

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

(Lord's Day—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight

Having the Glory of God

Scripture Reading: Rev. 21:10-11, 23; 1 Thes. 2:12; 2 Thes. 2:14; 1:10

- I. “He...showed me the holy city, Jerusalem...having the glory of God”—Rev. 21:10-11:**
- A. Glory is the expression of God, God expressed in splendor—v. 23.
 - B. An outstanding feature of the New Jerusalem is that it has the glory of God, His expression—v. 11a:
 - 1. The entire city of New Jerusalem will bear the glory of God, which is God Himself shining out through the city—vv. 23, 11b.
 - 2. The glory of God will actually be the content of the New Jerusalem, for this city will be completely filled with His glory; this indicates that the city is a vessel to contain God and express Him.
 - 3. The glory of God is actually God Himself being manifested (Acts 7:2); the fact that the New Jerusalem is full of God's glory means that God is manifested in this city.
 - C. The church today also should have God's glory, manifesting and expressing Him in this marvelous divine attribute—John 17:22; Eph. 3:21.
- II. The glory of God is intrinsically related to the economy of God—1:10, 12; 3:9, 16-17, 21:**
- A. God is a God of glory—Acts 7:2; Eph. 1:17; 3:14, 16; 1 Cor. 2:8; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:14.
 - B. God's purpose is to bring many sons into glory—Heb. 2:10; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:6-7, 12, 14.
 - C. God created us as vessels prepared unto glory—Rom. 9:23.
 - D. Sin is falling short of God's glory—3:23.
 - E. Christ's redemption has fulfilled the requirements of God's glory—vv. 24-25; Heb. 9:5; cf. Gen. 3:24.
 - F. Through the gospel of the glory of God, God has called us into His eternal glory—2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Pet. 5:10; 1 Thes. 2:12.
 - G. We have been predestined for God's glory, called into it, and will be brought into it—1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Thes. 2:12; Heb. 2:10.
 - H. Christ in us is the hope of glory—Col. 1:27; 3:4.
 - I. We are being transformed into the Lord's image from glory to glory—2 Cor. 3:18.
 - J. The goal of God's organic salvation, and the last stage of this salvation, is glory—Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:17, 21, 30.
 - K. Christ as the Author, the Captain, the Pioneer, of our salvation is leading many sons into glory—Heb. 2:10.

- L. We will enter into the highest stage of oneness—the oneness in the divine glory—John 17:22.
- M. There is glory to God in the church—vv. 22-23; Eph. 3:21.
- N. There will be the glory of God in the kingdom—Matt. 6:13; 16:27; 26:64; Rev. 5:12-13.
- O. The believers will be glorified with Christ to bear the glory of God for God's expression in the New Jerusalem—Rom. 8:17, 30; Rev. 21:10-11.
- P. The glory of God in the economy of God involves deification—God becoming man that man may become God in life, in nature, and in expression—John 1:14; Col. 3:4; Heb. 2:10; Rev. 21:10-11.

III. God has called us to enter into His kingdom and glory—1 Thes. 2:12:

- A. God's glory goes with His kingdom and is expressed in the realm of His kingdom—Matt. 6:10, 13b; Psa. 145:11-13:
 1. The kingdom is the realm for God to exercise His power so that He may express His glory—Rev. 5:10, 13.
 2. The shining of the kingdom is for the glorification of the Father—Matt. 5:16.
 3. The kingdom of God is God being manifested through us; the expression of God from within us is the kingdom—vv. 14-15; 1 Cor. 4:20; 10:31.
- B. The kingdom of God is God's manifestation in His glory with His authority for His divine administration; hence, entering into the kingdom of God and entering into the expressed glory of God take place at the same time as one thing—Heb. 2:10; Matt. 5:20; Rev. 21:9-11; 22:1, 5.

IV. Through the gospel God has called us “unto the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”—2 Thes. 2:14:

- A. The glory which the Father has given the Son (John 17:22) is the sonship with the Father's life and divine nature (5:26) to express the Father in His fullness (1:18; 14:9; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3).
- B. This glory the Son has given to His believers so that they also may have the sonship with the Father's life and divine nature (John 17:2; 2 Pet. 1:4) to express the Father in the Son in His fullness (John 1:16).
- C. God has called us unto the obtaining of this glory, the glory of the divine life and the divine nature to express the Divine Being—2 Thes. 2:14.

V. The gospel is the gospel of the glory of Christ—2 Cor. 4:4:

- A. Christ is the image of God and the effulgence of His glory; hence, the gospel of Christ is the gospel of His glory that illuminates and shines forth—Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Rev. 6:2.
- B. The gospel is the gospel of the glory of Christ, which illuminates, radiates, and shines in our hearts—2 Cor. 4:4, 6.
- C. Through the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, the Christ of glory as the excellent treasure is received by the believers; now the shining reality of Christ, the embodiment and expression of the Triune God, is the treasure within us—vv. 6-7.

- D. God shines in our hearts that we may shine on others so that they may have the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that is, the knowledge of Christ, who expresses and declares God—2:17; 4:2, 5; John 1:18.
- E. Those who receive the gospel of glory through our shining will have Christ as the precious treasure dispensed into them; then, like us, they will be earthen vessels containing this priceless treasure—2 Cor. 4:4, 6-7.

VI. The Lord Jesus is coming “to be glorified in His saints”—2 Thes. 1:10:

- A. Christ is the Lord of glory, and He was glorified in His resurrection and ascension—1 Cor. 2:8; John 17:1; Luke 24:26; Heb. 2:9.
- B. Christ is in us as the hope of glory to bring us into glory—Col. 1:27; Heb. 2:10.
- C. The coming again of Christ in glory has two aspects:
 1. On the one hand, the Lord Jesus will come from the heavens with glory—Rev. 10:1; Matt. 25:31.
 2. On the other hand, He will be glorified in His saints; that is, His glory will be manifested from within His members, causing their body of humiliation to be transfigured into His glory, conforming it to the body of His glory—2 Thes. 1:10; Phil. 3:21.
 3. “He comes, He comes, Christ comes to glorify me! / My body He’ll transfigure, like His own it then will be. / He comes, He comes, redemption to apply! / As Hope of glory He will come, His saints to glorify”—*Hymns*, #949.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE LORD SPIRIT

Transforming Us into the Image of the Lord of Glory

We are told in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that we are being transformed “even as from the Lord Spirit.” The preposition *from* here indicates that transformation is proceeding from the Spirit rather than being caused by Him. In order for the Spirit to do His transforming work in us, there is the need for a certain essence to be dispensed into us by the Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit is working in us to transform us in life, nature, essence, element, form, appearance, and every aspect of our being by dispensing the divine life, nature, element, and essence into us. This means that the divine life, nature, essence, element, and being are dispensed by the Spirit into our life, nature, essence, element, and being to cause a metabolic change within us. This change is organic, because it is a change in our being by another being, in our life by another life, in our nature by another nature, and in our element and essence by another element and essence. This transformation is from the Lord Spirit.

Christ as the Lord Spirit is now doing a transforming work within us as He imparts Himself into us as life. When we open to Him, behold Him, and reflect Him, we are under the process of transformation. All that He is, is transfused into our being. Through being transfused with what He is, we will be completely transformed. Today we are being transformed into His image from one stage of glory to another, until eventually we will be the same as He. This takes place only by means of Christ as the Lord Spirit.

The glory in 2 Corinthians 3:18 is the glory of Christ as the resurrected and

ascended One, who as both God and man passed through incarnation, human living, and crucifixion, entered into resurrection, accomplished full redemption, and became a life-giving Spirit. As the life-giving Spirit, the resurrected Christ dwells in us to make Himself and all He has accomplished, obtained, and attained real to us, that we may be one with Him and may be transformed into His image from glory to glory. When we with unveiled face are beholding and reflecting the glory of the Lord, He infuses us with the elements of what He is and what He has done. Thus, we are being transformed metabolically to have His life shape by His life power with His life essence; that is, we are being transfigured, mainly by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2), into His image. This transformation is from glory to glory, that is, from the Lord Spirit to the Lord Spirit. The Lord Spirit is upon the Lord Spirit. This means that the Lord Spirit as the rich supply is continually added into our being.

To be transformed is to have Christ added into our being to replace what we are so that Christ may increase and our natural life may decrease. As the process of transformation takes place within us, the old element of our natural being is carried away, and the glory, the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit, is added into us to replace the natural element. The process of transformation is both organic and metabolic. It is organic because it is related to life, and it is metabolic because it is related to a process in which an old element is discharged and a new element is added.

There is a difference between change and transformation. Transformation involves the process of metabolism. However, something may change in an outward way without any inward metabolic transformation. In the process of metabolism a new element is supplied to an organism. This new element replaces the old element and causes it to be discharged. Therefore, as the process of metabolism takes place within a living organism, something new is added to it to replace the old element, which is carried away. Metabolism thus includes three matters: the supplying of a new element, the replacing of the old element with the new element, and the discharge or the removal of the old element so that something new may be produced.

Transformation is a metabolic process, a metabolic change. The Spirit's work in transforming us involves a change in our whole being—in life, nature, essence, element, form, and appearance. Transformation is not outward change, correction, or adjustment; transformation is altogether an inward, metabolic change of our being. Therefore, we may define transformation as a divine, spiritual metabolism wherein a new element is added to the old to discharge the old and to produce something new.

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul tells us that we are in the process of being transformed into "the same image." This is the image of the resurrected and glorified Christ. To be transformed into the same image is to be conformed to the resurrected and glorified Christ, to be made the same as He is (Rom. 8:29).

When we behold and reflect the glory of the Lord, He infuses us with the element of what He is and what He has done. In other words, He dispenses this element into us. The result is that we are being transformed metabolically to have His life shape by His life power with His life essence. We are then transformed into His image.

The constitution of life involves the life essence, the life power, and the life shape. Every kind of life has these three things—the essence, the power, and the shape. For example, a carnation flower has an essence and a power. Therefore, it is formed into a certain shape. As it grows with the life essence and by the life power, it is shaped into a particular form. It is the same with the divine life. This life has its essence, power, and shape. The shape of the divine life is the image of Christ. Thus, in 2 Corinthians 3:18 we have the thought of being transformed into the same image, the image of the resurrected and glorified Christ. This means that we will be shaped into the image of Christ. Based upon this fact and upon Paul’s use of the word *transformed*, we may speak of being metabolically constituted into the image of Christ.

From One Degree of Glory to Another

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul also tells us that we are being transformed into the same image “from glory to glory.” This means that we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another degree. This indicates an ongoing process of life in resurrection. Transformation does not happen once for all; rather, it is gradual, from one degree of glory to another. In the pathway of transformation, we proceed progressively from one level of glory to another level of glory. Transformation is a pathway of glory; it increases from one degree of glory to another degree of glory until we are transformed into the image of the firstborn Son of God.

We need to see that the glory is Christ blossoming in resurrection. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was God incarnate. God was concealed within the physical body of the Lord Jesus. Inwardly there was God; outwardly there was the flesh, and with this flesh there was no glory. In John 17:1 the Lord Jesus prayed, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You.” When the Lord Jesus prayed that the Father would glorify Him, He actually prayed that He would enter into glory through death and resurrection. In Luke 24:26 He asked the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into His glory?” When the Lord Jesus spoke these words, He was already in resurrection. Thus, for Him to enter into His glory was for Him to be in resurrection. This verse reveals clearly that Christ’s resurrection was His glorification.

We may use the blossoming of a carnation flower as an illustration of the glory in 2 Corinthians 3:18 being Christ’s blossoming in resurrection. After a carnation seed is sown into the earth, the seed dies and then begins to grow up. It sprouts, grows into a plant, and eventually blossoms. This blossoming is the glorification of the carnation seed. Because a carnation seed dies when it is sown into the soil, we may say that its blossoming is its resurrection. Glorification, therefore, is equal to resurrection. Christ’s resurrection was His blossoming. This blossoming Christ, the resurrected Christ, is glory.

Furthermore, the resurrected Christ as the glory is the life-giving Spirit. Therefore, we may go on to say that the glory in 3:18 is actually the life-giving Spirit. As previously mentioned, *from glory to glory* in verse 18 means from the Lord Spirit

to the Lord Spirit, because in this verse *glory* and *Spirit* are synonyms. Therefore, to be transformed from glory to glory is to be transformed from the Spirit to the Spirit. Now we are in the process of being transformed from glory to glory. The more we live and walk in the life-giving Spirit, the more glory is added into our being and the more we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory. To be transformed from glory to glory far surpasses a mere outward improvement of behavior according to religious or ethical teachings.

Today the glory is the resurrected Christ, and this Christ is the Spirit. This means that the Lord as the glory is the Spirit living in us and dwelling in our spirit. Now that we have the Spirit indwelling our spirit, we need to exercise our spirit more and more by praying, reading the Word, and calling on the name of the Lord. The more we exercise our spirit with an unveiled face, the more we will behold the Lord. As we are gazing on Him, we will also reflect Him. While we are beholding and reflecting Him in this way, His element will be added into our being. This new element will replace and discharge the element of our old, natural life, and we will experience transformation, a metabolic change. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 3199-3203)

THE IMAGE OF GOD

The Illumination of the Gospel of His Glory Shining in the Believers

In 2 Corinthians 4:4 Paul says that “the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them.” This verse indicates that the terms *God*, *image*, *Christ*, *glory*, *gospel*, and *illumination* are all in apposition to one another; thus, they all refer to the same wonderful person. God is the image, the image is Christ, Christ is the glory, the glory is the gospel, and the gospel is the illumination. First, the expression *the image of God* shows that the image is in apposition to God. God, who is the source, has an image, and this image is simply God Himself. If we see the image of God, we see God; if God disappears, His image disappears as well. Since in verse 4 the image and God are in apposition to each other, they are one. Therefore, the image of God is nothing less than God Himself.

Second, as we have pointed out, the image of God is Christ. As the image of God, Christ is the expression of the invisible God. Third, Christ is the glory. This is confirmed by Hebrews 1:3, which says that Christ is the effulgence of God’s glory. Fourth, Christ, the glory, is the gospel. Acts tells us that the believers preached Christ Jesus as the gospel (5:42; 8:35; 11:20; 17:18). This shows that the gospel is not something separate from Christ; rather, Christ is the gospel. Today some Christians in their preaching separate the gospel from Christ. But according to the divine revelation in the Bible, the gospel is a living person, Christ. Christ who is the gospel is the image of God, and the image of God is God. Therefore, the gospel is God Himself embodied and expressed in Christ.

Fifth, the gospel is the illumination, the enlightenment. The gospel is the gospel of the glory of Christ, which illuminates, radiates, and shines in the heart of man.

When the gospel came to us, it came to us by shining, and this shining brought into us Christ, who is the image of the processed Triune God. As a result, Christ, the living person, was illuminated into our being. Many believers can testify that when they heard Christ as the gospel, a certain impression of Christ entered into them. Although they may try to reject this impression of Christ or erase it from their being, they cannot do it. Once the impression of Christ is illuminated into us, it remains within us forever. This illumination is the gospel, this gospel is the glory, this glory is Christ, Christ is the image of God, and as such, Christ is God. Therefore, what has been illuminated into our being is a living person, the Triune God embodied in Christ, who is the image, the expression, of God.

Furthermore, we need to see that the gospel of the glory of Christ first shines into us, and then it shines out from within us. The more the glory shines within us, the more it penetrates into our being and saturates it. Eventually, the inner glory will consume, swallow up, our entire inward being. Then the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ will shine out through us. Such a shining cannot come by way of teaching; it can come only through the experience of Christ who is Himself the glory of God and the manifestation of God. We praise the Lord that Christ has shone into the depths of our being, that now He is shining within us, and that He will shine throughout our inward being. Therefore, we need to pay attention to the inner shining of Christ as the glory within. The goal of God's economy is that we all shine forth His glory. As we are under such a shining, Christ saturates us with Himself, and we enjoy the sweetness of Christ living in us to be our life and our person.

The Illumination of the Knowledge of the Glory of God Being in His Face

Second Corinthians 4:4, speaking of "the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ," refers to four matters: illumination, gospel, glory, and Christ. Verse 6 goes on to say, "The God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." God's shining in our hearts results in the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that is, in the enlightenment that causes us to know the glory of the gospel of Christ. This illumination, the enlightenment, that makes the glory of Christ's gospel known to us, issues from the shining of God in our hearts. God's shining in the universe produced the old creation. His shining in our hearts has made us a new creation, because this shining brings into us, earthen vessels, the marvelous treasure of the Christ of glory.

The shining of God in our hearts is to illumine us that we may know the glory in Christ's face. The glory of God manifested in the face of Jesus Christ is the God of glory expressed through Jesus Christ, who is the effulgence of the glory of God (Heb. 1:3); to know Him is to know the God of glory. In particular, the illumination in 2 Corinthians 4:6, which refers to the shining of God's light on others out from those whose hearts have been enlightened by God, corresponds with the manifestation of the truth in verse 2 and is the same as the shining in Matthew 5:16 and Philippians 2:15. God shines in our hearts that we may shine on others so that they may have

the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that is, the knowledge of Christ, who expresses and declares God (John 1:18).

God's shining in our hearts is in the face of Christ. In order to experience God's shining, we need to have direct, personal, and intimate contact with Christ. This contact will cause God to shine in our hearts. God may shine upon us, but if we want Him to shine *in* us, we need to have direct, intimate contact with Him. This is the reason we call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. By calling on the Lord we are brought into face-to-face contact with Him and experience God's shining in our heart. Only when we have such direct, personal, and intimate contact with the Lord do we have the inner shining. Whenever we call on the Lord in a dear, intimate way, we are before His face, and the shining of God is in our heart. Then we may shine out what we have received for the shining of the glory of the gospel of Christ.

In our preaching of the gospel there should be an illumination, a shining. We need to preach the gospel in a very illuminating way. This means that while we are preaching, God shines into the hearts of those to whom we are speaking. We also need to help them to call on the name of the Lord Jesus in order that they would be brought to the face of Christ, have personal contact with Him, and experience God's shining in their hearts. To preach in this way is to present not merely a gospel of certain facts but a gospel of glory. Those who receive the gospel of glory will have Christ as the precious treasure dispensed into them. Then, like us, they will be earthen vessels containing this treasure. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 3206-3209)