

## THE UNIQUE WORK IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

(Thursday—First Morning Session)

### Message One

#### **Knowing the Work of God—the Unique Work in the Lord's Recovery**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:18; Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 3:8; Eph. 3:16-21; 4:12, 16

#### **I. We need to know the work of God—the unique work in the Lord's recovery—Eph. 4:12:**

- A. In the universe and in every age, God's work is absolutely the same in principle; the work He does in every age is for the same goal—to work Himself into man for the eternal, corporate expression of Himself—Gal. 4:19; Rev. 21:10-11.
- B. Throughout the ages there is only one work that God desires to do, and this unique work is to work Himself into man, making man a God-man, one who is God yet man—John 1:12-13; 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:4.
- C. The nature of God's work is the same in every age; the design, measure, and plan of God's work have never changed—He desires to work Himself into us—Eph. 3:16-21.

#### **II. God's unique work in the universe and throughout all the ages and generations is to work Himself in Christ into His chosen people, making Himself one with them and making them one with Him—Gal. 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:17a:**

- A. God's purpose is to work Himself into us, making Himself our inward elements:
  - 1. This purpose is the center of the universe, and apart from this purpose the Christian life is meaningless—Rev. 4:11.
  - 2. The proper priority is not for us to work for God but for God to work Himself into us—Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13.
- B. The governing vision of the Bible is the Triune God working Himself into His chosen and redeemed people to be their life and life supply in order to saturate their entire being with the Divine Trinity—Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; Rev. 1:4-5; 22:1-2a:
  - 1. The kernel of the divine revelation is that God created us and redeemed us for the purpose of working Himself into us to be our life, our life supply, and our everything—Gen. 1:26; 2:7; Rom. 8:10b, 6, 11.
  - 2. The entire Bible was written according to the principle of the Triune God wrought into His redeemed people as their enjoyment, their drink, and their fountain of life and light—Psa. 36:8-9:
    - a. We need to be constituted with this principle, and it must become a vision to us—Prov. 29:18a.
    - b. This must be an intrinsic principle within us, governing whatever we speak, teach, and preach—Acts 26:19.

**III. The intrinsic element of our work is that we minister the building and builded God into others for the building up of the Body of Christ—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 3:17a; 4:4, 12, 16:**

- A. The goal of our work should be to minister the building and builded God into others—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:22; 3:17a.
- B. We need to pray that the Lord will teach us to work in the way of ministering the processed and consummated Triune God into others—2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 3:9-10, 12.
- C. As we endeavor to carry out the God-ordained way in the four steps of begetting, nourishing, perfecting, and building, our work must be based upon the processed and consummated Triune God, who is building Himself into His redeemed people and building them into Him—Acts 8:4; Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 14:1, 3-4, 12, 31.
- D. In every aspect of our work—preaching the gospel, feeding the believers, establishing churches, and perfecting the saints—the intrinsic element must be that we minister the building and builded God into others—Matt. 16:18; 24:45; Eph. 3:17a; 4:12:
  - 1. If we realize that God desires to work Himself into His chosen people, then the goal of our work will be to minister the building and builded God into others so that the Triune God may build Himself into their being—3:17a:
    - a. The crucial matter in our work in the Lord's recovery is to minister the building and builded God—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 3:17a.
    - b. The God whom we worship and minister to others is the processed and consummated Triune God embodied in Christ and realized as the Spirit—Col. 2:9; John 7:39; Gal. 3:14.
    - c. God is building Himself into His redeemed people in order to produce a house—the church, the Body of Christ, the enlargement of Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God realized as the Spirit—John 14:2, 10, 16-17, 20, 23.
    - d. Such a revelation should become a principle that governs our understanding of God and of God's building—Prov. 29:18a; Acts 26:19.
  - 2. We should reconsider the work that we are doing for the Lord and ask how much of Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God has been wrought into those whom we have brought to the Lord—Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:28.
  - 3. We need to practice one thing—to minister the processed and consummated Triune God into others so that He may build Himself into their inner man; we need to pray that the Lord will teach us to work in this way—2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 3:9-10, 12.
  - 4. When we build the church with the processed and consummated Triune God, it is not actually we who are building; rather, God is building through us, using us as a means to dispense and transmit Himself into others—Acts 9:15; Eph. 3:8-9.

**IV. The unique work in the Lord's recovery is the ministry of the Spirit—2 Cor. 3:8:**

- A. The ministers of the new covenant are of the Spirit; however, their work is not merely of the Spirit—it *is* the ministry of the Spirit—vv. 6, 8; 4:1.
  - B. We should not say that the work we are doing is merely a spiritual work; rather, the unique work in the Lord's recovery is the Spirit—3:8:
    - 1. The words spoken by the Lord Jesus were spirit (John 6:63); according to this principle, we can also say that the work that the Lord has given us is spirit.
    - 2. The work, the ministry, of the new covenant is a ministry of the Spirit, not merely a spiritual ministry—2 Cor. 3:8.
    - 3. When we become those who are filled with the Spirit, the words that we speak will be spirit, and the work that we do will also be spirit—Acts 2:4; Eph. 5:18.
- V. In the Lord's recovery there is only one work—the work of the one Body—4:12:**
- A. The unique work in the Lord's recovery is the work of His economy, the work of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10:
    - 1. We all must see the Body and do the work of the Body—Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16; 4:4, 15-16.
    - 2. The vision of the Body must become our governing vision, and we must do the work of the Lord's recovery under this vision—Prov. 29:18a.
    - 3. If we see the oneness of the Body, we also see the oneness of the work, and we will be delivered out of individualistic work into the work of the Body—Eph. 4:4, 12; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; 15:58; 16:10.
  - B. All the co-workers should do the same one work universally for the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 24-27; Eph. 4:12, 16:
    - 1. What we are doing today is not our personal work but the economy of God throughout the generations, that is, the building up of the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 3:9; 4:12.
    - 2. Whatever we do in our locality or universally for other countries should be done with the realization that we are building up the Body of Christ—v. 16.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE OUTWARD MANIFESTATION  
AND THE INWARD PRINCIPLE OF GOD'S WORK**

In this universe and in every age God works according to His intention. God's work seems to be different outwardly in every age; actually, it is absolutely the same in principle inwardly. The Old Testament age and the New Testament age are absolutely different, and God's work in the two ages is different. However, intrinsically God is the same God in both ages. This may be likened to the fact that the clothes I wore yesterday and the clothes I am wearing today are different, yet I, who wear the clothes, am the same. In every age God is the same God, and the work He does in every age is for the same goal, although the way His works are manifested outwardly is different. Hence, as those who pursue God walk on His way, they should not pay too much attention to the outward manifestation of His work; rather, they should focus on knowing God's way and God Himself inwardly. It is difficult to say what God's way of working in every age is, and it is even more difficult to say what the outward manifestation of His

work in man and through man is. These matters are entirely controlled by God's hand and cannot be determined by man.

For example, in the four hundred years that have passed since the Reformation carried out by Martin Luther, God has passed through many people. Surprisingly, however, those whom God has passed through and worked on have had different outward manifestations. There was one kind of manifestation with George Müller, another kind with D. L. Moody, and yet another kind with Charles Spurgeon. Not only have the outward manifestations of God's work in every person been different, but the outward manifestations of His work in every age also have been different. Therefore, we should not insist that we must do a certain thing in order to touch God's desire. For example, in China the Lord used Brother John Sung primarily for the gospel. God's work in him was manifested in a particular way with a particular appearance. Some felt that his work was fruitful and therefore sought to imitate, to copy, his way. In the end, however, that way did not work for them. We all have a certain appearance, yet none of us can guarantee what the children we beget will look like, for their appearance is not under our control. The children we give birth to are not bronze statues, stone sculptures, or wax figures. Only man-made objects such as bronze statues, stone sculptures, and wax figures can be alike. The children we give birth to have life and are living.

There are two ways of looking at God's work throughout the ages. Apparently, the outward manifestation, the outward form, of God's work is completely different in every age. Intrinsicly, however, the principle, way, content, and purpose of God's work are absolutely one and the same. God worked in Christ, in the apostles, and in the spiritual saints throughout the ages, and He is working in us also. The goal and direction of God's work are absolutely the same. This is similar to the fact that although we may wear Chinese-style clothing in China, kimonos in Japan, and Western-style clothing in Europe, we, the persons, are unchanged regardless of what we wear outwardly. We are who we are whether we are in Taipei, in Japan, or in Europe. Likewise, what God did in Job, David, John, Martin Luther, and George Müller was outwardly different but inwardly the same. Throughout the ages God has never changed His work.

Whether in the Old Testament age or the New Testament age, in China or abroad, at present or in the future, the outward manifestation of God's work may be diverse, but there is only one content within. Because we have received such a revelation from the Bible, we have no desire to imitate others in their outward forms, nor do we want the churches to imitate one another in outward form. God's work is manifested in the church in Taipei in one way, in the church in Taichung in another way, and in the church in Kaohsiung in yet another way. This is referring to the outward appearance. However, the work that God is doing is intrinsicly one; God's work in Kaohsiung is also His work in Taipei, and God's work in Taiwan is also His work in Southeast Asia.

#### **GOD'S UNIQUE WORK THROUGHOUT THE AGES BEING TO WORK HIMSELF INTO MAN**

It is a great blessing for college students to be saved while they are still young. Furthermore, the situation of the churches today is much richer than it was thirty years ago. Thirty years ago, even if we had used all our money to buy spiritual publications, it would still have been impossible to find in them the light that we have today. Now that we have passed on the light of these truths to you, you must clearly see that there is only one work God desires to do throughout the ages. The unique work that God has been doing throughout the ages is to work Himself into man. God desires to make man a God-man, one who is God yet man. A God-man is one who has God within him, one who has the element of God. This may be likened to a cup of water becoming a cup of tea-water after the addition of the element of tea. We were

originally only human, but today God has been added into us. God has not only been added into us, but He is also mingled with us. This mingling reaches the point where we become God-men, but we do not share the Godhead.

God's work throughout the ages has been only to work Himself into man. This is the work He did in Job, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Old Testament prophets. Throughout the ages God did not do another work in these persons. If we read the book of Daniel without seeing Daniel's character, it will be difficult for us to understand the content of the book. If we do not know the characters of Isaiah and Jeremiah, it will be difficult to understand the contents of the books they wrote. Every book written by the prophets in the Old Testament can be compared to a famous person's biography. If we cannot see the prophet's character, we will not be able to sense the flavor of God produced by the work that God did in that prophet or understand the portion of the Scriptures that he wrote. This is the secret. Therefore, not only the New Testament reveals that we are in Christ, but even the Old Testament reveals the same principle. The one thing that God has been doing throughout the ages is to work Himself into man. This is God's goal.

#### **SPIRITUAL THINGS NOT TO BE IMITATED OUTWARDLY**

When God works Himself into us, what we manifest, what we express, is different from individual to individual. When God worked Himself into George Müller, what was manifested through him was the establishing of orphanages. When God worked Himself into Charles Spurgeon, what was manifested through him was the powerful preaching of the gospel. God's work in each person is manifested in a different way. The same God is working, but He is manifested in different ways through different people. Thus, we cannot imitate spiritual things but can only follow the inner principle. All imitations of outward forms are wrong.

Our study of biographies and histories is not for seeking out the outward manifestations of historical figures in order to reproduce them; rather, it is for seeking out the way God took in them and the work He did in them. When we say that God's work in recent ages has been to build His church, our understanding may not be precise enough. Many Christians probably think that in recent ages the way God has been taking is the way of the gospel, that He is for the spreading of the gospel. They may become very zealous concerning the gospel and go forth to the whole inhabited earth. We dare not say that this is wrong, but this is at most the outward appearance. The way in which a person will be used by God is not determined by man.

When God came to Job in the Old Testament, Job was touched by God, and in him there was a manifestation, an operation, which produced a result. The results produced by God's working in different people are not the same. We have no way of telling the young brothers and sisters what God has set out to do in this age. If we told them, it would only show that we do not know the principle of God's work. No one knows how God will manifest His work in all the young people in five years. However, according to the Bible and the experiences of the saints who have gone before us, we know that there is one thing God has been doing throughout the ages—working Himself into us. What we do not know is what God will manifest through us after He works Himself into us.

#### **GOD DESIRING TO WORK HIMSELF INTO MAN**

In the past two thousand years those who have paid attention only to how God works have been destined to fail and err. The New Testament clearly shows that God desires to work Himself into us, yet this matter is beyond our natural thought. We think only of being zealous, working for God, being spiritual, receiving power, and so forth. This is especially true of those in Christianity. As soon as a person is saved, he has all these natural thoughts.

The matter of God working Himself into us is beyond what we could even dream of. Within us we have neither the light nor the revelation. Even if this matter were placed right before our eyes, we would not be able to have any response within. We may be like rocks, which cannot have seeds planted in them or have ink written on them. We do not have any concept at all concerning God's unique work.

Even the brothers and sisters who have been saved for many years and have heard numerous messages in the church may still desire to improve themselves before God every time they think of Him. We need the Holy Spirit within to open our eyes to see that improvement is not what God desires from us. Even if we were to become a million times better today, God would not want this. What God desires is to work Himself into us. This is what God has been doing in every age.

The nature of God's work is the same in every age; the design, measure, and plan of God's work has not changed at all—He desires to work Himself into us. The outward form, the outward manifestation, of this work is different in every person. If we would all cooperate with God, only God knows what will happen on this earth in the next five years. (*The Bridge and Channel of God*, pp. 7-11)

#### **OUR NEED FOR GOD TO WORK HIMSELF IN CHRIST INTO US AS OUR LIFE, NATURE, AND CONSTITUTION**

Just as the photograph of a person does not have the life and nature of that person, so David, a photograph of God's heart, did not have the life and nature of God. Even though he was a man whose heart was according to God, he did not have anything related to God organically. What David needed is what we need today. We need God to build Himself in Christ into our humanity. This means that we need God to work Himself in Christ into us as our life, our nature, and our constitution. As a result, we are not simply a man according to God's heart—we are God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. We today are not outwardly as high as David was, but we can declare that we have God's life, nature, and constitution.

In order to accomplish this, God in Christ became a man and went through some processes that this man could be designated something divine. In resurrection He was designated the firstborn Son of God. In and through resurrection Christ, the firstborn Son of God, became the life-giving Spirit, who now enters into us to impart, to dispense, Himself as life into our being to be our inner constitution, to make us a God-man just like Him. He was God becoming man, and we are man becoming God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

#### **GOD'S DESIRE TO BUILD HIMSELF IN CHRIST INTO US IN ORDER TO HAVE A MUTUAL ABODE**

Many Christians are still trying merely to have a behaving, a living, and a being that are according to God's heart, but they do not have the concept that God desires to build Himself in Christ into our being. What He is building into us will be His abode, which will be our abode also. Hence, it becomes a mutual abode. The New Jerusalem is this mutual abode. On the one hand, the New Jerusalem is the dwelling place of God; on the other hand, it is also our eternal dwelling place (Rev. 21:3, 22). For eternity the New Jerusalem will be the fulfillment of the Lord's brief word in John 15:4: "Abide in Me and I in you."

Ephesians 3:17 tells us that Christ is now within us doing the work of building Himself into us to produce this mutual abode. We often say that Christ is living in us and working in us. Now we need to ask this question: What is Christ wanting to accomplish by His working in us? The answer is that Christ is working in us to build up God's habitation by building Himself into us.

David wanted to build God a house of cedar, but God wanted to build Himself in Christ

into David. What God would build into David would be both God's house and David's house. This mutual abode is also unveiled in John 14:23: "If anyone loves Me, . . . My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." This abode will be not only for the Triune God but also for us. What God builds up in us is both God's habitation and our habitation.

We need to realize that God will have a habitation not by our doing or working but by His building. Christ builds the church (Matt. 16:18) by coming into our spirit and spreading Himself from our spirit into our mind, emotion, and will to occupy our entire soul. This church will become His habitation and our habitation. This is what we need, and our burden is to emphasize this one thing.

#### **THE TRIUNE GOD BECOMING OUR INTRINSIC CONSTITUTION**

There is no need for us to build anything for God. Rather, God needs to build Himself in Christ into us as our life, nature, and essence. Eventually, the Triune God will become our intrinsic constitution. We will be constituted with the Triune God. That will be the seed of David and the Son of God—something divine and human satisfying God's need and our need for a mutual abode. The New Jerusalem is the consummation of this mutual abode, and we will all be there. (*Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel*, pp. 168-169)

#### **MINISTERING THE BUILDING GOD AND THE BUILDED GOD**

Our work in the recovery today is to minister God to people. Yes, we need to save sinners and to feed the saints and perfect them. The crucial matter, however, is that we minister God to others. The God whom we minister is not just the building God—He is also the builded God. If we fail to minister God in this way, our work will be wood, grass, and stubble (1 Cor. 3:12).

I would ask you to reconsider the work you are doing for the Lord. Perhaps you have opened up a region or have brought many people to God. But I ask you this question: How much of Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God has been wrought into those whom you have brought to God? If we are sincere and genuine, we will humble ourselves and confess that not very much of the Triune God has been wrought into the ones we have brought to God. Therefore, we need to practice one thing—to minister the processed Triune God into others so that He may build Himself into their inner man. In every aspect of our work—preaching the gospel, feeding the believers, perfecting the saints—the intrinsic element must be that we minister the building and builded God to others. I would urge you to pray that the Lord would teach you to work in this way.

#### **THE PROCESSED TRIUNE GOD BUILDING HIMSELF INTO HIS REDEEMED PEOPLE**

The processed Triune God is embodied in Christ and realized as the consummated Spirit. This is the God whom we worship, preach, and minister to others. Today He is building Himself into His redeemed people in order to produce a house with Himself as the element and also with something from their redeemed and uplifted humanity. This house is the church, the Body of Christ. This house is the enlargement, the expansion, of Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God realized as the Spirit. As we carry out the God-ordained way in the four steps of begetting, nourishing, perfecting, and building, our work must be based upon the processed Triune God, who is building Himself into His chosen people. (*Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel*, pp. 200-201)