

Message Nine

The Full Ministry of Christ in Three Stages

Scripture Reading: John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6; 2:4-5; 19:7-9; 21:2; 22:17a

I. The unique teaching of God's New Testament economy (1 Tim. 1:3-4) is the teaching concerning the full ministry of Christ in three stages—incarnation, inclusion, and intensification:

- A. "What the Lord's recovery will be and how it will be depend upon how we handle this teaching" (Witness Lee); this teaching can be summarized in one simple sentence—"The Lord's recovery is God becoming the flesh, the flesh becoming the life-giving Spirit, and the life-giving Spirit becoming the sevenfold intensified Spirit to build up the church that becomes the Body of Christ and that consummates the New Jerusalem" (*The Divine and Mystical Realm*, pp. 17-18).
- B. In order to work together with God as His co-workers (2 Cor. 6:1; 1 Cor. 3:9), we need to know, experience, and enjoy Christ (to gain Christ—Phil. 3:8-14) in His full ministry in His three divine and mystical stages.

II. In the first stage, the stage of His incarnation, from His human birth to His death, Christ accomplished the following main things:

- A. In the stage of His incarnation Christ brought the infinite God into the finite man; although Christ came forth from Bethlehem, His goings forth were from ancient times, from the days of eternity; this refers to Christ's eternal origin and indicates that the Triune God was preparing to come forth out of eternity into time, to come with His divinity into humanity by being born in Bethlehem as a man—Micah 5:2.
- B. In the stage of His incarnation Christ united, mingled, and incorporated the Triune God with the tripartite man—Luke 1:35; 2:40, 52; John 14:10-11; 1:14.
- C. In the stage of His incarnation Christ expressed in His humanity the bountiful God in His rich attributes through His aromatic virtues:
 - 1. The Man-Savior's human virtues of affection, kindness, patience, mercy, and understanding were displayed in His fellowship with a sinful woman; His divine attributes, especially the attributes of divine authority to forgive a person's sins and His giving of peace to the forgiven sinner, were also displayed—Luke 7:36-50.
 - 2. The Man-Savior, as the good Samaritan, came down to the place where the wounded victim of the Judaistic robbers lay in his miserable and dying condition; He was moved with compassion in His humanity with His divinity and rendered him tender healing and saving care, fully meeting his urgent need—10:25-37.
 - 3. When Christ was being crucified, one of the two criminals who were crucified with Him said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom"; Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, Today you shall be with Me in Paradise"; this shows the divine attribute of His eternal and indiscriminate love expressed through His cherishing human virtue—23:42-43.
- D. In the stage of His incarnation Christ accomplished His all-inclusive judicial redemption through His death on the cross:
 - 1. His judicial redemption is according to the righteousness of God as the procedure of God's salvation to satisfy the requirements of God's righteous law on sinners—Rom. 1:17a; 3:21-26; 9:30-31.
 - 2. It is for sinners to be forgiven before God (Luke 24:47), washed (Heb. 1:3), justified (Rom. 3:24-25), reconciled to God (5:10a), and sanctified unto God positionally (1 Cor.

1:2; Heb. 13:12), thereby qualifying and positioning the believers to enjoy God's organic salvation and enter into God's higher grace for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy and the attainment of God's ultimate purpose (Rom. 5:10, 17, 21).

III. In the second stage, the stage of His inclusion, from His resurrection to the degeneration of the church, Christ accomplished the following main things:

- A. He was begotten in resurrection to be God's firstborn Son; "the seed of David" becoming "the Son of God" speaks of the process of Christ's being designated the firstborn Son of God by resurrection; this is the gospel of God, unto which Paul was separated—1:1-4:
1. By incarnation Christ, the only begotten Son of God in His divinity (John 1:18), put on the flesh, the human nature, which had nothing to do with divinity; in His humanity He was not the Son of God.
 2. By resurrection His human nature was sanctified, uplifted, and transformed; in resurrection His humanity was deified, "sonized," meaning that He was designated the Son of God, becoming the firstborn Son of God with both divinity and humanity—Rom. 8:29; Acts 13:33.
 3. The divinity, the Spirit of holiness, in Christ became operative in His death, and in resurrection He "blossomed" to be the firstborn Son of God and the life-dispensing Spirit, imparting His divine life into us to make us His many brothers—Rom. 1:4; 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:45b.
 4. The prototype is the firstborn Son of God, and the reproduction is the many sons of God, the members of the prototype to be His Body, which consummates in the New Jerusalem—Col. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3.
 5. Christ has already been designated the Son of God, but we are still in the process of designation, the process of being "sonized," deified—Rom. 8:28-29:
 - a. In resurrection Christ in His humanity was designated the Son of God, and by means of such a resurrection we also are in the process of being designated sons of God—v. 11.
 - b. The key to the process of designation is resurrection, which is the indwelling Christ as the rising-up Spirit, the designating Spirit, the power of life in our spirit; we urgently need to learn how to walk according to the spirit, to enjoy and experience the designating Spirit—John 11:25; Rom. 8:10-11; Acts 2:24; 1 Cor. 15:26; 5:4; Rom. 8:4, 6, 14.
- B. The incarnated Christ, the last Adam, became the life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6:
1. Our use of the word *inclusion* is based on our use of the word *inclusive*—for Christ, as the last Adam, to become the life-giving Spirit was for Him to become the all-inclusive Spirit—Phil. 1:19.
 2. The life-giving Spirit, who is the pneumatic Christ, is also called the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2), the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7), the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19), and the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).
 3. The ministry of Christ in the stage of inclusion as the life-giving Spirit is revealed in Romans 8, which shows that the life of the Triune God, as the law of the Spirit of life dispensed into our tripartite being, makes us men of life to be God's sons and the members of Christ to constitute the Body of Christ for His expression, thus fulfilling God's original intention—Gen. 2:7, 9; Rom. 8:14; 12:5:
 - a. "The law of the Spirit of life [Gk. *zoe*] has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death"—8:2.

- b. “If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life [Gk. *zoe*] because of righteousness”—v. 10.
 - c. “The mind set on the spirit is life [Gk. *zoe*] and peace”—v. 6.
 - d. “If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life [Gk. *zoe*] to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you”—v. 11.
- C. In His resurrection Christ regenerated the believers for His Body—1 Pet. 1:3:
- 1. The pneumatic Christ became the firstborn Son of God and the life-giving Spirit for the regenerating of the believers, making them the many sons of God born of God with Him in one universally big delivery through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
 - 2. All the believers of Christ have been baptized in one Spirit into the one Body of Christ and have been given to drink of this one Spirit for the constitution of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:13.
 - 3. In His resurrection Christ gave Himself as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit without measure through His speaking of the words of God—John 3:34.

IV. In the third stage, the stage of His intensification, from the degradation of the church to the consummation of the New Jerusalem, Christ intensifies His organic salvation, produces the overcomers, and consummates the New Jerusalem:

- A. Because of the degradation of the church, Christ as the life-giving Spirit has been intensified sevenfold to become the seven Spirits—the sevenfold intensified life-giving Spirit—Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6.
- B. Christ as the sevenfold intensified life-giving Spirit intensifies His organic salvation to save the believers from:
- 1. The formal church life and the loss of the first love to the Lord, the shining capacity of the lampstand, and the enjoyment of Christ as life in the church in Ephesus—2:1-7.
 - 2. The defeat that leads to the taste of the second death in the church in Smyrna—vv. 8-11.
 - 3. The worldliness in union with the world as a marriage and the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans in the church in Pergamos—vv. 12-17.
 - 4. Fornication, idolatry, demonic teaching, and satanic depths in Catholicism, signified by the church in Thyatira—vv. 18-29.
 - 5. The spiritual death—dead and dying—in Protestantism, signified by the church in Sardis—3:1-6.
 - 6. The losing of the crown, which has been gained already in Brethrenism, signified by the church in Philadelphia—vv. 7-13.
 - 7. The lukewarmness and Christlessness in degraded Brethrenism, signified by the church in Laodicea—vv. 14-22.
- C. If we would be overcomers, we must recover, maintain, and develop our first love toward the Lord:
- 1. The leaving of the first love is the source and the main reason for the failure of the church throughout the ages—2:4-5.
 - 2. To love the Lord Jesus with the first love is to give Him the first place in all things; we need to give Christ the first place, the preeminence, in all things and in all matters, regarding Him as everything in our life—Col. 1:18b.
 - 3. We must not love anyone or anything above the Lord, including our soul-life—Matt. 10:37-39; Rev. 12:11.

- D. We are saved from degradation by the speaking of the sevenfold intensified pneumatic Christ and by the overcoming saints living in their spirit—2:1, 7; 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10.
- E. Christ's sevenfold intensified heavenly ministry is for the complete preparation of the bride for Christ (19:7-9), the formation of the bridal army (vv. 11-21; 17:14), the binding of Satan (20:1-3), the bringing in of the kingdom of Christ and of God (vv. 4-6), and the consummation of the New Jerusalem (2:7; 21:2).
- F. The final outcome is that the ultimately consummated Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God becomes the Bridegroom, and the aggregate of the overcoming saints becomes the bride of the universal romance between the redeeming God and His redeemed man as the conclusion of the entire Scriptures—22:17a.
- G. We need to consider this matter of intensification and pray desperately to the Lord, saying, "I want to advance from inclusion to intensification. Lord, You have been intensified sevenfold, and I pray that I also will be intensified sevenfold to overcome the degradation of the church that the Body may be built up to consummate the New Jerusalem" (*Incarnation, Inclusion, and Intensification*, p. 22).