

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

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four

### The Fellowship of Life

Scripture Reading: Rev. 22:1-2; 1 John 1:3, 7; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 1:9

- I. **“He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street”—Rev. 22:1:**
  - A. In the New Jerusalem the fellowship of life begins from the throne and reaches all the gates; this fellowship is in the flow of life (the river), with the supply of life (the tree), and on the way of life (the street)—vv. 1-2; 21:2.
  - B. As portrayed by the flowing of the water of life in the New Jerusalem, the function of the fellowship of life is to supply us with all the riches of the divine life—22:1-2.
- II. **First John unfolds the mystery of the fellowship of life—1:3, 7:**
  - A. The fellowship of life is the flow of the eternal life within all the believers, illustrated by the flow of the water of life in the New Jerusalem; the reality of the Body of Christ, the church life in actuality, is the flow of the Lord Jesus within us, and this flowing One must have the preeminence within us—Rev. 22:1; Col. 1:18b; cf. Ezek. 47:1.
  - B. The fellowship of life is the imparting of the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—into the believers as their unique portion and blessing for them to enjoy today and for eternity—1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14.
  - C. Fellowship indicates a putting away of private interests and a joining with others for a certain common purpose; hence, to be in the divine fellowship is to put aside our private interests and join with the apostles and the Triune God for the carrying out of God’s purpose—Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3.
  - D. The fellowship of life is realized by the sense of life and is preserved by the sense of life—Rom. 8:6.
  - E. The fellowship of life is carried out by the Spirit in our regenerated spirit, and thus it is called the “fellowship of spirit”—Phil. 2:1; 2 Cor. 13:14.
- III. **The divine fellowship is everything in the Christian life—1 John 1:3, 7:**
  - A. When fellowship disappears, God also disappears; God comes as the fellowship—1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 22:1.
  - B. The divine fellowship blends us, tempers us, adjusts us, harmonizes us, and mingles us together into one Body—1 Cor. 10:16-18; 12:24-25.
- IV. **Just as there is the circulation of blood in the human body, so there is a circulation in the Body of Christ—a circulation which the New Testament calls fellowship, the fellowship of life—1 John 1:3, 7:**

- A. Fellowship is a common participation, a joint participation; thus, to have fellowship is to have a corporate participation in something—Phil. 4:14; 2:1.
- B. In order to have the unique fellowship, we must live by and behave in the divine life, not in our natural life—Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11.
- C. The church life depends upon the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; the current, the fellowship, of the Divine Trinity within us, as revealed in 2 Corinthians 13:14, is our spiritual pulse.
- D. The fellowship of life is the reality of the church life; thus, we should seek to live in this fellowship so that we may enjoy Christ in the church—1 Cor. 1:2, 9, 30.

**V. The fellowship of life is related to oneness—v. 9; 6:17; 10:16-17; 12:20:**

- A. The fellowship, the circulation, of the divine life in the Body brings all the members of the Body into oneness—Eph. 4:3-6.
- B. As long as we have the divine life flowing within us, we are in this oneness—the oneness of the Body, the oneness among all the saints—1 Cor. 12:12-13.
- C. The fellowship of the divine life, as the issue of God in His faithfulness, causes us to participate in, to partake of, to enjoy, Christ in His all-inclusiveness as the solution to all the problems in the church; we should focus on Him, not on any persons, matters, or things other than Him, so that all the problems among the believers may be solved—1:9.

**VI. The fellowship of the eternal life is the reality of living in the Body of Christ in the oneness of the Spirit—10:16-18; Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:3:**

- A. We enter into the vertical aspect of the divine fellowship by the divine Spirit, the Holy Spirit; this aspect of fellowship refers to our fellowship with the Triune God in our loving Him—2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 1:3, 6; Mark 12:30.
- B. We enter into the horizontal aspect of the divine fellowship by the human spirit; this aspect of fellowship refers to our fellowship with one another by the exercise of our spirit in our loving one another—Phil. 2:1; Rev. 1:10; 1 John 1:2-3, 7; 1 Cor. 16:18; Mark 12:31; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-15.
- C. The one divine fellowship is an interwoven fellowship—the horizontal fellowship is interwoven with the vertical fellowship—1 John 1:3, 7:
  - 1. The initial experience of the apostles was the vertical fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, but when the apostles reported the eternal life to others, they experienced the horizontal aspect of the divine fellowship—vv. 2-3; cf. Acts 2:42.
  - 2. Our horizontal fellowship with the saints brings us into vertical fellowship with the Lord; then our vertical fellowship with the Lord brings us into horizontal fellowship with the saints.
  - 3. We must maintain both the vertical and horizontal aspects of the divine fellowship in order to be healthy spiritually—cf. 1 John 1:7, 9.
- D. The fellowship among the churches is the fellowship of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 10:16:
  - 1. Because there is one Spirit, there is only one Body, and there is only one circulation of life in the Body; this circulation is the fellowship of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:4; 1 John 1:3, 7.

2. A local church is a part of the unique Body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Body is universally one; in fellowship there is no separation—Rev. 1:11; 2:7a.

**VII. The fellowship of life, the flow of the divine life, mingles us with the Triune God for His corporate expression—21:23; 22:1-2, 5:**

- A. The flow of the divine life causes us to become precious materials for the building up of the New Jerusalem—Gen. 2:10-12, 22; Rev. 22:1-2; 21:11, 18-21.
- B. The flowing of the Triune God as the fellowship of life causes us to become the New Jerusalem—John 4:14b.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST**

We need to see in a brief way the fellowship of the Body of Christ. In our physical body there is a current of blood, which we may call the circulation of the blood. This current, or this circulation, is going on continuously in our physical body. If this circulation, or this current of blood, were to stop for only a few minutes, we would die. Thus, it is the circulation of our blood that keeps us alive. The health of our body depends on the circulation of our blood. We may say that this circulation is the fellowship of our body.

The fellowship of the Body of Christ is very similar to the circulation of the blood in our body. We have been enlightened to see that Christ has a Body and that we are members of His Body, that is, members of Christ Himself. Just as our physical body has many members, Christ's Body also has many members. And just as a man has only one body—this is a principle ordained in God's creation—Christ also has only one Body. If we do not understand the church as the Body of Christ, we should simply look at our own body. We can understand Christ's Body by knowing our own body. I have learned a great deal concerning the Body of Christ by learning to know my own body. If we learn to know our body, we will know the Body of Christ.

The circulation of the blood is the fellowship of our body. The fellowship of Christ's Body also is a kind of circulation. In our physical body we have the circulation of the blood, but Christ's mystical Body does not have blood. The fellowship in Christ's Body, then, is the circulation of the Spirit. The Spirit today is the "blood" in Christ's Body. If there were no blood in our body, our body would be dried up and would be dead. Likewise, if Christ's Body did not have the Spirit, it would be like a corpse. Thus, the fellowship of the Body of Christ is simply the circulation, the current, of the Spirit—not the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God, but *the* Spirit. In the New Testament *the Spirit* denotes the consummated Spirit, the Spirit who has been consummated, compounded, and mingled and who is now dispensing. In this Spirit there is divinity, that is, God's divine nature, and there is humanity, that is, man's human nature. There is also Christ's person, Christ's wonderful, all-inclusive death, and Christ's empowering resurrection with His ascension. All these elements have been compounded into this one Spirit. When this one Spirit is circulating within the Body of Christ, divinity, humanity, Christ's person, Christ's death, and Christ's resurrection all are circulating. How wonderful this is!

The circulation of the blood is very important to our physical body. This circulation carries nourishment to every part of our body, and it also causes our body to be cherished. At times we may need to do some physical exercises to improve the circulation in our body. This may cause us to be more healthy. Romans 10:12 says that whenever we call on the name of the Lord, the Lord becomes rich to us. I have discovered that the more we call on the Lord with a loud voice, the more our spirit is released and the more we are healed and strengthened. Such calling on the Lord will make us very healthy, because to call in this way is to exercise. If we are always quiet and shut up within ourselves, we will be very weak. But if we call, “O Lord Jesus! O Lord! O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!” for ten minutes, the Lord will become rich to us. We will have joy, and eventually we will have strength. The joy of the Lord will be our strength (Neh. 8:10). I have learned the secret of calling on the name of the Lord. The Lord is rich to all who call on Him. To call is not merely to pray. The Greek word for *call* means to cry out, even loudly. In certain situations it would not be appropriate for us to call on the Lord loudly. However, when we are in a proper situation to do so, we should call loudly, “O Lord Jesus! Amen!” By calling on the Lord in this way, we will enjoy the riches of Christ, and we will be strengthened. This is because our calling on the name of the Lord causes the Spirit to circulate within us. This circulating Spirit is the compound Spirit, who includes divinity, humanity, Christ’s person, Christ’s death, and Christ’s resurrection. The riches in this compound Spirit are unsearchable. When this Spirit circulates within us, we enjoy all Christ’s riches. This circulation is the fellowship of the Body of Christ.

### **The Body of Christ Being Uniquely One Universally**

The Body of Christ is uniquely one universally (Eph. 4:4-6). Individually, we are members of the Body of Christ, and all the local churches are parts of this one unique Body of Christ. As those who are in the Body, we need to realize that we are one with all the saints in the entire universe. Ephesians 4:4-6 depicts a oneness that is universal: “One Body and one Spirit, as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” In these verses we can see that the Triune God is mingled with the Body. The Body mentioned here is not local; rather, it is universal. This is the universal oneness of the Body of Christ.

### **The Fellowship of the Body of Christ Also Being Uniquely One Universally**

Since the Body of Christ is uniquely one universally, the fellowship of the Body of Christ also is uniquely one universally.

### **THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE APOSTLES**

The fellowship of the Body of Christ is the fellowship of the apostles—the divine fellowship between all the believers and the Triune God. The term *the fellowship of the apostles* is used in Acts 2:42: “And they were continuing steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles.” Then, 1 John 1:3 tells us that the fellowship of the apostles is not merely with us, the believers, but also with the Father and the Son. Here John did not mention the Spirit directly, because he was speaking in the

Spirit. The Spirit was there already. The fellowship of the apostles is the fellowship of the Body of Christ, the divine fellowship between all the believers and the Triune God.

The fellowship of the apostles is based upon the apostles' teaching. Fellowship always comes after teaching. If there is no teaching, there is no element or realm of the fellowship. Actually, the teaching is the element and the realm of the fellowship. By the Lord's mercy, today in the Lord's recovery we are under the apostles' teaching and in the apostles' fellowship. The fellowship of the recovery which we are in is the recovered fellowship of the apostles. This fellowship was lost, but it has been recovered. Today we are in the fellowship of the apostles, which is the fellowship of the Lord's recovery. If you are a Baptist, you are in the fellowship of the Baptists. But the fellowship of the Baptists is narrower than the fellowship of the apostles, so they cannot claim that their fellowship is the fellowship of the apostles. We need to see and have the boldness to say that we are in the fellowship of the recovery which is the recovered apostles' fellowship.

#### **THE FELLOWSHIP FOR THE LORD'S UNIQUE RECOVERY**

We always need to remember that we are in the Lord's recovery and that His recovery is unique. There is not another recovery, just as there is not another Body of Christ or another New Testament. The fellowship of the apostles is the fellowship for this unique recovery of the Lord. When we see something going on in the recovery which is not so good, we need to have this kind of fellowship and a proper attitude. When a man marries someone, he is bound to her for as long as he lives. If he is unhappy with her, he cannot divorce her. He should try the best to help his wife by fellowshipping to improve in a nice and living way. He should not charge her to improve but help her to improve. This is the right way. When we see something wrong in the recovery or in any of the local churches, we should try the best to help the situation by fellowshipping so that it can be improved and corrected. If there is anything wrong, we can and should fellowship and pray together and seek the Lord's leading to improve the situation for the benefit of all the saints. This will be a real help to the Lord's recovery.

We should not have the thought that we can do a particular work according to our way in the recovery. We may be very gifted and have a large capacity to work out something. But what we work out may be the same as worldly people carrying out a certain enterprise. We have to realize that in the Lord's recovery there is only one work.

When I came into the recovery, I realized what the recovery was and that it was uniquely one. The one who brought the recovery to China among us was Brother Watchman Nee. If I would not have taken the way of the recovery, I could have had a work in northern China, but I gave that up. I fully realized that the Lord has only one Body, one work, one Bible, one revelation, and one current, one flow, in one fellowship. At that time Brother Nee was being used by the Lord. I never tried to speak anything different from his teaching. This does not mean that I did not have any other teachings, but my speaking always followed Brother Nee's speaking in

order to keep the unique fellowship in the Lord's unique recovery. I felt that it was a glory to participate in the Lord's recovery in such a subjective way with Brother Nee. I thank the Lord that He had mercy upon me in helping me to have the best choice. In Moses' blessing in Deuteronomy 33, there is the term "the choicest things" (vv. 13-16). I realize that the Lord has been giving me the choicest things throughout my years in the recovery. This is due to His mercy in placing me and keeping me all the time in His recovery. As long as we are preserved in the Lord's way, we are preserved in the oneness in the unique fellowship. There is only one Lord, one Body, one Bible, one divine revelation, one speaking, one recovery, one fellowship, and one way to practice the recovery.

#### **THE NEED FOR THE FELLOWSHIP AMONG THE CHURCHES**

Our problem today is related to the matter of fellowship. We are in the fellowship of the recovery, but do we fellowship? For example, do the brothers in Sacramento fellowship with the brothers in Chicago, Cleveland, or Wichita? Among the churches in the Lord's recovery, there is not much fellowship. We have seen that the problems between Barnabas and Saul were probably due to a lack of proper and adequate fellowship. If we are not in fellowship, problems can come in among us.

The circulation of blood in our physical body is a good picture of the fellowship, the flow of the divine life, in the Body of Christ. If our blood circulation is not proper, this can cause much sickness to our body. The proper blood circulation swallows up all kinds of germs. I was in Taipei for about five years beginning in late 1984. After about three of those years, trouble came in among the churches. The trouble in the churches today is due to the shortage of the fellowship, the circulation of the blood. This lack of fellowship gave the enemy an opportunity to come in.

We are even very short of fellowship with the churches who are close to us geographically. There is very little circulation. If my shoulder were not participating adequately in the blood circulation of my body, it would be sick. No part of my physical body can be separate from the other parts since all the parts must participate in the one blood circulation. Some may think that they are wise to keep themselves separate. But if any part of the Body of Christ is separate, that part will eventually die. The best way to stay healthy is to "receive more blood and to give more blood," that is, to stay in the fellowship, the circulation of life. Then we will save ourselves and promote the healing of the Body. In some places there has been no peace because of a lack of fellowship. The more fellowship we have, the more peace we have.

The reason why many people are weak physically is that they sit too much. They do not move. It is the same spiritually. We are sick and weak because we remain with ourselves, in ourselves, and for ourselves. We are sick because we are so much in ourselves. We need to get out of ourselves by fellowshiping with the other churches. If we want to get helped, the secret is to go to see some brothers in another locality. The brothers in Texas should not have traffic among themselves only. They need to go to Chicago, Cleveland, and Seattle and break the boundary of Texas.

I would like to make a proposal to the leading brothers. Perhaps ten days from today, fifty brothers from fifty cities can go to a certain church to be in their Lord's

Day morning meeting at 10 a.m. I can assure you that you will receive the help and that the church will be helped. Today there are many opinions among the churches concerning the churches. Other churches have opinions concerning the church in Cleveland and the church in Anaheim. The church in a certain city may have many opinions about other localities. Each local church may have some opinions about other local churches. All of these opinions need to be thrown away. How can they be thrown away? They can be thrown away by the circulation, the fellowship. If the waste in our physical body is not discharged regularly, we will die. The circulation of blood within our body is like a river that always carries away the waste in our being so that it can be discharged. In like manner, the fellowship in the Body carries away all the negative things.

Some brothers may be afraid for others to come and visit them. But what we need today among the churches is more divine circulation, more fellowship. There are about fifty churches in California, but there is not much fellowship among them. This is where our shortcoming is, and this is why we are weak. The circulation helps us and helps others. It helps everyone in the Body. We need the fellowship. This fellowship is the fellowship of the apostles, which is today the fellowship of the recovery. The fellowship today among us is the recovered apostles' fellowship.

All the churches around the globe are part of the one recovery of the Lord. There should not be any boundaries of separation among the churches. Some co-workers in the past did have the feeling that a certain area was their territory. But we need to see that it is not healthy or profitable in the Lord's recovery for anyone to have a boundary for his work. The only boundary is the boundary of the recovery. We should not say, "That's my church. That's the work in my territory." We have only one work. That work is the work of the recovery based upon the teaching of the apostles. The remedy to the problem of so-called boundaries and territories among the churches is the fellowship. We should not have the thought that others coming to our place may disturb our work. We do not need to defend our work. Our work is the Lord's work, which is the recovery's work. We need the adequate fellowship among all the churches in all the nations, and we need a clear vision concerning the apostles' teaching and the apostles' fellowship.

#### **TO KEEP THE UNIVERSAL ONENESS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST**

This fellowship is to keep the universal oneness of the Body of Christ (John 17:11b, 20-23; Eph. 4:3-6). Ephesians 4:3 charges us to endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit. We can keep this oneness because it is our possession already. We have this oneness; thus, we only need to keep it. Regardless of how weak we may be, we still have this oneness. This is because we still have the circulation of the "blood," the circulation of the Spirit. If we did not have this circulation, we would be spiritually dead. As long as we have life, regardless of how weak we may be, we have this oneness. It is the possession of every believer. What we need, then, is just to keep this oneness. When we keep this oneness, we are in the unique fellowship of the Lord's recovery. (*A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 36-43)