

## CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF MATTHEW 5 THROUGH 7

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

### **Entering through the Narrow Gate and Walking on the Constricted Way That Leads to Life, the Ever-blessed Condition of the Kingdom**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 7:13-14; Rev. 2:7; John 6:57, 63

**I. In the decree of the kingdom's constitution, Christ displayed the two possible ways of people's life and work before God—"Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it"—Matt. 7:13-14:**

- A. "The way that leads to life" is the way that leads to a living reward in life; it is the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22)—the way of the truth (2 Pet. 2:2), the straight way (v. 15), the way of righteousness (v. 21), the way of peace (Luke 1:79; Rom. 3:17), the way of salvation (Acts 16:17), the way of God (Matt. 22:16; Acts 18:26), and the way of the Lord (John 1:23; Acts 18:25).
- B. The broad way leading to destruction is according to the worldly systems, satisfying the natural tastes; to get the crowd; to maintain a career of man; and to achieve man's enterprise—Matt. 13:31-33; Rev. 2:13, 20; 17:4-5.
- C. The constricted way leading to life is according to the divine regulations, fulfilling the spiritual requests; to bring in God's elect; to bear the testimony of Jesus Christ; and to carry out God's economy for the building up of the Body of Christ—Rom. 1:9; Heb. 11:5-6; Rev. 1:1-2, 9-10.
- D. The God-ordained way is to have a living and working that are always narrow and constricted, according to the pattern of the Lord's indescribable life and ministry—John 5:19, 30; 4:34; 17:4; 14:10, 24; 7:16, 18.
- E. We in the Lord's recovery must walk in our spirit; walking in spirit restricts us, causing us to live a normal Christian life and making us vital, healthy believers who take the way of life for God's building—Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 22-23; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.
- F. We must learn to restrict ourselves in our labor according to the measure of the rule that the God of measure, the ruling God, has apportioned to us—2 Cor. 10:13-15.
- G. The more we are constricted, the more we are regulated; and the more we are regulated, the more we are healthy; to be vital means to be healthy; Paul desired to admonish every man and to teach every man in all wisdom that he might present every man full-grown in Christ; Paul did not depend on miracles, but his work was much more in the "every man" way—Col. 1:28-29; Acts 20:19-20, 31.

**II. We must stay on the way of life, the line of life, in the maintenance of life by enjoying Christ as the tree of life in the flow of life for God's building in life by our growth in life—John 10:10b; Rev. 22:1-2; Eph. 4:16; 2:21-22:**

- A. We stay on the way of life by living and serving according to the principle of life, not according to the principle of right and wrong.
- B. We stay on the way of life by loving the Lord to the uttermost, drawing others to run after Him—Mark 12:30; S. S. 1:4a.
- C. We stay on the way of life by eating Jesus through pray-reading and musing on the word and by ministering the word as the Spirit into others by the exercise of our spirit—John 6:57, 63; Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15 and footnote; Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4; 24:45; 1 Cor. 2:4-5, 13.

- D. We stay on the way of life by enjoying the Triune God as the law of the Spirit of life with its divine capacity—Rom. 8:2; Jer. 32:39.
- E. We stay on the way of life by abiding in Christ as the tree of life in the flow of life under His headship and according to His divine nature—Rev. 22:1-2.
- F. We stay on the way of life by being careful about the people whom we contact and being separated unto God from every kind of spiritual death—wild death, mild death, and subtle death—Lev. 5:2; 11:1-40; Num. 6:6-7.
- G. We stay on the way of life by living in resurrection, in the reality of the church as the Body of Christ, signified by the golden lampstand, a tree of resurrection life—Eph. 1:22-23; Exo. 25:31-40; Rev. 1:11-12.

### **III. The God-ordained pathway for the church is the way of Philadelphia; this God-ordained pathway is the constricted way that leads to life:**

- A. The characteristic of the overcomers in Philadelphia is their brotherly love (3:7-8); love prevails among them so that they shepherd people according to God (1 Pet. 5:2) by cherishing them with the cheering presence of God and nourishing them with the healthy teaching of the economy of God (Eph. 4:11; 5:29; Acts 20:28).
- B. The Lord's recovery with Philadelphia is a recovery in quality, a recovery of the original substance of the church, the inner substance of God, which is love (1 John 4:8); to stand on the genuine ground of oneness, the ground of the church, is to choose to love all the brothers (Rev. 3:7a; cf. 2:4, 7).
- C. The Lord's using the key of David to open the door for the spread of His recovery is objective to us, but Christ is also using the key of David to subjectively open the door in our inner being for us to be transformed and built into the house of God as a pillar with the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the new name of the Lord—v. 17; 3:12; cf. 21:22:
  - 1. *The name of My God* indicates that the pillar is God; *the name of the city of My God* indicates that the pillar is the New Jerusalem; and *My new name* indicates that the pillar is Christ in a new significance; the overcomer as a pillar becomes God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead, he becomes a constituent of the New Jerusalem, and he becomes Christ in a new experiential sense—3:12.
  - 2. The New Jerusalem is the new Christ; as God's enlargement and expansion, we are Christ in a new sense as the New Jerusalem; the new Christ is not the same as He was in the four Gospels; the bride, who is the increase of the Bridegroom, is the New Jerusalem, including all of God's regenerated ones—John 3:29-30; Rev. 21:9-10.
  - 3. For us to be built into God, become a constituent of the New Jerusalem, and become a part of the new Christ is humanly impossible, but the law of the Spirit of life within us contains an element that deals with impossibility—Rom. 8:2; Luke 18:27; cf. Gen. 28:12-19; John 1:51.
- D. The overcomers in Philadelphia pay more attention to life than to work, caring more about quality than quantity (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12); they have "a little power" with the realization that what pleases the Lord is not their doing much for Him but their doing their best for Him with what they have (Rev. 3:8; Mark 14:8).
- E. The overcomers in Philadelphia keep the Lord's word in His unique New Testament ministry (Rev. 3:8), which brings them into the genuine appreciation, love, and enjoyment of the precious person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as their life and everything (2 Cor. 11:2-3).
- F. Because those in Philadelphia keep the Lord's word, they are "rich toward God" (Rev. 3:8; Luke 12:21) by pray-reading and musing upon His word to treasure up His word in their heart (Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:11, 15); we can lift up our hands unto the word of God, indicating that we receive it warmly and gladly and that we say Amen to it (v. 48; Neh. 8:5-6).

- G. The overcomers in Philadelphia do not deny the Lord's name; they have abandoned all names other than that of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they call upon the name of the Lord, who is rich to all who call upon Him (Rom. 10:9-10, 12-13); they openly confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11), and they do not preach themselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and themselves as the believers' slaves for Jesus' sake (2 Cor. 4:5).
- H. Brother Lee's final word to the elders in Anaheim: "The elders need to love one another, their wives need to love one another, and they need to love one another's children."

#### **IV. Once Philadelphia fails, she becomes Laodicea:**

- A. Laodicea is a distorted Philadelphia; when brotherly love is gone, the opinion of the majority is the accepted opinion; as long as the majority is in favor, it is all right.
- B. In the eyes of the Lord, the characteristics of Laodicea are lukewarmness and spiritual pride—Rev. 3:15-18:
  - 1. Spiritual pride comes from history; some were once rich, and they think that they are still rich; they still remember their history, but they have lost their former life.
  - 2. The Lord was once merciful to them, and they remember their history, but now they have lost that reality.
  - 3. They remember that they were once wealthy and had become rich and had need of nothing, but now they are poor and blind.
- C. If we want to continue in the way of Philadelphia and avoid becoming Laodicea, we have to remember to humble ourselves before God—Matt. 5:3; Isa. 57:15; Gal. 6:3.
- D. Laodicea means to know everything but, in reality, to be fervent about nothing; in name it has everything, but it cannot sacrifice its life for anything; it remembers its former glory but forgets its present condition before God; formerly, it was Philadelphia, but today it is Laodicea—Rev. 3:15-18:
  - 1. The degraded recovered church has the knowledge of the doctrines concerning Christ but not much living faith to partake of the divine element of Christ.
  - 2. White garments signify conduct that can be approved by the Lord; such conduct is the Lord Himself lived out of the church, and it is required by the degraded recovered church for the covering of her nakedness.
  - 3. The eyesalve needed to anoint their eyes must be the anointing Spirit (1 John 2:27), who is the Lord Himself as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b); the degraded recovered church needs this kind of eyesalve for the healing of her blindness (cf. Job 42:5-6).
- E. Dead, vain knowledge and doctrinal forms have made the degraded recovered church lukewarm; she needs to repent of her lukewarmness and be zealous, boiling, burning, that thereby she may regain the enjoyment of the reality of Christ.
- F. "He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"—Rev. 3:21-22:
  - 1. Here to overcome is to overcome the lukewarmness and pride of the degraded recovered church, to pay the price to buy the needed items, and to open the door so that the Lord can come in; Christ as the unique Overcomer includes all the overcomers.
  - 2. To sit with the Lord on His throne will be a prize to the overcomer so that he may participate in the Lord's authority and be a co-king with Him in ruling over the whole earth in the coming millennial kingdom.