

Revelation—A Book of the Divine Administration

by Ron Kangas

If we would have a genuine spiritual understanding of the book of Revelation, we need to touch the spirit of this book, be in the proper position to receive the message of this book, and know the subject, the central thought and overarching theme, of this book.

Revelation, to be sure, is a book of prophecy bearing the nature of prophecy. “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it, for the time is near” (1:3). The Lord Jesus Himself considers this writing a prophecy: “Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this scroll” (22:7). The writer, the apostle John, goes on to speak of “the words of the prophecy of this scroll” (vv. 10, 18) and of “the words of the scroll of this prophecy” (v. 19). However, as a book of prophecy, Revelation has a spirit, an essential characteristic, which is disclosed in 19:10: “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of the prophecy.” “The spirit of the prophecy is the reality, substance, disposition, and characteristic of the prophecy. Thus, the testimony of Jesus is the reality, substance, disposition, and characteristic of the prophecy of this book” (Recovery Version, v. 10, note 1). The expression *the testimony of Jesus* is first used in Revelation in 1:2, where John says that he “testified the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ.” The golden lampstands (v. 12), the great multitude (7:9-17), the bright woman with her man-child (12:1-5), the harvest with its firstfruits (14:1-5, 14-16), the overcomers on the glassy sea (15:1-4), the bride ready for marriage (19:7-9), and the New Jerusalem (21:2)—all are the testimony of Jesus, the corporate expression of God in Christ. In brief, the testimony of Jesus is the genuine church. This testimony is the spirit of the prophecy, the substance and characteristic of Revelation as a book of prophecy.

In order to receive this prophecy as originally intended by God, we need to be in the proper position. Regarding this,

there is no need for speculation, discussion, or debate; rather, we should simply attend to the Lord’s explicit speaking. “What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea” (1:11). “I Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches” (22:16). *To the seven churches* and *for the churches* are emphatically clear indicators that the recipients of the prophecy were the believers in Christ meeting in the respective local churches, that is, in the unique local expression of the Body of Christ in various localities, as recognized (to say the least) by the Lord Himself (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). One must be in a local church as defined in the New Testament to be rightly positioned to receive “the words of the prophecy of this scroll.”

To the churches, with the believers as their components, the Lord was pleased to present a marvelous heavenly vision of the divine administration—the absolute, sovereign, and universal rule of God in Christ on the throne over all persons, all things, and all matters for the carrying out of God’s eternal will to have a corporate expression of Himself—the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth (21:2).

This vision of the divine administration with all that it entails is the subject of the book of Revelation and also the subject of this essay. Unless we realize the governmental and administrative character of this book, we cannot have a proper understanding of it. This article, therefore, is a modest initial attempt to delineate the essential features of Revelation as a book of administration. After we consider, as a prerequisite, the basic truth concerning the sovereignty and government of God, we will reflect upon Revelation as a book of the divine administration, viewing it from the perspective of God’s administrating throne, on which the redeeming God sits forever.

God's Sovereignty and Government

In different ways, David, king of Israel, and Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of the inhabited earth, learned that the self-existing and ever-existing God, in His sovereign government, rules the universe and everyone and everything in it. David, after he had made preparations for the building of the temple, publicly declared,

You are blessed, O Jehovah, God of Israel our father, from eternity to eternity. Yours is the greatness and the power and the splendor and the victory and the majesty, indeed all that is in heaven and on earth; Yours, O Jehovah, is the kingdom, and You are exalted as Head over all. (1 Chron. 29:10-11)

Nebuchadnezzar, after he had been restored to a sound mind, confessed,

I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored the ever-living One; / For His dominion is an eternal dominion, / And His kingdom is from generation to generation; / And all the inhabitants of earth are considered as nothing, / But He does according to His will in the army of heaven / And among the inhabitants of the earth; / And there is no one who can resist His hand / Or say to Him, What are You doing? (Dan. 4:34-35)

Like David and Nebuchadnezzar, eventually every believer in Christ and every human being on earth will recognize the sovereignty of God over all things, “come to know that the heavens do rule” (v. 26), and honor “the King of the heavens, because all His works are truth and His ways justice, and because He is able to abase those who walk in pride” (v. 37). The sovereignty of God is absolute, and the government of God is universal.

We need to have a clear view and proper understanding of God's sovereignty. Divine sovereignty refers to God's unlimited authority and power. As indicated by the record regarding the death of Ahab in 1 Kings 22, God, the sovereign One, is above everything, behind everything, and is involved in everything. He has the full capacity to carry out whatever He intends according to the desire of His heart and His eternal economy (Rev. 4:11; Dan. 4:35). God is the sovereign Potter who has absolute authority over the nation of Israel and the believers, both of whom are “clay” in the Potter's hands (Jer. 18:1-10; Rom. 9:19-29).¹ “Does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?” (v. 21). Because God is sovereign and possesses absolute authority, He can, if He wills, make one person a vessel to honor and another person a vessel to dishonor. This does not depend on human willing but on divine sovereignty. For God to be sovereign, therefore, means that

God is the ultimate, final, and complete authority over everything and everyone. Whatever happens stems from his decisions and control. God's sovereign will is also free, for nobody forces him to do anything, and whatever he does is in accord with his own purposes and wishes. (Feinberg 294)

In the words of Norman Geisler, dominion is God's control of all things, and sovereignty is God's right to control all things (536). For Arthur W. Pink, the expression *the sovereignty of God* denotes “the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the godhood of God” (*Sovereignty* 19). “To say that God is sovereign,” Pink continues, “is to declare that God is God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Most High, doing according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (19). In his volume on the attributes of God, Pink points out that God's sovereignty is the exercise of His universal supremacy:

Being infinitely elevated above the highest creature, He is the Most High, Lord of heaven and earth. Subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent; God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. None can thwart Him, none can hinder Him...Divine sovereignty means that God is God in fact, as well as in name, that He is on the Throne of the universe, directing all things, working all things “after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11). (*Attributes* 32)

God's sovereignty, an incommunicable divine attribute, is intimately related to God's government. The essential generic meanings of *govern* surely apply to God's governing of the universe. To govern is to exercise sovereign authority, to control the action and behavior of others, to keep under restraint, to exert a deciding or determining influence on matters, things, and persons. Governing is the action of ruling, directing, limiting, and determining. Government is the office, function, and authority of the one who governs. In His government, God has the highest office with the unique ruling function and absolute authority. Whereas the scope and extent of human government are limited, the extent of God's governing is unlimited. In his helpful treatment of the subject, Millard J. Erickson remarks, “By the government of God we mean his activity in the universe so that all its events fulfill his plan for it” (140). With God's government, in contrast to His providential preservation, “the emphasis is more fully upon the purposive directing of the whole of reality and the course of history to the ends that God has in mind. It is the actual execution, within time, of his plans devised in eternity” (141). Because God is sovereign in His government, “he alone determines his plan and knows the significance of each of his actions” (143).

A few matters require comment. The government of God

is not identical with the kingdom of God. God's kingdom is the realm in which He rules to carry out His eternal purpose for His glory; God's government is the administrative center of His kingdom. As we will see later, this administrative center is the throne of God, where all things are decided and determined. The fact that righteousness is the foundation of God's throne indicates that righteousness characterizes God's government in every aspect (Psa. 89:14), for God is righteous, just, in His actions. Thus, the exercise of God's sovereign government is simultaneously an exercise of God's righteousness, especially in His judgment. God's righteous, governmental judgment begins with His household, the church. In his first Epistle, which is concerned with the Christian life under the government of God, Peter says,

It is time for the judgment to begin from the house of God; and if first from us, what will be the end of those who disobey the gospel of God? And if the righteous man is saved only with difficulty, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? (4:17-18)

In His kingdom God governs righteously and with judgment. Sadly, due to rebellion among both angels and human beings, the sovereignty of God is despised, and the government of God is reviled. Consider Spurgeon's powerful words:

There is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a foot-ball, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on his throne... They will allow him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends his throne, his creatures then gnash their teeth; and when we proclaim an *enthroned God*, and his right to do as he wills with his own, to dispose of his creatures as he thinks well, without consulting them in the matter, then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on his throne is not the God they love. (Online)

Fallen human beings want a God who will love them, care for them, and provide for them but not a God to rule over them. This attitude is satanic and originates with Satan, who, rebelling against God, contests God's unique right to govern the universe and limit His creatures. Thus, in the universe there are two great principles—God's authority and Satan's rebellion, and the unique controversy between God and Satan concerns authority and rebellion. Rebellion

is the denial of God's authority and the rejection of God's rule. Satan was originally an archangel created by God, but due to his pride he uplifted himself, violated God's sovereignty, rebelled against God, became God's adversary, and established his own kingdom (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:2-19; Matt. 12:26). When man sinned, he also rebelled against God, denied God's authority, and rejected God's rule. But although Satan rebelled against God's authority and although humankind violates His authority by rebelling against Him, God will not let this rebellion continue. Rather, He will exercise His sovereign authority in His government to subdue all rebellion and consummate His eternal economy. The conflict engendered by Satan's rebellion will be resolved with finality in the book of Revelation.

The Throne of God

As the Bible consistently reveals, the divine administration, the divine government, is focused on the throne of God from which the sovereign God rules over everything and everyone in the universe. This is revealed in the Psalms and consummately unveiled in Revelation. "You sit on the

throne, judging righteously" (Psa. 9:4). "Jehovah sits enthroned forever; / He has established His throne for judgment" (v. 7). "Jehovah—His throne is in heaven" (11:4). "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; / The scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom" (45:6). "God reigns over the nations; / God sits upon His holy throne" (47:8). "Right-

eousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne" (89:14). "Jehovah has established His throne in the heavens, / And His kingdom rules over all" (103:19). Having a deep impression regarding this, David could declare, "Your kingdom is an eternal kingdom, / And Your dominion is throughout all generations" (145:13). As we proceed from Psalms to Revelation, we see that the apostle John was given a particular, even spectacular, vision of the administrating throne of God. He heard a voice saying, "Come up here, and I will show you the things that must take place after these things," and immediately he was "in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting" (4:1-2). He who lives forever and ever is He who "sits upon the throne" (v. 10). This is the vital center of Revelation—the throne in heaven and the One sitting upon the throne (5:1). Seven lamps of fire are burning before the throne (4:5), the kings of the earth dread "the face of Him who sits upon the throne" (6:16), the man-child is "caught up to God and to His throne" (12:5), and those who are firstfruits to God and to the Lamb "sing a new song before the throne" (14:3). Ultimately, to the glorified sons of God in the New

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Jerusalem, the administrating throne becomes the throne of God and of the Lamb whence flows the river of water of life (22:1). It certainly is no exaggeration to say that Revelation, a book of the divine administration, is a book of the throne and that this throne is the throne of authority from which God rules over all.

It is crucial for us to see a spiritual vision of the throne of God for the divine administration throughout the universe. The throne in Revelation 4 and 5 is the throne of divine authority. God on the throne is behind the scene ruling over everyone and everything (Isa. 6:1; 1 Kings 22:19). Everything in the world situation throughout history is decided on the throne; nothing can happen outside the rule of God's throne (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Luke 22:31-32).

The throne of God is not only for God to reign but also for God to accomplish His eternal purpose according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11; 3:11). In Revelation 4, a chapter that places powerful emphasis upon the reality of the throne, we read these tremendous words: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created" (v. 11). "God is a God of purpose, having a will of His own pleasure. He created all things for His will that He might accomplish and fulfill His purpose. This book, which unveils God's universal administration, shows us the purpose of God" (Recovery Version, v. 11, note 2). God's purpose is to produce and build up an eternal dwelling place—the New Jerusalem—for His satisfaction, expression, and administration. In the New Jerusalem, a corporate person as an organic city, God's will in His creation of all things will be not only fully revealed but also completely fulfilled. This is God's ultimate goal in the book of Revelation.

The greatest difficulty God faces is that His throne has been opposed and attacked by rebel forces (Isa. 14:12-14; Matt. 12:26; Rev. 2:13). God's throne is eternal and absolute, but one of His creatures rebelled and still seeks to exalt his throne to be equal with God's throne, thereby intruding upon God's authority (Isa. 14:13-14). From the time of Satan's rebellion until now, there has been a dispute in the universe regarding authority, and much of what is presently taking place on earth is an expression of Satan's resistance to God's throne. This resistance issues from the abyss (Rev. 9:1-2), from which the beast, Antichrist—the king, "the angel of the abyss" (v. 11)—will emerge to wage war directly against God and Christ (17:8). According to chapter 11, when the two witnesses have completed their testimony, "the beast who comes up out of the abyss will make war with them and overcome them and kill them" (v. 7). The abyss versus the throne—this is the conflict portrayed in Revelation. Eventually, everything issuing from the abyss will be cast into the lake of fire, and the throne of God will abide unshaken for eternity.²

That Christ May Have the Preeminence

If we consider Revelation 1:1 in light of the subject of the book—the divine administration for the carrying out of God's eternal purpose—we will realize that in the divine administration the primary matter is not God's judgment upon the enemy and upon everything contrary to His will. Rather, God's intention in His administration is that Christ would have the first place, the preeminence, in all things. "He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things" (Col. 1:18). The preeminent Christ is all-inclusive, and Revelation presents Him with many aspects of His all-inclusiveness: the Son of God (2:18), the Son of Man (1:13; 14:14), the faithful Witness (1:5; 3:14), the Firstborn of the dead (1:5), the Ruler of the kings of the earth (v. 5), the One who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty (v. 8), the First and the Last (v. 17; 2:8; 22:13), the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and Omega (v. 13), the living One (1:18), the Holy One, the true One (3:7), the faithful One (19:11), the Amen (3:14), the beginning of the creation of God (v. 14), the Root and the Offspring of David (22:16), the Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5), the Lamb (v. 6; 21:23; 22:1), the King of kings and the Lord of lords (19:16), the Word of God (v. 13), the morning star (2:28; 22:16), another Angel (7:2; 8:3; 10:1; 18:1), and the Husband (21:2). God is administrating the universe with the goal of giving such a Christ the preeminence in all things.

Christ as the preeminent One has the first place in everything. He is preeminent in the Triune God. Among the three in the Godhead, the preeminence always goes to the second, the Son. The first, the Father, exalts the Son, and the third, the Spirit, always testifies concerning the Son (Phil. 2:9; John 15:26). Christ is preeminent also in God's exaltation of Him (Acts 2:33; Eph. 1:22). Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God in the third heaven, He has been given to be Head over all things, and God has given Him the name which is above every name (Phil. 2:9). Christ occupies the first place, the place of preeminence, both in the old creation and in the new creation, both in the universe and in the church (Col. 1:15, 18).

Christ has the preeminence in God's economy, His plan and arrangement to dispense Himself in Christ as the Spirit into His chosen and redeemed people as their life, their life supply, and their everything to produce and build up the Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem. As the One who has the preeminence in the divine economy, Christ is all-inclusive; He is God, man, and the reality of every positive thing (2:9, 16-17). This wonderful Christ is the centrality and universality, the center and the circumference, of God's economy (1:15-27; Eph. 1:10). This means that in God's economy Christ is everything; God wants Christ and Christ alone,

for He is all and in all (Matt. 17:5; Col. 3:10-11). God's intention in His economy is to work such a Christ into our being as our life so that we may become the Body of Christ, the corporate expression of the Triune God (1:18; 3:15). Christ, therefore, has the preeminence in the Body of Christ and the new man.

Christ is the Head of the church, which is an organic entity constituted with the Triune God and His chosen and redeemed ones (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6). If we would honor the preeminence of Christ in the Body, we need to realize that He is the Head and that we are the members of His Body, living corporately under the Head, obeying the unique authority of the Head, growing with the growth of God, and having the consciousness of the Body and a feeling for the Body (Col. 1:18; 2:9-10, 16-17, 19; 3:15; 1 Cor. 12:25-26; Rom. 12:15). The first principle of living in the Body of Christ is to obey the authority of the Head (Eph. 4:15). Since the Christ we enjoy is the Head of the Body, who is keenly conscious of the Body (Acts 9:4-5), the more we enjoy Him, the more we become conscious of the Body and care for the Body.

The ultimate goal of God in His economy is to gain the new man constituted with the all-inclusive Christ wrought into a corporate people (Col. 1:27; 3:4, 10-11). Actually the new man equals the Body of Christ (vv. 10, 15; Eph. 2:15-16); the expressions *the new man* and *the Body of Christ* are synonyms and may be used interchangeably. The emphasis with the church being the Body of Christ is on life, whereas the emphasis with the church being the one new man is on the person (1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:4, 24). As the Body of Christ, the church needs Christ as its life; as the new man, the church needs Christ as its person (Col. 3:4; Eph. 3:17). Together, Christ and the believers form a great, universal man. As the One in heaven, Christ is the Head, and as those on earth, we are the Body. Thus, the new man is the corporate God-man, with Christ, the firstborn Son, as the Head and with the believers, the many sons of God, as the Body. Furthermore, this new man, the Body, is actually Christ constituted into us, for in the new man Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:10-11). In this new man Christ has the first place, and the divine administration is operating to the end of giving the wonderful, all-inclusive Christ the preeminence in all things.

Christ—the Center of the Divine Administration

This Christ is the One who is executing God's administration over the whole universe. The center of the divine administration unveiled in the book of Revelation is the

resurrected, ascended, and enthroned Jesus Christ, the glorified God-man. In His ascension and in His heavenly ministry, Christ is the One enthroned to execute God's governmental administration in the universe. "God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil. 2:9-10). The Christ who "endured the cross, despising the shame," has "sat down on the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

The Worthy Lion-Lamb: In Revelation 4 we have a vision of the throne, and in Revelation 5, a vision of the Lamb on the throne. "I saw in the midst of the throne...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" to carry out God's administration (v. 6). Here we have a marvelous vision of the Lamb, the Redeemer, not on the cross dying for our sins but on the throne ruling the universe. The enthroned Christ, the Lamb with the seven eyes, the seven Spirits of God, is executing God's governmental administration for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy. The throne of the sovereign God has become, and forever will be, the throne of the redeeming God, God and the Lamb.

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Christ, the embodiment of God (Col. 2:9), administers the universe under the headship of God because God has given Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His Body (Eph. 1:22-23). In the divine administration Christ is the worthy Lion-Lamb (Rev. 5:5-6). As the Lion, He is the Fighter against the enemy, Satan; as the Lamb, He is the Redeemer for us (Gen. 49:9; John 1:29). This Lion-Lamb is the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man. Now we need to see that the Lord is on the throne not only as God but also as man, the God-man, and realize that the Lord of the whole universe is the God-man, God becoming man through incarnation (John 1:1, 14; Rom. 8:3), and the Man-God, man becoming God through resurrection (1:3-4). "Lo! in heaven Jesus sitting, / Christ the Lord is there enthroned; / As the man by God exalted, / With God's glory He is crowned" (*Hymns*, #132).

Because Christ has solved the two great problems—the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man—He is worthy, in executing the divine administration, to open the scroll of the divine economy. This means that the enthroned God-man has received the commission to carry out God's

economy, symbolized by the scroll (Rev. 5:7-9). In the divine government Christ opens the scroll of God's economy, His plan and arrangement to fulfill His eternal purpose to have the New Jerusalem as His ultimate, consummate, corporate expression. The scroll of this economy has been put into His hands, and now He holds God's economy and carries it out. By opening the seven seals, Christ unlocks the mystery of the universe.

T*he Ruler of the Kings of the Earth:* The enthroned Christ as the center of God's universal administration is "the Ruler of the kings of the earth" (1:5) for the spreading of the gospel and the raising up of local churches. He is truly King of kings and Lord of lords. Apparently and visibly, the world is ruled by kings, presidents, and prime ministers; actually and invisibly, the world is ruled by the ascended Christ, who, as the highest Ruler, is above all earthly rulers, leaders, and government officials. The events of world history are not determined by human beings, and they are not the random products of chance; on the contrary, everything is directed and administered by Christ as the Ruler of the kings of the earth.

He is ruling sovereignly over the earth with His authority so that the environment may be fit for God's chosen people to receive His salvation (Acts 17:26-27; John 17:2). He is managing the world's situation for the purpose of producing the church so that He may come back to establish the kingdom of God on earth. (Lee, *Conclusion* 829)

The Son of Man Walking in the Midst of the Golden Lampstands: In Revelation 1:12-20 Christ is portrayed as the Son of Man walking in the midst of the churches as the golden lampstands, supplying them and caring for them. John's description of Him is astounding. His head and hair are as white as white wool, as snow (v. 14). His eyes are like a flame of fire for watching, observing, searching, judging, and enlightening (v. 14). His feet are like shining bronze, as having been fired in a furnace (v. 15). His voice is like the sound of many waters, a tumultuous sound (v. 15). In His hand He holds the "seven stars," the messengers of the churches; out of His mouth proceeds a sharp two-edged sword; and His face shines as the sun shining in its power (vv. 16, 20). When John saw this awesome One, he "fell at His feet as dead" (v. 17). Then the Lord comforted him, placing His hand on him and saying, "Do not fear; I am the First and the Last and the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (vv. 17-18). This is Christ not for the redemption of sinners but for God's administration in the churches, for, as we should recall, the Lord Jesus sent His angel to testify to John "these things for the churches" (22:16). His speaking to the messenger of the church in Thyatira is now the speaking of the Spirit to those who have an ear: "All the churches will know that I am He who searches the inward parts and the hearts" (2:23).

A*nother Angel:* As the center of the divine administration, Christ is a unique, special angel—another Angel (7:2; 8:3; 10:1; 18:1). The enthroned Lord Jesus Christ is called "another Angel" because He stands on the position of one who has been sent by God. In the Old Testament He was known as the Angel of Jehovah (Gen. 22:11-12; Exo. 3:2-6; Judg. 6:11-24; Zech. 1:11-12; 2:8-11; 3:1-7). In the book of Revelation He is unveiled as another Angel because He, in God's administration, is the One sent by God to carry out God's economy. As another Angel, Christ takes care of the believers, preserving them throughout all tribulations, controlling the whole universe, and directing other angels to carry out God's judgment on earth (7:2-17). As another Angel, Christ executes God's administration by ministering to God as the High Priest with the prayers of His saints (8:3-5). In 10:1-2 Christ comes as another Angel to take possession of the sea and the land, as signified by His having one foot on the sea and the other on the land. Although the earth and the sea have been usurped by God's enemy, Christ will come to claim His rightful inheritance (Psa. 2:8; 24:1). Finally, as another Angel, Christ will come to declare God's judgment over Babylon the Great and to appear in glory to make the whole earth the kingdom of God (Rev. 18:1-2; 11:15).

The Divine Administration in God's Judgment upon the World and Babylon

The divine administration in Christ is witnessed in God's judgment upon the world and upon Babylon in its religious and material aspects. God's judgment upon the world system, and especially upon the kingdom of Antichrist and those who worship him, is absolutely according to righteousness. The late overcomers praise God, saying, "Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty! Righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!" (15:3). Their praise continues with these words: "All the nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous judgments have been manifested" (v. 4). The angel who has power over the waters declares, "You are righteous, who is and who was, the Holy One, because You have judged these things" (16:5). Verse 7 continues, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

Although God's righteous judgment upon the kingdom of Antichrist is severe, a particular judgment is measured out upon Babylon. "Babylon the Great was remembered before God to give her the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath" (v. 19). The Lord will use Antichrist and the ten kings to destroy religious Babylon, the great harlot. Revelation 17:16 says that "the ten horns...and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate." In His sovereignty God will "put it into their hearts to perform His mind and to perform one mind" to judge religious Babylon (v. 17). Remembering the unrighteousnesses of material Babylon (18:5), God will judge this great city suddenly and

violently, and the saints, apostles, and prophets will rejoice that He has judged judgment for them upon her (v. 20). “Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence and shall be found no more at all” (v. 21). After Babylon has been judged, a great multitude in heaven will shout, “Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power are of our God. For true and righteous are His judgments; for He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He avenged the blood of His slaves at her hand” (19:1-2). Following this, “the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders” will say, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns” (v. 6).

The Divine Administration in the Function of the Man-child

Certain aspects of the divine administration involve not only the individual Christ but also the corporate Christ—Christ and His church living and functioning as a corporate person. In 1 Corinthians 12:12 *the Christ* refers not to the individual Christ but to the corporate Christ, the Body-Christ. This corporate Christ is composed of Christ Himself as the Head and the church as His Body with all the believers as His members. These members are organically united with Him and constituted with His life and element and thus have become His Body, an organism to express Him (Rom 12:4-5; Col. 3:4, 11). Hence, Christ is not only the Head but also the Body, and the Bible considers Christ and the church as one mysterious Christ—the “Me” in Acts 9:4-5. Christ is the Head of this mysterious Christ, and the church is the Body of this mysterious Christ; the two have been joined to become the one mysterious Christ, the great mystery (Eph. 5:32). However, we need to be careful to avoid misunderstanding. Christ in Himself is the Head, and Christ constituted into the believers is the Body. Christ is the Head and the Body; however, the believers are the Body but cannot be the Head, because the Head is a matter related to the Godhead. Although the believers can be only the Body and not the Head, Christ can be both the Head and the Body. The Head is individual, but the Body is corporate. We need to keep this distinction in mind as we now consider the man-child as a corporate person engaged in spiritual warfare to bring in the kingdom of God.³

For us to know God’s eternal purpose and His economy, we need to see the spiritual things behind the physical things, that is, the spiritual world behind the physical world (Dan. 10:12-13, 20-21). Behind the physical scene a spiritual struggle is taking place. This spiritual struggle is

unveiled in Revelation 12, a chapter that presents a vision concerning the war in heaven—the warfare in the universe between God and His enemy. Central in this vision is the universal bright woman with her man-child fighting against the dragon (vv. 1-5). The battle, however, is fought not by the woman but by the man-child, the stronger part within the woman, who bears the responsibility to fight against the enemy (vv. 4-5, 11). The man-child, a corporate person, consists of the overcomers in Christ who fight against Satan continually.

Because the church has not attained and, as a whole, will not attain to God’s purpose, God will choose a group of overcomers, victorious ones, who will attain to His purpose in principle and fulfill His requirement to deal with His enemy. In principle, the man-child refers to the overcomers in the church (2:26-27; 12:5). All of God’s people should participate in the fulfillment of His eternal purpose, but many do not assume their rightful responsibility, thus making it necessary for the Lord to select a group of overcomers—the man-child brought forth by the universal woman. The overcomers are the instrument that enables

God to achieve His purpose. These overcomers stand on behalf of the church, take the position which the whole church should take, and do the work of and for the church (2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12; 21; 12:5, 11). When God gains them as His corporate man-child, His purpose will be attained, and He will be satisfied.

The overcomers stand on behalf of the church, take the position which the whole church should take, and do the work of and for the church.

The universal bright woman represents the totality of God’s people, but the man-child is the stronger part within the woman (Gen. 3:15). In the Bible the stronger ones among God’s people are considered a collective unit fighting the battle for God and bringing God’s kingdom down to earth (Rev. 12:5, 10-11). Thus, God will use the man-child to fulfill His economy and to accomplish His purpose. In particular, He needs the man-child to defeat His enemy and to bring in His kingdom so that His eternal purpose might be accomplished. Significantly, the rapture of the man-child—the catching up of this child to God and to His throne—will be a transaction that causes Satan to lose his position in heaven. As verse 9 makes clear, the great dragon, the ancient serpent, will be cast to the earth, and his angels will be cast down with him. Then a loud voice in heaven will proclaim, “Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ” (v. 10).

The man-child is related to God’s most important dispensational move, an event that closes one age and opens another (11:15). In His administration God has

decided to end this age, the age of grace and of the church, and bring in the age of the kingdom, and for this He needs the man-child as His dispensational instrument. The rapture of the man-child and the fighting that ensues terminates the church age and introduces the age of the kingdom (12:10). This means that the man-child will bring the kingdom of God to earth, thereby completing God's greatest dispensational move (Matt. 6:10; Rev. 11:15). If we see this, we will understand the crucial function of the man-child in the divine administration.

The Divine Administration in Spiritual Warfare

Because of the increasingly fierce opposition of God's enemy against Him, His purpose, and His people, spiritual warfare is inevitable, even necessary, and during the ultimate war, at Armageddon, the Lord will execute the divine administration by fighting. Spiritual warfare is necessary because Satan's will is set against God's will (Matt. 6:10; 7:21; Isa. 14:12-14). The warfare between God and Satan has its source in the conflict between the divine will and the satanic will. If we would know how the church can function as God's warrior to engage in spiritual warfare, we need to understand this conflict of wills and realize that, by God's empowering grace, the human will must stand with the divine will to oppose and subdue the satanic will. The principle here is that God, the Creator, will not deal directly with His fallen creature Satan; instead, He wants His creature man to deal with this perverse enemy. Thus, as the church, our fighting is to subdue the satanic will and to defeat God's enemy (Rev. 12:11).

The purpose of spiritual warfare is to bring in the kingdom of God (v. 10). Spiritual warfare is actually the warfare between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:26, 28). The kingdom of God is the exercise of the divine will and the overthrowing of the power of Satan by the power of God. When the enemy of God is unable to stand in a certain place, the kingdom of God has come to that place. Wherever the devil has been cast out and wherever the work of the enemy has been displaced by God's power, the kingdom of God is there (Rev. 12:10; 11:15). The work of the church is to bring in the kingdom of God; through prayer the church must release the power of the kingdom of God on earth (Matt. 6:9-10, 13; 18:19).

Revelation 17 and 19 speak of what we may call the ultimate war—the war at Armageddon. With one mind, the ten kings will “give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they who are with Him, the called and chosen and faithful, will also overcome them” (17:13-14). Human armies, under the instigation and direction of Antichrist, will fight directly against the corporate Christ, the Lamb and His overcoming army, and be defeated.

Details regarding this are found in Revelation 19. According to verses 11 through 21, Christ will come as a fighting General with His bride, the overcoming believers who are His army, to fight Antichrist, the kings under him, and their armies at Armageddon. The willfulness and defiance of these enemies are beyond description, for pathetic, fallen human beings will dare, in their rage and rebellion, to fight along with Antichrist directly against Christ. Although the Lord Jesus, as the God-man, is both the complete God and a perfect man, He will come as the Son of Man, not as God, to engage Antichrist in battle. As the Son of Man, He will need a counterpart to match and complete Him, and this counterpart will be His bride (v. 7; John 3:29). Before His coming back, Christ will have a wedding, uniting His overcomers to Himself as one entity (Rev. 19:7-9). He will marry the one (a corporate person in the principle of the Body of Christ) who has been fighting against the enemy for years, who is thus skilled in war, and who has already overcome the evil one. After His wedding He will come with His bridal army to destroy Antichrist. In righteousness He, who is “called Faithful and True” (v. 11), will judge and make war. His name will be called the Word of God, because His fighting will be the speaking of the word of God (v. 13). As He fights, He will speak for God and express God; His fighting at Armageddon will be a powerful speaking. This speaking and fighting will defeat the enemy of God and bring in the kingdom of God for God's administration.

The Divine Administration in the Millennial Kingdom

In order to appreciate the divine administration in the coming millennial kingdom, it is necessary to comment first on certain salient features of the kingdom of God, even though this is an immense subject in the Scriptures.

It is no exaggeration to say that the New Testament is a book of the kingdom of God; the entire New Testament is on the kingdom (Matt. 3:2; Rev. 11:15; 12:10). The kingdom of God is the ruling, the reigning, of God with all its blessing and enjoyment. The kingdom of God is a divine sphere for God to work out His plan; it is a realm where God can exercise His authority to accomplish what He intends (Matt. 6:10). For the believers in Christ, the kingdom is the sphere for us to worship God and enjoy God under the divine ruling with a view of entering into God's glory (v. 13).

The kingdom of God is actually God Himself (Mark 1:15; Matt. 6:33; John 3:3). God's kingdom has God as its content; God Himself is everything as the content of His kingdom (1 Cor. 4:20; 15:28). God Himself is life, the divine life, and this life has a nature and ability which form the realm of God's ruling. In actuality, therefore, God's reigning over the believers is not merely an outward matter but a matter of the innate ability of the life of God (Rom. 8:2).

The life of God is the kingdom of God and also our entrance into the kingdom of God; this is a crucial and basic principle (John 3:15, 5). The nature of the kingdom of God is divine because it is the kingdom of *God*. To proclaim that the kingdom of God has drawn near (Mark 1:15) is to proclaim that God Himself has drawn near.

The kingdom of God is not only God's reign over the universe in a general way by His authority and power but also God's reign in a particular way in the sense of life (John 3:3, 5, 15; Rom. 14:17; 8:2, 6, 10-11). The kingdom of God is the realm of the divine life for this life to move, work, and govern so that life may accomplish God's purpose. This reveals that the kingdom of God in the sense of life is organic, for the kingdom of God is an organism constituted with God's life for His ruling in life and by life (cf. 5:17). The unique way to enter into this kingdom of the divine life is to receive God as life through regeneration, a new birth in the human spirit by the divine Spirit. Because the kingdom of God is the realm of the divine life, we must have this life—the eternal, uncreated life of God—if we are to live in this realm. Because through regeneration we receive the divine life, regeneration is the unique entrance into the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5, 15).

The kingdom of God in the sense of life is the Lord Jesus as the seed of life sown into our being and developing within us into a realm over which God can rule as His kingdom in the divine life. On the one hand, we enter into the kingdom of God through regeneration; on the other hand, the kingdom of God enters into us in the form of Christ, the God-man, as a seed of life (Mark 4:3, 26). God's life, which is Christ Himself (John 1:4; 11:25; 14:6), is the seed of the divine life that develops into the kingdom for His ruling (Mark 4:3, 26-29). If we see this, we will realize that Christ establishes the kingdom of God in the sense of life by sowing Himself as the seed of life into believing people so that the kingdom of God may grow within them until it reaches its full development.

Although the kingdom of God in the sense of life is a present, experiential reality, it is also a blessing for the faithful believers to inherit in the future (Matt. 19:29; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). To inherit the kingdom of God is not simply to enter into the kingdom; it is to receive the kingdom as a reward for our enjoyment (Matt. 25:14, 21, 23). Since the kingdom of God in the sense of life is the realm of the divine life, to inherit the kingdom of God as a future reward is to inherit eternal life as our enjoyment (19:29). To inherit the kingdom of God is to obtain the

enjoyment of God's eternal life in the millennial kingdom through our present growth, experience, and enjoyment of this life (1 John 1:2; 2:25; 5:11-13). Inheriting the kingdom of God in the way described here is different from entering into the kingdom of God through regeneration. When we believed in the Lord Jesus and received Him (John 3:15; 1:12-13), we were regenerated, we received eternal life, and we entered into the kingdom of God. If we live by this life and not by our natural human life, this life will become our inheritance for our enjoyment in the millennium. This means that we need to live in the kingdom of God today by the eternal life, experiencing and enjoying eternal life in this age, so that we may inherit the kingdom of God in the coming age, which is to inherit the full enjoyment of God's eternal life as our reward.

With this in mind, we can now consider the divine administration in the kingdom of God as presented in the book of Revelation. John speaks of the kingdom of God both as a present and as a future reality. The Lord Jesus, the apostle John testifies, "loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom" (1:5-6). In 5:9 and 10 we read, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made them a kingdom." This is the kingdom of God in the sense of the divine life, and John identifies himself as one living in this realm

We need to live in the kingdom of God today by the eternal life, experiencing and enjoying eternal life in this age, so that we may inherit the kingdom of God in the coming age.

of life: "I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus" (1:9). In this aspect of the kingdom of God, God rules and administers by His life. However, in the future, when the kingdom of God is manifested on earth in splendor during the millennium, God will rule and administrate in righteousness by power and authority, even with an iron rod (2:27; 12:5; 19:15). The kingdom in this governmental sense will come in the future, perhaps soon. "Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ" (12:10). "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever" (11:15). At that time God will set up His kingdom on earth. Concerning this, Matthew 13:43 says, "Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Contrary to common and traditional understanding, these "righteous" are not all the believers; they are the overcomers, those who receive the crown of righteousness, the reward of reigning with Christ on earth for a thousand years (2 Tim. 4:8, 18). The thousand-year reign of the overcomers (Rev. 20:4, 6) refers to the kingdom of the Father,

which God will set up in the millennium, when Christ and the overcomers will reign in righteousness and with authority for the Father's expression and satisfaction:

In His work in the millennium Christ with His overcomers as co-kings will reign over all the nations (Rev. 20:4, 6; 2:27; 19:15c). The millennium will be the last section of God's kingdom on this earth in the old creation over the God-created, fallen, and restored nations. They all will be the last stage of human nations on the old earth, and they all will become the kingdom of God's Christ (Rev. 11:15), and Christ and His overcomers shall be the kings over them. Such a reigning will be the unique work of Christ in the millennium to show, for one thousand years, to the entire universe His kingship with His divine and heavenly authority for the shame of Satan, the defeated enemy of God, who will then be bound and imprisoned in the abyss, the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:2-3). (Lee, *Conclusion* 844-845)

The Divine Administration in the Final Judgment

In Revelation 20:7-15 we see the divine administration in the final judgment—the judgment upon the devil, the unbelieving dead, the demons, and death and Hades. “The devil, who deceived them [the nations on earth at the end of the millennium], was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone” (v. 10). The lake of fire was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41), and now the devil is cast into it. Verse 11 goes on to say, “I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose face earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.” The word *Him* refers to the Lord Jesus, for according to the Lord's own word in John 5:22, the Father “has given all judgment to the Son” and has appointed Him to judge the living and the dead (2 Tim. 4:1). “This is the One who was designated by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42). God “has set a day in which He is to judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has designated, having furnished proof to all by raising Him from the dead” (17:31). The Lord Jesus will judge the living before the millennium, as mentioned in Matthew 25:31-46, and the dead after the millennium, as mentioned in Revelation 20:12.

I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened; and another scroll was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by the things which were written in the scrolls, according to their works.

This refers to the resurrection (indicated by *standing*) of the dead unbelievers, otherwise called “the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29). These unbelievers, whose names are not written in the book of life, will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15):

The perishing unbelievers will be judged according to the scrolls, which are a record of their works (vv. 12-13), but they will be cast into the lake of fire according to the book of life. This indicates that they are condemned by the Lord because of their evil deeds but perish because of their unbelief, which issues in their not having their names written in the book of life. Not believing in the Lord Jesus is the unique sin that causes people to perish (John 16:9). (Recovery Version, v. 15, note 1)

Revelation 20:13-14 explains more:

The sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, each of them, according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

The dead given up by the sea probably are not those who died while at sea, who were buried in the sea, for these dead are certainly included among the dead in Hades. Perhaps those given up by the sea are not deceased human beings but instead the spirits of beings—the demons—from the preadamic age. Thus, it is possible that the demons will be judged at that time. Then death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire. Death will be the last enemy destroyed by God (1 Cor. 15:26). After the final judgment at the great white throne, every negative thing in the universe will have been judged and cleared away, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth with the New Jerusalem—the eternal, mutual dwelling place of the redeeming, life-dispensing God and His redeemed, regenerated, and glorified people (Rev. 21:1-2).

The Divine Administration in the New Jerusalem

The New Jerusalem is not a literal, physical city but the enlargement and consummation of the church as the Body of Christ. Since the Body of Christ, being a living organism, is a corporate person, the New Jerusalem as the consummation of the Body will likewise be a corporate person constituted of the processed and consummated Triune God mingled with and expressed through His chosen, redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite people. This holy city, this corporate God-man, will be a mutual abode for the redeeming God and His redeemed people. This glorious city will be God's administrative center in the universe, and “the nations [on the new earth] will walk by its light” (21:24). The fact that the New Jerusalem will have “the glory of God” and that her light will be “like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal” (v. 11) reveals that the holy city will be the corporate expression of God, God expressed in glory through a universal, corporate person. Furthermore, in 22:1 and 3 we see that the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the New Jerusalem, not at the periphery but in

the center of this city of glory. From this throne the redeeming God—God in Christ as the light within the lamp—will carry out His administration (21:23), based upon Christ’s redemption, in His eternal kingdom in the new heaven and new earth:

Christ’s work in administrating within the New Jerusalem is for His expression through His administration. All that the redeeming God administrates is for the purpose that He might be expressed. In the New Jerusalem the throne of the redeeming God will be in the center of the city, and His expression will extend to its circumference. Therefore, the redeeming God administrating on the throne is the God both of administration and of expression. His administration serves the purpose of His expression in His eternal manifestation. (Lee, *Conclusion* 846-847)

Our Cooperation with Christ in the Divine Administration

In cooperating with Christ in carrying out the divine administration to bring in the kingdom, we need to serve God according to the principle of incarnation. The New Testament principle of incarnation is that, in Christ and through Christ, the divine life and nature are mingled with the human life and nature so that we and God may have one life and one living. God is brought into humanity and lives in and works with humanity. This principle is a matter of God entering into man and mingling Himself with man to make Himself one with man; thus, God is in man, and man is in God. The principle of incarnation is that God is mingled with man as one person with two natures, living together in one life and one living. The Christian life is a life in the principle of incarnation; that is, the Christian life is a life in which we, the believers in Christ, who have been justified and regenerated in Him, live together with God, having one life with one living. In our spiritual serving in the Lord and to the Lord, we should do everything in the principle of incarnation. This is how the Lord Jesus, who is now the Head of Body, lived and served when He lived as the God-man on earth, and this is how we, the Body of the Head and the enlargement and continuation of Christ, should live and serve as the many God-men today. In particular, our cooperation with and our participating in the divine administration must be according to the principle of incarnation. Then Christ, who is both at the right hand of God in the third heaven and in our regenerated spirit (Rom. 8:34, 10), will have a way to fulfill the desire of His heart and consummate His economy to build up the

Body, to prepare the bride, to bring in the kingdom, and to consummate the New Jerusalem.

Exercising Our Spirit to See the Vision of the Throne: Our cooperation with God’s governmental administration begins with seeing a vision of the throne of God, and this seeing involves the exercise of the regenerated human spirit, which is the organ through which we realize and respond to God’s move in His administration. When John saw the visions recorded in the book of Revelation, he was *in spirit* (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). In 4:1 he says, “After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will show you the things that must take place after these things.” His response was to be in spirit. “Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting” (v. 2). The indispensable requirement for seeing the vision of the throne and of the administrating God sitting on the throne is to be in spirit, that is, to be one with the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18) by exercising our spirit, in which the Spirit dwells (1 Cor.

6:17). Sadly, countless believers either do not know the spirit, perhaps regarding the spirit and the soul as identical, or neglect the spirit. As a result they cannot and do not see the throne of God as a spiritual reality, although they may adhere to certain truthful theological propositions related to God’s sovereignty. To know about the throne as a concept

and to adhere to divine sovereignty as a doctrine are vastly different from having a vision in spirit of the throne of God and of God on the throne.

Some crucial matters related to the human spirit require comment here. The spirit in Revelation 4:2 is not merely the created human spirit (Prov. 20:27) but the regenerated human spirit enlivened by and mingled with the divine Spirit (John 3:6). Because the Lord, who, economically, is the Spirit in resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), is with our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22) and even in our spirit (Eph. 2:22), the regenerated spirit of the believers is actually a mingled spirit, for he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). To be one spirit with the Lord, the life-giving Spirit, is to be mingled with Him in our regenerated spirit. Such a mingled spirit is a spirit of wisdom and revelation by which we see and realize the divine things and thereby have the full knowledge of God and of all that He has done in Christ in raising Him from the dead, in seating Him far above all in the heavenlies, and in making Him the Head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:17-23). It is to our spirit that the mystery of Christ is

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made known, as Paul clearly testifies: “By revelation the mystery was made known to me...which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit” (3:3, 5). The principle is the same with being in spirit and exercising our spirit to see the vision of the administering throne of God. To see such a vision is not to receive revelation beyond what is written in the Scriptures; rather, it is to have a genuine spiritual knowing and realization of the fact, recorded in Revelation 4:1-2, that the universe is under the rule of God on the throne. It is a great mercy and blessing to have not only a doctrine of the throne of God but a spiritual vision of the throne of God.

Submitting to the Throne: If we truly see the throne of God, we will submit to the throne, and we will place ourselves absolutely and without reservation under the rule of the One to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given (Matt. 28:18). We will then take the lead to do what everyone will eventually do: “In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11). *Jesus Christ is Lord*—to declare this is to yield, to submit, to the resurrected, glorified, and enthroned Christ, the God-man who sits on the throne of administration to rule over all. When we have such a realization and make such a declaration, the throne in the heavens becomes the throne in our being, the principle of rebellion is broken, and the kingdom of God enters into us subjectively so that we may live in the kingdom of the Son of God’s love (Col. 1:12-13). Only those who submit to the throne of God and who do the will of the Father (Matt. 7:21) can cooperate with the divine administration to end this age and bring the kingdom of God to earth, in fulfillment of Revelation 11:15. The alternative to this submission is tragic, for all those who presume to work for God apart from the will of God and without submission to the throne of God are, in the words of the King, “workers of lawlessness” (Matt. 7:23).

Giving Christ the Preeminence in Our Being and in Our Personal Universe: Submitting to the throne of God results in giving Christ the preeminence in our tripartite being and in our personal universe, in all matters, things, situations, activities, and relationships that are personally related to us and in which we are personally involved. Christ, the preeminent One, must have the first place in our daily life, family life, and church life. Christ must have the first place in our love so that we love Him with the first love (Rev. 2:4). Whatever one loves, his or her whole being is set on and occupied with and possessed by (Mark 12:30). The root of spiritual decline and degradation, personal and corporate, is the loss of the first love for the Lord, the love that gives Him the first place. We urgently need to preserve and develop the first love for the Lord

and then do what the Lord calls “the first works” (Rev. 2:5). The first works are works that issue from and express the first love. When we are filled with the first and best love for the Lord, everything we do will issue from and express our love for Him. Furthermore, the more the Lord Jesus has the first place in our love, the more He will have the preeminence in our tripartite being, for He will live in us as our hope of glory (Col. 1:27), our life (3:4), our constituent and our all in all (v. 11). The peace of Christ will then arbitrate in our hearts (v. 15), and the word of Christ will dwell in us richly (v. 16), with the result that in our daily living we will do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus (v. 17). Only when the enthroned Christ has the preeminence in the living of God’s people will He, in reality and practicality, have the preeminence in the universe.

Experiencing the Seven Spirits of God: If we would participate in and carry out the divine administration today, we need to experience the seven Spirits of God (Rev. 1:4-5; 3:1). The seven Spirits of God are undoubtedly the one, unique Spirit of God (Eph. 4:4) because they are ranked in the Godhead in Revelation 1:4-5. In essence and existence the Spirit is one, but in function and work the Spirit is seven. In the Bible seven is the number for completion in God’s operation and also signifies intensification (Dan. 3:19; Isa. 30:26). The title *the seven Spirits of God* denotes the Spirit of God as the sevenfold intensified Spirit for God’s move. Although there is only one Spirit in the Godhead essentially, in Revelation this unique Spirit is called the seven Spirits in His sevenfold intensified function to carry out God’s economy. From this we see that the book of Revelation unveils the fact that the one Spirit of God has been intensified sevenfold to fulfill His function in carrying out God’s economy.

Revelation 1:4 says specifically that the seven Spirit’s are “before His throne.” Here the Spirit of God is “viewed according to the governmental character that the book as a whole unveils to us,” and there He is “designated as being before His throne” (Kelly 311, 312). Agreeing with this observation, Scott says that the seven Spirits are before the throne because “the primal thought in the Apocalypse is the public government of the earth” and then goes on to note that the “governmental character of the book accounts for the mention of the Spirit before Christ” (24-25). In both 4:5 and 5:6 the seven Spirits are connected to God’s throne. “There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (4:5). “I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders 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). Central for our purpose here is that the seven Spirits are, economically and governmentally, intimately associated with the throne, indicating

thereby that the application and experience of the throne are dependent upon the function of the seven Spirits. For the seven Spirits to be associated with the throne of God in this way means that they function to carry out the decisions and judgments of the divine administration.

If the throne of God is to be actualized in our lives as believers, we must know and experience the seven Spirits of God as the seven lamps of fire and as the seven eyes of the Lamb. The seven Spirits are burning before the throne to carry out God's administration—to execute God's economy in the universe—by directing the world situation. Also, the sevenfold intensified Spirit is the seven lamps of fire to burn, enlighten, expose, judge, purify, and refine the believers for the testimony of Jesus. Anything that does not correspond to God's nature will be burned by His fire. God is administrating His government by enlightening, searching, exposing, judging, and burning. In order to know God in His administration and to be one with Him governmentally, we need to experience these seven lamps of fire. We also need to experience the sevenfold intensified Spirit as the eyes of Christ, the redeeming Lamb, to infuse us with the element and riches of Christ for the Body of Christ. Experientially, after the seven Spirits of God burn as lamps of fire judging, purifying, and motivating us, they become the seven eyes of the Lamb for transfusing what Christ is into our being so that we may match Him as His bride, His counterpart, and thus be one with Him to fulfill God's eternal will.

Receiving the Divine Dispensing: To receive the divine dispensing is to receive the flowing of the river of water of life that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (22:1). In Daniel 7:9-10 the Lord's throne is flames of fire, its wheels are burning fire, and a stream of fire issues forth and comes out from before Him. God is the burning One (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29), and the fire here indicates that God is absolutely righteous and altogether holy. In our experience of the administrating God on the throne, first we meet Him as fire and then we enjoy Him as the river of water of life in which grows the tree of life (Rev. 22:2). Ultimately, in the New Jerusalem the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne of God's administration will become the flow of the river of water of life proceeding from the life-dispensing throne. After the Spirit burns us, He flows within us, and we experience the divine dispensing, the processed and consummated Triune God imparting Himself into us as our life, our life supply, and our everything for His kingdom and corporate expression. We will live by this dispensing for eternity:

*In our experience of the administrating
God on the throne, first we meet
Him as fire and then we enjoy Him
as the river of water of life
in which grows the tree of life.*

Eventually, God will put all the enemies under the feet of Christ, and He will abolish death, the last enemy. Then everything will be new. There will be the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center. For eternity the redeeming God will sit on the throne in the center of the New Jerusalem, and out of the throne, that is, out of God Himself, will flow the water of life to saturate the city. Furthermore, the tree of life will grow in the water of life to nourish the city. This saturating and nourishing is the divine dispensing in full. We shall be there eating of the tree of life and drinking of the water of life. For eternity, we shall be eating, drinking, and worshipping God. This is the eternal enjoyment of God's dispensing. While we are enjoying the dispensing of the Triune God by eating and drinking, we shall worship Him. (Lee, *Conclusion* 221)

Although this will be our eternal experience and enjoyment, there is no need to wait until we have become the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. Today, even now, we can and should experience the precious dispensing into our being of the flowing, nourishing Triune God.

Worshipping God as the Sovereign Lord: As John 4 reveals, real worship, worship in spirit and truthfulness, is the outflow of our receiving the divine dispensing. In the book of Revelation worship is a great matter, for it is an acknowledgement of what theologians have rightly called the God-

hood of God—God with His lordship, authority, sovereignty, majesty, and supremacy.

In Revelation there is a special line concerning worship, something that is sought not only by God but also by Satan.⁴ To worship God is to know Him as God with His Godhead and Godhood, to recognize His official, transcendent standing over the universe, and to acknowledge Him, confess Him, and submit to Him as the King on the throne. The last commandment in this book is "Worship God" (22:9), and throughout the book many instances of worship are described. "The twenty-four elders will fall before Him who sits upon the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever" (4:10). "All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God" (7:11). In their praise the late overcomers will say to God, "You alone are holy; for all the nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous judgments have been manifested" (15:4). After Babylon the Great has been judged and destroyed, God will receive particular worship: "The twenty-four elders

and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who sits upon the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah!" (19:4). When the apostle John, overwhelmed by the visions he had seen, fell before the feet of an angel to worship him, the angelic messenger admonished him, saying, "Do not do this. I am your fellow slave and a fellow slave of your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God" (v. 10).

During the great tribulation the angel who announces the eternal gospel will say with a loud voice, "Fear God and give Him glory because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who has made heaven and earth and the sea and the springs of water" (14:7). But, under the instigation of Satan, who craves to be worshipped, many will continue to "worship the demons and the idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk" (9:20). Eventually, Satan will receive what he has been seeking—to be worshipped directly (cf. Matt. 4:9). When the beast, the Antichrist is manifested, the dragon, the devil, will give him his power, his throne, and great authority (Rev. 12:3, 7-9; 13:2), and those on the earth will worship the dragon "because he gave his authority to the beast" and they will worship the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? And who can make war with him?" (v. 4). To worship the dragon is not merely to worship an idol or image—it is to worship the devil directly. This is the greatest delight to Satan and the greatest insult to God, an offense that results in unmitigated judgment upon all those who exercise their souls to engage in such evil worship. The false prophet (vv. 11-18) will exercise "all the authority of the first beast" and cause "the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast" (v. 12). Furthermore, the false prophet will make an image of the beast and cause everyone who will not worship the image of the beast to be killed (vv. 14-15). Toward the end of the great tribulation, God will intervene to judge not only the beast and the false prophet but also everyone who worships the image of the beast (16:2; 19:20). Although multitudes will worship the dragon, the beast, and the image of the beast, the Lord will have His overcomers, martyrs for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God who refuse unto death to worship the beast or his image.

I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and of those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image. (20:4)

They will live and reign with Christ for a thousand years (vv. 4, 6).

In the book of Revelation there are two thrones—the throne of God (4:2-3, 10) and the throne of Satan, the dragon (13:2). These two thrones are at war, and the issue

of the conflict is man's worship. We must worship Christ as the divine Administrator, as the One on the throne in the heavens administrating over all persons and all things for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. The more we worship the Lord in this way, the more we will realize that the worship of God and the throne of God are inseparably connected, intrinsically joined. The same is true, perversely, of the throne and worship of Satan. To come under God's throne is to worship the sovereign God through the exercise of our regenerated spirit; to remain under Satan's throne is to worship the devil through the power of the fallen soul. If we want God to rule, we must worship Him, and if we want to worship Him, we must allow Him to rule. God's administration is, on the human side, carried out through our worship, for the genuine worship of God opens the way for Him to rule and to bring His kingdom to earth. If we realize this, we will enter into the worship described in 5:11-13:

I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and of the living creatures and of the elders, and their number was ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb who has been slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things in them, I heard saying, To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the might forever and ever.

Offering Intercessory Prayers: The record concerning prayer in Revelation indicates that to a great extent the divine administration is executed through the prayers of His redeemed and regenerated people who submit to Him and are one with Him. In 5:8 the angelic elders have "golden bowls full of incense, which bowls are the prayers of the saints." It is significant that in a chapter that reveals Christ as the center of God's administration, prayers are mentioned in a definite and particular way. To be sure, praying for God's interests in the universe is a crucial function of the believers as priests in the kingdom of God (v. 10). Prayer, like worship, is intimately related to the throne; verses 6 and 7 speak of the throne, and verse 8 speaks of the prayers of the saints. Although God, who sits on the throne, is absolutely sovereign, He requires our cooperation through prayer.

More is revealed regarding the saints' prayers in 8:3-5. Verse 3 says, "Another Angel [Christ in God's administration] came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." "The golden censer signifies the prayers of the saints," and the "incense signifies Christ with all His merit to be added to the prayers of the saints that

the saints' prayers offered upon the golden altar might be acceptable to God" (Recovery Version, v. 3, notes 3 and 4). It is good for believers to pray, and it is necessary for them to pray, but prayers without Christ as incense added to them cannot be acceptable to God for the carrying out of His administration. Verse 4 goes on to say, "The smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of the hand of the Angel before God." In verse 3 incense is added to the prayers; in verse 4 the incense ascends with the prayers, ensuring both their acceptance and their effectiveness in executing on earth the decisions made on the throne in heaven. "The smoke of the incense indicates that the incense is burned and ascends to God with the prayers of the saints. This implies that the prayers of the saints become effective and are acceptable to God" (Recovery Version, v. 4, note 1). Clearly, the implication of the next verse is that it is God's answer to the prayers previously mentioned: "And the Angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it to the earth; and there were thunders and voices and lightnings and an earthquake" (v. 5). Obviously, the prayers in Revelation 8 are focused on God's governmental administration, not on the needs and problems of the believers; therefore, the answer to such prayers is the execution of God's righteous judgment as a necessary preparation of the coming of the kingdom to earth in splendor.

According to the record in Revelation, prayers are offered not only from the earth but also from under the earth.

When He opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they had. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Master, holy and true, will You not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth? (6:9-10)

These souls are not in heaven but in Paradise, the pleasant section of Hades, where these martyrs are awaiting the out-resurrection (Phil. 3:11). In prayers that are reminiscent of the petitions of the widow in Luke 18:1-8—"Avenge me of my opponent" (v. 3)—these martyred saints are crying out for God's vindication through His righteousness in His governmental administration. However, God has not only His will but also His way and His time to perform His will; therefore, these souls in Paradise need to rest for a while longer. "To each of them was given a white robe; and it was said to them that they should rest yet a little while, until also the number of their fellow slaves and their brothers who were about to be killed, even as they were, is completed" (Rev. 6:11).

The prayers in Revelation 5, 6, and 8 are particular prayers in and for the divine administration, and these prayers are, and always must be, offered according to the basic principle of prayer. It is commonly thought that prayer is simply asking God for something or petitioning Him to do something, usually for the benefit of the one asking. But this is not the principle, the intrinsic significance, of prayer. Prayer is man cooperating with God and working together with God, thereby allowing God to express Himself and accomplish His purpose (Rom. 8:26-27; James 5:17). Prayer actually begins with God, who has a will to perform, a desire to fulfill, and an intention to realize. The praying ones cooperate with Him regarding His will, desire, and intention by denying themselves and opening fully to the Lord so that what is in Him may be transmitted into them to become a burden to be discharged through prayer. Implied here is the fact that God cannot do what He wants to do unless His people also want it. God, especially in carrying out His administration in the present age, does not, and will not, act unilaterally; rather, He waits until He secures sufficient cooperation from the believers. He makes His will,

desire, and intention known to His loving and seeking people, and they in turn allow this will, desire, and intention to become their own, thereby becoming one with the Lord experientially. Then they pray not according to their natural human feelings, whatever they may be, but according to God's will, desire, and intention that have been wrought

into them. By hearing and answering their prayer, God performs His will, fulfills His desire, and realizes His intention. As the book of Revelation makes clear, God wills to administrate over the universe and over everyone and everything in it for the preparation of the bride, the defeat of Satan, the manifestation of the kingdom, and the consummation of the New Jerusalem. When God's people pray according to the principle of prayer, they cooperate with the enthroned redeeming God to carry out the divine administration. What a high and glorious service this is!

Having the Spirit of a Martyr: We have seen that the divine administration to bring in the kingdom of God is fiercely opposed by God's enemy, who is adamant in his rebellion and determined to maintain his kingdom. As a result, there is constant warfare between the kingdom of God with the throne of God and the kingdom of Satan with the throne of Satan. In this conflict many of the faithful saints are killed, martyred, according to the will of God; thus, in a very real sense, Revelation is a book on martyrdom, on the believers paying the ultimate price—

When God's people pray according to the principle of prayer, they cooperate with the enthroned redeeming God to carry out the divine administration.

their human life—to uphold the testimony of Jesus, to overthrow the dominion of Satan, and to bring in the kingdom of God.

In Revelation we have particular and definite speaking from the Lord about the necessity of martyrdom. To those passing through trials for His sake, the Lord Jesus says,

Do not fear the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison that you may be tried, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. (2:10)

To hold fast the Lord's name and to not deny His faith may require martyrdom. "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name and have not denied My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells" (v. 13). In dealing with Satan, no ground can be given to the self and nothing of the natural life can be preserved. Those who overcome the dragon, the accuser of the brothers, and cause Satan to be cast down do not spare themselves in any way. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death" (12:11). The enemy of God fears only one kind of believer—the one who loves the Lord with the first and best love and who does not love the soul-life, the natural human life. Only this kind of person, a believer with the heart and spirit of a martyr, can be used by God to fulfill His desire to end the present age of grace and bring in the age of righteousness, the age of the kingdom.

Before this takes place, many more faithful ones will die, but in doing so they will overcome the enemy who will kill them. Consider the overcomers standing on the glassy sea, "those who come away victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name" (15:2). Although they will be martyred under Antichrist, they will be resurrected to reign with Christ during the millennial kingdom. "They sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty! Righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!" (v. 3). They vindicate God in His righteous government, even when He does nothing to deliver them from death. Their number will be included with those in 20:4 and 6, who were slain because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus but who will share in the first resurrection and thus "will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (v. 6).

Only the sovereign Lord on the throne knows what the believers must experience between now and the time when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of

our Lord and of His Christ and He reigns forever and ever (11:15). The number of martyrs, as 6:11 makes abundantly clear, must be completed. However, we need not die the physical death of a martyr in order to have the spirit of a martyr, the spirit of one who does not love his or her natural life but is faithful unto death in carrying out the divine administration.

Living in the Local Churches: If we would cooperate fully with the glorified, exalted Christ in carrying out the divine administration, we need to live in the practical local church life as defined by the Lord Jesus in Matthew and Revelation. After Peter received and articulated the revelation from the Father that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16), the Lord spoke of the church: "I also say to that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church" (v. 18). Here *My church* is the one, unique, universal church, the Body of Christ. In Matthew 18 the Lord spoke concerning the church from another angle: "If he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you just like the Gentile and the tax collector" (v. 17). Here *the church* refers to the local church, the expression of the unique Body of Christ in a certain locality. In practice, *My church*—the universal Body of Christ becomes *the church*—the church in a locality.

In Revelation the Lord Jesus refers to and addresses local churches: "What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea" (1:11). First the Lord mentions seven churches and then lists seven cities. In chapters 2 and 3 He links *the church* to a particular city: the church in Ephesus (2:1), the church in Smyrna (v. 8), the church in Pergamos (v. 12), the church in Thyatira (v. 18), the church in Sardis (3:1), the church in Philadelphia (v. 7), and the church in Laodicea (v. 14). Eventually, the Lord's speaking to each church becomes the speaking of the Spirit *to the churches* (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). As we noted at the outset of this article, at the end of Revelation the Lord declares, "I Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches" (22:16). What the apostle John received, he received for the churches, and what he saw, he wrote in a scroll and sent it to seven local churches. It is evident, therefore, that according to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the book of Revelation is intended for local churches, and we must be in a genuine local church in order to have the proper position to receive this book. This means that we must be in what the Lord Jesus calls *the church*, a local expression on the ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ as a local expression of the one universal church. The Lord addresses the churches, the Spirit speaks to the churches, the revelation was given for the churches, the scroll was sent to the churches—this demonstrates that the book of Revelation is for the churches and that only by

living in the local church life as understood by Christ Himself can we participate in working out the divine administration revealed in this book.

Further evidence of this consists in the fact that there is a vital relationship between the churches in chapters 1 through 3 and the throne with the enthroned redeeming God in chapters 4 and 5. The Christ who walks in the midst of the churches is the Christ who is ruling, governing, and administrating on the throne. In 3:1 He describes Himself as "He who has the seven Spirits of God," but in 5:6 the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth are the seven eyes of Christ, the Lamb on the throne. Since Christ is the ladder joining earth to heaven and bringing heaven down to earth (John 1:51), He is One who connects the churches with the throne and carries out through the churches the decisions made on the throne. All of this indicates that what is taking place in the churches is related to the activity of the divine administration in the heavens and corresponds to this activity and that the actions of God's heavenly, governmental administration are expressed in and applied through the churches. Thus, the churches participate in the divine administration. "The churches with Christ as their center are the focus in the divine administration for the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose" (Lee, *Oneness* 126). Although the churches themselves are not the central government directly, we may say that the local churches are the Lord's "embassies" through which God is executing His administration over the entire world situation:

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. (Lee, *Colossians* 514)

If we are in the genuine churches, not in a denominational, divisive religious group, we may receive the transmission from the throne through the seven Spirits and thus cooperate with the Lord in the divine administration.

It is significant that in Matthew when the Lord Jesus spoke of the church, He mentioned it in relation to the kingdom of God (16:18-19; 18:17-18). This indicates how intimately the kingdom and the church are related. The New Testament first presents the kingdom and then the church, for the presence of the kingdom produces the church. The

gospel brings in the divine life (John 3:15), and this life has its realm, which is the kingdom (vv. 3, 5). The divine life with the kingdom as its realm produces the church.

Because the kingdom of God is the reality of the church, apart from the kingdom life we cannot live the church life (Matt. 5:3). The kingdom life issues in the church life. As we live the kingdom life in a corporate way, we spontaneously live the church life. The genuine church is the kingdom of God in this age, and today the believers live the kingdom life in the church (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; Col. 4:11; Rev. 1:4-6).

On the one hand, the kingdom of God produces the church through the gospel of the kingdom; on the other hand, the church brings in the kingdom of God. The work of the church is to bring in the kingdom of God in manifestation (Matt. 6:10; Rev. 1:6, 9; 11:15). The church exists for the specific purpose of ushering in the kingdom, and the work of the church is governed by the principle of the kingdom of God. The responsibility of the church is to cooperate with God in His administration in order for His

will to be done on earth (Matt. 6:10; 7:21; 12:50). For this the church must pray, asking that the will of God be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Without this prayer ministry of the church, the kingdom of God cannot come to earth and the will of God cannot be done on earth. Therefore, the church occupies a central and crucial place

in the divine administration, for it is the one place on earth that is the kingdom of God and that also brings in the kingdom of God. This concept is woven into the fiber of the book of Revelation.

If we have a spiritual understanding of Revelation, we will know that to be in a local church as an embassy is actually to be in the kingdom of God. In writing to "the seven churches which are in Asia" (1:4), John observed that Jesus Christ, the Ruler of the kings of the earth, has made us a kingdom (v. 6), indicating thereby that, in practicality, the kingdom of God today is in the church and even is the church. The word *kingdom* in 1:6 indicates that where the church is, there the kingdom of God is also; the church represents the kingdom. This view is supported by the fact that, according to 5:9-10, those who have been purchased for God by the blood of Jesus have been made a kingdom. The apostle John, by living in the church, was living in the kingdom (1:9). In a very real sense, therefore, the kingdom of God is present, and the believers may live in the kingdom by living in the church. Nevertheless, the kingdom of God will also come in the

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future. “Now has come...the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ” (12:10). “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever” (11:15). To be in the church is both to be in the kingdom and to bring in the kingdom. Actually, the particular responsibility of the church as the kingdom of God is to bring in the glorious manifestation of the kingdom at the Lord’s coming to claim the earth as His inheritance.

It is a great and crowning mercy, under the government of God, to live in the genuine local church life and to cooperate with God in arriving at the particular goal of His heavenly government and divine administration—to draw the Lord Jesus to come for His bride, to end the age of mystery, to defeat Satan in the ultimate spiritual war, and to bring in the eternal kingdom of God. If we are faithful to cooperate with the divine administration in the churches, we will join the overcomers and the great multitude in declaring, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns” (19:6). AFC

Notes

¹For a remarkably incisive discussion of God’s sovereignty in relation to the human will, see “The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart,” in Witness Lee’s *Life-study of Exodus*, pp. 231-238. “Here we see God’s sovereignty and man’s free will. Instead of being contradictory, these two correspond...God’s sovereignty does not contradict our free will, and our free will does not contradict His sovereignty. If we see this, we shall humble ourselves under God’s sovereignty and spontaneously take up our responsibility” (235).

²A note in the Recovery Version of the Holy Bible on *abyss* as used in Romans 10:7 is instructive and illuminating.

The Greek word is used in Luke 8:31 in reference to the dwelling place of the demons; in Rev. 9:1, 2, 11 to denote the place out of which the locusts, whose king is Apollyon (Antichrist), will come; in Rev. 11:7 and 17:8 to signify the place out of which the beast, the Antichrist, will ascend; and in Rev. 20:1, 3 to specify the place into which Satan will be cast and imprisoned during the millennium. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses this word for *deep* in Gen. 1:2. Here, in this verse, it points to the place Christ visited after His death and before His resurrection, which place, according to Acts 2:24, 27, is Hades; for Acts 2:24, 27 reveals that Christ went into Hades after He died, and rose from that place in His resurrection. Hence, according to biblical usage, the word *abyss* always refers to the region of death and of Satan’s power of darkness, which is the lower parts of the earth (Eph. 4:9), into which Christ descended after His death, which He conquered, and from which He ascended in His resurrection.

As the book of Revelation discloses, evil forces from the abyss will be unleashed shortly before the Lord’s coming to earth with the kingdom, and these forces will fight, desperately but vainly, against Christ and His army (Rev. 17:8-14). The Lamb will overcome them, and the called, chosen, and faithful ones who will be with the Lamb at His coming will also overcome them. The throne prevails over the abyss.

³Countless commentaries on the book of Revelation take the traditional view that the woman in Revelation 12 is the virgin Mary and that the man-child is Christ. This interpretation is, simply put, erroneous. The universal bright woman in this chapter is a sign signifying the totality of God’s people, and the man-child is a corporate person composed of Christ and the victorious, overcoming believers.

⁴See Watchman Nee’s message entitled “Worship” in *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*.

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