

# ASPECTS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND CHURCH LIFE SEEN IN THE NEW JERUSALEM

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One

## **The Throne of God and of the Lamb, the River of Water of Life, and the Tree of Life**

Scripture Reading: Rev. 22:1-2

- I. Every believer should be a “little New Jerusalem,” and every local church should be a miniature of the New Jerusalem, the great God-man, with Christ as the centrality and universality:**
- A. The vision of eternity is the vision of the New Jerusalem—Rev. 21:9-10.
  - B. The life of eternity is the living out of the New Jerusalem—Phil. 1:19-21a; Gal. 2:20.
  - C. The work of eternity is the working out of the New Jerusalem—1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10; 3:12a.
  - D. God has put eternity in man’s heart—Eccl. 3:11:
    - 1. “Eternity” is “a divinely implanted sense of a purpose working through the ages which nothing under the sun but God alone can satisfy” (The Amplified Bible).
    - 2. God created man in His image and formed in him a spirit that man may receive and contain Him (Gen. 1:26; 2:7); in addition, God put eternity, an aspiration for something eternal, in man’s heart so that man will seek God, the eternal One.
    - 3. Hence, temporal things can never satisfy man; only the eternal God, who is Christ, can satisfy the deep sense of purpose in man’s heart—cf. 2 Cor. 4:18:
      - a. Christ’s name is Immanuel, meaning “God with us”—Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23.
      - b. Actually, the content of the entire New Testament is an Immanuel (v. 23; 18:20; 28:20; Rev. 21:3), and all the believers in Christ, as the members of Christ, are a part of this great Immanuel, the corporate Christ (1 Cor. 12:12; Col. 3:10-11).
      - c. The sign of Immanuel consummates in the New Jerusalem, which will be the aggregate of Immanuel, the totality of God being with us.
- II. The center of God’s authority in the New Jerusalem is the throne of God and of the Lamb—Rev. 22:1:**
- A. The center of a nation is its capital, the place where the central government is located; the New Jerusalem also has a center, which is the throne of our redeeming God, the throne of God and of the Lamb.
  - B. *The throne of God and of the Lamb*, showing that there is one throne for both God and the Lamb (cf. 21:23), indicates that God and the Lamb are one—the Lamb-God, the redeeming God, from whose throne proceeds the river of water of life for our supply and satisfaction; this depicts how the Triune God—God,

the Lamb, and the Spirit, who is symbolized by the water of life—dispenses Himself into His redeemed under His headship (implied in the authority of the throne) for eternity:

1. God is our Creator (Gen. 2:7), the Lamb is our Redeemer (John 1:29), and the Spirit is our Regenerator (3:6).
2. God was the One who purposed, He became the Lamb who redeemed (1:1, 14), and finally, He became the life-giving, flowing Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b).
3. The love of God, the grace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are the reality of God, the Lamb, and the Spirit flowing within us from the throne of grace in our spirit—2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 4:16; cf. Rom. 5:17, 21.
4. In our daily life, in our family life, in our marriage life, in our business life, and in our church life the center must be God's throne; everything must be submitted to His headship.
5. Every morning after rising up we need to say, "Lord, thank You for a new day for me to take You as my Lord. I subject myself under Your headship for the whole day. Lord, set up Your throne in my life. Set up Your throne in the center of my being. Lord, bring my whole day with my daily life under Your throne":
  - a. If we would offer such a prayer to the Triune God every morning, from that moment, we would have the living water flowing within us.
  - b. Whenever we subject ourselves to the Triune God, taking Him as our Head, we enjoy the flow of the water of life within us.
  - c. If we do not have the flow of the living water within us, this is because we do not accept or recognize the lordship, the headship, and the authority of the Triune God in the very center of our being.

### **III. God dispenses Himself into us as the river of water of life proceeding out of the throne to supply and saturate the entire New Jerusalem—Rev. 22:1:**

- A. The river here, typified by the rivers in Genesis 2:10-14, Psalm 46:4, and Ezekiel 47:5-9, signifies the abundance of life in its flow:
  1. It is one river, flowing to the four corners of the holy city, like the one river in Genesis 2:10-14, which parts into four heads to reach man in every direction.
  2. As indicated in John 7:38, this one river with its riches becomes many rivers in our experience of the different aspects of the riches of God's Spirit of life—Rom. 8:2; 15:30; 1 Thes. 1:6; 2 Thes. 2:13; Gal. 5:22-23.
- B. The water of life is a symbol of God in Christ as the Spirit flowing Himself into His redeemed people to be their life and life supply; it is typified by the water that came out of the riven rock (Exo. 17:6; Num. 20:11) and symbolized by the water that flowed out of the pierced side of the Lord Jesus (John 19:34).
- C. The water of life is bright as crystal, having no dimness or opaqueness; when this water of life flows in us, it purifies us and makes us as transparent as crystal—Rev. 22:1.

### **IV. That the one tree of life grows on the two sides of the river signifies that the tree of life is a vine that spreads and proceeds along the flow of the water of life for God's people to receive and enjoy (v. 2); this fulfills for eternity what God intended from the beginning (Gen. 2:9):**

- A. The tree of life was closed to man because of his fall (3:22-24), but it was opened to the believers through the redemption of Christ (Heb. 10:19-20); today the enjoyment of Christ as the tree of life is the believers' common portion (John 6:35, 57).
- B. In Greek the word for *tree* in Revelation 2:7, as in 1 Peter 2:24, means "wood"; thus, the tree of life signifies the crucified (implied in the tree as a piece of wood—v. 24) and resurrected (implied in the life of God—John 11:25) Christ, who today is in the church, the consummation of which will be the New Jerusalem, in which the crucified and resurrected Christ will be the tree of life for the nourishment of all God's redeemed people for eternity (Rev. 22:2, 14).
- C. Eating the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life.
- D. For the proper church life and the recovery of the church life, that is, for the proper growth in the Christian life, what we need is not merely the mental apprehension of teachings but the eating of the Lord as the tree of life, the bread of life, in our spirit (John 6:57); even the words of the Scriptures should not be considered merely as doctrines to teach our mind but as food to nourish our spirit (Matt. 4:4; Heb. 5:12-14).
- E. The heavenly King's ministry in all His visits created opportunities for Him to reveal Himself; in His contact with the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28, the opportunity was created for Him to reveal Himself as "the children's bread" (v. 26):
  - 1. The Canaanite woman considered Him the Lord—a divine person—and the Son of David—a royal descendant, great and high in His reign; but He unveiled Himself to her as small pieces of bread, good for food.
  - 2. This implies that, as the heavenly King, He rules over His people by feeding them with Himself as bread; we can be the proper people in His kingdom only by being nourished with Him as our food.
  - 3. To eat Christ as our supply is the way to be the kingdom people in the reality of the kingdom.
  - 4. The Canaanite woman came to ask the Lord to heal her sick daughter, but the Lord said that He was the children's bread to feed her:
    - a. This shows that whenever we have a need, it is proof that we need to eat the Lord Jesus more; we have to learn this secret in our circumstances—eat the Lord more.
    - b. We need to take the Lord Jesus into us and let Him become our food and our everything; then our circumstances will change.
    - c. When we eat more of the Lord Jesus, the churches will be enlivened; this is the central viewpoint of the New Testament.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB**

The last item that is recorded in the section concerning the New Jerusalem is the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1). The throne, of course, is for God's administration. God is the One who had a purpose and who made a plan in eternity

past and who created all things for the fulfillment of His plan. The Lamb is the One who redeemed us, the One who has accomplished a full redemption to fulfill God's plan. Thus, the throne of God and of the Lamb denotes that this throne is to carry out God's plan through Christ's redemption. Both God's plan and Christ's redemption are being carried out through this throne. The throne is the very source from which the river of water of life flows, and it flows with the tree of life growing in it (22:2). The throne for the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose is to flow out God Himself that by this flow of life His purpose could be accomplished.

#### **"A LITTLE NEW JERUSALEM"**

When we get into the full record concerning the New Jerusalem, we will spontaneously understand that this is fully related to our personal experiences of the Triune God. Do not think that the New Jerusalem is merely something objective in the future for a certain group of people. We have to realize that what is recorded in Revelation 21 and 22 should be experienced by us today in a very personal way. Experientially speaking, every proper and normal Christian is "a little New Jerusalem." Whatever is ascribed to the New Jerusalem corporately should be experienced by us individually and personally. With and in each one of us are the three gates of the Divine Trinity. Furthermore, in each one of us there must be the throne of God and of the Lamb. We must enthrone Him in our heart and in our spirit. In other words, in the very center of our being there should be the throne of God and of the Lamb. At the end of the record of the New Jerusalem the unique item is the throne.

#### **THE CENTER OF OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE**

In our Christian experience the unique item should be the throne of the One who purposed and of the One who redeemed. Such a throne must be set up in our entire being, and this should be the center of our Christian life. This means that we would accept the God who purposed and the Christ who redeemed us as our Head, Lord, and authority. We should be willing to subject ourselves to such a headship. We adore Him as the Lord, and we take Him as our authority. We enthrone Him in our being and in our Christian life.

In our Christian life the center is the throne of God and of the Lamb. We are not here living for ourselves. We are living and existing for the accomplishment of God's purpose, to carry out what Christ has accomplished. Therefore, we experience the One on the throne in His headship and lordship, and we submit ourselves to such an authority. In our daily life, in our family life, in our marriage life, in our business life, and in our church life the center must be God's throne. Everything should be subjected to His headship.

All of us have experienced that whenever we would subject ourselves to this headship, we immediately sense something full of God's riches flowing within us. This is the flow of the Triune God as life, life supply, and everything to our being. Within us we sense such a flow, and this flow is from the throne of God and of the Lamb as the water of life.

## THE FLOW OF THE DIVINE TRINITY

In Revelation 22:1 we see the flow of the Divine Trinity—God, the Lamb, and the water of life (the Spirit). According to John 7:38-39, the water of life refers to the Spirit. God was the One who purposed, He became the Lamb who redeemed (John 1:14, 29), and finally became the life-giving, flowing Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). God flows in the water of life, the Lamb flows in the water of life, and the Spirit flows as the water of life. Thus, this is the triune flow, the flow of the Divine Trinity as the very life supply.

This should not be taken as a theological teaching. According to our daily experiences, we Christians should experience the flow of the Divine Trinity every day. Every morning after rising up we need to say, “Lord, thank You for a new day for me to take You as my Lord. I subject myself under Your headship for the whole day. Lord, set up Your throne in my life. Set up Your throne in the center of my being. Lord, bring my whole day with my daily life under Your throne.” If you would offer such a prayer to the Triune God every morning, from that moment you would have the living water flowing within you. This living water flowing is the flow of the Triune God. It is not a small thing that the Triune God flows in you today. He flows in you as the One who purposed, as the One who redeemed, and as the One who is the life-giving Spirit. This One is the very consummation of the Triune God reaching us as the living water.

Such a subjective revelation has been missed by many of today’s Christians. I hope we all would realize in our experience that whenever we subject ourselves to the Triune God, taking Him as our Head, we enjoy a flow within us. Thank the Lord that in the Lord’s recovery, day after day, month after month, year after year, and time after time, what is stressed is the unique flow. We have given message after message which tells us that the Triune God is flowing. There are also many hymns in our hymnal concerning this subject. The first two stanzas of *Hymns*, #12 say:

O God, Thou art the source of life,  
Divine, and rich, and free!  
As living water flowing out  
Unto eternity!

In love Thou in the Son didst flow  
Among the human race;  
Thou dost as Spirit also flow  
Within us through Thy grace.

Many times in the Lord’s table meeting, we all sense the flow of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Our Father is the very God who had a purpose and who purposed to accomplish His eternal plan. The Son as the very Lamb is also flowing to dispense what He has accomplished on the cross. Whatever was accomplished on the cross was objective, and this has to become subjective to us by the flow of the Lamb. Even the Lamb is flowing in this divine flow because this flow proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. This means that the water of life flows out of God and out of the Lamb. We do not only have such a vision and revelation, but we

have this experience day by day and even moment by moment. I can testify that without such a divine flow I cannot live, I cannot minister, and I have nothing to minister. But praise the Lord, this divine flow is always availing in our life and in our being.

#### THE SOURCE OF LIFE WITHIN US

Do not say the source of the divine life flowing within us is in the heavens. We have to say the source is within us. Some may argue that John saw the throne in the heavens, but we must realize that according to Ephesians 2:6 we are now seated together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. The source is in us because the source is in the heavens, and we are in the heavens. God is in the heavens and we are in the heavens, so God is in us. Some may feel, however, that though God and we are in the heavens, we are in the heavens separately. We should not forget, however, that when we believed, we believed into the Triune God. We were also baptized into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and the name denotes the person (Matt. 28:19). We were baptized into the person of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, so after being baptized we are in the Triune God. God and we are in the heavens, but also we are in Him and He is in us. We and God are coinhering. We should enjoy this wonderful coinherence with the Triune God.

The Jews only believe God, but we believe “in” God. The difference between the Jews believing and our believing depends on the small preposition *in*. We believe in God, and actually in Greek the preposition for *in* is *into*. We believe into God. When we believed in the Lord Jesus, we believed into the Triune God, and at the same time the Triune God came into us. There is no way to demonstrate the fact that we are in God and God is in us. We are not on this earth, but we are in the heavens, on the one hand, and in God, on the other hand.

This very God who is in us is the source of life. The throne of God and of the Lamb should be the center of our being. In the meeting we may say the throne is in us, but many times when the sisters go shopping, the throne is thrown away to the heavens. The brothers also need to ask themselves if they have the throne of God in them in doing business. Who is our Lord, Head, and authority in our daily life? Many times even in small things such as buying a tie or a pair of shoes, we would not let the throne in our heart.

We must realize that whenever the throne is gone, there is no source of the flow. This is why many times we have the feeling that we are dry and even dried up. There is not the flow of the living water because we do not accept or recognize the lordship, the headship, and the authority of the Triune God in the very center of our being. This is why the throne is the last item revealed concerning the New Jerusalem. Without the throne, the New Jerusalem does not have a center, and without the throne, there is no flow of life. As a result, the entire New Jerusalem would be dried up and even starved to death. The water of life flows out of the throne, and the tree of life grows in the water of life and on the two sides of the river of the water of life as a vine producing timely fruits for the food of God's redeemed for eternity. Both the water of life and the tree of life are the issue of the

throne. If there were no throne in you, what would be the issue? Many Christians are dried up, starved to death, and there is no growth in life because the throne is put away to the heavens and is not in their experience.

The tree of life also has leaves for the healing of the nations, symbolizing the deeds of Christ guiding and regulating the nations outwardly that they may live the human life forever. This indicates that when we enjoy Christ as the tree of life, the unbelievers are regulated by our conduct, which we live out of Christ.

Every single saint is a “little New Jerusalem.” Within you in the center of your being there should be the throne of God and of the Lamb. Whenever you would take the Triune God as your Head, that will be the time when something begins to flow in your being. We have to apply this to our daily life in every instance and in every small thing. Even in our talk to our children and in our talk to our spouse, we have to practice submitting ourselves to the inner throne. Do not look into the heavens, but look to the center of your entire being where there should be a throne. The throne should be prevailing in the center of your being. Then the water of life will be proceeding out of the throne to supply you and to bring to you the tree of life, which nourishes you all day long.

#### **OUR DAILY LIFE—A LIFE OF THE NEW JERUSALEM**

Our daily life must be a life of the New Jerusalem. In that day when we arrive at the ultimate consummation of the divine revelation, we should not be surprised, because today we are experiencing the same thing. What will be in the New Jerusalem will be an intensification and a consummation of our present experience. We are now experiencing the same thing day by day in our family life, in our marriage life, in our school life, in our business life, and in our church life. We are experiencing the throne of God and of the Lamb out of which flows the Triune God for our enjoyment. The water of life, the flow of the Spirit of life, is the divine life in resurrection for the drink of God’s redeemed (Rev. 22:17b; John 7:38-40). This river of water of life proceeding out of the throne is bright as crystal with no dimness or opaqueness, purifying God’s redeemed and making them transparent.

In the last forty years of my ministry, I have not had a heart to speak concerning anything else. What burdens me in my ministry is to tell people that the Triune God is flowing Himself into their being. I have spoken this one thing from many directions and with many messages. The last pages of the New Testament are on the throne, out of which flows the Triune God. The river flows with the God who purposed, with the Lamb who redeemed, and with the Spirit who is now the all-inclusive, processed, triune, life-giving Spirit. I do not want to merely teach you concerning the throne in Revelation 22, but I believe that while you are reading this chapter, the throne of God and of the Lamb, out of which the Triune God flows, is being spoken into you. The Triune God is now flowing into you as the water of life with the tree of life growing in it. (*God’s New Testament Economy*, pp. 387-393)

#### **THE LORD BEING THE CHILDREN’S BREAD FOR MAN TO EAT**

Let us use an illustration. Matthew 15 speaks about the Lord leaving the land of

Judea and withdrawing to the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman came forward and cried, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter suffers terribly from demon possession" (v. 22). Although she was a Gentile woman, she addressed the Lord Jesus as the Son of David according to the traditional concept of Judaism. However, the Lord replied, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs" (v. 26). The woman used the religious title *Son of David*; Jesus' answer was concerning a piece of bread. There was a vast difference between the words they said to each other.

The Son of David as a royal descendant and an heir to the throne was a great man. In man's religious concept Christ was considered an incredibly great man and the Heir in the royal family. However, Jesus' reply was that He was the children's bread. Now let me ask you, "Who is greater, the Son of David or the children?" Everyone will agree that the Son of David is greater. Now let me ask you another question: "Which is greater, the children or the children's bread?" Needless to say, the children are greater than the children's bread. Therefore, consider this: Who is greater, you or the Lord Jesus? You have to boldly say, "I am greater because I am a child, and He is the bread." However, you would dare not declare that you are greater, because of the influence of the traditional concepts in religion. To say that we are greater than the Lord is not a blasphemy to the Lord but a genuine knowing of the Lord. With all sincerity of heart, you can say, "Lord, I thank You and praise You! Today You have become my food. The eater is always greater than the food. Lord, You have become the small food for me to eat!"

When the Lord Jesus withdrew to Tyre and Sidon, there appeared a Canaanite woman who was pitiful, lowly, and base. She regarded the Lord Jesus as the Son of David, a descendant of the royal household. However, the Lord was wise, and His response was wonderful—simple but profound. He said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." He wanted the Canaanite woman to know this: "If I were the Son of David, I would not have come to you. The Son of David should be on the throne, not in Tyre and Sidon. You have to know that I am the children's bread. You have to also know your position. If I were the Son of David, you would not be qualified to cry out to Me. If I were the children's bread, you would neither be qualified to eat Me. You are a Gentile dog. You do not know Me thoroughly, nor do you know yourself accurately."

The Lord was truly wise, and the meaning of His answer was truly profound. Nevertheless, on that day the Holy Spirit worked in the Canaanite woman so that her understanding was opened immediately after hearing the Lord's word. She did not argue or get angry. It is as if she said, "Lord, You are right. You are the children's bread, and I am a heathen dog. However, You have to know that even dogs have their portion. The dogs' portion is not on the table but under the table. The dogs cannot eat the bread on the table, but shouldn't the crumbs under the table be their portion?" The response of this Canaanite woman was also very meaningful. It is tantamount to saying, "Lord, You have to know that even though You are the children's bread, the bread is not on the table anymore because Your naughty children have dropped You off the table. As a heathen dog, I am under the table, but You also are under the

table. I am in Tyre and Sidon, but You also are not in Jerusalem. Hence, You are now my portion.”

**NOT MERELY ASKING THE LORD  
TO DO THINGS FOR US BUT EATING THE LORD**

The Canaanite woman came to ask the Lord to do something for her. She begged the Lord to heal her sick daughter. However, the Lord’s answer did not give any hint that He was going to do something. He said that He was the bread to feed her. By this we understand that we do not need the Lord Jesus to do anything for us; instead, we need to eat the Lord Jesus. Sisters, is your husband ill? Do not ask the Lord first to heal his sickness. The reason your husband is ill is so that you may eat the Lord Jesus. Take the Lord Jesus into you, and then your husband’s illness will be healed. Are you vexed by your children’s disobedience? You often pray that the Lord will perform a miracle to make your children obedient. However, the more you pray, the less effective your prayers are; the more you pray, the more disobedient your children are. Now you have to learn this secret: You have to eat the Lord more. Eat the Lord well, and your child will be healed.

Whenever you have a need, it is a proof that you need to eat the Lord Jesus. Have you lost your job? Do not pray to the Lord for a good job. All you need to do is eat the Lord Jesus, and the job will appear. When unbelievers hear these words, they will think that I am talking nonsense, but the experienced ones know that the job comes out of our eating the Lord. Do not ask the Lord Jesus to do something outside of you. Rather, eat the Lord Jesus and take Him into your being.

Brothers and sisters, we have all seen that the Lord Jesus has truly come to be our food. We need to change our concept. The elders in all the localities are faithfully managing the churches, bearing the churches on their hearts, and earnestly hoping that the churches will go on. Being anxious for the churches is good but not effective. Do not ask the Lord to help you take good care of the churches; you have to turn to take a few bites of the Lord Jesus. When you eat more of the Lord Jesus, the churches will be enlivened.

This is the central viewpoint in the New Testament. The Lord came not to work for us but to feed us. It is wrong to ask the Lord to till the ground for you like an ox; it is also wrong to shear the Lord of wool for your beauty. When the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15 asked the Lord Jesus to heal her sick daughter, the Lord replied in effect, “Do not ask Me to be an ox to till the ground for you; I am the crumbs for you to eat! Regardless of whether or not your daughter is sick, just eat Me! Eat Me, and your daughter will be healed!”

Brothers and sisters, your family life has problems because you do not eat Jesus. When the wives eat Jesus, the husbands change for the better; when the husbands eat Jesus, the wives change for the better. When the children eat Jesus, the parents no longer are a problem. When the parents eat the Lord Jesus, the children have a turn. You need to take the Lord Jesus into you and let Him become your life, your food, and your everything; then your circumstances will change. Actually, we do not care whether our circumstances are good or bad; we only care to eat and enjoy the

Lord. The Lord is for you to eat! You first eat under the table, and then after a while you eat what is on the table. When the Gentile dogs eat Christ, they become the children of God. After the children eat more of Christ, they become the precious stones. In Revelation 2 the Lord told the messenger of the church in Pergamos, “To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone” (v. 17). The white stone is the one who overcomes. The one who eats the hidden manna eventually becomes the white stone for God’s building. (*Eating the Lord*, pp. 18-20, 22-24)