

COOPERATING WITH THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One

Seeking the Things Which Are Above

Scripture Reading: Col. 3:1-2; Eph. 2:5-6; Heb. 4:12; 1 Cor. 2:14-15

- I. “If therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God”—Col. 3:1:**
- A. In ascension Christ is the One who is sitting at the right hand of God—Heb. 1:3; 12:2; Rom. 8:34:
 - 1. *The right hand of God* signifies preeminence, the first place of honor.
 - 2. The right hand of God is the first and highest place in the universe, and God has put the ascended Christ there, giving the preeminence and the highest honor in the entire universe to Christ—Heb. 1:13; 8:1; 10:12.
 - B. God not only saved us from the position of death, but He also seated us with Christ in the highest place in the universe—Eph. 2:5-6:
 - 1. It was in Christ that God seated us all together, once for all, in the heavenlies.
 - 2. This was accomplished when Christ ascended to the heavens, and it has been applied to us by the Spirit of Christ ever since we believed in Him.
 - 3. Today we realize and experience this reality in our spirit through faith in the accomplished fact—v. 8; 1 Pet. 1:8; Heb. 11:1.
 - C. The things which are above are the things which are in the heavens, in contrast to the things which are on the earth—Col. 3:1-2:
 - 1. The things which are above include the ascended Christ and all things related to Him.
 - 2. The things on the earth include culture, religion, philosophy, and the improvement in behavior—2:8, 16, 18-23.
 - D. In order to seek the things which are above, we must be where these things are; because we have one position with Christ in His ascension (Eph. 2:6), we can seek the things which are above.
 - E. According to the New Testament, the things which are above include Christ’s ascension, His enthronement, and His being made the Head, the Lord, and the Christ:
 - 1. Acts 2:36 says that God has made Jesus in His ascension both Lord and Christ; He was made the Lord of all to possess all; and He was made Christ, God’s anointed One (Heb. 1:9), to carry out God’s commission.
 - 2. In ascension Christ has been made the Head over all things to the church—Eph. 1:22:
 - a. *To the church* implies a kind of transmission.
 - b. Whatever Christ, the Head, has attained and obtained is transmitted to the church, His Body.
 - c. In this transmission the church shares with Christ in all His attainments: the resurrection from the dead, His being seated in His transcendence,

the subjection of all things under His feet, and the headship over all things—vv. 19-23.

3. The Lord Jesus has been crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9); He is the Pioneer, who has cut the way into glory within the veil, and the Forerunner (6:19-20); He is our High Priest and the Minister of the true tabernacle (8:2); and, as the enthroned One, He is the center of God's administration according to God's eternal economy (Rev. 5:6).
4. Such things are the things which are above, and we should set our mind on them—Col. 3:2.
5. To seek the things which are above is to respond to and reflect Christ's activities in His heavenly ministry—Heb. 2:17; 4:14; 7:26; 8:1-2; Rev. 5:6; Col. 3:1-2.

II. In order to seek the things which are above and to set our mind on them, we need to turn to our spirit and experience the dividing of the soul from the spirit—Heb. 4:12:

- A. Only when we are in our spirit are we in heaven and mind the things which are above; when we are outside our spirit, we are earthly and mind the things which are on the earth—Col. 3:2:
 1. The way to seek the things which are above is to turn to our spirit and call on the name of the Lord—Rom. 8:16; 10:12.
 2. There is a transmission taking place from Christ in heaven to us on earth by means of the all-inclusive Spirit in our spirit—Eph. 1:19, 22-23; 2:22:
 - a. Our spirit is the receiving end of the divine transmission, whereas the throne of God in heaven is the transmitting end—Rev. 5:6.
 - b. By turning to our spirit, we are lifted into heaven—4:1-2.
 - c. Because of the transmission from the throne of God in heaven into our spirit, when we experience and enjoy Christ here on earth, we are simultaneously in heaven.
 - d. In spirit we are one in position with Christ, seeking the things which are above—Col. 3:1.
- B. We need to experience the dividing of the soul from the spirit—Heb. 4:12:
 1. First Thessalonians 5:23 shows that the soul and the spirit are not the same but are two separate items; there is a great difference between the soul and the spirit.
 2. The soul and the spirit can be divided because they are two entities and are of two kinds of substances; regardless of how hidden our spirit is within our soul, they are still two distinct organs; thus, we need to experience the dividing of our soul from our spirit—Heb. 4:12.
 3. The spirit is so hidden in the soul that it needs to be divided from the soul by the living and operative word of God, which is “sharper than any two-edged sword”—v. 12.
 4. First Corinthians 2:14 and 15 speak of two kinds of persons: the soulish man and the spiritual man:
 - a. The soulish man, and the soul itself, cannot understand or receive the spiritual things—v. 14.

- b. The spiritual man discerns the spiritual things and likes to receive the spiritual things and to know and experience the things which are above—v. 15.
 - c. It is by the spirit that we understand and discern the spiritual things, and it is in the spirit that we desire to have the spiritual things.
- C. By experiencing the dividing of our soul from our spirit and by exercising our spirit, we can seek the things which are above and set our mind on them; then the riches of Christ's heavenly ministry will be transmitted into us, and we will be transformed and constituted with Christ—Col. 3:1-2; Heb. 7:25-26; 8:1-2; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10-11.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

SEEKING THE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE

In Colossians 3:1 Paul says that since we were raised together with Christ, we should seek the things which are above. This verse indicates clearly that we have one position with Christ. How could we seek the things which are above if we were not above also? To seek the things above, we must be in heaven where these things are.

When we are in spirit, we are also in heaven, but when we are not in spirit, we are on earth and, experientially, even under the earth. Only when we are in spirit are we in heaven; whenever we are outside the spirit, we are earthly.

The way to seek the things which are above is to turn to the spirit and call on the name of the Lord. There is a transmission taking place from Christ in heaven to us on earth by means of the all-inclusive Spirit in our spirit (Eph. 1:19, 22-23; 2:22). Our experience tells us clearly that we touch the heavens by turning to our spirit, for our spirit is the receiving end of the divine transmission, whereas the throne of God in heaven is the transmitting end. Thus, by turning to our spirit, we are lifted into heaven. Because of the transmission from the throne of God in heaven into our spirit, when we enjoy the Lord here on earth, we are simultaneously in heaven. Then in our experience we are in Christ, in the Father, and in heaven. Then in the spirit we are one in position with Christ, seeking the things which are above.

SETTING THEIR MIND ON THE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE

In Colossians 3:2 Paul continues, "Set your mind on the things which are above, not on the things which are on the earth." According to the New Testament, the things which are above include Christ's ascension, His enthronement, and His being made the Head, the Lord, and the Christ. In Acts 2:36 Peter says that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. In Ephesians 1:22 we see that in ascension Christ has been made Head over all things to the church. In Hebrews 2:9 we are told that the Lord Jesus has been crowned with glory and honor. In Hebrews 6:19 and 20 we see that the Lord Jesus is the Forerunner, the Pioneer, who has cut the way into glory within the veil; as our Forerunner, our Pioneer, Christ is now in glory. Such things are the things above, and we should set our mind on them.

Moreover, the book of Hebrews also reveals that Christ is our High Priest, the One who "sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (8:1). In Hebrews 4:14 we are told that we have "a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God." As our heavenly High Priest, "He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them" (7:25). When we call on the Lord and have fellowship with Him, we sense that something from the heavens is being transmitted into us. Often this divine transmission causes us to be beside

ourselves with joy. Since we have such a High Priest interceding for us, we should “come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help” (4:16). The things which are above include the ministry of intercession of our High Priest. Because of His intercession, we may receive mercy and grace for our timely need.

Furthermore, according to Hebrews 8:1 and 2, Christ is also a Minister of the “true tabernacle” in the heavens. Christ is our heavenly Minister who is ministering in a tabernacle pitched by the Lord and not by man. This tabernacle, this sanctuary, is the third heaven, the heavenly Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies in the heavens is connected to our spirit; therefore, in experience, our regenerated spirit is also the Holy of Holies. Our spirit is thus connected to the third heaven, where Christ is ministering on our behalf. As the High Priest, He is interceding for us, and as the heavenly Minister, He is supplying us with the riches of God. In His intercession Christ brings us with our need to God. In His ministry He brings the riches of God to us.

In the book of Revelation we see even more of the things which are above. What we have in this book is not merely a window but an opened heaven. Heaven was opened to John, and he saw a throne set in heaven and One sitting upon the throne (4:1-2). This throne is not simply the throne of grace but the throne of authority, the throne of the divine administration. In Revelation 4:5 John goes on to say, “Out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” John also tells us that in the midst of the throne he saw “a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” (5:6). John’s vision in chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation is related to God’s administration today. From John’s vision we realize that heaven is neither silent nor without activity. On the contrary, from His throne God is carrying out His administration over the entire universe. The Lamb, the Redeemer, the One slain on the cross for our sins, is now on the throne and has seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God.

The Lord Jesus is executing God’s operation in the heavens. He is the Lamb with seven eyes, with the seven Spirits of God, carrying out God’s administration through the local churches. Actually, the churches are God’s embassies. For this reason, the world situation is not under the control of any earthly head of state but under the churches through which God is executing His administration. Just as the American embassy in a particular country is an extension of the United States, so the churches as God’s embassies are an extension of the heavens. Our headquarters, our administrative center, is in heaven. Therefore, we should look toward heaven, where there is a throne on which God is sitting and where the Lamb with seven eyes is standing to execute God’s administration through the churches as His embassies. Because the churches are God’s embassies, the enemy hates them. In Revelation 4 and 5 we have a vision of our central government, and in Revelation 1 through 3 we have a vision of the local churches as the embassies. Through the seven Spirits there is a transmission going on from the heavenly headquarters into the embassies. Through the seven Spirits, what is in the headquarters is transmitted into the churches. From the throne in the heavens, the divine transmission brings the things above into the local churches.

Seeing a vision of the things which are above will revolutionize our daily living. It will cause us to turn our attention from the things on earth to the things in heaven—to the glorified and enthroned Jesus, to the heavenly High Priest, to the Head over all things to the church, to the One executing the divine government. We should seek these things and set our mind on them. Then the riches of Christ’s heavenly ministry will be transmitted into us, and we will be transformed and constituted of Christ.

The things above are related to the second of Christ’s two ministries. The first aspect of

Christ's ministry was His ministry on earth. Lasting thirty-three and a half years, this ministry began with Christ's incarnation and was concluded with His crucifixion. During the years that He was on earth, Christ accomplished much in His ministry. Through His death on the cross, He accomplished redemption for us. All Christians are familiar with the earthly ministry of Jesus and value it very highly, for it is through this ministry that we have been saved.

As important as Christ's earthly ministry was, it is not the main aspect of His ministry. The primary part of His ministry is His ministry in heaven. By His earthly ministry He redeemed us, saved us, and regenerated us. But by His heavenly ministry, He is building the church (Matt. 16:18). The Body of Christ needs the heavenly ministry of Christ, the ministry of Christ above, in order to be built up.

To seek the things which are above and to set our mind on them are to join ourselves to the Lord in His ministry in heaven. We need to join ourselves to the One who is interceding, ministering, and executing God's administration. Our living should be a kind of living in which we seek these heavenly things and set our mind on them. This means that we live in such a way as to join our heavenly Christ in His priesthood, ministry, and administration. If we all live in this way, the church life will be greatly uplifted.

Because Christ is interceding for a particular church, we also may become burdened to pray for that church. We then ask the Lord to transmit His heavenly supply into the saints in that locality. Whenever we receive news of a need in a certain place, we should immediately pray, joining ourselves to Christ in His intercession for that need. If we do this, we will be setting our mind on the things above.

Our standard needs to be uplifted. We are not here to seek earthly things but to have a living that is one with Christ's living. Christ today is living as the High Priest, the heavenly Minister, and the universal Administrator. We need to join Him in His living and have one living with Him.

If we seek the things which are above and have one living with Christ, we will be wholly occupied with the enterprise of our Master. Our heart will be with Him in heaven, where He is interceding for the churches, supplying the saints, and administrating God's government. This will be our concern, our desire. If we take Christ as life and seek the things which are above in such a way, the lustful members will be put to death, the evil elements in the fallen soul will be put away, and the old man will be put off. Furthermore, we will automatically put on the new man.

To seek the things which are above and to set our mind on them are to live Christ, to have one living with Him. When Christ prays in heaven, we should pray on earth. This means that there is a transmission between the Christ praying in heaven and us praying on earth. By means of this transmission we may pray in oneness with Him. We respond on earth to Christ's praying in heaven. None of us should be unemployed. We all have the responsibility to respond to Christ's heavenly transmission. Christ is in heaven interceding, ministering, and administrating, and we are on earth responding to Christ's activity in heaven.

Between Christ in heaven and us on earth there is a divine transmission, a heavenly current. If we are receiving this transmission, we will respond to Christ's work in heaven. However, if in our experience we are not continuously connected to Him or if we allow insulation to build up between us and Him, the transmission will cease. It is possible that among many genuine Christians today the connection with the heavenly Christ in their experience has been severed. We may be genuine Christians, but we may not experience the divine current, and there is no fellowship between us and the Lord. Instead of being cut off from the heavenly Christ, in our experience we need to continually receive the divine transmission. Day and night, we should be infused with a supply from heaven and experience the transaction

between the heavenly Christ and us. We should continually respond to Christ's interceding, ministering, and executing of God's administration.

Prayer is the only way to have our mind set on the things in heaven. When we set our mind on things above by praying, we will not pray for trivial matters. Instead our prayer will be occupied with Christ's heavenly intercession, ministry, and administration. Because Christ is interceding for the churches around the world, we also pray for the churches. We should let the Lord take care of all the small matters in our living. Our responsibility is to seek first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Since the Father knows our need, He will take care of us and meet our need.

When we set our mind on the things which are above during our times of prayer, we become a reflection of Christ's ministry in the heavens. Through our prayer, Christ, the Head, is given a way to carry out His administration through His Body. When we pray, we are a heavenly ambassador on earth as the extension of God's kingdom. However, when we are gossiping, we are not a heavenly ambassador at all. Only when we pray do we become an ambassador of the heavenly kingdom on earth in a practical way.

Christ's ministry in heaven is for the goal of building up the Body and forming His bride. However, Christ's ministry in heaven requires our response. We need to become on earth the reflection of that heavenly ministry. When we seek the things above, we respond to the Lord's heavenly ministry and reflect it. If in our prayer we are willing to forget insignificant matters and care for the things above, we will become conscious of the traffic between us and Christ in heaven. We will sense a current flowing back and forth between Him and us. By means of this kind of prayer, the divine riches are transfused into us. This enables us to be one with others and to be right with everyone. This also issues in the renewing of the new man. Through the heavenly transmission and transfusion, the new man comes into existence in a practical way. Hence, the new man is produced by the heavenly traffic, transaction, and transfusion.

As we seek the things which are above, the new man will be renewed in a full way. In a very practical sense, the new man comes into existence through our seeking of the things which are above. Therefore, if the new man is to be expressed on earth, we need to enjoy Christ as the High Priest, the heavenly Minister, and the universal Administrator, experiencing the two-way traffic between the heavenly Christ and us.

The all-inclusive life-giving Spirit is the issue of Christ's redemption. Galatians 3:14 indicates that Christ has redeemed us so that we may receive the Spirit. Christ accomplished redemption not merely to save us from sin, but even the more to impart Himself into us as the life-giving Spirit. When we open our being and set our mind on the things above, this Spirit transmits the riches of the divine life into us. When we set our mind on the things above, this causes the heavenly transmission to function in our experience to bring the divine essence of Christ into us. The more this essence is added into our being, the more we experience the renewing of the new man. Renewing depends on the transmission of the divine substance into us. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 3604-3610)