovery of Christ as life and as everything for the building up of the church—Matt. 16:21-24; cf. Rev. 3:14.

III. When we move out of ourselves and into the Triune God, we are one and are even perfected into one to be in the one accord—John 17:11, 17, 21-23; Eph. 4:1-6:

- A. To be sanctified is to move out of ourselves and into the Triune God and to allow Christ to live in us; in this way we are perfected into one—John 17:21-23.
- B. This sanctification takes place by the Word, which is the truth, and by the Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth:
1. As we come to the Word every morning, outwardly we touch the Word, but inwardly the Spirit touches us; by the Word and by the Spirit, both of which are the reality, we are sanctified.
 2. The more we touch the Word and the more the Spirit touches us, the more we move out of ourselves; we move from one dwelling place, the self, to another dwelling place, the Triune God.
 3. Every day we need to make this move, for in the self there are worldliness, ambition, self-exaltation, and opinions and concepts.
 4. If we continually touch the Word and allow the Spirit to touch us day by day, we will be sanctified; that is, we will move out of ourselves, our old lodging place, and into the Triune God, our new lodging place.
 5. Once we are out of ourselves, we are sanctified, separated from the factors of division and separated not only unto God but also into God.
 6. To have the genuine oneness and the one accord, we must first move out of ourselves and into the Triune God (vv. 17, 21); then we must allow Christ to live in us (v. 23a) so that we can be one with the saints in any locality.
- C. "I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one"; this perfected oneness is the real building; it is the growth in life—v. 23; Eph. 4:16:
1. To be perfected into one means to be rescued from worldliness, ambition, self-exaltation, and opinions and concepts.
 2. "I in them"—this means that the Son is living and moving in us.
 3. "You in Me"—this means that the Father is living and moving in the Son.
 4. In other words, while the Son lives and moves in us, the Father lives and moves in

Him; by this twofold living and moving, we are perfected into one, and we express the Father in glory.

- D. Ambition is implied in John 17:21; self-exaltation, in verse 22; and concepts and opinions, in verse 23:
 - 1. In the Triune God there is no ambition, in the glory of the Father there is no self-exaltation, and in the place where Christ lives and reigns there are no opinions and concepts.
 - 2. In the divine and mystical realm of the processed Triune God, ambition is swallowed up, self-exaltation disappears, and concepts and opinions are killed; here there is no evil of division in the Satan-systematized world (v. 15); instead, there is genuine oneness.
- E. Genuine oneness is living in the Father, allowing Christ to live in us, and living in the Father's glory, His expression—vv. 22, 24:
 - 1. We need to move out of ourselves and into the Triune God and remain in Him for the Father's expression, His glory.
 - 2. The real building, the oneness, and the one accord as the practice of the oneness is possible only in the Triune God, and it is prevailing only when Christ lives in us; then we can express the Father in glory and experience the genuine oneness.

IV. The book of Acts shows the prayer that we need in order to be filled with the Spirit essentially and economically so that all our activities would be the activities of the acting God—1:14; 6:4; 13:1-4:

- A. The prayer that we need is the prayer that brought in the outpouring of the Spirit—1:14; 2:1-4, 16-17a.
- B. The prayer that we need is the prayer that shook the earth and empowered the disciples with the Holy Spirit to speak the word of God with all boldness—4:24-31.
- C. The prayer that we need is the prayer of the apostles to match the ministry of the word—6:4.
- D. The prayer that we need is the prayer that brought Peter into a trance and brought a heavenly vision to him—10:9-16.
- E. The prayer that we need is the prayer that opened the prison gate for Peter—12:4-14.
- F. The prayer that we need is the prayer that brought the five prophets and teachers into the Lord's commission—13:1-4.
- G. The prayer that we need is the prayer that brought in a great earthquake and shook the foundations of the prison house—16:23-26.
- H. The prayer that we need is the prayer that brought Paul into a trance and into the Lord's speaking to him—22:17-21.

V. The book of Acts shows that our working together with God to build up the church is a spiritual warfare and that prayer is the secret to accomplish God's work—4:24-31; Psalms 2:1-2; Ephesians 6:10-20:

- A. The prayers that we utter before the Lord must stand against and resist "counter-prayers" that are directed particularly against the church and the work we are carrying out to build up the church—John 17:15; Matt. 6:13; cf. Psalm 31:20.
- B. In order to maintain the one accord, to practice the oneness, we need to "persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2); we need to pray without ceasing, keeping ourselves intimately connected to the Lord (1 Thes. 5:17; Matt. 26:41; Col. 2:19).
- C. Prayerlessness is a sin; all in the Lord's recovery must be prayerful and stand against the sin of prayerlessness—1 Sam. 12:23; Col. 4:2.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE THREE SUBSTANCES OF THE POWER IN THE RECOVERY

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:14, 8; 4:31; 6:7; 12:24; 19:20

The book of Acts begins with the one accord and stresses the one accord. The early disciples could not have maintained or kept this one accord, however, if they had had different ways, means, agents, or substances for them to carry out the Lord's move on this earth. If we read through the entire book of Acts, we can see that the way they took to carry out God's move on this earth to fulfill His New Testament economy was entirely by three main substances—prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. Not only in Acts but also throughout the entire New Testament, prayer, the Spirit, and the Word were used for the carrying out of God's economy. The different groups in Christianity today use many other ways. This is why I do not feel that it would be a profit to the move of the Lord in the recovery to establish schools or other things like this. This might be a distraction that keeps the churches somewhat different. If we have different ways of doing things, it is hard to keep the one accord. In order to maintain the unique one accord we all have to learn to do the same thing by the same way. The substances that constitute the unique way for the Lord's move are prayer and the Spirit, which result in the Word.

THE WORD GROWING AND MULTIPLYING

Acts never tells us that the Spirit grew and multiplied; it says that the word grew and multiplied. There are three sections in the book of Acts concerning the move of the Lord through His Word. Chapter 6, which is the end of the first section, says that the word of God grew (v. 7). Chapter 12, which is the end of the second section, tells us that "the word of God grew and multiplied" (v. 24). Then Paul's ministry began in chapter 13. Finally, chapter 19, the end of another section, tells us that "the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed" (v. 20). The Lord's move eventually is not to have something resulting in the Spirit. What we do actually is to carry the Word to people. The Word is the real contents, the real constituents, of the New Testament economy of God. God's Word constitutes the New Testament Bible and also constitutes the very New Testament economy of God. We should pray that we may have the Spirit as power to spread the Word.

GETTING CONSTITUTED WITH THE WORD

We have to pick up the Word to an even greater extent than Peter did. Peter probably did not have a share, as we do, in the fourteen Epistles written by Paul and in the book of Revelation written by John. This is why Peter charged the saints in his later ministry to take whatever the apostle Paul wrote (2 Pet. 3:15-16). In John 16 the Lord told Peter and all his companions that He had many things to say to them which they could not have borne at that time. He said that they had to wait for the Spirit of reality to come for further speaking (vv. 12-13). Mostly, the Holy Spirit spoke in continuation of the Lord Jesus through Paul on the New Testament economy of God. The word spoken by the Lord Himself directly to Peter is mostly in the four Gospels. After Pentecost the Lord spoke to all His people mainly through the apostle Paul in his Epistles. Peter with all his companions had to pick up mainly what was recorded in the Gospels, but today we have to pick up much more. We have to pick up the words of the Lord from the four Gospels and especially from the fourteen Epistles of the apostle Paul. After giving Life-study messages on the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, the first thing we published in collective volumes was our Life-studies on Paul's fourteen Epistles because we consider that his Epistles are more crucial for us to know God's economy.

For us to know the Lord Jesus in His earthly ministry we surely need the four Gospels. To know His birth, His youth, His living and ministry on this earth, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension, we have to pick up the record in the four Gospels. But for us to know the definition, the full

revelation, of God's New Testament economy concerning the Body of Christ, we surely have to pick up the fourteen Epistles of Paul. The four Gospels show us the Head, whereas Paul's fourteen Epistles show us the Body and reveal the Head to us in an even deeper way. Because we are living in the Body today under the direction of Christ as our living Head, these fourteen Epistles are more crucial to us.

I charged the new full-timers in Taiwan to spend half a day, every day, in the Word. This is a must. Even when they were out preaching the gospel to the villages, they still spent the first half of the day praying together over the Word. They even brought their Life-studies with them. They always study the Word regularly according to their schedule. If these young ones do not have an adequate constitution of the Word, they will have nothing to present to others regardless of how much they pray. But the full-timers in Taiwan have something when they open up their mouth because they have been studying the New Testament Recovery Version with all the footnotes and the Life-study messages. They are full of the divine revelation. They are full of the divine Word. They have much to say, and this is quite convincing when they meet other Christians. They open up the Recovery Version and give away some booklets and Life-studies; thus, many get attracted and would even like a copy of the Recovery Version for themselves.

SPEAKING THE HIGHER GOSPEL, THE RICHER WORD

By going out to the small villages, the full-timers baptized one thousand nine hundred seventy-five within three weeks. The main reason for this is that they preached the gospel with a higher, richer word. The Word works. If a farmer sows nothing or even if he sows some poor seed, what kind of harvest can he expect? We need to speak the higher gospel, the richer word, which is very logical and philosophical and which meets the need of the modern young people in this age.

The young people today, generally speaking, are very philosophical and scientific. The more scientific and logical people become, the more they want to know the meaning of human life. The age has changed and is much different from one hundred years ago. When the missionaries went to China, the people there were very conservative. They did not have much knowledge and were concerned only with ethics and with doing something to make a living. But today people all over the globe have become very educated and are very philosophical and logical. If you were to tell them only that they are sinners who are going to hell, they would not like to hear this. They are bored of this. Within them there is a desire to know the deeper truths, the real meaning of this universe, the real meaning and reason of human life.

When our brothers went out to preach the gospel in this way, it convinced people. Even those people in the villages had heard the preaching of Christianity before. To their opinion after hearing this preaching, they only considered this as another religion like Buddhism. To many of them the philosophical teachings of Confucius are much better than the mere preaching of going to heaven or hell. When our young people went to them, the people in the villages were so impressed that they were college graduates. They would surely listen to someone coming to their home who had graduated from the top university in Taiwan. These full-timers going to the villages had an impact.

Today the United States is the top country on this earth. The young people today on the campuses are seeking more knowledge concerning human life and the reality of the universe, yet superficial knowledge will not fill up the void within them. They would like to know the truth of the universe, the real meaning, the real significance, of human life. We have what they need. We have a proper translation of the New Testament with footnotes that open up the text, many booklets for distribution, and many truths to speak. These truths have to be our constitution. We have to be saturated and soaked with all these divine realities. Then we need to go out to speak with our Recovery Version and with our pockets or handbags full of the rainbow booklets, which contain a slightly edited version of the Life-study messages. When you are speaking the high gospel to someone, after a certain point give them a booklet. This really means something. Thank the Lord that He has given us a rich deposit of His Word. The early believers went out not only with the Spirit but even the more with the Word. The Spirit by Himself is too abstract. We can minister the Spirit to others, but we cannot present the Spirit.

What we can present in a thorough way is the Word.

One particular brother told me that he recently met a group of Jewish young people who are seeking the truth. I told this brother that if he is going to convince these Jewish young people, he must know how to use the Old Testament because they treasure it to the uttermost. They boast of the Old Testament even though they may know very little about it. The best way to catch them is to use their treasure. First, open to Genesis 22, and read to them God's promise to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (v. 18; cf. Gen. 12:3). Ask them who this seed is in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. When you open up the Bible in this way, they will be shocked. Then you need to give them an interpretation that this seed of Abraham is Christ. Read a portion of Matthew 1 to them, showing them the ancestors of Jesus Christ: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, and Isaac begot Jacob" (vv. 1-2a). Then open to Galatians 3, and show them that this Christ is the very One in whom the entire world is blessed (vv. 14, 16). If this brother were to share the truth with these Jewish young people in this way week after week for a period of time, they would be convinced. We do not need to argue with anyone; just open up the holy Word to them. The most profitable way to convince people is to use the holy Word.

Nearly every nation on this earth today promotes their people being educated. All the educated people know that there is a unique and famous book called the Holy Bible. Every philosophical and logical person would like to know this book. They would even like to know this book as literature. If a person does not know something about the Bible, he may be considered as backward. I believe that once one gets educated, there is a desire in his heart to know the Bible. If you go to a thoughtful, educated person and open up some crucial verses to him to show him what this book teaches, he would be happy to hear you. You should go to him with prayer and with the Spirit to present the Word. Then the Word will be living. Because we go with prayer, the Spirit, and the Word, something will surely happen.

Many thoughtful persons would like to know something about the book of Revelation because they are curious. If you cannot share with them from this book, you will lose their interest. After reading the first verse of the New Testament, a thoughtful person may ask you the significance of "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). This question is a real testing. If you say that you do not know, you cannot capture this person. Many curious questions will be asked of you when you go to contact logical people, so you must be prepared by having a deposit of the rich Word in your being. Your preaching of the high gospel will be very convincing and will gain the respect, the regard, of the one to whom you are speaking. Our goal, though, is not merely to get regard from people. We want to sow the Word into people's minds and hearts, and eventually this Word will be used by the Holy Spirit to get into their spirit to regenerate them. This is why it is altogether worthwhile for us to study the Word.

MAINTAINING THE ONE ACCORD BY PRAYER, THE SPIRIT, AND THE WORD

Instead of using our hall to establish a school or as some kind of center to take care of children, we need to spend our time on the Word and to contact people. There are thousands of Chinese families in many major cities in the United States who would be open to our visitation. Even though many brothers have a job, they can still use their evenings and weekends to visit these families door to door. To go to visit them in prayer by being prepared with the holy Word and filled with the Spirit will be very prevailing. To use the church meeting hall for a school or as a center to care for children will bring a lot of complications to the hall. The children will have to be controlled, a playground will have to be prepared for them, and a substantial amount of the day will be occupied by them in which the hall will not be free for the church's purpose. All the churches should use every inch of the hall for studying the Word and for prayer to receive the Spirit in order to bring people to the hall so that they may be saved.

To maintain the one accord we must take one way for our driving. If we have different ways to

drive, surely our one accord will be somewhat damaged. In the New Testament there is only this one unique way constituted with these three substances—prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. Apparently, to use the hall as a place to care for children is not something distracting or making division. But after a while some saints who have given quite much will not agree with the hall being used for that purpose. It may also be that some of the elders may feel to have a meeting during a time that has already been designated for the purpose of the children. We all have to try to do everything that would not bring in this kind of dissenting effect or thought. Whatever you do by prayer, whatever you do to get the Spirit, and whatever you do to take the Word, no one would dissent with.

Suppose a brother would propose that we use a certain kind of music to preach the gospel. Some may feel good about this, but others may not. No one, however, would have different opinions concerning prayer, concerning the Spirit, and concerning taking the Word and preaching the Word. This is the unique way that everybody knows because this is God's ordained way. This is not the way that I invented or taught but the way that God invented and ordained in the Bible. We need to take this principle in all our practices. Try the best to always limit and restrict your practice by the Word. Whatever the Word does not say, it is better not to take. To preach the gospel by any way other than prayer, the Spirit, and the Word may cause some different thinking.

People would take another way because they do not want to spend that much time in the Word. To take other ways besides prayer, the Spirit, and the Word are shortcut ways for the sake of convenience. We cannot be entirely successful by taking a shortcut way. The genuine way, the proper way, the most profitable way, to take is the unique way. The unique way in doing anything is God's ordained principle. The entire universe is full of principles set up by God, the Creator. If you are going to be married, you must take God's ordained way with the principle of the marriage of one husband and one wife (Matt. 19:3-9). If you take a shortcut way, you will get in trouble. In our world and in the universe there are many God-ordained principles. Science actually discovers all these God-ordained principles.

To use other ways to preach the gospel or to carry the church on might be profitable, but that is the shortcut way. The shortcut way will always have some side effects. Only the proper way will never have any side effects. The best medical doctors are careful not to release any medicine that may have harmful side effects. Therefore, we should not use anything other than prayer, the Spirit, and the Word to carry on the gospel or the church life. Otherwise, we should be prepared for some side effects like dissension, which will damage the real one accord.

TOILING IN THE WORD, LABORING IN PRAYER, AND BEING DILIGENT IN DEALING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

It may seem very awkward to take the genuine way. It takes time and patience; we have to labor and toil. Let us toil in the Word, labor in prayer, and be diligent in dealing with the Holy Spirit. This is worthwhile. We have to spend much time to get into the Word; we have to get ourselves saturated, constituted, and even soaked with the holy Word. We must also get ourselves constituted with our contact with the Lord. We have to contact Him day by day and hour after hour; then we will be the right person.

In 1958 I went to the Cow Palace in San Francisco to listen to Billy Graham's preaching. Some told me that Dr. Graham spent much of his time on his knees praying. That was the source of his impact. I admired the way he applied the Word to the present world situation in his preaching. If he had not had an adequate knowledge of the Word and had not spent an adequate amount of time in studying the Word, he could never have applied the Word so adequately and soberly to the present world situation. We all have to spend time in the holy Word.

If you are burdened to preach the gospel, you must get into the Word and be one who knows the Word. A person may be a manager of a bank or a college professor, but he still has to spend time in the Word. A professor may know a lot, but God is not asking him to present his studies to people. For you to go out to contact people, you need to know the holy Word. Then use all your available time to pray

to contact the living Lord.

**ASKING THE LORD TO BRING OUR ENTIRE BEING INTO THE LIGHT
AND BEING DEALT WITH BY HIM TO BECOME A PERSON OF POWER,
FULL OF THE SPIRIT WITHIN AND WITHOUT**

Do not merely ask God to give you the power; the power is waiting for you. You need to be cleansed, dealt with, purified, chastened, and chastised by the Lord. No elder or any brother can deal with or purify your inward being. Only the Lord Himself can deal with you directly. You need to give Him the way in your being every day. Just as we need to wash our hands frequently, we also need to be cleansed by the Lord frequently. To handle the gospel is a most holy thing. This could never be done by anyone whose hands are dirty. We need to come to the Lord and open our entire being to Him to be dealt with, to be enlightened, to be exposed, to be checked, and to be humbled. The power comes from this kind of prayer.

We should not merely pray for the power. The power is there to be appropriated by you, but who are you, what are you, and where are you? You may be dirty, never dealt with, proud, criticizing others, offending your wife, despising the elders, and rebelling against the church. You may be feeble in this way and yet still be zealous for the gospel. You cannot be a prevailing one to preach the gospel if you are this kind of person. If you are going to be a prevailing one, you need to go to the Lord every day to get yourself adjusted, cleansed, enlightened, exposed, and rebuked, not by man's words but by the Lord's Spirit directly. The Lord has no chance to deal with you unless you pray.

When you pray, do not be occupied with your work or with other things. Do not even be occupied with gospel preaching. You have to keep yourself absolutely free and open to the Lord. Leave yourself open to the Lord. Let Him come in for at least ten minutes to speak to you, to enlighten you, to point out to you all your shortcomings, sinfulness, evil, and impure thoughts. Ask Him to bring your entire being into the light for a full and utter exposure of your real condition. This kind of prayer would make you prevailing. You do not need to pretend that you are powerful. As a purified and chastised person, when you open up your mouth, every word will be a word of power. Whatever comes out of your mouth will be powerful. Even your voice will be powerful because your person will be power. This will be the case because through your prayer you have been saturated by the cleansing One.

The One who cleanses you is also the One who purifies and saturates you. As a person saturated with the Lord, you will be empowered. This is why a word spoken by one person is powerful, and the same word spoken by another means nothing. Prayer makes your person. Prayer makes you another person, a person of power. Such a person of prayer will be full of the Spirit within and without.

When you go to contact others, as a person who is full of power and full of the divine revelation of God's New Testament economy, the impact will be there. When you go, you must have the unique one accord backing you. You should be one with the church, one with your co-workers, one with all the brothers, and one with all the sisters. You should mean business with the Lord. If you are such a person and if you are not carrying out something on your own and for yourself in the Lord's recovery, the impact will surely be there.

HAVING SOMETHING HIGH TO PRESENT TO PEOPLE

I came to the United States when I was nearly sixty years old with little knowledge of English in speaking. But I believe that since the first day that I came to this country, I was somewhat empowered, despite the fact that my English may not have been good and my speaking may not have been eloquent. D. L. Moody did not have a high education. He was helping his uncle in a shoe store when the Lord called him to preach the gospel. Once, after he preached to a large congregation, a learned person told him that his grammar was wrong. Moody frankly told that person to go to preach with his correct grammar and then see what would come out. The power, the impact, is not in the right grammar. It is in what kind of person you are and what you present to people. People do not want the proper grammar. They want the right thing. They want life. They want Christ. They want the reality of

salvation.

The impact with me through the years is in prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. Although I am not so skilled in singing, by the Lord's mercy, I have composed a number of good hymns. One of them, *Hymns*, #501 in our hymnal, "O glorious Christ, Savior mine," is actually much better in Chinese because nearly every line is poetic. Recently, I was in a Lord's table meeting in a certain locality, and all the hymns sung in that meeting except for one were written by me. The one that was not written by me was the hymn with the chorus "One with Thee, one with Thee" (*Hymns*, #474). This hymn was written altogether with my ministry by a sister who was constituted with my ministry. This was another factor to convince me that we need a new hymnal, dropping all the substandard hymns that we do not use out of our present hymnal. Fifty years ago, *Hymns*, #226, written by the Brethren, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord," was a treasure to me. But today this treasure has lost its color and taste. This is a very good hymn, but it is not that rich. It is not as rich as *Hymns*, #132—"Lo! in heaven Jesus sitting, / Christ the Lord is there enthroned." Stanza 6 of this hymn is especially rich:

With the Glorified in heaven
Is the Church identified;
By the Spirit of this Jesus
Are His members edified.

My point is that when we go out, we need to have something high to present to people. This is why I am not bothered by the opposition. I consider myself as a seller of the oil (Matt. 25:9). If you want to buy the oil, come to me. My English may not be eloquent or grammatical, but the oil and the divine riches are here in this ministry. I am not boasting, but I am challenging you to get into the Word. Take the unique way of prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. Do not think of anything else, and do not use any gimmicks. Get yourself constituted, qualified, and equipped. Then go out in your prayer with the Spirit presenting the Word. Many will get convinced. The seeking people are eager to listen to someone who can tell them what the reality of human life is. This is what they need, and this is what we have. We need many saints to go and present the divine truths that the Lord has shown us to the needy people. Do not think of taking a way other than prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. Any other way will cause dissension and division. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1986, vol. 1, "Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move," pp. 85-95)

ONE ACCORD
AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four
The Resurrected, Ascended, and All-inclusive Christ

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8-11; 2:32-36; 3:13-15; 4:33;
5:30-32; 7:56; 20:28; 16:31

I. The Christ revealed in Acts is in resurrection—1:3; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33:

- A. Through death Christ entered into another realm, the realm of resurrection:
 - 1. Because Christ is the living One with an indestructible life, death is not able to hold Him—Heb. 7:16; Acts 2:24.
 - 2. He delivered Himself to death, but death had no way to retain Him; rather, death was defeated by Him, and He rose up from it.
- B. We need to know Christ in the power, sphere, and element of His resurrection— Phil. 3:10-11.
- C. Christ's resurrection was the focus of the apostles' testimony—Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:13, 15, 26; 4:33; 10:39-40; 13:33; 17:3, 18:
 - 1. God glorified His Servant Jesus through His resurrection and in His ascension—Luke 24:26; Acts 3:13, 15, 26; 4:10, 33; 5:30-31.
 - 2. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus points back to His incarnation, humanity, human living, and God-ordained death and points forward to His ascension, ministry and administration in heaven, and coming back—2:23; 1:9-11.

II. The Christ revealed in Acts is in ascension—1:9-11; 2:32-36; 5:31:

- A. Whereas resurrection is a matter of life, Christ's ascension is a matter of position, and position is a matter of authority.
- B. The Lord's ascension was His initiation into His living and ministry in the heavens; this initiation brought Him into a new realm, that is, into the heavens where He now has His living and is ministering there.
- C. The Lord's ascension brought Him into a new stage—the stage of a resurrected man living in the heavens as the center of God's administration—Rev. 5:6:
 - 1. This resurrected One is now sitting in the heavens to execute God's administration—Heb. 12:2.
 - 2. The resurrected Christ ascended to the heavens to be exalted by God and to be given the kingship, the lordship, and the headship over all things—Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:22.
- D. The ascended Christ has also obtained the throne, the glory, and all the authority in the universe—Rev. 5:6; Heb. 1:3; 2:9; Matt. 28:18.
- E. The ascended Christ is the Lord of all to possess all—Acts 2:36:
 - 1. The lordship of Christ is one of the most important aspects of what He has obtained in His ascension—10:36.
 - 2. Since the lordship of Christ was fully established in His ascension, we—the members of His Body—need to realize this heavenly fact—Eph. 1:20-21.
- F. The ascended Christ is God's Anointed to carry out God's commission to work out the spreading of the gospel and the building up of the church—Acts 1:8.

III. The Christ revealed in Acts is the all-inclusive Christ—3:14-15, 25-26;

5:30-32; 7:56; 10:36, 39-43; 16:31; 17:30-31; 20:28:

- A. Christ is the Author of life—3:14-15:
 - 1. As indicated by the Greek word rendered “Author,” Christ is the origin or Originator of life; He is the Author, the Chief Leader, in life—v. 15.
 - 2. In Acts 3 we see the imparting of life into others, which is to propagate Christ; for such a propagation, we need the Lord as the Author of life, the source of life.
 - 3. As the Author of life, Christ is the holy and righteous One—v. 14.
- B. Christ is God’s Servant—vv. 25-26:
 - 1. As the seed of Abraham and the Servant of God, Christ is the One in whom all the families of the earth—all the races, colors, and nationalities—will be blessed—vv. 25-26.
 - 2. God sent back the ascended Christ as a blessing by pouring out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; hence, the Spirit whom God poured out was the Christ whom God raised and exalted to the heavens—2:33; 3:13-15, 25-26.
- C. Christ is the Leader and Savior—5:30-32:
 - 1. God exalted the man Jesus as the highest Leader, the Prince, the Ruler of the kings to rule over the world, and the Savior to save God’s chosen people — Rev. 1:5; 19:16; Acts 5:31.
 - 2. *Leader* is related to His authority, and *Savior* is related to His salvation; He rules sovereignly over the earth with His authority so that the environment might be fit for God’s chosen people to receive His salvation—cf. 17:26-27.
- D. Christ is the Son of Man—7:56:
 - 1. Acts 7:56 reveals that Christ is the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God to be the comfort, encouragement, and strength to the one martyred for Him.
 - 2. Stephen saw the ascended Christ as the Son of Man; this indicates that the Christ who is in the heavens still has His humanity; He still possesses His human nature.
- E. Christ is God—20:28:
 - 1. Christ as our God is the Purchaser of the church, having obtained the church with His own blood—v. 28.
 - 2. God secured, purchased, and redeemed the church with “His own blood” (v. 28), “the blood of Jesus His Son” (1 John 1:7).
 - 3. Christ died on the cross as the God-man, and the blood that He shed there for our redemption was not only the blood of the man Jesus but also the blood of the God-man.
 - 4. The blood through which God obtained the church is God’s own blood.
- F. Christ is the Lord of all—Acts 10:36:
 - 1. *All* in Acts 10:36 refers to all peoples—1 Tim. 2:4.
 - 2. The ascended Christ is the Lord of all the different races and peoples on earth; with Him, there is no respect of persons—Rev. 5:9.
- G. Christ is the Judge—Acts 10:39-43:
 - 1. Christ has been designated by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead— v. 42.
 - 2. Christ is a man to judge the world, designated by God in righteousness and proved by God’s raising Him from the dead—17:30-31.
- H. Christ is the Lord Jesus, the object of the believers’ faith—16:31:
 - 1. To believe in the gospel is mainly to believe in Jesus Christ—v. 31.
 - 2. To believe in the Lord Jesus is to stand on the person of Christ and all that He has accomplished, both of which constitute the belief, the faith, of God’s New Testament economy—1 Tim. 1:4.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

PREACHING CHRIST

Centered on Christ

We have seen that Paul's preaching and teaching were based on the Old Testament. The Old Testament, however, contains many things: history, the law, types, and prophecies. The Jews studied the Old Testament week by week, but they did not pay attention to Christ. They had some thought concerning the Messiah, but they did not have any understanding of Christ. When Paul went into the synagogues to preach and teach, he did not care for anything other than Christ.

When some hear that Paul preached Christ and Christ alone, they may say, "Did Paul not begin his preaching with an account of the history in the Old Testament? Did he not speak of God's bringing His people out of Egypt and about Saul and David?" Yes, Paul spoke about those things, but he did so in order to prepare the way to preach Christ. In Acts 13:22 Paul quoted the word about David being a man according to God's heart. Then in verse 23 he went on to say, "From this man's seed, God, according to promise, brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus." Here we see that after a short introduction he came to his crucial message, which was altogether centered on Christ. After beginning with the history until the time of David, Paul went on to point out that from David's seed God brought forth a Savior, Jesus Christ. With Him there is salvation.

In 13:24 and 25 Paul referred to John the Baptist: "After John had proclaimed, prior to His public entrance, a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. Now as John was completing his course, he said, What do you suppose that I am? I am not the Christ. But behold, One is coming after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie." Literally, the Greek words rendered "prior to His public entrance" mean "before the face of His entrance." Here Paul pointed out that prior to Christ's public entrance, John proclaimed a baptism of repentance. Repentance is to change one's mind, and baptism is to bury the repentant ones, terminating them, so that the Savior may germinate them by regeneration (John 3:3, 5-6).

As Paul went on to speak concerning "the word of this salvation" (Acts 13:26), he emphasized Christ's crucifixion. He pointed out that the people of Israel had Him put to death. In verse 27 he said, "Those dwelling in Jerusalem and their rulers, being ignorant of this One and of the words of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by judging Him." They judged the Lord Jesus by sentencing Him to death (Luke 24:20). "When they had accomplished all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb" (Acts 13:29).

Raised from the Dead

Beginning with verse 30, Paul went on to speak of Christ's resurrection: "But God raised Him from the dead." We have seen that Acts tells us both that God raised up Jesus (2:24, 32) and that He rose from the dead (10:40-41). Regarding the Lord as a man, the New Testament says that God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 8:11). But considering Him as God, it tells us that He Himself rose from the dead (14:9).

The Firstborn Son of God in Resurrection

After pointing out that the resurrected Christ "appeared to those who had come up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now His witnesses to the people" (Acts 13:31), Paul went on to say, "We announce to you the gospel of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; this day have I begotten You'" (vv. 32-33). Resurrection was a birth to the man Jesus. He was begotten by God in His resurrection to be the firstborn Son of God among many brothers (Rom. 8:29). He was the only begotten Son of God from eternity (John 1:18; 3:16). After incarnation, through resurrection, He was begotten by God in His humanity to be God's firstborn Son.

If it were not for Paul, I do not think that we would be able to see that Psalm 2 speaks of the

resurrection of Christ. Paul was able to see the Lord's resurrection in the word, "You are My Son; / Today I have begotten You." Paul applied the word *today* to the day of the Lord's resurrection (cf. Acts 13:33). This means that Christ's resurrection was His birth as the firstborn Son of God. Jesus, the Son of Man, was born to be the Son of God through being raised up from the dead. Therefore, God's raising up of Jesus from the dead was His begetting of Him to be His firstborn Son. We need to realize that the Lord's resurrection was His birth. This is a crucial matter.

The Lord's Two Births

The Lord Jesus has had two births. First, He was born of Mary to be the Son of Man. Then thirty-three and a half years later, He was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. Through resurrection He had a second birth, for as a man, He was born in His resurrection to be the Son of God. Therefore, in His first birth He was born of Mary to be the Son of Man, and in His second birth He was born in resurrection to be the Son of God.

The Only Begotten Son and the Firstborn Son

When some hear that Christ was born to be the Son of God in resurrection, they may have a problem and say, "Was not our Lord the Son of God from eternity?" Yes, from eternity He was the Son of God. Before His first birth, that is, before He was born of Mary to be the Son of Man, He was already the Son of God. The Gospel of John emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and He is the Son of God eternally. Since He was already the Son of God before His incarnation, why was it necessary for Him to be born the Son of God in His resurrection? If we would answer this question, we need to study the Bible carefully.

Romans 8:29 and Hebrews 1:6 both speak of Christ as the Firstborn. In His second birth the Lord Jesus was born to be the firstborn Son of God. According to the New Testament, He is the Son of God in two aspects. First, He was God's only begotten Son; second, He is now God's firstborn Son. The words *only begotten* indicate that God has only one Son. John 1:18 and 3:16 speak of the only begotten Son of God. Eternally speaking, Christ was the only begotten Son of God. This was His eternal status. But through resurrection He, as a man, was born to be the firstborn Son of God. The word *firstborn* indicates that God now has many sons (Heb. 2:10). We who believe in Christ are the many sons of God and the many brothers of the Lord, the many brothers of the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29).

The Embodiment of Life and the Propagation of Life

As the only begotten Son of God, the Lord is the embodiment of the divine life. The Gospel of John emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and as the Son of God, He is the very embodiment of the divine life (1:4). Through resurrection Christ became the firstborn Son of God as the life-dispenser for the propagation of life. First, He was the only begotten Son as the embodiment of life; now He is the firstborn Son for the propagation of life. Through His becoming the firstborn Son of God in resurrection, the divine life has been dispensed into all His believers to bring forth the propagation of the very life that is embodied in Him. We all need to see this.

Here in Acts 13 Paul was not preaching Christ as the only begotten Son of God, as the Gospel of John does. Rather, here Paul was preaching Christ as the firstborn Son of God for propagation. For this reason he preached the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as His second birth. Through His second birth, His birth in resurrection, Christ became the firstborn Son of God for the propagation of the divine life. (*Life-study of Acts*, pp. 310-314)

ONE ACCORD
AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five
Keeping Ourselves in the One Flow of the Lord's Work
for the Spreading of the Church
and Receiving the Lord's Mercy to Be Saved from Satan's Schemes

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8; 5:20; 6:4, 7; 9:31; 12:24; 19:20

- I. The book of Acts reveals that in the move of the Lord there is only one divine stream of the Lord's work and that we need to keep ourselves in this stream:**
- A. The divine stream, which has been flowing throughout the generations, is uniquely one; since there is only one divine stream and since the flow is uniquely one, we need to keep ourselves in this one flow—1 John 1:3; Rev. 22:1.
 - B. Where the divine stream flows, we have the life of God, the fellowship of the Body, the testimony of Jesus, and the work of God—Gen. 2:10-14; Psalms 36:8-9; 46:4a; John 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1.
 - C. When we give the Lord the preeminence in our entire being, taking Him as our first love, He becomes the divine stream to us, flowing within us and out of us as the first works; the first works are works that are motivated by, issue from, and express the Lord as our first love; only works that are motivated by the first love are gold, silver, and precious stones—v. 1; 2:4-5; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 2:9; 3:12.
 - D. The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this day, is just one stream for God's goal to build up the church for His corporate expression—Matt. 16:18; cf. Ezek. 47:1-12.
- II. The basic principle of the church is that it is eternal and universal, so the church must constantly spread on the earth; the growth of the church and the building up of the church are based on spreading—Acts 1:8; 8:1; 9:31:**
- A. The spreading of the church is brought about by the growth in the Lord's life and the flowing out of the Lord's life, the overflow of life—Eph. 4:16; John 7:37-39; Acts 2:42, 46-47; 5:20; 6:4, 7; 12:24; 19:20.
 - B. When the church begins to spread, erroneous concepts are shattered, regardless of whether the concepts are regional, racial, or mutually discriminatory; it is through spreading that all our close-mindedness is eliminated—cf. 1 Cor. 12:24; Col. 3:10-11.
 - C. Acts 8 shows that the first step in the church's spread was to Samaria (vv. 1-25), and the second step was to Ethiopia, to Africa (vv. 26-39); this shows that we must preach the gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation because the church is universal and needs to spread (Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9).
 - D. Acts 9 shows God's choosing of Saul (later Paul), which is against the human concept; our narrow, erroneous human concept needs to be broken and shattered through the spreading of the church; we must believe that a person can be persecuting the church one hour and preaching the gospel the next hour—vv. 10-22.
 - E. Acts 10 indicates that the Lord's evangelistic move on earth is under His administration on the throne in heaven and that the gospel needs to be spread to the four corners of the inhabited earth to collect all kinds of unclean (sinful) people, cleansing them with the

redeeming blood of Christ and washing them with the renewing Holy Spirit—vv. 11-12, 15, 28; cf. Heb. 8:1; Acts 7:56.

- F. Acts 13 reveals that in the church in Antioch, the five prophets and teachers who were ministering to the Lord were composed of Jews and Gentiles, each having a different background, education, and status; this indicates that the church is composed of all races and classes of people regardless of their background, and that the spiritual gifts and functions given to the members of the Body of Christ are not based on their natural status—v. 1; 4:36; Rom. 16:21; Luke 9:7-9; Acts 22:3:
 - 1. Through these five faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ, the Lord took a great step to set apart Barnabas and Saul for His work and move to spread the gospel of His kingdom to the Gentile world.
 - 2. It was absolutely a move by the Spirit, in the Spirit, and with the Spirit through the coordination of the faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ on the earth with the Head in the heavens—13:1-4a.
- G. On the apostle Paul's first trip to spread the gospel, he went to Cyprus and then to Asia Minor to establish many local churches—v. 4b—14:28; Rev. 1:4.
- H. After Paul separated from Barnabas, he went out on his second ministry journey to Europe (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and returning through Ephesus back to Antioch)—Acts 15:35-40; 16:6—18:22.
- I. Paul's third journey was from Antioch to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, and Greece to Jerusalem—v. 23—21:17.
- J. Paul's fourth journey was from Caesarea to Rome—27:1—28:31.

III. We must receive the Lord's mercy to be saved from Satan's schemes to frustrate the spreading and building up of the church, and we must keep ourselves in the flow of the age for the building up of His Body—cf. Heb. 4:16; Lam. 3:22-25:

- A. We must be saved from outward and dead ordinances, human opinions, and the self with its old concepts; whoever receives mercy from the Lord will be saved in these matters; the degree to which we are saved is the degree to which the church can be built up—Rom. 5:10; Phil. 1:19-21a; 2:12-16; Acts 15:1-12; Gal. 2:21; 5:1; 2:4.
- B. We must learn from the lesson of Peter to be saved from the veils of our religious traditions and old background so that we may see and live under the vision of God's eternal economy to hold the truth of the gospel—Acts 10:9-16; Gal. 2:11-14.
- C. We must learn from the lesson of Barnabas to be saved from human opinions and natural relationships—disputes that arise among the co-workers because of personal relationships are terrible; remember this well!—Acts 13:13; 15:35-40; Col. 4:10.
- D. We must learn from the lesson of Apollos to be saved from a ministry that lacks a complete revelation of God's New Testament economy and from not being fully one with the ministry of the age—Acts 18:24—19:2; 1 Cor. 1:12; 16:10-12.
- E. We must learn from the lesson of Paul in Acts 16:6-12; these verses indicate the problem of workers coming to a place and tending to become set and settled down, not wanting to move; old relationships, old affections, old inclinations, and old concepts keep us from following the inner leading of the indwelling Spirit:
 - 1. The Holy Spirit forbade Paul and his co-workers, and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; the Holy Spirit's forbidding separates us, sanctifies us, and the Spirit of Jesus either allows us or does not allow us—vv. 6-7.
 - 2. The Holy Spirit says no to sanctify us, and the Spirit of Jesus says go to send us out in the humanity of Jesus to accomplish the will of God under the cross.

- F. We must learn from the lesson of Paul to practice the Body life and to take the word of the Spirit through the members of the Body, obeying it as a word from the Head—20:23; 21:4, 7-8, 11-14.
- G. We must learn from the mistake of James and the devastating mixture of the church in Jerusalem—vv. 18-21; Matt. 22:7; 24:1-2:
 - 1. Jeremiah spoke of the law of life that could be written upon our hearts (Jer. 31:31-34), and Paul spoke of the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit (Rom. 8:2, 4, 6), but James treasured and uplifted the law of letters (Acts 21:20).
 - 2. Paul spoke of being crucified with Christ and being conformed to the death of Christ by the power of Christ's resurrection; it is this life that produces the Body life that consummates in the New Jerusalem; self-cultivation does not carry out God's economy, but self-denial does—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; Matt. 16:24.
 - 3. James boasted that there were myriads of believing Jews in the church in Jerusalem who were zealous for the law, but Paul was zealous to gain Christ, be found in Christ, know Christ, lay hold of Christ, pursue Christ, and uplift Christ for the fullest enjoyment of Christ—Acts 21:20; Phil. 3:6-14; Col. 1:18b.
- H. We must learn from the lesson of Paul to be saved from the mixing of Judaic practices with God's New Testament economy; this mixing is not only erroneous but also abominable in the eyes of God—Acts 21:18-27, 31, 36; Heb. 10:29.
- I. We must learn from the lesson of Paul's appealing to Caesar, utilizing his Roman citizenship to save himself from his persecutors so that he might fulfill the course of his ministry—Acts 22:25-29; 23:10-11; 25:8-12; 26:32:
 - 1. Paul was willing to sacrifice his life for the Lord, but he still endeavored to live longer so that he might carry out the Lord's ministry as much as possible—20:24.
 - 2. God in His sovereignty rescued Paul so that He might separate him from all the dangerous situations and entrapments and sent him to a quiet prison; this was to afford him a quiet environment and give him time, whether in Caesarea (24:27) or in Rome (28:16, 23, 30), that through his last Epistles he might release exhaustively to the church throughout the generations the revelation of the mystery of God's New Testament economy that he received from the Lord.
 - 3. The benefit and profit that the church throughout the generations has received from these Epistles will take eternity to measure (see 25:11, footnote 1).

IV. All of us should follow the pattern of the apostle Paul to do the same one work universally for the unique Body—1 Cor. 3:12; 15:58; 16:10; Eph. 4:11-16:

- A. The work in the Lord's recovery is for the building up of the local churches unto the building up of the universal Body of Christ—2:21-22; 1 Cor. 16:10.
- B. Today there are four kinds of workers:
 - 1. The first kind is the co-workers who match the need of the ministry of God in the present age; this is a small group of people who have been dealt with by the Lord and who are in one accord.
 - 2. The second kind is the younger co-workers; they are willing to receive direction and to come under the coordination of the older co-workers, and they are willing to follow and to learn in humility.
 - 3. The third kind is those who are unwilling to submit to the senior co-workers and who do not belong to the denominations, but who are happy to remain in fellowship with us.
 - 4. The fourth kind is the preachers and free evangelists among the denominations.
- C. What we need today are the first and second kind of co-workers; concerning the third and

fourth kind of workers, we can only let them choose their own pathway; with some people God has not assigned them to take the same way as we do, and we dare not say anything to them.

- D. Whatever the situation may be, we are here to do the work that God has committed to us; we cannot interfere with others' work, and we are not here tearing down others' work.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE DIVINE STREAM

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:8-12; Psa. 36:8-9; John 4:10, 14; 7:38-39;
1 Cor. 10:4; Rev. 21:6; 7:17; 22:1-2; 21:23; Ezek. 47:1, 5, 7-9, 12

The Scriptures reveal to us that man's need is met in God alone. To all of man's need God Himself is the supply, the only supply, and all the supply. God's intention is to be life to man, for it is as life to man and the life of man that God could be the supply to all of man's need. Thus, in order to be life to man, God must come to man and enter into him as the living supply. Only in such a way can man enjoy Him and live by Him.

THE STREAM OF LIFE

In the beginning of Genesis we see that after man was created, he was placed in the garden of Eden beside a tree called the tree of life. Near it there was a river. By the help of further revelations of the Scriptures, we understand that this is a picture that shows how God comes to man. He comes as the flowing of a stream to be contacted and received by man. In Psalm 36:8-9 the psalmist praises God, saying, "You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures./For with You is the fountain of life." This means that with God is the fountain of life, from which flows the river of God's pleasures. God is a fountain of life, and from this fountain of life flows the river of God's pleasures. Man may drink of this divine river and enjoy the pleasures of God and be satisfied. The pleasures of God and the fatness of God go along with the flowing of this divine river. If we drink of this river, we will enjoy the pleasures of God and be satisfied with the fatness of God.

God as life to man first flows out in His Son, our Lord Jesus. Thus, the Lord can give us the living water, and the water that He gives will become in us a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life (John 4:14). God flows out in His Son and through His Son. God is the fountain of the divine water of life, and the Lord Jesus is the springing up of the fountain. He is the Rock smitten for us that out of Him may flow the living water of the divine life to be taken by us.

Second, God flows out as the living water in His Spirit and through His Spirit. The Lord tells us that he who believes into Him will have rivers of living water flowing from within him. He spoke this of the Spirit (7:37-39). By this we know that the Holy Spirit is the second channel by which God Himself flows out as the living water to us.

Hence, the Scriptures show us that God comes to us as life as the flowing of living water. The Scriptures tell us that whoever is thirsty may come to the Lord and drink the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17) and that in eternity the Lord will be our Shepherd and will guide us to springs of waters of life (7:17). The water of life is God Himself as our life. We drink of Him, we enjoy His pleasures, and we are satisfied with His fatness.

The book of Revelation tells us that this stream of living water flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (22:1). This is another picture showing us the source of this living water. It means that the life of God flows out of God Himself in the redeeming Savior, the Lamb, with ruling authority to be life to us now.

Within this stream is the life of God. We read that in the river of living water is growing the tree of life, yielding its fruit each month (v. 2). This shows that the life that supplies all our need is something growing in the river of living water. Thus, it proves to us that the river of living water is the

supply of the divine life. In the book of Ezekiel we see that in this river of life there is the power to swallow up death, for where it flows, it heals the salty water and makes it fresh. It has healing power. We also see that it has the power to produce, for where it goes, vegetable life as well as animal life is produced. Where it flows, all kinds of trees grow, yielding various kinds of fruits. Moreover, the waters themselves are swarming with living creatures. This is a most meaningful picture (47:6-12). By meditating on it, we realize its significance. Here is a stream that flows out of God Himself to bring life to supply all our need. This is a stream that will both heal and produce, both swallow up death and supply us with life. This is the stream of life.

THE STREAM OF FELLOWSHIP

From this picture of the stream in the Scriptures, we may realize that it is also a stream of fellowship. Consider the situation of the New Jerusalem. In the whole city there is only one street, and in the midst of that street is the stream of living water. By contemplating this scene, we realize that this stream is the stream of fellowship. It flows throughout the entire city, and the whole city can have fellowship only through or by this stream of living water. This reveals that the fellowship of the Body of Christ is the stream of divine life. Wherever the stream of the divine life flows, there is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. What is the fellowship of the church? It is the flowing of the divine life. As the stream of the divine life flows within us, there is the fellowship of the Body among us. This fellowship started from the day of Pentecost, and from Jerusalem it flowed to Antioch, to Asia, to Europe, and then to America and throughout the world. The fellowship of the Body that we are enjoying is such a tremendous thing. We are in this stream of the fellowship of the Body, and this flowing is ever increasing and being enriched. The more it flows, the greater and the richer it becomes.

THE STREAM OF TESTIMONY

Where this stream flows, there is also the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we know that this is so? Consider again the situation of the New Jerusalem, and suppose that you are one who is coming into the city from the outside. When you enter the gate, you immediately come upon the one street of the city in which is flowing the stream of living water. If you follow the stream, it will bring you to the place where the Lord Jesus is. This means that the stream will bring you into contact with the Lord. In other words, this stream of living water will cause you to know something of Christ; it will testify to you something of Christ. Where could you find Christ? Where could you meet Christ? Here is the channel; here is the way; here is the means by which you can touch Christ, by which you can experience Christ. The testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, is with the very stream of divine life. Where the stream of the divine life flows, there is the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we must ask, What does it testify? The answer is most significant. It testifies that there is a Lamb, that within the Lamb is God Himself, and that this Lamb is on the throne. This is the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the redeeming One; He is the Lamb of God who was slain for our sins. He was crucified on the cross, shedding His blood for our redemption. After accomplishing redemption, He was resurrected and exalted to the heavens, to the throne. In the Lamb on the throne is God Himself. These three items are the summary of the testimony of the Lord Jesus—the *Lamb* on the *throne* with *God in Him*. The stream of the divine life brings this testimony to us. It is the testimony of the Lord Jesus.

THE STREAM OF THE WORK OF GOD

This stream is also the stream of God's work. Where the stream flows, there is the work of God. This is clear in the book of Acts, a book that speaks to us of the work of God. What is that kind of work that is the work of God? It is a work in the stream of living water. Where the stream of living water flows, there is the work of God. God works along the flowing of the stream of the divine life. If you consider the whole record of the book of Acts, you will see the picture quite clearly. On the day of Pentecost this stream of divine life flowed out of God Himself in Christ with ruling power from the throne. It began to flow from Jerusalem. From there it flowed to Antioch, and then from Antioch it

turned to the west; it flowed to Asia, and through Asia it flowed to Macedonia, to Europe. Here is a picture of the flowing of the stream of divine life, and with the flowing of this stream is the work of God. By flowing God works; by flowing God preaches His gospel; by flowing God brings people to be saved. There is a stream that we could call the stream, or the current, of the work. Where it flows, there is the work of God.

Notice that there is no end, no conclusion, to the book of Acts. There are twenty-eight chapters, but in the book of Acts in heaven today there may be twenty-eight hundred chapters. The twenty-eight chapters in our Bible are the record of only sixty or seventy years of history. There is an opening, but no closing, no conclusion. This is because this stream of life is still flowing and never stops flowing. The history of the church shows that this stream has continued to flow from generation to generation right up to this very day, and it is flowing still. Where it flows, there is the life of God; where it flows, there is the fellowship of the Body; where it flows, there is the testimony of Jesus; and where it flows, there is also the work of God. It is the stream of life, the stream of fellowship, the stream of testimony, and the stream of the work of God.

Brothers and sisters, we must be in this stream. If we are not in this stream, we are out of life, we are out of the fellowship of the Body, we are out of the testimony of the Lord Jesus, and we are out of the work of God. Oh, if we are simply in this stream, we will have everything. From where does it flow? It flows from the throne. What kind of a throne is this? It is the throne of the Lamb with God in Him. God is in the Lamb, and the Lamb is on the throne, and this stream flows out of this throne. If you have this stream, you have the throne, you have the Lamb, and you have God within the Lamb. If you have this stream, you have everything. If you are in this stream, then you are in God, you are in the Lamb with the throne, you are in the life, you are in the fellowship, you are in the testimony, and you are in the work of God. Are you in the stream? You need to know. If you are not in the stream, you will have to make a turn. We must be in the stream.

In the universe there is a divine stream that starts in the beginning of the Scriptures and flows throughout the whole book. We can trace this stream from the beginning of the Bible right to the end. In many places there is reference to this flowing stream. It is still flowing today. It is flowing, flowing all the time, and will be flowing to eternity. The Lord said that the water that He gives would be a fountain of water springing up unto eternal life. This stream shall flow to eternity; it can never and will never cease. Throughout the whole history of the church there has ever been and still is such a divine stream.

This stream has flowed back to the Western world as a supply to His Body. We look to the Lord that it will be increasing in this country and even to all parts of the world. May we remember this in our prayers, and may we be ready to go along with the Lord so that this stream may have a free way to flow without any hindrance in us. We must be faithful to the flowing of this stream of the divine life, of the fellowship of the Body, of the testimony of the Lord Jesus, and of the work of God.

THE STREAM IN RELATION TO GOD'S PURPOSE

The eternal purpose of God is to mingle Himself with humanity. He is working toward this one thing today. This oneness is not simply a joining or a uniting together; it is far more than this. It is a mingling together, a blending together, which is much deeper. It is a mingling of the divine nature with the human nature until they become one. The entire Scripture is concerned with this one basic and central matter, that of God mingling Himself with us.

We must now ask, How will God accomplish this? It is clearly revealed in the Word that in order for God to do this, He must come into us. When God becomes our life, He will automatically be mingled with us.

How can God come into us as our life? This is divine and quite mysterious. Not only with the divine life but also with human life, there is an element of mystery. If asked, What is life? one would find it difficult to define. In the Scriptures God uses a figure to describe how He could be life to us. This figure is a stream of water. He comes into us to be our life just as a stream of water flowing out

and flowing in, flowing out from heaven and flowing into us. I think it is easy to understand how this flowing stream can come into us. We simply drink of it. God Himself is the stream of the water of life. God flows out of heaven onto this earth, and flows into you and me.

Is there a stream of God flowing within you today? There is a stream within me that is always flowing. Sometimes when I wish to sleep, this stream stirs me. I say, "Lord, I would like to rest; I am tired"; but this stream flowing within does not agree. It gives me the impression, "You are tired, but I am not tired. I am still flowing, and My flowing will strengthen you." There is a stream continually flowing. Oh, brothers and sisters, do you have the flowing?

THE SOURCE AND NATURE OF THE STREAM

We have seen that after man was created, he was put before a tree called the tree of life. By the side of the tree of life there was a river, and by the flowing of this river there were some precious materials: gold, pearl, and onyx stone. What is the meaning of these items? They are most significant. Remember that this is in the second chapter of the whole of Scripture. At the end of the Scriptures, we find the same things again in the last two chapters. There we see a city made of gold, pearls, and precious stones, the same kind of materials listed in Genesis 2. There we also see a river flowing, and in its midst grows the tree of life. Here you have the river and the tree of life once more.

How many times throughout the Scriptures God is spoken of as a flowing stream of water! "You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures. / For with You is the fountain of life" (Psa. 36:8-9). The Lord Jesus tells us that the water that He gives will become a fountain of living water springing up into eternal life (John 4:14). He says again that whoever is thirsty may come to Him and drink, and whoever believes into Him will have rivers of living water flowing from within him (7:37-38). All these words relate to one thing—that God has flowed out and is still flowing on this earth into humanity as the life. We may ask, In what form has God flowed out? He has flowed out first in His Son, in Christ, and then He has flowed out as the Spirit. God is the fountain, the very source; Christ the Son is the spring of this divine water; and the Holy Spirit is the living stream, flowing all the time.

On the day of Pentecost the Lord poured Himself out in the Holy Spirit. Notice the word *poured* in Acts 2:33. He poured out the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit became the flowing stream of the divine water. For almost two thousand years since that time, the Holy Spirit has been flowing in this world. This flowing has never stopped and will flow to eternity. God the Father is the very source. Christ the Son is the reservoir, the Rock smitten that the divine water stored within may be released. What is this living water that flows from Him? It is the very Spirit of the life of God. The Holy Spirit is the flowing Spirit of the divine life. "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this" (vv. 32-33). He has poured out the Holy Spirit, flowing with the divine life. From that time there is a flowing of the divine life, and this flowing is the Holy Spirit Himself.

We must consider the source of this stream. On the highest peak of the universe there is a throne, one throne, and on this throne the Lamb is sitting. I would ask, Who is the Lamb? The Lamb is the crucified, buried, resurrected, and exalted Christ. Christ is the Lamb. And who is Christ? This Christ is Someone most wonderful. This Christ is the divine nature mingled with the human nature. He is God incarnated, who died on the cross, who was buried in the tomb, who went down to Hades, who was raised up from Hades and from death, and who was exalted to the heaven of heavens, to the right hand of God. He is the very God in human nature. He is the One who died to redeem us from our sins and who has been exalted to the highest place in the universe. Please notice that He is the Lamb, and yet He is on the throne. A lamb is a very humble thing, and a throne is full of authority. As the Lamb slain, the crucified Jesus has now been exalted to the throne to have the full authority of the universe. Do you realize this? How meaningful it is! Within the Lamb is God Himself. How can we know that God is within Him? We are told that God is the light, and the Lamb is the lamp. Just as the light is within the lamp, so God is within the Lamb on the throne. Oh, how I wish that this picture would impress you!

This is the highest point of the whole universe. Christ, the Lamb, with God within Him is sitting on the throne, and from this very throne flows out the river of divine life.

I would ask you to notice what is included in this stream of water. Since it flows out from such a place, then all that Christ has obtained and attained, all that He has and all that He is, must be included in it. How I wish I had here a cup of all-inclusive water as an illustration, a cup of water with everything included in it! Then, if we could make an opening in this cup so that its contents could flow out, I would ask you to tell me what would be included in such a flow. You would have to answer that everything would be included. Obviously, everything would be included. From the throne where Christ is sitting, there flows out a stream of water, the contents of which can never be exhausted. The all-inclusiveness of the Triune God is here; humanity is here; the element of the crucifixion and of the burial is here; the resurrection, the ascension, the authority, the Lordship, the Headship, and everything is included here in this stream. How rich! How all-inclusive! This is the stream that is flowing within you today.

The Scriptures tell us that within this stream grows the tree of life. What is the tree of life? It is simply Christ as the life. Think of the many times the Scriptures refer to a tree as a figure of Christ. The fact that this tree grows in the living water shows us that Christ as life is in the flowing of the Holy Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit flows, there Christ is found as the life. The Holy Spirit brings Christ to us as our life just as the stream of living water brings to the whole city the tree of life as the supply of life. Look once more at the picture. Here is a stream of living water, and within the stream, growing all the way, is the tree of life. Thus, the stream brings the supply of life to the entire city. The Holy Spirit brings Christ to us as food, as the life supply. Since this is such a vital matter, I wish to press it by asking, Do you have this stream flowing within you? Is it flowing within you at this very moment? Unbelievers do not have it, but alas, there are some believers who, although they have had this stream flowing into them, have not kept themselves within its flow. They have the life of the Triune God within them, but they are not keeping themselves in the flowing of this life. Many times you are conscious that you are out of the flowing of this stream. Then sometimes you know that you are in its flowing. What have you to do then? It is really quite simple. You simply have to keep yourself in the flowing of the stream. Whenever you feel that the flowing of the stream within you is cut off, you must turn to the Lord immediately to seek the reason. Why has the stream within you stopped flowing? You must discover the reason and deal with the Lord about it until the flowing is recovered. Wherever you are going and whatever you are about to do, if there is the sense that the flowing of the stream will be stopped by proceeding in that matter, then you must stop. Stop in order to maintain the flowing. To maintain the flowing you must refrain from all those activities which are not of the Lord, that is, which are not of the flowing of the stream within you.

THE ONE STREAM

The flowing of the divine life, which started on the day of Pentecost and has been flowing throughout all generations to this very day, is only one stream. Wherever it goes, wherever it flows, it is not many streams; it is only one. Read the book of Acts, and you will see that there is one stream, one current. This stream started from Jerusalem and flowed to Antioch, and from Antioch it turned to Asia and was flowing there. Then one day the Lord wanted the stream to strike forth into Europe, to Macedonia, but the apostle who was working in the flowing of the stream was not clear about it. Eventually, however, he became clear that the flowing was striking forth from Asia to Europe, and he had to go along with it. It is a familiar story. From Macedonia the stream went in its path to Corinth, to Rome, to Spain, and to all parts of Europe. History tells us that from Europe it flowed to the west, to America, and from the west it flowed to the east and to the south. In reading the history of the church we find that this flowing stream has never been stopped, and we notice that everywhere that this stream flowed, it was just one. It was one in Jerusalem, one to Antioch, one to Asia, one to Europe, and one everywhere it has flowed. Please be clear that there have never been two streams. There is only one stream, and you have to keep yourself in this one stream.

If you read Acts and the Epistles written by the apostle Paul, you will see that quite a number of people at that time, who were preaching the gospel and working for the Lord, were not in the stream. According to the record of the Scriptures, they were not in the stream. For instance, in the first chapter of Philippians the apostle tells us that there were some who preached the gospel because of envy (v. 15). They were preaching the gospel, but they were not working together with the apostle. Although they preached the gospel, they were not in the one stream of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts you can find another example. Consider Barnabas. At the beginning Barnabas was working with the apostle Paul. Both were in the one stream. But after a certain time, Barnabas for some reason would not agree to go along with the apostle Paul. The two were divided. Do you find any record in Acts of Barnabas after that division? No! He was out of the stream. He was still working for the Lord, but he was out of the stream. Are you clear about this matter? If you study carefully the history of the church, you will find that throughout the generations there has been one stream of the Holy Spirit flowing all the time. Many have been working for the Lord, but not all have been in the flowing of that one stream. If you will accept the mercy and the grace of the Lord, you will be brought into that very stream that is flowing today.

At this point, I would like to offer a personal testimony on this matter. In 1933 I went from northern China to Shanghai for the first time in order to visit Brother Watchman Nee. I stayed with him there for several months. When I was about to leave to return to my home city in northern China, Brother Nee came to me and said, "Brother Lee, we feel it is the Lord's mind that you move your family to Shanghai and stay with us for the Lord's work. Would you bring this matter to the Lord?" When I went to the Lord with this matter, I received the light. The Lord showed me that in the book of Acts the current of the Lord's work, the stream of the Holy Spirit, is one. He showed me that in the Acts there was only one line on the map, starting from Jerusalem and running to Antioch, from there to Asia, and from there to Europe. I saw that there never have been two streams but always one. I said to the Lord, "Lord, I thank You. There can never be two streams of Your work in China. If there is something done for You or by You or through You in northern China, it must first be that I go to Shanghai to be mingled together in the one stream, in order that out from there something will flow forth to northern China. Thus, there will be one stream." On the very next day Brother Nee came to see me. I said to him, "Brother, I am clear about this matter. I must do what you suggest. From this day I am working with you in Shanghai."

From that time, what a flowing there has been! I can never tell you how rich and how wonderful it is. It is all because I moved into the flowing of the stream at that very time. Oh, the light of the Scripture has flowed as a tide! The life, the power, the energy, and the authority have flowed into me. Wherever I have gone, I have not gone on my own. I have been just as a boat in the current; wherever the current has gone, I have been carried on. It has been so easy. It has not been my strength, my energy, or my endurance; it has been the flowing of the stream. From that time, the Lord has been gradually showing me the flowing of the life, the flowing of the work, the flowing of the testimony, and the flowing of the fellowship of the Body.

THE CIRCULATING OF THE STREAM

The flowing of this stream of the Holy Spirit is the fellowship of the Body of Christ. It is similar to the circulation of the blood in our physical bodies. The blood is flowing all the time from one part to another and then back again. In just such a way the stream of the Holy Spirit as the fellowship of the Body is flowing among the saints upon this earth.

It is quite clear to me that in these days the flowing of the divine stream is toward the Western world. This flowing to the West is something of the fellowship of the Body of Christ. It started from the throne of the exalted Lamb and has been flowing through all generations to this present time. It has been flowing through many regions and nations, and now it has turned to the Western world. This is the stream of the fellowship of the Body, the stream of the testimony of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, and the stream of the work of the Holy Spirit.

When I was young, Brother Nee came one day to have a talk with me. I was a young learner under his hand, and many times he gave me some basic lessons. He said, "Brother, do you know that we can never go to any place to start a work unless the current of the Holy Spirit is there already?" Oh, how I have remembered this word! Unless the current of the Holy Spirit is already in a place, you and I can never go there to work. Brother Nee continued to say, "Oh, brother, if you realize where the current of the Holy Spirit is, simply go along with it! To work there for the Lord will be a rest to you; it will be a bed upon which you can lie. The work in the flowing of the Holy Spirit is not a burden but a rest." I cannot tell you how much these words have helped me. From that time I have learned the lesson that I must go along with the flowing of the stream of the Holy Spirit. I cannot go to any place to work for the Lord or to start a work for the Lord without the flowing of the current of the Holy Spirit. I am unable to do that, I am not qualified to do that, and I am not ordered by the Lord to do that. What I must do is simply go along with the flowing.

Let me give you a further personal word. I had no intention of coming to the United States, but the flowing of the Holy Spirit carried me here. I could not help it. Furthermore, my intention was that I would soon return to the Far East. But the flowing is still westward, and I could not return. My direction was eastward, but the flowing of the Spirit was westward. All I can do is simply be carried along by this flow. How wonderful to be in this stream! Oh, here is the life, here is the fellowship, here is the testimony, and here is the work of God!

What we must do today is just go along with the stream, just subject ourselves to the current of the work of the Holy Spirit. In this matter I have no personal liberty. It is not according to my thoughts but according to His flowing. The words of a hymn say,

Not where we elect to go,
But where Jesus leads the way,
There the living waters flow,
There our darkness turns to day.
(*Hymns*, #907)

THE STREAM IN RELATION TO THE BUILDING

Out of the flowing of the stream come the gold, the pearls, and the precious stones. Look at the picture in Genesis 2. These precious substances are for the building of God's dwelling place. Wherever the flowing is, material will be produced for the building of the church. Look at the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God in the Old Testament. On the shoulder pieces and on the breastplate of the high priest were precious stones set in gold. The apostle Paul tells us that the church is built with gold, silver, and precious stones. These are the materials that come out of the flowing of the current of the Holy Spirit. In Revelation we are told that the entire city, the New Jerusalem, is built with gold, with pearls, and with precious stones. How did all these materials come into being? They came simply from the flowing of the current of the divine life. Where the stream of the divine life is, there some material, some precious material, for the building of the church will come into being. You and I can never produce material for the building of the church. Only the flowing of the divine life, the current of the Holy Spirit, can do this. It has been flowing through the generations and is flowing today, and wherever it goes, gold, pearls, and precious stones are produced for God's building.

May the Lord grant us to be impressed by this picture. May He always keep us in the flowing of the life, in the fellowship, in the testimony, in the work, and in the building of the house of God. May we also pray toward this end. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1963, vol. 1, "The Divine Stream," pp. 169-181)

FOUR KINDS OF WORKERS

Today there are four kinds of workers. First, there are co-workers who match the need of the ministry of God in the present age. This is a small group of people who have been dealt with by the Lord and who are in one accord. Second, there are younger co-workers who are willing to receive

direction and come under the coordination of the older co-workers. They are willing to follow and to learn in humility. Third, there are those who are unwilling to submit to the senior co-workers and who do not belong to the denominations, but who are happy to remain in fellowship with us. Fourth, there are preachers and free evangelists among the denominations. Today we need the first and second kind of co-workers.

When a co-worker is in a certain place, he has to cooperate with the local church there. The work and the church cannot be separated from each other. When a co-worker is working in a certain place, he is at the same time one of the local brothers. When the church assigns work to the saints, the co-workers should stand on the same ground as local brothers and accept assignments in the same way.

Concerning the third and the fourth kind of co-workers, we can only let them choose their own pathway. God has not assigned some people to take the same way that we have, and we dare not say anything to them. Whatever their situation may be, we are here to do the work that God has committed to us. We cannot interfere with others' work, and we are not here to tear down others' work. (*Messages Given during the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry*, vol. 1, pp. 153-154)

ONE ACCORD
AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six
Grace in Acts

Scripture Reading: John 1:14, 16-17; Acts 4:33; 11:23; 13:43; 14:3, 26; 15:11, 40; 20:32

I. We need to know, experience, and enjoy the grace of God—Eph. 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:10:

- A. The grace of God is a matter of tremendous significance.
- B. According to the New Testament, grace is actually what God is to us for our enjoyment—John 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 12:9.
- C. The New Testament reveals that grace is mainly not the work God does for us; grace is the Triune God Himself dispensed into our being and experienced as our enjoyment.
- D. Grace came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17); this indicates that grace is a person.
- E. The personification of grace is God Himself; Paul realized this when he said, “Not I but the grace of God which is with me”—1 Cor. 15:10.
- F. When God is enjoyed by us, that is grace.
- G. Grace is God in His Son Jesus Christ to be our portion so that we may enjoy all that He is.
- H. Grace is not merely Christ Himself; it is also Christ moving, Christ working, Christ reigning, Christ convincing, Christ subduing, Christ saving, and Christ uplifting.
- I. There are different aspects of grace:
 - 1. Great grace—Acts 4:33.
 - 2. Visible grace—11:23.
 - 3. Grace saving us—Eph. 2:5; Titus 2:11; 2 Tim. 1:9.
 - 4. Grace empowering us—2:1.
 - 5. Grace imparted—Gal. 2:9.
 - 6. The real grace—John 1:14, 16-17.
 - 7. Commended to the grace of God—Acts 14:26.
 - 8. Grace to function—Eph. 3:8.
 - 9. Grace for timely help—Heb. 4:16.
 - 10. Abounding, reigning grace—Rom. 5:2, 15, 20-21.
 - 11. Justified by His grace—3:24.
 - 12. How to receive grace—Lam. 3:55.
 - 13. Gifts according to the grace—Rom. 12:6.
 - 14. Sufficient grace—2 Cor. 12:9.
 - 15. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ—13:14.
 - 16. Grace with our spirit—Gal. 6:18; 1 Cor. 16:23; 2 Tim. 4:22.
 - 17. “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen”—Rev. 22:21.
- J. As believers in Christ, we need to experience the grace of the Lord as revealed in the New Testament:
 - 1. Having faith and love through the Lord’s superabounding grace—1 Tim. 1:14.
 - 2. Having obtained access into and standing in God’s abounding grace—Rom. 5:2a.
 - 3. Enjoying eternal comfort and good hope in grace—2 Thes. 2:16.
 - 4. Coming forward with boldness to the throne of grace to find grace for timely help—Heb. 4:16.

5. Receiving God's abounding supply of all grace—2 Cor. 9:8.
6. Constantly enjoying God's multiplying grace—1 Pet. 1:2b; 2 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 22:21.
7. Enjoying God's greater grace by being humble—James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5.
8. Experiencing the perfecting of the Lord's sufficient grace, Christ's overshadowing power, in our weakness—2 Cor. 12:9.
9. Being perfected, established, strengthened, and grounded by God's all grace after having suffered—1 Pet. 5:10.
10. Carrying out the stewardship of the grace of God entrusted by Him—dispensing to people the riches of Christ as the grace of God—Eph. 3:2, 8.
11. In our living, speaking words for building up and thus giving grace to people—4:28-29.
12. Reigning in life by receiving the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness—grace reigning unto eternal life—Rom. 5:17b, 21b.
13. All the believers having grace upon them and the church being built up; the grace received by the believers being visible—Acts 4:33; 11:23.

II. We need to see grace in Acts—4:33; 11:23; 13:43; 14:3, 26; 15:11, 40; 20:32:

- A. "With great power the apostles gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all"—4:33:
 1. We appreciate the phrase *great grace was upon them all*.
 2. This happened at the time of Pentecost; thousands of people were being brought to the Lord—2:41; 4:4.
 3. This was a situation in which people could realize that great grace was upon the believers.
 4. This grace was nothing less than the living Jesus moving, convincing, subduing, releasing, uplifting, and transcending.
 5. "He [Barnabas] arrived and saw the grace of God"—11:23a.
 6. When he saw the grace, he "rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain with the Lord with purpose of heart"—v. 23b.
 7. The grace that was seen by Barnabas must have been the Triune God received and enjoyed by the believers and expressed in their salvation, change in life, holy living, and the gifts they exercised in their meetings, all of which could be seen by others.
- B. "Paul and Barnabas ... spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God"—13:43:
 1. To continue in the grace implies that we have already received this grace.
 2. Having received the grace of God, we now need to continue in it:
 - a. Actually, the believers received the holy and faithful things in verse 34.
 - b. Then these holy and faithful things became the grace of God in verse 43.
 - c. Hence, the grace of God is compounded of all the holy and faithful things.
- C. "They spent a considerable amount of time speaking with boldness in the Lord, who testified to the word of His grace"—14:3:
 1. We need to see the significance of the expression *the word of His grace* in verse 3.
 2. The phrase *the word of His grace* denotes certain dispensational points; the word of the Lord's grace replaces the law.
 3. This phrase is a strong indication of a change of dispensation, of a change of God's arrangement in His economy.
- D. "They had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled"—v. 26:
 1. Grace is the Triune God becoming life and everything to us.
 2. The grace that motivated Paul and operated in him was a living person, the resurrected

- Christ, the embodiment of God the Father who became the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, who dwelt in him as his everything—1 Cor. 15:10.
- E. “We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus we are saved in the same way also as they are”—Acts 15:11:
 - 1. This grace comprises the Lord’s person and His redemptive work—Gal. 2:21; Rom. 3:24.
 - 2. Peter and the Jewish believers were saved by this grace, not by keeping the law of Moses.
 - F. “Paul chose Silas and went out, having been commended to the grace of the Lord by the brothers”—Acts 15:40:
 - 1. Paul was commended to the grace of the Lord.
 - 2. The fact that Paul was commended to the grace of the Lord by the brothers indicates that he had taken the right way.
 - G. “I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified”—20:32:
 - 1. The word of God’s abundant grace is able to build up the saints.
 - 2. The word of God’s grace functions to give us the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified:
 - a. This inheritance is the Triune God Himself with all that He has, all that He has done, and all that He will do for His redeemed people.
 - b. Our eternal inheritance is related to the divine life, which we have received through regeneration and which we are experiencing and enjoying through our entire Christian life.
 - c. To participate in God’s inheritance requires us to be sanctified, and to be sanctified requires the word of God’s grace.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

GRACE

Ephesians 2:7 says, “That He might display in the ages which are coming the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul testifies, “But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace unto me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.” The grace of God is a matter of tremendous significance. It is important for us to find out the genuine and proper meaning of the grace of God in the New Testament. If we would understand what the grace of God is as revealed in the New Testament, we need a clear view of the New Testament as a whole.

When I was young, I was taught that grace means that we do nothing and that God does everything for us. According to this teaching, anything we do is work, not grace, but whatever God does for us is grace. However, according to the New Testament, grace is actually what God is to us for our enjoyment (John 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 12:9). Grace is actually God in Christ dispensed into our being for our enjoyment in our experience. Grace is mainly not the work God does for us; grace is the Triune God Himself dispensed into our being and experienced as our enjoyment. In brief, grace is the Triune God experienced and enjoyed by us. The New Testament reveals that grace is nothing less than God in Christ dispensed into our being for our enjoyment.

John 1:17 says that grace came through Jesus Christ. This indicates that grace is somewhat like a person. The personification of grace is God Himself. Paul realized this when he said, “Not I, but the grace of God with me” (1 Cor. 15:10). For Paul, grace was a living person. In Paul this person became the very grace by which he labored. Therefore, grace is God Himself; it is what God is to us for our enjoyment. When God is enjoyed by us, that is grace. Grace is the very God in His Son Jesus Christ to

be our portion so that we may enjoy all He is.

We need to emphasize the fact that grace is God as our enjoyment. When God becomes our portion for us to enjoy, that is grace. Do not consider grace as something less than God. Grace is nothing less than the Triune God enjoyed by us in a practical way as our portion. Concerning this definition of grace, the first stanza of *Hymns*, #497 says:

Grace in its highest definition is
God in the Son to be enjoyed by us;
It is not only something done or giv'n,
But God Himself, our portion glorious.

Grace is God not in doctrine, but in our experience, for grace is God in Christ with all He is for our enjoyment. This includes life, strength, comfort, rest, light, righteousness, holiness, power, and the other divine attributes. When we enjoy God and participate in Him, that is grace.

We have pointed out that in Ephesians 2:7 Paul indicates that God will “display in the ages which are coming the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” To display the riches of God’s grace is to exhibit them to the whole universe. The riches of God’s grace surpass every limit, for they are the riches of God Himself for our enjoyment. The riches of God’s grace will be publicly displayed for eternity.

In Ephesians 2:8 Paul goes on to say that we are saved by grace. In Ephesians grace denotes God dispensed into us. Therefore, to be saved by grace means to be saved by God dispensed into us in Christ. Most Christians, however, regard grace as a thing, not as a person. To them, grace is merely a gift freely given. According to this concept of grace, we were sinners who did not deserve God’s salvation, but God saved us freely by giving us His unmerited favor. This, however, is a superficial understanding of what it means to be saved by grace. Ephesians reveals that saving grace is God Himself in Christ wrought into our being. Hence, to be saved by grace actually means to be saved by the dispensing of the Triune God into us.

According to Ephesians, salvation is the transmission of God into us as grace. It was not a simple matter for God to be transmitted into us as grace. It was necessary for Him to be processed through incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. By being processed in this way, He is now able to transmit Himself into us. When the processed God is transmitted into us, He becomes saving grace to us in our experience. This grace is not only amazing grace; it is abounding grace. Grace is the processed God transmitted into our being.

If you read Ephesians 1 and 2 with much prayer, you will see that God processed and transmitted into our being is the saving grace and the abounding grace. We have been saved by the transmission of this processed God. In His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, God has saved us by His grace. In the ages to come—in the millennium and eternity—God will display this grace publicly to the whole universe.

In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul speaks three times concerning grace. Twice he speaks of the grace of God, and once, of “His grace.” In this verse grace is the Triune God becoming life and everything to us. It was by this grace that Saul of Tarsus, the foremost of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15-16), became the foremost apostle, laboring more abundantly than all the apostles.

First Peter 4:10 speaks of the varied grace of God: “Each one according as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.” The varied grace of God is the rich supply of life, which is the Triune God ministered to us in many aspects. As good stewards, by the gift we have received we should minister to the church and to the saints such grace, not mere doctrine.

In 1 Peter 5:10 we have a word concerning “the God of all grace.” In this verse “all grace” refers to the riches of the bountiful supply of the divine life in many aspects ministered to us in the many steps of the divine operation in God’s economy. The term “the God of all grace” is unique; it is found in the New Testament only in 1 Peter 5:10. Peter does not say merely that God is the God of grace; he

says that God is the God of *all* grace. As believers, we should be encouraged by the fact that our God is the God of all grace. This divine grace is an outstanding attribute of our God who has favored us with it in Christ. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 102-105)

ONE ACCORD
AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

**Continuing to Live in the Divine History within Human History
in the Continuation of the Book of Acts
for the Spreading and Building Up of the Church
as the Corporate Manifestation of Christ**

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8, 13-14; 2:16-18, 21; 5:20, 41-42; 6:4;
13:32-34; 16:6-7; 17:16; 19:21; 28:31

- I. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history as the acting God; they have become God in life, in nature, in expression, and in function (but not in the Godhead) for the spreading and building up of the church as the corporate manifestation of Christ—1:8, 14; 2:14a; 4:10-20, 31-32; 5:20, 38-39; 13:1-4; 26:16-19; 28:31:**
- A. In Peter's first proclamation of the gospel in the book of Acts, he quoted from the book of Joel, which reveals the intrinsic, divine history within the outward, human history—Acts 2:17-21; Joel 1:1-4; 2:28-32.
 - B. The divine history within the human history is Christ's "goings forth...from the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2) across the bridge of time into eternity future (Psa. 90:2) so that He might be dispensed into His chosen ones as the Desire of all the nations (Hag. 2:7) for His corporate manifestation and His full glorification.
 - C. Joel speaks concerning the outpouring of the processed, consummated, compound Spirit, who was poured out on the day of Pentecost; this Spirit is the consummated Triune God and the realization of Christ for the manifestation of Christ— Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:1-4, 16-21; 1 Tim. 3:15-16.
- II. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history by calling on the name of the Lord, suffering on behalf of the name of the Lord, and speaking in the name of the Lord, the name of Jesus:**
- A. Joel's prophecy and its fulfillment concerning God's New Testament jubilee have two aspects: on God's side, He poured out His Spirit in the ascension of the resurrected Christ; on our side, we call on the name of the ascended Lord, who has accomplished all, attained unto all, and obtained all—Acts 2:16-18, 21; Joel 2:28-29, 32a:
 - 1. Our divine history in the midst of human history is a history of calling on the name of the Lord to enjoy the riches of Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ as the fullness of Christ—Rom. 10:12-13; Eph. 3:8, 19; 1:22-23.
 - 2. By calling on the name of the Lord, we keep ourselves in God's golden, divine history—a history that begins with Enosh (Gen. 4:26), continues through the Old and New Testaments (Job 12:4; Gen. 12:8; 26:25; Deut. 4:7; Judg. 15:18; 1 Sam. 12:18; Psa. 116:4, 13, 17; 80:18; 88:9; 1 Kings 18:24; Isa. 12:4; Lam. 3:55, 57; Psa. 99:6; Isa. 55:6; Jonah 1:6; 2 Kings 5:11; Isa. 41:25; Acts 2:21; 7:59; 9:14, 21; 22:16; Rom. 10:12-13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:22), and concludes with the last prayer in the Bible (Rev. 22:20).

- B. As we are living in the divine history, we suffer on behalf of the Lord's name within the human history; it is a real honor to be dishonored on behalf of the Name, the very name of the man-dishonored but God-honored Jesus—Acts 4:18-20, 29-31; 5:41-42; 9:13-16; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Col. 1:24-25.
- C. We carry out the divine history within the human history by speaking “boldly in the name of Jesus”; this name is the expression of the sum total of what the Lord is in His person and work—Acts 9:27; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Thes. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:5.

III. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history by living, moving, and acting as one Body; they do everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body:

- A. After the Lord Jesus died, resurrected, and ascended, He continued to live, act, walk, and work on earth in thousands of people because He imparted Himself into them through His death and resurrection—John 12:24.
- B. The four Gospels give us a picture of the Head, and the book of Acts shows us the Body; the book of Acts is actually the acts of Christ by the Spirit in the church as His Body, His reproduction and duplication—1:14; 2:14a, 42; 9:4-5; 28:13-15.

IV. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history by rejecting themselves and living by another life—Christ as the divine life; this corporate living of Christ is the reality of the Body of Christ:

- A. The life that is indicated by “this life” in Acts 5:20 is the divine life preached, ministered, and lived by Peter that overcame the Jewish leaders' persecution, threatening, and imprisonment; Peter's life and work made the divine life so real and present in his situation that even the angel saw it and pointed it out.
- B. Paul lived Christ and served God by the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus in his spirit (the divine Spirit mingled with his human spirit as one spirit); he lived within the veil (in his spirit as the practical Holy of Holies) and outside the camp (the human organization of religion)—16:6-7; 17:16; 19:21; Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 1:9; Phil. 3:3; Heb. 6:19-20; 13:13.
- C. In order to live in the divine history within the human history and by the divine life in our human life, we need to be vessels open to the Lord, loving Him, receiving Him, being filled with Him, and letting Him be everything to us and do everything in us, through us, and for us—Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 9:21, 23; cf. 2 Kings 4:1-6.

V. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history by continuing steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word; this is to live in the apostolic ministry in coordination with Christ as our great High Priest in His heavenly ministry—6:4; Heb. 7:25; 8:1-2:

- A. By prayer we set our mind on the things above and become a reflection of Christ's ministry in the heavens; we depend on prayer to do what man cannot do, to understand what man cannot understand, and to speak what man cannot speak—Acts 9:11; 13:1-4; Col. 3:1-3; 4:2; Eph. 6:18; Dan. 6:10; 9:2-3; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Cor. 3:6.
- B. By the ministry of the word, we impart Christ into others as the heavenly life and power so that they may be sustained with the riches of Christ to live Christ as their heavenly life on earth—Rom. 15:16; cf. Isa. 50:4-5.

VI. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history seen in Psalm 68, which shows that Christ is the center of God's move on the earth

and the reality of God's activities through the church—vv. 1, 24:

- A. We need to enjoy the processed and consummated Triune God as the life-dispensing and outpoured Spirit day by day—vv. 11-13, 19; Acts 2:46-47; 5:42; 16:5; 20:31; 28:30-31.
- B. We need to dwell in Christ as the “shore” of the evangelists for the transportation and spreading in the preaching of the gospel; on the day of Pentecost at least one hundred twenty gospel “ships,” all of whom were Galileans, set out from the “shore” to spread the gospel—Psa. 68:27; Gen. 49:13; Acts 2:7; 13:31.

VII. The book of Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history by continuing to enjoy, live, and proclaim the resurrected Christ as the firstborn Son of God and as the holy things of David, the faithful things, which are all the aspects of what Christ is as mercies to us—13:32-34:

- A. Christ as the seed of David was begotten through His resurrection to be the firstborn Son of God and the life-giving Spirit as God's sure mercies shown to David—vv. 33-35; Isa. 55:3-4.
- B. In Acts 13:34 Paul interprets God's sure mercies in Isaiah 55:3 as “the holy things of David, the faithful things,” and in Acts 13:33 and 35 he indicates that these things are the resurrected Christ Himself as the firstborn Son of God and as the Holy One.
- C. This is also confirmed by Isaiah 55:4, which reveals that the sure mercies are Christ Himself as the Witness, Leader, and Commander to the peoples.
- D. The resurrected Christ as the firstborn Son of God and the life-giving Spirit is a great gift given by God to His chosen people, and this gift is entitled “the holy things of David, the faithful things”—Acts 13:33-34.
- E. The resurrected Christ is the mercies and blessings, the holy and faithful things, whom God gives to us as a great gift; this gift is the resurrected Christ Himself as the reality of the eternal covenant with all His unsearchable riches to be our all-inclusive grace—Isa. 42:6b; 55:3; 1 Cor. 1:9; Acts 13:43.

VIII. If we would be in the continuation of the book of Acts, we need to continue to live in the divine history by having an upper-room consecration—1:13-14:

- A. At the seashore Peter gave up his job to follow the Lord Jesus, but in the upper room he gave up much more—Matt. 4:18-20; Acts 1:13-14:
 - 1. He stood with the heavenly vision to give up the religion of his forefathers.
 - 2. He gave up his country, his relationship with his neighbors and friends, and his relatives, and he was willing to risk his life.
- B. The kind of consecration that we need today is an upper-room consecration, a consecration in which we pay the price to have our whole being “married” to the heavenly vision—26:19; 1:8; 20:24.
- C. If we pay the price for the heavenly vision, we will “burn the bridges” behind us and will have no way to go backward.
- D. Whether we have seen the heavenly vision or not depends on whether we are willing to pay the price to buy the anointing Spirit as the eyesalve—Rev. 3:18.
- E. To take the way of the Lord's recovery is not cheap; this way is expensive and requires a costly consecration.
- F. We are not here for a movement but for the Lord's recovery, and the recovery can be carried out only by the specific and extraordinary consecration in the upper room.
- G. The one hundred twenty in the upper room all became a burnt offering; they were burning for the Lord in spirit, and they burned others with the divine fire of the divine life—Luke 12:49-50; Acts 2:3-4; Rom. 12:11.

- H. When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, great crowds followed Him, but they did not afford Him anything for His move; His move was with those in the upper room, with those whose eyes had been opened and whose hearts had been touched— Acts 17:6b.
- I. It is a small number who will turn the world upside down and change the age; if we would be in the upper room, we need to pray in a specific way and say, “Lord, I am willing to be in the upper room for the recovery of Your testimony.”

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE VISION OF CONSECRATION

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:12-14; Rev. 3:18

In the foregoing chapters we have covered the vision of Christ, the vision of the church, the vision of the Body, the vision of the self, and the vision of the world. In this chapter we need to consider the vision of consecration. As we will see, this vision is of a particular kind of consecration.

BOUND BY THE FLESH, THE SELF, AND THE WORLD

We have pointed out that fallen people are bound by a cord composed of three strands: the flesh, the self, and the world. The flesh is the human body corrupted by the sinful nature of Satan. Sin is nothing less than the sinful nature of Satan injected into the human body, which had been created by God for His purpose. In Romans 6 and 7 sin is personified and likened to a living person who dwells in us, works in us, and reigns in us. As we have the flesh in the body, so we have the self in the soul. The self is the soul plus the satanic mind, the satanic thought.

The human body has become the flesh, and the human soul has become the self, but what has happened to the human spirit? There seems to be nothing wrong with the human spirit, for, in contrast to the body and the soul, there is nothing evil or sinful in it. No, there is nothing sinful in the human spirit, but nevertheless the human spirit has been deadened. The spirit has been deadened by the sin in the body and by the self in the soul. The more sinful we are, the more our spirit is deadened. Likewise, the more self-seeking we are, the more our spirit is deadened.

Human beings are bound not only by the flesh and the self but also by the world. Satan has systematized all the things on earth which are necessary for human existence. These things include food, marriage, clothing, housing, and transportation. The Lord provides everything necessary for our existence so that we may live to fulfill His purpose. However, Satan has come in to systematize these things into a system which in the Greek New Testament is the word *kosmos* and in English is *world*. Originally, all these things were on earth for human existence, and there was nothing wrong with them, but Satan came in to change the earthly things into worldly things. Satan transmuted the human body into the flesh and changed the human soul into the self. In the same principle, Satan has changed the earthly things— the things that were originally on earth for man’s existence—into worldly things. These things have become elements of Satan’s system, the world, in which all people are imprisoned. Man has been systematized by Satan and has no freedom to fulfill God’s purpose.

How evil and how subtle Satan is! Satan has corrupted the human body with sin, causing the body to become the flesh. Satan has polluted the human soul with the satanic mind, causing the soul to become the self. Satan has systematized all the earthly things that are necessary for human existence, organizing them into one system, the world.

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WORLD

The world may be likened to a large university. A university is a system with many colleges, schools, and departments. In a university there may be a school of medicine, a school of law, a school of business, and a school of liberal arts. Such schools are the systematizing elements of the university. All the students in the university are systematized according to their major, and they study in one of the

many schools.

The entire world today is a big “university”—the university of the world. In this university there are different “schools”: the school of food, the school of marriage, and the schools of clothing, housing, and transportation. Whereas most students in a university study in just one school, the worldly people, who have been systematized in the university of the world, may study in a number of different schools, taking many “units” at a time but never graduating. They are so busy and so occupied that they have no time for God. They will not say that they are too busy to eat, but they will tell you that they have no time to come to a meeting, to read the Bible, or to pray. They have time for anything in the university of the world, but they have no time for anything related to God.

In the great university of the world, there is also a school of religion. There are even a school of Christianity and a school of Judaism. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, the Jewish people were systematized by Satan in the school of Judaism.

TURNING FROM JUDAISM TO THE HEAVENLY VISION

The apostles and disciples in the early days were taught and trained by the Lord Jesus to realize something new, something absolutely different from Judaism. They came to know Christ, and they saw the vision of Christ. They knew that Christ had been crucified and resurrected, that He had ascended on high, that He had been enthroned and had been made the Lord and Christ, and that He would come back to the earth. They also had the vision of the church and realized that God would gather together His chosen ones and build them up as local churches. They had been in Judaism, but they were turned from Judaism to the heavenly vision.

THE CONSECRATION IN THE UPPER ROOM

Acts 1 speaks of the upper room in Jerusalem. In this upper room a group of about a hundred and twenty prayed for ten days in one accord. They not only prayed, but they also consecrated themselves to the Lord, offering themselves to Him in a very real and practical way.

Three and a half years earlier, the Lord Jesus came to Peter by the seashore, and Peter offered himself to Him. Peter left his job and began to follow the Lord (Matt. 4:18-20). We may say that Peter consecrated himself to the Lord. However, Peter’s experience in the upper room was something else. Here Peter had a new kind of consecration, not an ordinary consecration but something specific. At the seashore Peter gave up his job, indicated by his leaving his fishing nets, but in the upper room he gave up much more. We need to itemize the things Peter gave up in order to be in the upper room.

Standing with the Heavenly Vision to Give Up the Religion of His Forefathers

The first thing Peter gave up was Judaism. The heavenly vision was contradictory to the religion of his forefathers. Peter’s attitude was not to stand with his forefathers’ religion but to stand with the heavenly vision. In the first several chapters of Acts, we see that Peter and the other apostles were troubled and persecuted by Judaism, but they continued to take sides with the heavenly vision. The first item of their consecration in the upper room was to give up the traditional religion of their forefathers.

Giving Up His Country

In order to be in the upper room, Peter also gave up his country. Peter was from Galilee, but he left Galilee and came to the upper room in Jerusalem.

Giving Up His Relationships with His Neighbors and Friends

As a native of Galilee, Peter surely had relationships with his neighbors and friends in Galilee. For Peter to be in the upper room required that he give up these relationships. This is not an insignificant matter. Peter gave up these relationships at a real cost.

Giving Up His Relatives

Peter also gave up his relatives. I doubt whether Peter brought his parents with him into the upper room. There is no hint to this effect. Actually, Peter's parents might have remained in Judaism.

Risking His Life

Finally, Peter was in the upper room at the risk of his life. He was ready to give up his life. At that time Jerusalem was a threatening place to Peter and all the others in the upper room, yet they were willing to risk their lives to be there. In order to be in the upper room, they all gave up Judaism, their country, their neighbors and friends, and their relatives, and they were willing to risk their lives.

THE KIND OF CONSECRATION WE NEED TODAY

We need to see the vision of this upper-room consecration. You may talk much about consecration, but this may be a consecration at the seashore, not a consecration in the upper room. Yes, at the seashore you gave up something to follow the Lord Jesus, but you may not have yet come to the upper room. What kind of consecration do you have—a consecration at the seashore or a consecration in the upper room?

The time in the upper room in Acts 1 was a turning time. It was a time of the turning of an age, a time of the turning of a dispensation. The turn that took place at that time affected heaven and earth. Do you know what the issue of that consecration in the upper room was? That consecration issued in the church. The church came out of the consecration, the dedication, of the one hundred twenty in the upper room.

During those ten days in the upper room, everything was dedicated in a practical way and was dedicated at any cost—at the cost of their forefathers' religion, at the cost of their country, at the cost of their relationships with neighbors and friends, at the cost of their relatives and families, and at the cost of their lives. The only thing they cared for was the heavenly vision. They were "drunken" with this heavenly vision. They were "married" to this heavenly vision; their whole being was held by this heavenly vision; and they were beside themselves with this heavenly vision. This is the kind of consecration we need today.

PAYING THE PRICE FOR THE HEAVENLY VISION

Have you seen the heavenly vision about which we have been speaking? Have you seen the visions of Christ, the church, the Body, the self, and the world? I believe that you have seen something. Will you be able to stand before the Lord at the judgment seat and tell Him that you have not seen any of these visions? Surely you have seen something concerning Christ, the church, the Body, the self, and the world, and thus you are without excuse in this matter.

Some claim that they have not seen the vision. They say this because they are not willing to be in the upper room. In other words, they are not willing to pay the price for the heavenly vision. They know that there is a cost to admitting that they have seen something. They realize that all these visions are costly, but they are not willing to pay the price.

Regarding this matter of cost, or price, let us read the word of the Lord Jesus in Revelation 3:18: "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see." In this verse the Lord counsels us not to pray nor to ask nor to receive nor to take by faith; He counsels us to *buy*. Here we are concerned only with the third of the three things which the Lord counsels us to buy—eyesalve to anoint our eyes that we may see. Perhaps, in a sense, you have not seen the heavenly vision, but as soon as you are willing to pay the price, to buy the eyesalve, you will see. The crucial matter is the willingness to pay the price. Once you come into the upper room, everything is clear. But if you are not willing to come into the upper room, no matter how many messages you hear, you still will not be able to see.

You need to buy the eyesalve. Do not excuse yourself by saying that you have not seen the vision. Do not say that you are not clear. You may be clear, but you may not be willing to pay the price. If you are not willing to pay the price, you will not dare to say that you have seen the vision. Whether

or not you have seen the vision depends on this one matter—whether you are willing to pay the price. Pay the price to buy the eyesalve, and you will see the vision.

I encourage you to pray, saying, “Lord Jesus, by Your mercy I will buy the eyesalve. By Your mercy I am willing to pay the price to be in the upper room.” If you say this to the Lord, the heavens will be opened, the scales will fall from your eyes, and you will see the heavenly vision.

BURNING THE BRIDGES BEHIND US

If you pay the price for the heavenly vision, you will “burn the bridges” behind you and will have no way to go backward. Christianity will be behind you, and you will have no way to return to it. Even if you wanted to go back, the people would not accept you.

However, suppose that one day an offer is presented to you, an opportunity to have a better position or a better future. The opportunity may be for you, or it may be for your wife or children. Would you consider this offer? For you to consider such an offer would mean that you have not burned all the bridges. It would mean that you have left yourself a way to go back. By the Lord’s mercy I can testify that I burned all my bridges more than thirty years ago. We should not be ashamed of burning our bridges—we should praise the Lord for it.

THE COST OF TAKING THE WAY OF THE LORD’S RECOVERY

To take the way of the Lord’s recovery is not cheap. This way is expensive; it requires a costly consecration. To take this way will be at the cost of the religion of your fathers and of your country, at the cost of your relationships with your neighbors and of your relatives, and at the cost of your own life. Are you ready for such a consecration? Are you ready to come into the upper room to be clear concerning the heavenly vision?

We are here not for a movement but for the Lord’s recovery. How can the recovery be realized? The recovery can be realized, carried out, only by the experience of the consecration in the upper room. This is not an ordinary consecration; it is a special consecration, a specific consecration, an extraordinary consecration. This consecration is a turning point.

What happened to those one hundred and twenty who were in the upper room in Acts 1? They all became a burnt offering. They were burning, and they burned others. We also need to be burned, and then we will burn others.

What are we expecting today? Do we expect a revival or a movement? Do we expect a new kind of Christian activity? What are we doing here? Have we come together to hear something that we cannot hear elsewhere? We may be here for this reason, but this is not enough. We must be here for the Lord’s recovery, which is the issue of an upper-room consecration.

IN THE CROWD OR IN THE UPPER ROOM?

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, great crowds followed Him. Multitudes were saved and healed, and multitudes received the favor of God. Eventually, however, there were only about one hundred and twenty in the upper room. The crowds, the multitudes, did not afford the Lord Jesus anything for His move. The Lord’s move was with those in the upper room, with those whose eyes had been opened and whose hearts had been touched. This small number came into the upper room to be burned, and then they turned the whole world upside down. The principle is the same today. It is a small number who will turn the world upside down and change the age.

Do you intend to be in the crowd or in the upper room? Will you remain one of the multitude, or by the Lord’s mercy will you come into the upper room? I do not know who you are. Only the Lord knows who will be in the upper room.

I would urge you to pray to receive the Lord’s mercy so that you might be in the upper room. If you are not willing to come here, then what you have read in these chapters will have nothing to do with you. Then you will be like those in the crowds, those the Lord did not count on. If you would be in the upper room, you need to pray in a specific way and say, “Lord, I am willing to be in the upper room for the recovery of Your testimony.” (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1965, vol. 3, “The*

Heavenly Vision,” pp. 207-214)

ONE ACCORD
AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Lord's Day—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight
The Divine Trinity and the Kingdom of God

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:3; 2:32-36; 8:12; 14:22; 16:6-7; 20:28; 28:23, 31

- I. Even as the Divine Trinity is the framework of the entire New Testament, so the Divine Trinity is the structure of the book of Acts; chapter after chapter of Acts unveils the operation of the Divine Trinity for the carrying out of God's New Testament economy—e.g., 1:1-2, 4-5, 8, 11, 21; 2:4, 17-18, 21-24, 27, 31-33, 36, 38; 13:2, 4, 7, 9-10, 12, 16, 23, 30, 33-39, 49-50, 52; 28:15, 23, 25, 31:**
- A. We must be governed by the revelation that God is uniquely one—Psa. 86:10; Isa. 45:5; 1 Cor. 8:4:
1. The unique God is triune, three-one—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit— Matt. 28:19.
 2. *The Triune God* refers mainly to God Himself; *the Divine Trinity* refers mainly to God's being triune, which is the primary attribute of the Godhead—v. 19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5.
- B. The Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—was fully involved with the Son's ascension and the pouring out of the Spirit—Acts 2:32-36:
1. The Son ascended, the Father exalted Him, and the Spirit was poured out— Luke 24:51; Phil. 2:9; Acts 1:9-11; 2:32-36.
 2. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit were all wrapped up with the outpouring of the Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God—v. 33; John 7:37-39; Phil. 1:19.
- C. In Acts 16:6-7 *the Holy Spirit* and *the Spirit of Jesus* are used interchangeably, revealing that the Spirit of Jesus is the Holy Spirit:
1. *The Holy Spirit* is a general title of the Spirit of God in the New Testament— Acts 9:17, 31.
 2. *The Spirit of Jesus* is a particular expression concerning the Spirit of God and refers to the Spirit of the incarnated Savior who, as Jesus in His humanity, passed through human living and death on the cross—16:7:
 - a. This indicates that in the Spirit of Jesus there is not only the divine element of God but also the human element of Jesus and the elements of His human living and His suffering of death as well—Phil. 2:7-8.
 - b. In his ministry the apostle Paul needed such an all-inclusive Spirit.
 3. As a vessel containing the Triune God, Paul was fully constituted of the Holy Spirit, who was involved with the Lord's incarnation and birth, and of the Spirit of Jesus, who was involved with the Lord's humanity, human living, all-inclusive death, life-imparting resurrection, and ascension—Eph. 3:14-17; Luke 1:35; Acts 2:32-36; Phil. 1:19.
 4. The kind of work that we do for the Lord depends on the kind of Spirit by whom we are guided, directed, instructed, and constituted; when the all-inclusive Spirit becomes our constitution, our work will be the expression of this Spirit—Acts 16:6-7; Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19.

- D. God obtained the church “through His own blood”—Acts 20:28:
 - 1. God purchased the church by paying the price of “His own blood.”
 - 2. Through incarnation our God, the Creator, the eternal One, became mingled with man—John 1:1, 14:
 - a. As a result, He was no longer only God—He became a God-man, who had blood and was able to die for us—1 John 1:7.
 - b. When the Lord Jesus, the God-man, died on the cross, He died not only as man but also as God.
 - 3. The blood that He shed was not only the blood of the man Jesus but also the blood of the God-man.
 - 4. Therefore, His blood, through which God obtained the church, is “His own blood”—Acts 20:28.

II. The kingdom of God is the main subject of the apostles’ preaching in Acts—1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31:

- A. The fact that the resurrected Christ, in His appearing to the apostles through a period of forty days, spoke to them “the things concerning the kingdom of God” indicates that the kingdom would be the main subject of the apostles’ preaching in their coming commission after Pentecost—1:3.
- B. According to the New Testament, the kingdom of God is not a visible, material realm; actually, the kingdom of God is a person, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself— Luke 17:20-21.
- C. The churches and the kingdom of God go together; the churches produced by the propagation of the resurrected Christ are the kingdom of God on earth today— Acts 14:22; 20:25:
 - 1. The resurrected Christ, who is propagating Himself in His ascension, by the Spirit, and through the disciples, is the reality of the kingdom of God; the kingdom of God is His expansion—1:8; 8:12:
 - a. The churches are the expansion of Christ, who came to sow Himself as the seed of the kingdom of God; this is revealed in the Gospels—Mark 4:3, 26.
 - b. In the Gospels Christ was the seed of the kingdom; in the book of Acts we have the propagation of this seed to produce the churches as the kingdom of God—8:1, 12; 13:1-4.
 - 2. We in the churches are the propagation of Christ and the expansion of Christ, and we are enlarging the kingdom of God—Rev. 1:9, 11.
- D. The kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life into His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life—2 Pet. 1:3-11:
 - 1. To enter into this kingdom, people need to repent of their sins and believe in the gospel so that their sins may be forgiven and so that they may be regenerated by God to have the divine life, which matches the divine nature of this kingdom—Mark 1:15; John 3:3, 5.
 - 2. All the believers in Christ can share the kingdom in the church age for their enjoyment of God in His righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit— Rom. 14:17.
 - 3. The kingdom of God will become the kingdom of Christ and of God for the overcoming believers to inherit and enjoy in the coming kingdom age so that they may reign with Christ for a thousand years—1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 20:4, 6.
 - 4. As the eternal kingdom, the kingdom of God will be an eternal blessing of God’s eternal life for all of God’s redeemed to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for

eternity—21:1-4; 22:1-5, 14, 17.

- E. In Acts 14:22 Paul entreated the believers who were continuing in the faith to realize that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God, because the whole world opposes our entering in; to enter into the kingdom of God is to enter into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom.
- F. In Acts 19 we see that Satan is fighting against God's spreading of His kingdom on earth; the prevailing ministry for the propagation of Christ is a fighting, a battle, for God's kingdom—vv. 23-41.
- G. Paul's proclaiming the kingdom of God in 28:31 was the propagation of the resurrected Christ:
 - 1. This is proved by the words *teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ*, which things go together with the kingdom of God—vv. 31, 23.
 - 2. To teach concerning Christ is to spread the kingdom of God; therefore, the kingdom of God is actually the propagation of the resurrected Christ—a process that continues to be carried out through the believers today—v. 31.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

Entering into the Kingdom of God through Many Tribulations

A Kingdom of the Divine Life

In Acts 14:22 we see that Paul and Barnabas told the disciples that “through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.” Many think that the kingdom of God is merely a sphere where God may rule over people as the King. According to this understanding, the kingdom of God is simply a realm where God rules over His people. I do not say that this understanding is wrong, but it is superficial and natural.

The kingdom of God was a main subject of the apostles' preaching in Acts (8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). It is not a material kingdom visible to human sight but a kingdom of the divine life. It is the spreading of Christ as life to His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life.

Christ as the Seed of Life Sown into the Believers

In the *Life-study of Mark* we have pointed out that the kingdom of God is the Savior Himself (Luke 17:21) as the seed of life sown into His believers, God's chosen people (Mark 4:3, 26), and developing into a realm in 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 of God's redeemed to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity (21:1-4; 22:1-5, 14).

In Acts 14:22 Paul exhorted the believers who were continuing in the faith to realize that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. Do you think that Paul regarded the kingdom of God as only a realm where God's people are under His ruling and that to enter into this realm we must pass through tribulation? Paul may have had the thought that the kingdom of God is a realm in which God rules over His people, but this certainly was not his main thought concerning the kingdom of God. We need to remember that Paul was exhorting disciples who were somewhat advanced. They were continuing not only in the grace of God but also in the faith. The charge to continue in the faith is both deeper and higher than that to continue in the grace. Therefore, those whom Paul was exhorting in 14:22 were somewhat learned in divine things. In telling them that they must enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation, Paul certainly regarded the kingdom as

something more than an objective realm in which God rules as the King.

What, then, was Paul's main thought concerning the kingdom of God? If we would know this, we need to realize that according to the New Testament, the kingdom of God is not a visible, material realm. Actually, the kingdom of God is a person, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. When He was questioned by the Pharisees about the kingdom, "He answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, Behold, here it is! or, There! For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:20-21). As the context proves, the kingdom of God is the Savior Himself, who was in the midst of the Pharisees. Wherever the Savior is, there is the kingdom of God. This was the reason He could say that the kingdom was in the midst of the Pharisees. As the Lord's word in Luke 17:20 indicates, this kingdom does not come with observation; that is, it is spiritual, not material and visible.

In the four Gospels the Lord Jesus sowed Himself as the seed of the kingdom into His disciples. The development of this kingdom seed begins in Acts and continues in all the Epistles. This development reaches its consummation—the harvest—in the book of Revelation. According to the Lord's word and Paul's understanding, the kingdom of God is not a material realm. Rather, the kingdom is spiritual, divine, and even personal. The kingdom is Christ as the seed sown into the hearts of His chosen people. Our hearts are the soil into which the kingdom seed is sown and in which this seed develops. As we have pointed out, the seed of the kingdom is sown in the Gospels, it develops in Acts and the Epistles, and it consummates with the harvest in Revelation. This is the proper definition of the kingdom of God.

Entering into the Full Enjoyment of the Resurrected Christ as the Kingdom of God

Now that we have seen that the kingdom of God is Christ as the seed that is sown into us, develops, and consummates in a harvest, we need to ask what it means to enter into the kingdom. To enter into the kingdom of God is to enter into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom. However, we may not understand what it means to enjoy Christ as the kingdom. The whole world opposes the entering of God's people into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom. Judaism, for example, has been usurped and utilized by Satan to frustrate the believers from entering this enjoyment. Throughout the centuries other forms of religion—Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam—have also been used by God's enemy to keep God's people from entering into the full enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ as the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:3 tells us that through a period of forty days the resurrected Christ appeared to the apostles and spoke to them "the things concerning the kingdom of God." Peter and all the one hundred and twenty had been brought to the Lord, and they had received the essential Spirit for their life, living, and existence. They were truly followers of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, in chapter 1 of Acts they had not yet entered into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom of God, as God's ruling realm. It was still necessary for them to enter into the realm of the full enjoyment of the resurrected Christ as God's kingdom. On the day of Pentecost Peter and all the others surely entered into this realm—the realm of the full enjoyment of the resurrected and ascended Christ as the sphere in which God rules over His people. As Peter was preaching the gospel in Acts 2, we see with him and the other apostles a picture of the kingdom of God. In Acts 2 the one hundred and twenty were in the full enjoyment of the resurrected and ascended Christ as God's ruling realm. Such a realm is the kingdom of God.

Very soon after the believers entered into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom of God, the Jewish religion came in to frustrate this enjoyment. If in chapters 3, 4, and 5, Peter, John, and the other believers had shown any weakness, they would have lost the full enjoyment of the resurrected Christ, and as a result, they would have missed the kingdom of God.

In the light of what we have seen concerning the kingdom of God, let us now come back to Acts 14 and ask if the disciples whom Paul was exhorting had entered into the realm of the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom of God. No, those believers had not yet entered into that enjoyment; they

were still on the way. Therefore, Paul charged them to enter into the realm of the full enjoyment of the resurrected and ascended Christ as the kingdom of God. Here he seemed to be saying, “I have preached to you the resurrected Christ as the holy and faithful things, as the grace of God, as eternal life, and even as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. The full enjoyment of grace, eternal life, and the Spirit is a realm, and this realm is God’s kingdom. You have not yet entered into this realm—you are on the way. Therefore, I exhort you through many tribulations to enter into the kingdom of God. You should expect opposition and be prepared for it. You will face much tribulation. But through all these tribulations you must endeavor to enter into the realm of the full enjoyment of the resurrected and ascended Christ as the kingdom of God. When you have the enjoyment of such a Christ, you will be under the divine rule. Then you will become the kingdom of God, which is the proper church life.” (*Life-study of Acts*, pp. 335-339)