

THE VISION, PRACTICE, AND BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

(Thursday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

God's Purpose for the Church

(2)

To Subdue God's Enemy

by Displaying His Multifarious Wisdom through the Church

Scripture Reading: Eph. 3:10; 1 Cor. 1:30; Ezek. 1:26-28

I. We have been saved by grace through faith to be God's masterpiece, through which God's multifarious wisdom is made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies—Eph. 2:10; 3:10:

- A. The Greek word for *masterpiece* is *poiema*, which means “something that has been made,” “a handiwork,” or “something that has been written or composed as a poem.”
- B. Not only a poetic writing may be considered a poem, but also any work of art that expresses the maker's wisdom and design; we, the church, the masterpiece of God's work, are a poem expressing God's infinite wisdom and divine design.
- C. We, the church, the masterpiece of God's work, are an absolutely new item in the universe, a new invention of God (2:15); we were created by God in Christ through regeneration to be His new creation (2 Cor. 5:17):
 - 1. God's masterpiece is absolutely new because it is the mingling of God and man; His masterpiece, His greatest workmanship, is the working of Himself into man and the constituting of man into oneness with Him to produce the church.
 - 2. The church is God's poem that speaks forth His wisdom; according to Ephesians 3:10, God's multifarious wisdom will be made known through the church.
 - 3. Hymns express the wisdom of the hymn writers; in the ages to come, in the millennium and in eternity, there will be a unique hymn, the church, which will express the wisdom and design of God.
 - 4. When we see the New Jerusalem, we may extol God for the beauty, wisdom, and design manifested in this marvelous production; the New Jerusalem will be God's poem, His masterpiece.

II. “Of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption”—1 Cor. 1:30:

- A. Christ was made wisdom to us from God as three vital things in God's salvation: righteousness (for our past), by which we have been justified by God that we might be reborn in our spirit to receive the divine life (Rom. 5:18); sanctification (for our present), by which we are being sanctified in our soul, that is, transformed in our mind, emotion, and will, with the divine life (6:19, 22); and

redemption (for our future), that is, the redemption of our body (8:23), by which we will be transfigured in our body with His divine life to have His glorious likeness (Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

- B. Righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are not only related to our past, present, and future; daily we need Christ as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption:
 - 1. When we believed into Christ, God put us into Him; then Christ “became” wisdom to us; the expression *to us from God* indicates something present, practical, and experiential in the way of transmission; Christ should continually flow from God to us and be our present and practical wisdom in our experience.
 - 2. Wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1:30 is equal to the way in John 14:6; righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are the materials used in the construction of the freeway in our Christian life:
 - a. When we exercise our spirit and call on the name of the Lord, we become righteousness—Rom. 10:12-13; 2 Tim. 2:22.
 - b. Day by day and hour by hour, we should not live in the soul, in the self, but live in the spirit, exercising the spirit to call on the name of the Lord Jesus; in this way we not only become righteousness but are also sanctified, separated from what is common and from being common ourselves.
 - c. Redemption includes three matters: termination, replacement, and being brought back to God; when God redeems us, He terminates us, replaces us with Christ, and brings us back to Himself; this is the actual process of transformation in which our old element, our old constitution, is terminated and replaced with a new element, a new constitution—Christ Himself in resurrection.

III. The rainbow around God’s throne also signifies that Christ became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification, and redemption—Rev. 4:3; Ezek. 1:26-28:

- A. The three primary colors of the rainbow are blue (the color of the sapphire throne, which signifies God’s righteousness—v. 26; Psa. 89:14), red (the color of the sanctifying fire, which signifies God’s holiness—Ezek. 1:4, 13, 27; Heb. 12:29), and yellow (the color of the glowing electrum, which signifies God’s glory—Ezek. 1:4, 27; Heb. 1:3):
 - 1. God’s righteousness, holiness, and glory are three divine attributes that keep sinners away from God—Gen. 3:24:
 - a. The sword for killing indicates God’s righteousness (cf. Lam. 3:42-43; Rom. 2:5), the flame signifies God’s holiness (Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Heb. 12:29), and the cherubim signify God’s glory (cf. Ezek. 9:3; 10:4; Heb. 9:5).
 - b. These attributes of God placed requirements on sinful man; since sinful man was unable to meet these requirements (Rom. 3:10-18, 23), he was not permitted to contact God as the tree of life, until Christ fulfilled the requirements of God’s righteousness, holiness, and glory by His all-inclusive death on the cross to open a new and living way for us to enter

into the Holy of Holies and partake of Christ as the tree of life (Heb. 10:19-20; Rev. 22:14).

2. Christ died on the cross to satisfy the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory and was resurrected to be our righteousness, holiness (sanctification), and glory (redemption)—Gen. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 8:23.
 3. Christ Himself, signified by the rainbow of righteousness, holiness, and glory, is the covenant of God given to His people—Isa. 42:6; Heb. 8:10-12.
 4. Christ is wisdom to us from God, transmitting Himself into us as righteousness (that we might be reborn in our spirit), sanctification (that we might be transformed in our soul), and redemption (that we might be transfigured in our body)—1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 8:10; 12:2; 8:23; Eph. 5:25-27.
 5. In eternity as the New Jerusalem (a city whose foundations have the appearance of a rainbow—Rev. 21:19-20), we will be a rainbow to testify of God's faithfulness to carry out His new covenant in making us exactly the same as He is as righteousness, holiness, and glory; this will display Christ as God's multifarious wisdom through us to the whole universe—vv. 10-11.
 6. The spiritual reality of this rainbow should be manifest in the church today—we need to allow God to fill us with His presence of righteousness by giving Him the full opportunity to work in us as the fire of holiness for His splendor of glory through us—1 Cor. 1:30.
- B. The rainbow is a sign of God's faithfulness in keeping His covenant that there will be no more judgment of death; we must live under the new covenant and not believe in any failure, weakness, darkness, or negative thing; we are the covenanted people, and we have a verse of promise to meet every situation—Lam. 3:22-23; Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 12:9; 2 Tim. 1:10; 2:1; Jude 24; 1 John 1:9; 1 Cor. 1:9.

IV. Christ being made wisdom to us from God as righteousness and sanctification and redemption and manifesting Himself as the multifarious wisdom of God through us in His complete salvation is also seen in Ephesians 5:25-27:

- A. Ephesians 5:25 says that Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her—this is Christ as our Redeemer accomplishing God's judicial redemption to satisfy the requirements of God's righteousness so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him—2 Cor. 5:21.
- B. Ephesians 5:26 says that He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word—this is Christ as the life-giving Spirit carrying out God's organic salvation in us to make us holy by His organic sanctification—1:4; Rev. 21:2.
- C. Ephesians 5:27 says that He might present the church to Himself glorious—this is Christ as our Bridegroom presenting us to Himself as His glorious church through the redemption of our body in His life-dispensing glorification—Rom. 8:23.

V. Through the church God's multifarious wisdom is made known to the rulers and the authorities, and the enemy is subdued—Eph. 3:10:

- A. God's creation of man was first for man to be in His image to express Him and

second to have His authority to deal with His enemy to represent Him (Gen. 1:26); the church was predestinated for the sonship of God and also was destined to subdue the enemy by making God's multifarious wisdom known through the church.

- B. If there were not such an evil one in the universe, God's wisdom would not need to be manifested; it is through all the troubles rendered by Satan that God has the opportunity to show forth His wisdom—2 Chron. 1:10; cf. Col. 2:2-3.
- C. Every damage from Satan is a good opportunity for God to display His wisdom; the more troubles there are, the more opportunities there are to display the Lord's wisdom.
- D. The Lord Jesus told the opposing Jewish religionists, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19); their destroying simply gave the Lord the opportunity to build up something greater than what was destroyed.
- E. The built-up church is the goal of God and the target of the enemy—Matt. 16:18; cf. Rev. 1:11-12.
- F. The Bible clearly and thoroughly reveals that what God has been doing in past generations, still is doing now, and will be doing in the future is to fully accomplish His sonship in us and to subdue the enemy, to cast out the serpent; this will be done through the church and by the church.
- G. As regards the sonship, we are in a process, and as regards the subduing of the enemy, we are in a battle.
- H. In the eyes of the Lord and in our experience of living the church life, Satan has already been defeated—John 14:30; 1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14; Rom. 16:20.
- I. There is no need for us to be sorrowful; we should always be happy and praising the Lord because even a defeat is a preparation for a further victory; ultimately, the Bible, especially the book of Revelation, is a book of victory, not a book of defeat—5:1-14; 11:15; 12:10-11; 14:8; 19:1-7; 20:10, 14; 21:2, 6; 22:20.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

HAVING THE APPEARANCE OF A RAINBOW

As a result of having a clear sky with the throne and of experiencing a man who has the appearance of electrum and a consuming fire, we will have the appearance of a rainbow. Ezekiel 1:28 says, "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." A rainbow is the brightness around the man who is sitting on the throne. This brightness signifies the splendor and glory around the Lord on the throne.

In order to understand the significance of the rainbow, we need to remember the rainbow at the time of Noah. A flood had destroyed the whole earth, and only eight people were spared from that judgment. After that, when people saw storm clouds in the sky, they might have been afraid of being destroyed. Therefore, God made a covenant in which He promised never again to destroy all living things by a flood, and He set the rainbow in the cloud as a sign of this covenant. "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen

in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth” (Gen. 9:13-16). The rainbow, therefore, was a sign of God’s faithfulness and promise not to destroy the fallen human race with a flood.

In His judgment and destruction of the fallen human race at the time of Noah, God spared some by His faithfulness. This also is our situation as believers in Christ. We need to realize that we have been spared by God. We all are fallen and deserve to be destroyed, but God has spared us. Praise the Lord that we have been spared by His faithfulness! Now we have a rainbow as a sign of God’s faithfulness. Although God is a holy God and a consuming fire and none can exist in His presence, by His faithfulness we have been spared.

In the rainbow there are several different colors, but the basic colors are only three—red, yellow, and blue. When these colors are shining and blending, they produce other colors, such as orange, green, and violet. It is very significant that the three primary colors of the rainbow are red, yellow, and blue because they correspond to what we have already seen in Ezekiel. The throne looks like a blue sapphire stone; the electrum is yellow; the fire is red. By their shining and refracting, these three colors combine to make a rainbow.

Now we need to see the spiritual significance of these three colors. Blue signifies the throne. According to Psalm 89:14 the foundation of God’s throne is righteousness. This indicates that the blue throne signifies the righteousness of God. Fire signifies the sanctifying, separating, and consuming fire. This means that red here refers to God’s holiness. Yellow signifies God’s glory in the glowing electrum. Therefore, here we have God’s righteousness, holiness, and glory, signified by the colors blue, red, and yellow.

God’s righteousness, holiness, and glory are three divine attributes that keep sinners away from God. Before we were saved, we were kept away from God by His righteousness, holiness, and glory. But the Lord Jesus came, died on the cross to satisfy the requirements of God’s righteousness, holiness, and glory, and was resurrected, and He is now our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). He is also now our glory. In ourselves we are short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23), we are under God’s righteous judgment, and we are kept away by God’s holiness. But now, as believers, we are in Christ, and He has become our righteousness, holiness, and glory. Moreover, because we are in Christ, we even bear Christ as righteousness, holiness, and glory. Because we are in Christ, in the sight of God we look like righteousness, holiness, and glory.

This should not be simply a doctrine or a teaching to us. We need to experience Christ in such a way that when others contact us, they can sense righteousness, holiness, and glory. This means that they should be able to sense that we have a clear sky, that we have a throne, and that we are righteous and proper, not careless or loose in any way. We should also have the electrum, glowing, shining, and weighty. Then we will have the appearance of a rainbow, and the angels, the demons, and

Satan will be able to see it. This rainbow is the sign of God's faithfulness in sparing us, the fallen ones. As those who were fallen but who have now been saved, we have become a testimony of God's faithfulness in saving us. Every local church should bear the testimony of such a rainbow.

Even the New Jerusalem has the appearance of a rainbow. The foundation stones of the New Jerusalem are of twelve layers, with each layer being a different color (Rev. 21:19-20). Some time ago I read an article which stated that the twelve layers of the foundation stones have the appearance of a rainbow in color. From this we see that the holy city, New Jerusalem, looks like a rainbow. This rainbow signifies that the city is built upon and secured by God's faithfulness in keeping His covenant. This rainbow will declare for eternity that when God judged sinners according to His righteousness, He did not destroy everyone but saved many from destruction as a testimony of His faithfulness. In eternity we, the aggregate of the saved ones, will be a rainbow testifying forever that our God is righteous and faithful.

We, God's spared ones, will be this holy city. By His righteousness, holiness, and glory, we will have the appearance of a rainbow declaring to the whole universe God's saving faithfulness. At the end of the Bible is a city whose foundation has the appearance of a rainbow surrounding the eternal God as His strong testimony. The experience of the Christian life and of the church life will consummate in such a rainbow.

When this rainbow appears, God will have the fulfillment of His heart's desire. Throughout the ages, God has been judging fallen man according to His righteous throne, His holy fire, and His glorious nature. Nevertheless, God has saved some to such an extent that they have become a bright rainbow reflecting His glory and testifying of Him and His faithfulness forever. The appearing of this rainbow indicates that heaven and earth have been connected and that God and man have been joined. Around the throne in the New Jerusalem, there will be a group of people who have received salvation because of God's faithfulness, and for eternity they will be a rainbow reflecting the brightness of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. At this point, God's eternal plan will have been accomplished.

Although this rainbow will be manifested in eternity, the spiritual reality of this bright rainbow should be manifest in the church today. In the church life we need to allow God to work in us, and we need to receive grace to the extent that everything becomes pure, just, and holy. This means that God's holy fire must burn away everything that does not match God so that God's nature is manifested as bright gold in and through the humanity of the brothers and sisters. Then the church will be filled with God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. These three characteristics will combine and reflect one another to form a bright rainbow expressing God and testifying for Him.

Once again I say that this should not be merely a teaching to us. Rather, the reality of this rainbow must be wrought into us so that, as God's spared ones, we will bear the appearance of a rainbow, bearing God's testimony and declaring God's faithfulness to the entire universe. This means that we will bear God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. (*Life-study of Ezekiel*, pp. 131-134)

SUBDUING THE ENEMY BY MAKING GOD'S WISDOM KNOWN THROUGH THE CHURCH

God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:26). This image is related to the sonship; the sonship is the fulfillment of God's image. It is by the sonship that eventually we will fully be in the image of God. By the new birth we have the image of God within our spirit, and by transformation our soul will be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Then by transfiguration even our physical body will be conformed to the full likeness of Christ. At that time we will have the likeness, the image, of God fully and thoroughly, from within to without (1 John 3:2).

God's Purpose Being Not Only That Man Bear God's Image but Also That He Deal with His Enemy

In His creation of man, God also committed His authority to man in order to subdue and deal with His enemy (Gen. 1:26). Therefore, the second item of God's purpose with the church is related to the second aspect of God's creation of man. God's creation of man was first for man to be in His image and second to have His authority to deal with His enemy. The church was predestinated for the sonship of God and also was destined to subdue the enemy. In subduing the enemy, the church will make the wisdom of God manifest to all God's enemies (Eph. 3:10).

The serpent first appears in Genesis 3, and he will be cast out in Revelation 20. Before Genesis 3 there are two chapters at the beginning of the entire Scriptures, and after Revelation 20 there are two chapters at the end, but in between there is a long record. On the positive side, this record is full of many good stories concerning the sonship. On the negative side, there are also many victorious stories related to subduing and overcoming the enemy. Finally, in Revelation 20 the ancient serpent will be bound and cast out (vv. 2-3, 10).

Every Defeat Being a Preparation for the Universal Victory

The Bible clearly and thoroughly reveals that what God has been doing in the past generations, still is doing now, and will be doing in the future is to fully accomplish His sonship in us and to subdue the enemy, to cast out the serpent. This will be done through the church and by the church. At present, as regards the sonship, we are under a process, and as regards the subduing of the enemy, we are in a battle. We are not only in a process but also in a battle, fighting all the time. Sometimes we are defeated; there is no doubt about this. In fighting sometimes we win, and sometimes we lose. However, do not be discouraged. Sometimes a defeat is for the purpose of a future victory. That is why I said that in the early days when I saw someone defeated, I was sorry, but today when I see someone defeated, I say, "Praise the Lord! This is the preparation for a further victory."

Eventually, we will not be defeated. We will be victorious. Victory will be ours, not the enemy's. I have this assurance. Do you think that eventually Satan will be victorious? No, we who are in Christ will be victorious. Do you believe in defeat, or do you believe in victory? In the past years many dear ones have come to me to argue, "Brother Lee, we never see you feeling sorrowful. You always look happy. This is too extreme." I told these ones, "If you argue for feeling sorrowful, you eventually will

lose the case. If you do not lose it today, you will lose it tomorrow. If you do not lose it in this generation, you will lose in the next generation. If you do not lose it in this age, I am sure you will lose it in eternity. When Revelation 21 comes, you will lose the case for feeling sorrowful.” There is no need for us to be sorrowful. We should always be happy and praising the Lord. Even a defeat is a preparation for a further victory. Let the enemy try to defeat us; eventually, he will be defeated.

What kind of Bible do you have? You need to say, “I have a Bible of victory.” This is a book of victory, not a book of defeat. How many books of the Bible do you have? Do you have only sixty-five books, without Revelation? You may show me what is mentioned in 2 Timothy 4 regarding the decline of the church, but I would say, “Look at Revelation.” Again you may show me the poor condition of the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, but there are not only three chapters in Revelation; there are twenty-two. Go on from chapter 3 until you get to chapter 21. At that time the universal Hallelujah will come out. The whole universe will cry, “Hallelujah, victory!”

Within this Bible are the Old and the New Testaments. A testament is something that is accomplished and given to us as a will. We simply accept it. Our victory is an item of the testament. In the eyes of the Lord, Satan has been defeated already. This is a matter of fact; it is a settled matter. If we have this foresight and insight, then day by day we will sing Hallelujah. With the church there is no difference between a defeat and a victory. Even a defeat is for a victory. We must tell Satan, “Satan, even your victory is a preparation for our victory. We can never be defeated. Eventually, you will be the one who is defeated. I do not care how much you attack and how much you damage. The Lord Jesus said in John 2:19, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ The more you destroy, the more the Lord will build up. Your destroying is just a preparation for His building up.” We need the vision of how much the Lord will use the church to defeat His enemy and to subdue and recover the whole earth. One day this will be accomplished. (*The Vision, Practice, and Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ*, pp. 36-39)