

Message Five

Christ's Heavenly Priesthood Ministered to the Churches for the Producing of the Overcomers

Scripture Reading: Rev. 2—3

I. Christ's heavenly priesthood is a speaking ministry:

- A. Christ speaks to God to intercede for us, and He speaks to us to minister the priestly service—Heb. 7:25; Rev. 1:16, 20; 2:1a, 7; cf. Mal. 3:1; Heb. 1:2:
 - 1. No one has ever seen God; the Son, as the Word of God (John 1:1, 14) and the speaking of God, has declared Him with a full expression, explanation, and definition of Him (v. 18).
 - 2. The book of Revelation tells us that even in the warfare for the kingdom of God, Christ is the Word of God speaking for God's purpose—19:13.
- B. By Christ's walking in the midst of the churches, He gets to know the condition of each church; such a tour of the churches makes Him thoroughly familiar with every situation; then according to what He sees, He speaks to us—2:1, 7.
- C. In His walking He is Christ, and in His speaking He is the Spirit; at the beginning of each of the seven epistles it is the Lord who speaks (vv. 1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14), and at the end it is the Spirit speaking to the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22); the walking Christ becomes the speaking Spirit.
- D. The nature of the Lord's priestly speaking is to trim and fill the golden lampstands:
 - 1. In the Old Testament there was the lampstand in the tabernacle; every morning the lamps were trimmed by having their charred wicks snuffed (Exo. 30:7); in addition, the lamps were supplied with oil (27:20).
 - 2. To trim is to cut off the charred ends that can no longer burn brightly; to add oil is to supply the Spirit.
 - 3. In Revelation 2 and 3 our High Priest is trimming the seven lampstands, cutting away those things that are not needed and that frustrate the shining; at the same time He is supplying the oil that is needed and that will make the lampstands burn brightly.

II. The Lord's speaking trims away religion—2:9:

- A. Today's Christianity has been Judaized; there are many essential differences between Judaism and the church in four major points—the temple, the law, the priests, and the worldly promises:
 - 1. In Judaism there is a material temple, whereas the temple in the church is a spiritual temple; in Judaism the worshippers and the place of worship are two different things; there is no place of worship in the church, for the place of worship is the worshipper—Eph. 2:21-22; John 4:24; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16.
 - 2. In Judaism there are the laws, a standard of principles for daily living, which are written on tablets of stone; in the church the Holy Spirit is our indwelling law of life inscribed on our hearts—Heb. 8:10.
 - 3. In Judaism there is a mediatorial class of priests, but in the church all the believers are laboring priests of the gospel of God, a holy and royal priesthood—Rom. 15:16; Rev. 1:6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.
 - 4. In Judaism there are worldly promises and earthly blessings, but in the church there are heavenly promises and spiritual blessings—Eph. 1:3; Gal. 3:14; cf. Matt. 16:24.

- B. “He is a not Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit, not in letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God”—Rom. 2:28-29; cf. Phil. 3:3; Gal. 3:7, 14, 16, 29.

III. The Lord’s speaking trims away worldliness—Rev. 2:12-17:

- A. Satan’s throne is in the world, the place where he dwells and the sphere of his reign; since the worldly church entered into union with the world, she dwells where Satan’s throne is—v. 13; cf. John 12:31-33; 14:30.
- B. The worldly and degraded church holds not only the teaching of Balaam but also the teaching of the Nicolaitans; the teaching of Balaam distracts people from the person of Christ to idolatry and from the enjoyment of Christ to spiritual fornication, whereas the teaching of the Nicolaitans destroys the function of the believers as members of the Body of Christ, thus annulling the Lord’s Body as His expression; the former teaching disregards the Head, and the latter destroys the Body—Rev. 2:14-15.
- C. While the church goes the way of the world, the overcomers come forward to abide in the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, where they enjoy the hidden Christ as a special portion for their daily supply; if we seek the Lord, overcome the degradation of the worldly church, and enjoy a special portion of the Lord today, He as the hidden manna will be a reward to us in the coming kingdom—vv. 16-17.

IV. The Lord’s speaking trims away the leaven of the evil in the apostate church—vv. 18-29:

- A. The woman Jezebel is the same as the one prophesied by the Lord in Matthew 13:33; there the woman added leaven (signifying evil, heretical, and pagan things) into the fine flour (signifying Christ as the meal offering for the satisfaction of God and man).
- B. This woman is the great harlot of Revelation 17, who mixes abominations with the divine things; Jezebel, the pagan wife of Ahab, is a type of the apostate church—2:20; 1 Kings 16:31; 19:1-2; 21:23, 25-26; 2 Kings 9:7.
- C. We need to beware of the principle of Babylon, the principle of the apostate church; anything that is halfway and not absolute is called Babylon; we need God to enlighten us so that in His light we may judge everything in us that is not absolute toward Him—Rev. 3:16-19; cf. Num. 6:1-9:
1. The principle of Babylon (Heb. *Babel*) is man’s endeavor to build up something from earth to heaven by human ability, signified by bricks—Gen. 11:1-9; 1 Cor. 3:12.
 2. The principle of Babylon is hypocrisy—Rev. 17:4, 6; Matt. 23:25-32; 6:1-6; 15:7-8; John 5:44; 12:42-43.
 3. The principle of Babylon is that of not considering herself a widow but of glorifying herself and living luxuriously; in a sense, the believers in Christ are a widow in the present age because their Husband, Christ, is absent from them; because our Beloved is not here in the world, our heart is not here—Rev. 18:7; cf. 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20; Luke 12:34; 1 Tim. 6:6-10.
 4. The principle of Babylon is the principle of a harlot; Babylon’s purpose is for man to make a name for himself and deny God’s name; the church, as the pure virgin espoused to Christ, should have no name other than her Husband’s—Gen. 11:4; Rev. 3:8; 2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Cor. 1:10.

V. The Lord’s speaking trims away lukewarmness—Rev. 3:14-22:

- A. “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth”—vv. 15-16.
- B. Laodicea is a distorted Philadelphia—vv. 14-22:
 - 1. When brotherly love is gone, Philadelphia immediately turns into “the opinion of the people” (the meaning of *Laodicea*).
 - 2. Laodicea is characterized by lukewarmness and spiritual pride; spiritual pride comes from history; some were once rich, and they think that they are still rich; the Lord was once merciful to them, and they remember their history, but now they have lost that reality.
 - 3. 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.
 - 4. If we want to continue in the way of Philadelphia and be saved from the lukewarmness of Laodicea, we must remember to humble ourselves before God—Isa. 66:1-2; 57:15.

VI. In addition to trimming the lampstand, the priest also filled the lamps with oil; to eat of the tree of life, to eat of the hidden manna, and to feast with the Lord are all the infilling of the Spirit—cf. Zech. 4:11-14:

- A. The book of Revelation reveals the intensification of the Triune God (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6) to bring the degraded church back to the enjoyment of Himself as the tree of life, the hidden manna, and the feast for the finalization of God’s New Testament economy.
- B. “To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God” (2:7); eating of the tree of life is the best infilling.
- C. “To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna” (v. 17); to eat of the hidden manna is to be filled and supplied.
- D. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me” (3:20); by feasting with the Lord, the infilling takes place.

VII. By Christ’s high priestly service all the dark things of religion, worldliness, evil, and lukewarmness are trimmed away; also by His heavenly priesthood the heavenly, divine element of the tree of life, the hidden manna, and the heavenly feast is ministered to us; the effect of this heavenly ministry is a metabolic transformation to make us precious stones for the building of God’s dwelling place—Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18:

- A. All the Lord’s heavenly service and care have the aim of making us the overcomers—Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 20-21.
- B. The nourishment of the tree of life, the hidden manna, and the heavenly feast becomes the divine element of which the lampstand is composed.
- C. Thus, every local church will be a lampstand, and in every local church there will be overcomers; these overcomers will make up the lampstand; a lampstand eventually is the overcomers in a local church.

VIII. While the Lord Jesus is arranging the world situation so that God’s people may go on, He is also exercising His heavenly ministry to especially supply God’s lovers and seekers with the heavenly riches, the divine element, so that they may be kept at an overcoming level; the sustaining of these God-lovers and Christ-seekers needs Christ’s heavenly ministry—Acts 5:31; Heb. 7:25; 8:2.