

# The High Peak of the Divine Revelation and the Consummation of the Divine Economy as Revealed in the Gospel of John

by Ron Kangas

In *How to Study the Bible*, Watchman Nee emphasizes the necessity of the person being right, for the “study of the Bible is not merely a matter of right methods but a matter of right persons” (7). Perhaps the most crucial characteristic of one whose person is right in studying the Word of God is being spiritual, that is, being a person who reads the Bible not only with the exercise of the mind but also with the exercise of the regenerated human spirit (John 3:6). “Since the Lord’s words are spirit [6:63], we have to read them in spirit. In other words, we can touch spiritual things only with the spirit” (9). Because the nature of the God-breathed Scripture is spirit (2 Tim. 3:16), “everyone who reads this book must approach it *with his spirit*; it must be read *with the spirit*. The spirit that we are referring to is the spirit of every regenerated person” (9). This emphasis on the spirit, the deepest part of our being, is in keeping with the word of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5:3: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.” To read the Bible with a proud or haughty spirit is an offense to the Lord and a damage to the reader, but, as the Lord Himself says, those who are poor in spirit are blessed. “To be poor in spirit is not only to be humble but also to be emptied in our spirit, in the depth of our being, not holding on to the old things...but unloaded to receive the new things” (Recovery Version, Matt. 5:3, note 2). If we are poor in spirit and also pure in heart (v. 8), we will receive light from God’s Word. This essay is written with the belief that, although the divine revelation in the Bible is complete and nothing may be added to it, we can, in fact we must, continually receive more light from the Word of God. The following stanzas speak of reading the Word with light and truth unlimited by sectarian notions:

We limit not the truth of God  
To our poor reach of mind,  
By notions of our day and sect,  
Crude, partial and confined.

Now let a new and better hope  
Within our hearts be stirred:  
The Lord hath yet more light and truth  
To break forth from His Word.

Who dares to bind by his dull sense  
The oracles of heaven,  
For all the nations, tongues and climes  
And all the ages given!  
The universe how much unknown!  
That ocean unexplored!  
The Lord hath yet more light and truth  
To break forth from His Word...

O Father, Son and Spirit, send  
Us increase from above;  
Enlarge, expand all Christian hearts  
To comprehend Thy love;  
And make us all go on to know  
With nobler powers conferred:  
The Lord hath yet more light and truth  
To break forth from His Word. (*Hymns*, #817)

By the mercy and grace of God, may all the Lord’s people no longer trust their “poor reach of mind” nor be limited by “notions of our day and sect, / Crude, partial and confined” nor dare to bind by dull human sense the “oracles of heaven.” Rather, may the hearts of believers everywhere be enlarged and expanded to acknowledge this divine reality: “The Lord hath yet more light and truth / To break forth from His Word.” In recent decades light and truth have broken forth from the Word of God on two matters of indescribable importance—the high peak of the divine revelation and the consummation of the divine economy, and it is the task of this article to present these great truths in a basic way. Then in light of such a revelation and consummation, I engage in an initial reconsideration of the Gospel of John, advancing the

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view that in this Gospel we have a divine and mysterious unveiling both of the high peak of the divine revelation and the consummation of the divine economy.

### The High Peak of the Divine Revelation

The high peak of the divine revelation is that God became man so that man may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead to produce and build up the organic Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth as God's eternal kingdom (John 1:12-14; 1 John 3:1-2; Rom. 8:3; 12:4-5; Rev. 11:15). Central in this revelation is the desire of God's heart and His eternal purpose to make Himself man and to make man God so that the two—God and man—may be the same in life, nature, constitution, and expression (Eph. 1:5, 9; 3:11; 4:16; 5:30, 32). According to this revelation, God's intention is to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity into His chosen and redeemed people to be their life and nature so that they may be the same as He is for His corporate expression (1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:3-23). For the fulfillment of His desire and purpose, God created humankind in His own image (which is Christ—2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15) with the intention that we would become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead (Gen. 1:26; Rev. 4:3; 21:10-11). In the light of this revelation, we see that in Christ God became man to make us God in life, nature, and expression so that we may have a God-man living and so that there would be the Body of Christ in reality (Rom. 8:3; 1:3-4; 8:4, 14, 29; 12:4-5). For this purpose, God sent His Son to be a man and to live a God-man life by the divine life (John 3:16; 1:14; 6:57). This God-man living issues in a universal, great man—the one new man—who is exactly the same as Christ—a corporate God-man who lives a God-man life by the divine life for the manifestation of God in the flesh (Eph. 4:24; 1 Tim. 3:15-16). God redeemed us not merely to save us from His judgment but with the intention of making us God in life and nature so that God can have the Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem as God's enlargement and expression for eternity (Eph. 1:6; 4:16; Rev. 21:2). In the New Jerusalem the One who is God yet man dwells in the one who is man yet God, and the one who is man yet God dwells in the One who is God yet man; thus, they are a mutual dwelling place, the fulfillment of the divine thought conveyed in the writings of the apostle John (John 14:2-3, 20, 23; 15:4). The New Testament unveils the fact that God became man to make man God in life and nature through a marvelous process. With God this process was incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection (1:14; 6:57; 1:29; 3:14; 12:24; 20:22), and with us, the believers in Christ, this process is regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification (3:6; Rom. 8:29; 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). Paul had a deep understanding of this, and in his Epistles we see that the

ascended Christ is ministering Himself to us as the life-giving Spirit in order to transform us into His image, making us the same as He is in His essence, element, nature, and appearance (vv. 17-18).

It is only by God's becoming man to make man God that the Body of Christ can be produced and built up for God's eternal goal, the New Jerusalem. God became man to make man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead so that He might have the church as the Body of Christ—the organism of the Triune God, the ultimate consummation of which is the New Jerusalem (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6; Rev. 21:2, 9-10). Thus, the issue of God becoming man and man becoming God is an organism; this organism is the Body of Christ, the union and mingling of God and man, composed of the One who is God yet man and those who are man yet God. For this, God sent His Son to be a man and to live a God-man life by the divine life. The God-man life is a life in which divinity is expressed in humanity, a life in which God with the divine attributes is expressed in humanity with the human virtues. Such a living issues in a universal man—a corporate God-man composed of many God-men who are the reproduction of the first God-man. This universal man, the one new man where Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:10-11), is exactly the same as Christ in life and in nature and is therefore a corporate man living a God-man life by the divine life (Rom. 8:3; 12:4-5). This is the high peak of the divine revelation—the revelation that in Christ God has become man in order that man might become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

At this juncture we join Witness Lee in referring to this revelation as the “diamond” in the “box” of the Bible:

God's intention is to make Himself man in order to make man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead... Eventually, the whole Bible consummates with this matter. The New Jerusalem, the ultimate consummation of the Bible, involves God becoming man and man becoming God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead, and God and man being mingled together to be one entity.

If we read the Bible without paying attention to this crucial point, then, in a very real sense, the Bible is to us an empty book. This means that although the Bible is real in itself, in our understanding of it the Bible is empty. As an illustration, let us suppose that a certain box, which is quite attractive, contains a large diamond. A child may be interested in the box but not in the diamond. An adult, however, would focus his attention on the diamond contained in the box. Today, many Christians care for the Bible as the “box,” but they have not seen and do not appreciate the “diamond” which is the content of this box, and they may even condemn those who have a proper

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appreciation of the “diamond” in the “box.” The “diamond” in the “box” of the Bible is the revelation that in Christ God has become man in order that man might become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

The vast majority of today’s Christians neglect the crucial point in the Bible that in Christ God has become man in order to make man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead and that God desires to mingle Himself with man to be one entity. Some not only neglect this; they falsely accuse as heretical those who teach it. Today many believe one aspect of this crucial point—that God became a man named Jesus—but they do not believe the other aspect—that man is becoming God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. (*Life-study* 203-204)

**A**lthough the believers in Christ will become God in life, in nature, and in expression, they will never become God in the Godhead and never be an object of worship. God alone is pure deity, self-existing, ever-existing, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, and God alone is, and always will be, the unique object of worship. Nevertheless, it is the desire of His heart that His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people become, by transformation in the divine life (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18), the same as He is in His life and His nature so that, as the New Jerusalem, they will be His glorious corporate expression.

### **The Ultimate Consummation of the Divine Economy**

God’s eternal economy is His plan and arrangement, according to the good pleasure of His will, to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity into His chosen and redeemed people as their life, life supply, and everything in order to make them His corporate expression, first as the Body of Christ, the church, and ultimately as the New Jerusalem (1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10, 22-23; Rev. 21:2). The divine economy is the issue of God’s will, purpose, good pleasure, and counsel (Eph. 1:5, 9-11; 3:9-11). God’s will is God’s wish, God’s desire; God’s will is what He wishes to do and wants to do (Rev. 4:11). God’s purpose is God’s intent set beforehand; God’s eternal purpose is His eternal plan made in eternity past. God’s good pleasure is what makes God happy; it is what God likes and what pleases Him (Phil. 2:13). God’s counsel is God’s resolution consummated in the council of the Divine Trinity (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:20). After God’s will, purpose, good pleasure, and counsel, there is God’s economy, God’s household administration, God’s plan and arrangement. The intention of God’s economy is to dispense Himself into His chosen people, making them one with Him; to dispense Christ with all His riches into His believers chosen by Him for the constitution of the Body

of Christ, the church, in order to express the processed and consummated Triune God; and to head up all things in Christ in the new heaven and new earth (Eph. 5:32; 3:8-10; 1:10). This gives rise to a further definition of the economy of God: The divine economy is that God became flesh, passed through human living, died, resurrected, and became the life-giving Spirit to enter into us as life and dispense God into us so that we may be transformed for the producing of the church, which is the Body of Christ, the house of God, the kingdom of God, and the counterpart of Christ, the ultimate aggregate of which is the New Jerusalem (John 1:14, 29; Acts 2:24; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; 15:45; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 5:10; 21:2).

**T**he fulfillment of God’s economy depends on His central work of building Himself in Christ into our being so that the church, as the fullness of the Triune God, will be His glorious expression. The most crucial and mysterious matter revealed in the Bible is that God’s ultimate intention is to work Himself in Christ into His chosen and redeemed people to make them His corporate expression (Eph. 3:14-21). God’s eternal intention is to have Christ

**God became man to make man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead so that He might have the church as the Body of Christ—the organism of the Triune God, the ultimate consummation of which is the New Jerusalem.**

wrought into our being to make us Christ-men, who are filled, possessed, and saturated with Christ and by Christ; there is nothing more important or basic in the whole universe than this matter (Rev. 4:11; Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Col. 3:4, 10-11). God’s desire to work Himself in Christ into our being is the focal point of the divine revelation in the Scriptures (Gal. 1:15-16). In order to carry out His eternal intention of working Himself in Christ into our being, God created humankind as a vessel to contain Him and gave human beings a spiritual organ to receive Him. God truly wants to work His entire being into us to the extent that He becomes our constitution. His intention is to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity into us so that He becomes every fiber of our tripartite being (Rom. 8:11; Eph. 3:14-17). He will continue to dispense Himself into us and work Himself into us as our life, our nature, and our everything until eventually He and we, we and He, are fully mingled together and become His expression (4:4-6). This issues in the ultimate divine intention of making us, the believers in Christ, the same as God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead for His expression (John 1:12-14; 1 John 3:1-2). This means that God’s intention

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is to make us like Him in His divine life, in His divine nature, and in His image as His expression but not in the Godhead. For God to make us like Him in this way actually means to make us God (Col. 3:4; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 3:18). God has imparted Himself in Christ as the Spirit into us to make us the same as He is in life and in nature but not in the Godhead; this is the divine intention.

The accomplishment of the divine economy is by the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity (2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 1:3-23; 3:14-21). The divine economy is God's plan and arrangement out of His desire and purpose; the divine dispensing is God's dispensing and distributing according to this plan and arrangement (1:5, 9-11; 3:14-17). This involves the real significance of the revelation of the Divine Trinity. Everything that is mentioned in the New Testament concerning God is related to the divine dispensing for the divine economy. The revelation concerning the Triune God in the holy Word is not for doctrinal understanding but for the dispensing of God in His Divine Trinity into His chosen and redeemed people for their experience and enjoyment. The Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—has been processed to become the life-giving Spirit so that we can drink of Him and so that He can become our enjoyment; this is the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity (John 1:14; 4:14; 7:37-39; 1 Cor. 12:13; 15:45). The Divine Trinity is for the divine dispensing, that is, for the distribution of God into the believers in Christ; the Father as the origin is the fountain, the Son as the expression is the spring, and the Spirit as the transmission is the flow (John 4:14; 7:37-39). The divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity is the unique way to build up the church, which is the Body of Christ and the dwelling place of God (Eph. 4:16; 2:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:15). We need a vision of the central matter in the Bible—the divine intention, the divine economy, and the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity into the believers in Christ for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal corporate expression of the Triune God (Eph. 1:5, 9-11, 22-23; 3:14-21; 4:16; Rev. 21:2, 10-11).

The ultimate consummation of the divine economy is the New Jerusalem, the organic constitution of the processed and consummated Triune God mingled with His regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite elect. According to its humanity, the New Jerusalem is the tabernacle of God among men—the dwelling place of God in His humanity among men on the earth (vv. 2-3). According to its divinity, the New Jerusalem is the temple of God as the dwelling place of His redeemed elect (v. 22). The New Jerusalem is the consummate incorporation of God and man—the processed and consummated Triune God incorporated into an incorporation with His redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified elect. The intention of God's central work is that

all the believers in Christ would be incorporated into Himself as an incorporation to be an enlarged, divine and human incorporation (John 14:20). This incorporation is first the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16), and its consummation is the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2, 10-11). Thus, the union, mingling, and incorporation of the processed and consummated Triune God with the regenerated believers consummates as the New Jerusalem. Eventually, the Triune God and redeemed humanity will be mingled, blended, and built up as one entity—the New Jerusalem, which is built by God's constituting of Himself into man to make man the same as God in life, in nature, and in constitution so that God and man may become a corporate entity (vv. 18-22). The New Jerusalem is a composition of divinity and humanity blended and mingled together as one entity. All the components have the same life, nature, and constitution and thus are a corporate person. God and man, man and God, are built up together and blended and mingled together; this is the consummation of God's central work in His economy.

The New Jerusalem is a constitution of God and man and man and God, who are constituted into one (22:17; 21:3, 22). This is divinity expressed in humanity and humanity glorified in divinity, with the divine glory shining forth with great splendor radiantly in humanity (v. 11). The two—divinity and humanity—become a mutual dwelling place. The One who is God yet man dwells in the one who is man yet God. The one who is man yet God dwells in the One who is God yet man.

Here we have the convergence of the high peak of the divine revelation and the consummation of the divine economy. The high peak of the divine revelation is that, in Christ, God has become man in order to make His chosen and redeemed people God in life and nature for His eternal corporate expression through the church as the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem. The divine economy is God's plan and arrangement to work Himself into His elect by dispensing Himself into them as their life, life supply, and everything. The consummation of the divine dispensing in the divine economy is the church as the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem. With the high peak of the divine revelation, we have the unveiling of the good pleasure of God's will; with the consummation of the divine economy we have the fulfillment of the desire of God's heart. With both the revelation and the consummation the goal is the same—the glorious, corporate expression of the Triune God in Christ through His chosen, redeemed, regenerated, and glorified people who have been made God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead for His expression. Thus, at a very deep level of both revealed truth and spiritual experience, the high peak of the divine revelation and the consummation of the divine economy coalesce and are profoundly one in the sight of God.

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## The High Peak of the Divine Revelation and the Consummation of the Divine Economy as Seen in the Gospel of John

The following sketch of the Gospel of John in light of the high peak of the divine revelation and the consummation of the divine economy is actually an attempt to articulate the central thought of this Gospel. The central thought of the Gospel of John, the basic thought, is that through incarnation divinity was brought into humanity and that in resurrection humanity is brought into divinity. To bring God into humanity by incarnation and to bring man into God in resurrection involves the mingling of divinity with humanity with the goal of producing a corporate expression of the Triune God in, with, and through the believers in Christ. In John's Gospel such a corporate expression is present as the kingdom of God, the bride as the increase of Christ, the one flock under the one Shepherd, the Father's house with the believers as the many abodes, the true vine with its branches, the new man brought forth in the resurrection of Christ, and the oneness of the believers in the divine glory for the expression of God. Here in this central thought we have both the high peak of the divine revelation and the consummation of the divine economy. To bring divinity into humanity is for God to become man, and to bring humanity into divinity is for man to become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. The One who is God yet man is united, mingled, and incorporated with those who are man yet God to produce the corporate expression of God in glory.

### *Incarnation*

Christ is the infinite God becoming a finite man (Rom. 9:5; 8:3; 1:3-4), for in His incarnation Christ brought the infinite God into the finite man. Although God is infinite and man is finite, in Christ's incarnation the two—the infinite God and the finite man—became one. As the infinite God, Christ is the great I Am (John 8:58). *I Am* is the meaning of the name *Jehovah* (Exo. 3:14), and *Jehovah* is the name of God (Gen. 2:7), the One who is and who was and who is coming, the self-existing and ever-existing One (Rev. 1:4). This name is used in speaking of God in His relationship with humankind. The incarnated Christ is I Am; He is Jehovah God come in the flesh (John 1:14; Rom. 8:3) to be our Savior. For Christ to be I Am means that He is the self-existing and ever-existing God who has a relationship with human beings. Anyone who does not believe that Christ is I Am will die in his sins (John 8:24). To us who know Him as the great I Am, He is the reality of every positive thing and everything we need.

Related to this marvelous and mysterious reality is the fact that Christ is the complete God manifested in the flesh—

the Son with the Father by the Spirit (1 Tim. 3:16). To be exact, the New Testament does not say that the Son of God was incarnated but that God, the complete and entire God, was manifested in the flesh. Certainly, the Son of God was incarnated, but He was not manifested in the flesh apart from the Father and the Spirit.

Christ is the Word, who was God, becoming flesh. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). "Christ's deity is eternal and absolute. From eternity past to eternity future, He is with God and He is God" (Recovery Version, v. 2, note 2). The God who the Word is, is not a partial God but the entire God—God the Son, God the Father, and God the Spirit. Because the Word is God's definition, explanation, and expression, the Word who became flesh—the complete God manifested in the flesh—is God's definition, explanation, and expression in the flesh. "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (v. 18). Thus, He is the only begotten Son to declare God.

The divine economy is God's plan to work Himself into His elect by dispensing Himself into them as their life, life supply, and everything. The consummation of the divine dispensing is the church as the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem.

The incarnated Christ is the mingling of divinity with humanity, the mingling of the Triune God with the tripartite man to produce and bring forth the God-man—the unique One who is the complete God and a perfect man. As such, He has both divinity and humanity, with each being complete but united in the body of one person, without separation, without confusion, and without being transmuted into a third nature. In this mingling divinity and humanity are combined in one person; however, the original natures of divinity and humanity do not lose their unique characteristics but are distinguishable in the combination. As the God-man, Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit, thereby possessing the essence of God (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:20), and He was born of a human virgin, thereby possessing the essence of humanity (Luke 1:27, 31). He was named Jesus by God and was called Emmanuel by man (Matt. 1:21, 23).

In His incarnation Christ was the union, mingling, and incorporation of the Triune God with the tripartite man. The use of *incorporation* here requires comment. A *corporation* is a group of people combined or associated into

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one body, usually for the purposes of business or government. An *incorporation* is a matter of union and intimate mingling. To *incorporate* is to unite intimately, to blend, combine, or mingle thoroughly into a whole. *Incorporation* denotes both an act of incorporating and the state of being incorporated. Whereas *union* concerns our oneness in life with the Lord and *mingling* is related to the divine and human natures, *incorporation* is a matter of persons in a relationship of coinherence. God in His Divine Trinity is an incorporation; that is, in the Godhead the Father, the Son, and the Spirit coinhere, mutually indwelling one another. Moreover, in the outworking of the divine economy the Father, Son, and Spirit work together as one (Matt. 12:28; Eph. 3:16-17). In His incarnation Christ the Son, the second of the Divine Trinity, brought this divine incorporation into humanity. For this reason He could say, "Believe the works so that you may come to know and continue to know that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father" (John 10:38), and "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me" (14:11). This is the incarnation of the divine incorporation, God becoming man to be the unique God-man.

The entire God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—participated in the incarnation of Christ (John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; John 8:29; Matt. 1:20). As the union, mingling, and incorporation of the Triune God with the tripartite man, the Lord Jesus is the Triune God-man (Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16). Christ is not only the God-man but also the Father-Son-Spirit-man (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35; John 8:29). The Savior in whom we believe and whom we have received is the wonderful Triune God-man (Luke 2:11; Phil. 3:20).

### *The God-man Living*

The God-man living is a living in which God with the divine attributes is expressed in and through humanity with the human virtues. We may say that in His living He expressed the bountiful God in His rich attributes through His aromatic human virtues. In particular, Christ expressed the attributes of love, light, holiness, and righteousness (1 John 1:5, 7; Eph. 3:19; John 8:12; Acts 3:14).

**T**he Gospel of John is full and profound in its revelation of the God-man living of the Lord Jesus. He could testify, "I have come in the name of My Father" (John 5:43), meaning that He came in the person of the Father and even as the Father. "The Son being in the name of the Father is equivalent to the Son being the Father; hence, He is called the Father (Isa. 9:6). This proves that the Son and the Father are one (10:30)" (Recovery Version, John 5:43, note 1). As the One who came in the Father's name, He did nothing from Himself. "The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner" (v. 19). Because He did not love His soul-life and

always denied Himself, He could say, "I can do nothing from Myself" (v. 30). He did not do His own work, did not speak His own word, did not seek His own will, and did not seek His own glory. Regarding His not doing His own work, He said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work" (4:34). In the prayer recorded in chapter 17, He said to the Father, "I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do" (v. 4). Regarding not speaking His own word, He asserted, "The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works" (14:10). Having uttered this, He went on to say, "The word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me" (v. 24). Regarding not seeking His own will, He declared, "I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me" (5:30). Regarding not seeking His own glory, He told certain religionists, "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, this One is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him" (7:18). Because the incarnated Son, the God-man, lived in this way, He expressed, glorified, God the Father in everything that He said and did.

Because in His incarnation Christ brought the divine incorporation into humanity, it is not surprising that He lived an incorporated life, a life of coinherence, dwelling in the Father as the Father was dwelling in Him. Clear evidence of this is found in 14:10-11: "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?...The Father who abides in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me." This is coinherence, the mutual indwelling of the Son and the Father. Because He lived in such a coinhering way, He was one with the Father (10:30), He lived because of the Father (6:57), He worked with the Father (14:10; 5:17, 19), He worked in the name of the Father (10:25), He did the will of the Father (5:30; 6:38), He spoke the word of the Father (14:24; 7:16-17; 12:49-50), He sought the glory of the Father (7:18), and He expressed the Father. In His living as the God-man, He truly was the expression of the Father.

### *Crucifixion*

The Lord Jesus lived as the God-man, and He died on the cross as the God-man. He, our Redeemer, was the complete God and a perfect man, and thus He died as the Son of Man with the human nature and as the Son of God with the divine nature, dying for us and our sins in His humanity and with His divinity (1:29). His humanity qualified Him to die for us, and His divinity secures the eternal efficacy of His vicarious, redemptive death.

**B**ecause He died as the God-man with both divinity and humanity, His blood was God's blood. For this reason Acts 20:28 speaks of "the church of God, which He [God] obtained through His [God's] own blood." The

Lord Jesus is God, and He died on the cross not only as man but also as God. The One who was crucified in our place was the One who had been conceived of God and born of God. Since He was the God-man, the element of God was in Him when He died and was still mingled with His humanity. Thus, the blood that the Lord shed on the cross was the blood of Jesus, the Son of God: “The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin” (1 John 1:7). The name *Jesus* denotes the Lord’s humanity, which was needed for the shedding of the redeeming blood. The title *His Son* denotes the Lord’s divinity, which is needed for the eternal efficacy of the redeeming blood. Therefore, *the blood of Jesus His Son* indicates that this blood is the blood of a genuine man for redeeming fallen human beings with the divine surety for its eternal efficacy. From this we conclude that the blood shed by the Lord Jesus is eternal, for it is the blood of a man mingled with the divine element, the element of eternity. The blood of Jesus, the Son of God—God’s own blood—is eternal.

**T**he Gospel of John is unique in revealing that the Lord’s death on the cross has not only the redemptive aspect but also the life-releasing aspect, signified by the blood and water in 19:34: “One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.” Blood is for redemption, which includes dealing with sins (1:29; Heb. 9:22), and water, a sign of life, is for imparting life, which includes dealing with death (2 Tim. 1:10). The blood was for the purchasing of the church (Acts 20:28; Rev. 1:5; 5:9), and the water was for the producing of the church as the counterpart of Christ (Eph. 5:29-30).

Through His crucifixion as the God-man, the Lord Jesus released the divine life for His divine multiplication. This is unveiled in John 12:24: “Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” In His work on the cross, Christ died as a grain of wheat falling into the ground to release life for multiplication; this is the life-releasing aspect of His all-inclusive death. The Lord Jesus fell into the ground and died so that His divine element, His divine life, could be released from within the shell of His humanity to produce many believers in resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3). Hence, the death of Christ released the divine life for the divine dispensing to produce many grains that can be blended together into a loaf, the church, the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:17).

Furthermore, through His crucifixion the Lord Jesus released the concealed glory of His divinity through the baptism of His death. The glory of Christ’s divinity was concealed within Him as in a grain of wheat. As the only begotten Son in the eternal Godhead, Christ possessed the divine glory from eternity past; this was the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John

17:5). However, His humanity taken on through His incarnation became a shell to conceal the glory of His divinity, which was manifested briefly during His transfiguration on the mountain (Matt. 17:1-2). While the glory of His divinity was concealed within the shell of His humanity, the Lord Jesus was pressed and constrained, longing to be baptized with the baptism of His death for the release of the glory of His divinity. “I have come to cast fire on the earth,” He said in Luke 12:49. This fire is the “impulse of the spiritual life. This impulse comes from the Lord’s released divine life” (Recovery Version, Luke 12:49, note 1). Because He earnestly desired this release, He went on to say, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished” (v. 50).

The Lord was constrained in His flesh, which He put upon Himself in His incarnation. He needed to undergo physical death, to be baptized, that His unlimited and infinite divine being with His divine life might be released from His flesh. (Recovery Version, v. 50, note 2)

When He was crucified, the shell of His humanity was

**Christ died as a grain of wheat falling into the ground to release life for multiplication. The Lord Jesus fell into the ground and died so that His divine element, His divine life, could be released from within the shell of His humanity to produce many believers in resurrection.**

broken, and the glory of His divinity was released for the goal of the divine economy—the corporate expression of the God of glory.

### **Resurrection**

In the Gospel of John many striking aspects of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus are emphasized, but we will consider only a few that are especially related to the high peak of the divine revelation and to the consummation of the divine economy. In 20:1 we see that Christ was resurrected “on the first day of the week.” This is an allusion to a new creation in resurrection:

The first day of the week, or the day after the Sabbath, signifies a new beginning, a new age...By His all-inclusive death He terminated the old creation, which had been completed in six days, after which was the Sabbath day. In His resurrection He germinated the new creation with the divine life. Hence, the day of His resurrection was a new beginning of a new week—a new age. (Recovery Version, v. 1, note 1)

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The linen cloths lying in the tomb testified of this (v. 5); these cloths signify the old creation. He was crucified with the old creation, and He was buried with it. In His resurrection He germinated a new creation, and thus everything of the old creation remained in the tomb.

According to the Gospel of John, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was His glorification. Luke 24:26 refers to resurrection as glorification: “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer and enter into His glory?” The Lord’s resurrection brought Him into glory (Acts 3:13, 15; 1 Cor. 15:43). As John’s Gospel shows, for the Lord Jesus in His humanity to be glorified was for Him to be resurrected and thereby have His divine life released from within the shell of His humanity for the producing of many believers in resurrection (12:23; 13:31-32). His glorification through resurrection was an answer to His prayer in 17:1: “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You.”

In the resurrection of Christ, the Spirit of God became “the Spirit,” the consummated Spirit (7:39). The consummated Spirit is the Triune God after He has passed through the process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. *Processed* refers to the steps through which the Triune God has passed in the divine economy, *consummated* indicates that the process has been completed, and *the consummated Spirit* implies that the Spirit of God has been processed and has become the consummated Spirit. The consummated Spirit is the compound of the Triune God, the man Jesus, His human living, death, and resurrection (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:10-11; Phil. 1:19).

**B**efore the Lord Jesus was crucified and resurrected, the consummated Spirit was “not yet” (John 7:39). The Spirit of God was there from the beginning (Gen. 1:2), but the Spirit as “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9), “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19), was “not yet” at the time of John 7:39, because He was not yet glorified. The Lord Jesus was glorified when He was resurrected, and through this glorification the Spirit of God became the Spirit of the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Jesus Christ (Luke 24:26; Phil. 1:19). The last Adam, who was Christ in the flesh, became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection; since then, the Spirit of Jesus Christ has both divine and human elements, including the reality of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:45; Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9). The consummated Spirit was breathed as the holy breath into the disciples by the Son in resurrection (John 20:22). The Gospel of John reveals that Christ became flesh to be the Lamb of God and that in resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit; thus, in His resurrection He breathed Himself as the consummated Spirit into the disciples (1:29; 20:22). The Holy Spirit in 20:22 is the Spirit expected in 7:39 and promised in 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; and 16:7-8, 13; this

indicates that the Lord’s breathing of the Holy Spirit into the disciples was the fulfillment of the promise of another Comforter.

Through death and resurrection Christ was transfigured into the Spirit (7:39). It is as the Spirit that He was breathed into His disciples, that He can live in the disciples and they can live by Him and with Him, and that He can abide in them and they can abide in Him (20:22; 14:19-20; 15:4-5). The Christ who breathed Himself into the disciples is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). By breathing the Spirit into the disciples, the Lord imparted Himself into them as life and everything. The Holy Spirit in John 20:22 is actually the resurrected Christ Himself, because this Spirit is His breath; therefore, the Spirit is the breath of the Son. Now that Christ is able to enter into us and dwell in us, He can carry out God’s intention to make us the same as He is in life and in nature.

### **Man Becoming God in Life and in Nature but Not in the Godhead**

As we turn to the process by which God causes the believers in Christ to become God in life and in nature for His corporate expression, we will concentrate on two matters in the Gospel of John—regeneration and the divine dispensing.

**W**hen Christ was resurrected, God’s chosen and redeemed people were regenerated in Christ (1 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 2:5-6). This means that when He was born as the firstborn Son of God, we were born to be the many sons of God, who are the many brothers of Christ (John 20:17; Heb. 2:10-12). When Mary tried to touch the Lord Jesus in the freshness of His resurrection (which was solely for the Father’s enjoyment), He said to her, “Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God” (John 20:17). At this juncture, we must raise a crucial question: How is it possible for the only begotten Son to have brothers? The apostle John clearly emphasizes the fact that the Son of God is the only begotten Son in the eternal Godhead (1:18; 3:16). By definition and by intrinsic nature, the only begotten Son is the only Son and thus cannot have brothers, who would simultaneously be God’s sons. These other sons would then jeopardize the status of the Son as the only begotten Son of God. Nevertheless, the Gospel of John reveals that Christ is the only begotten Son and also that Christ in resurrection has brothers.

Regarding the Son of God, there are two aspects—the aspect of the only begotten Son of God and the aspect of the firstborn Son of God (John 3:16; Rom. 8:3, 29). The Bible calls the second in the Godhead the only begotten Son of God (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). His being

the only begotten Son of God refers to His divinity and to His identity in the Godhead. As the only begotten Son, He is of the same essence with the Father and the Spirit; He possesses the full essence of God with all its unique attributes. His being the only begotten Son does not mean that there was a time when He did not exist and that at some point in eternity past He was begotten of God. He is eternally God (Heb. 1:12; 7:3). His begetting refers not to an event but to an eternal relationship with the Father; the Father is the eternal source of the Son, and the Son is the eternal expression of the Father.

**T**hrough resurrection Christ became the Son of God in the aspect of the firstborn Son of God (Heb. 1:5-6; Rom. 1:3-4; Acts 13:33). His being the firstborn Son of God refers to the Lord's resurrection, when He was glorified to be the Son of God both in His divinity and in His humanity. In His divinity He was already the only begotten Son of God, but through His resurrection His humanity became the Son of God also, and the way was opened for us to become the many sons of God. Through resurrection His humanity was "sonized" and uplifted to the eternal plane. Through resurrection Christ became the firstborn Son of God as the life-dispenser for the propagation of the life embodied in Him (Rom. 8:29, 10, 6, 11). In His first coming Christ was the only begotten Son of God; in His second coming He will be the firstborn Son (Heb. 1:6-8). Christ's being the only begotten Son is for us to be redeemed and to have eternal life; Christ's becoming the firstborn Son through His death and resurrection is for us to become sons of God as heirs to inherit all the riches of what God is, that is, to receive, participate in, and enjoy the riches of the Triune God (John 3:14-16; Rom. 1:3-4; 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26, 29).

Now we have the answer to the question concerning the only begotten Son and the brothers of Christ mentioned in John 20:17. In His status as the only begotten Son, Christ possesses divinity but not humanity, and as this unique only begotten Son, He cannot have brothers and does not have brothers. But the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ is now the Son of God also in another sense. He is the firstborn Son of God possessing both divinity and humanity, and as such, He can and does have brothers. In the same resurrection through which Christ was born as the firstborn Son of God (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:3-4), His chosen and redeemed people were born, regenerated, as His many brothers (8:29), the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10-12). This is why He could tell Mary to go to His brothers and then refer to the Father as "My Father and your Father." The following note makes this crystal clear:

Previously, the most intimate term the Lord had used in reference to His disciples was "friends" (15:14-15). But

after His resurrection He began to call them "brothers," for through His resurrection His disciples were regenerated (1 Pet. 1:3) with the divine life, which had been released by His life-imparting death, as indicated in 12:24. He was the one grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died and grew up to bring forth the many grains for the producing of the one bread, which is His Body (1 Cor. 10:17). He was the Father's only Son, the Father's individual expression. Through His death and resurrection the Father's only Begotten became the Firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:29). His many brothers are the many sons of God and are the church (Heb. 2:10-12), a corporate expression of God the Father in the Son. This is God's ultimate intention. The many brothers are the propagation of the Father's life and the multiplication of the Son in the divine life. Thus, in the Lord's resurrection God's eternal purpose is fulfilled. (Recovery Version, John 20:17, note 2)

The fact that the Lord's brothers brought forth in His resurrection are the same as Christ, who is God, in life and in nature is indicated by the phrase *My Father and your*

**Christ's being the only begotten Son is for us to be redeemed and to have eternal life; Christ's becoming the firstborn Son through His death and resurrection is for us to become sons of God as heirs to receive, participate in, and enjoy the riches of the Triune God.**

*Father.* Because the Father is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ the Son, the Son has the life and nature of the Father. The principle is the same with us. Since God is our Father in reality and since we therefore have a relationship with Him in the divine life, we have the life and nature of God; thus, we are the same as God in life and in nature but, of course, not in His unique, incommunicable Godhead.

**T**his understanding is confirmed by the truth revealed in the Gospel of John concerning regeneration. As believers in Christ, we have been born again, born anew, born from above, regenerated in our spirit by the divine Spirit (3:3, 5-6). John 1:12-13 says, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We have been born of God to become children of God possessing the life and nature of God, and the Spirit witnesses with our spirit concerning this marvelous reality. We are actually children of God born of God, and God is actually our Father, the One who

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has begotten us, imparting His own life and nature into us to make us the same as He is in life and in nature. “Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and we are” (1 John 3:1). We have believed into Christ, the only begotten Son of God, in whom is the life (5:11-12), and by believing we have received eternal life (John 3:15), and now our regenerated spirit is life (Rom. 8:10). Yes, believers in Christ as the Son of God have eternal life, the very life of God Himself. This was the beginning of our becoming God in life and in nature for His expression.

**T**his process of becoming continues and develops as we experience the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity as our life, life supply, and everything by our eating, drinking, and breathing the Lord, all of which are presented wonderfully in the Gospel of John.

In John 6 the Lord refers to Himself as the bread of life, the living bread, the true bread, the bread of God, and the bread that came down out of heaven for our nourishment (vv. 32-33, 35, 48, 51). This bread, as the Lord explicitly says, is for eating: “I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever” (v. 51). After saying that His flesh is true food and His blood is true drink, He declared, “He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me” (vv. 55, 57).

To eat is to contact things outside of us and to receive them into us, with the result that they eventually become our constitution (Gen. 2:16-17). To eat is to take food into us so that it may be assimilated organically into our body (John 6:48, 50). To eat the Lord Jesus is to receive Him into us so that He may be assimilated by the regenerated new man in the way of life (vv. 56-57). Eating implies both dispensing and mingling (Jer. 15:16). Eating is the way to experience God’s dispensing for His expression (Gen. 1:26; 2:9). The food eaten, digested, and assimilated by us actually becomes us; this is a matter of mingling. The record regarding spiritual eating in the Bible is a strong indication that God intends to dispense Himself into us by the way of eating (Exo. 12:1-11; 16:14-15; Deut. 8:7-10).

Eating the Lord as the bread of life and the bread of God is intrinsically related to the divine economy. God’s eternal economy is to make man the same as He is in life and nature but not in the Godhead and to make Himself one with man and man one with Him, thus to be enlarged and expanded in His expression, that all His divine attributes may be expressed in human virtues (1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 3:9). This involves God’s central work to work Himself in Christ into His chosen and redeemed people (vv. 16-17), a matter closely related to our eating God. God not only desires that man be His vessel to contain Him, but He also wants man to eat, digest, and assimilate Him

(Rom. 9:21, 23; John 6:57), for His eternal plan is to dispense Himself into us so that He becomes every fiber of our inward being. The oneness that God desires with man is illustrated by what takes place when we eat, digest, and assimilate food (Matt. 4:4). God wants to be digested and assimilated by us so that He can become the constituent of our inward being. We are what we eat; therefore, if we eat God as our food, we will be one with God and even become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. By eating God we become God in life and in nature.

**T**he principle is the same with drinking the living water. To the Samaritan woman the Lord Jesus said, “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life” (John 4:14). Elsewhere the Lord invites the thirsty to drink of Him: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water” (7:37-38). The apostle Paul follows the Lord in encouraging us to drink, saying, “All drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4), and “In one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit” (12:13). By exercising our spirit to contact God (John 4:24) and by opening our being to the Lord, we may experience the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity by drinking of the Spirit as living waters so that we may be saturated and permeated with Him to become Him.

We have seen that the Lord, the resurrected Christ, is the Spirit who gives life, and this Spirit is our breath (2 Cor. 3:6, 17; John 20:22). The Word, who was God, became flesh to be the Lamb of God, and in resurrection He became the holy breath for us to breathe in (1:29; 20:22). Christ is the Lamb-tree, because He is the Lamb for accomplishing redemption and the tree for imparting life; ultimately, the Lamb-tree is the holy breath (1:29; 11:25; 15:1; 20:22). Now we have Christ as the Word, the Lamb, the tree, and the breath: the Word is for expression, the Lamb is for redemption, the tree is for the impartation of life, and the breath is for our living (1:1, 29; 10:10; 14:19).

Paul’s command to pray without ceasing implies that unceasing prayer is like breathing (1 Thes. 5:17). To live is to breathe; to breathe spiritually is to call on the Lord’s name. We need to call on the Lord Jesus continually; this is the way to breathe, to pray without ceasing (Rom. 10:12-13). To pray without ceasing by calling on the Lord’s name is to live Christ (Phil. 1:21). If we would live Christ, we must breathe spiritually, and the way to breathe spiritually is to call on the name of the Lord

(Lam. 3:55-56). By calling on the name of the Lord, we receive the consummated Spirit as the all-inclusive breath (John 20:22; Rom. 10:12-13). The consummated Spirit as the breath is everything to us in living the Christian life; only the breath, the Spirit, can be a Christian, and only the breath can make us God. We have been born of God to become God in life and in nature, and now we need to eat God, drink God, and breathe God until in our entire being we are God in life and in nature.

### **The Consummation of the Divine Economy— the Kingdom of God as the Corporate Expression of God**

The consummation of the divine economy is the corporate expression of the Triune God, initially through the church as the Body of Christ and ultimately through the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. Although the word *church* is not mentioned in the Gospel of John, in this book the church as a corporate expression of God is portrayed in a number of ways—the kingdom (3:3, 5), the bride (vv. 29-30), the one flock under one Shepherd (10:16), the Father's house (14:2-3), the Son's vine (15:1), the Spirit's child (16:12-15, 20-22), and the oneness of the believers in the divine glory (17:22). Because of the limitations of space, I will consider only the kingdom of God, a realm of life where God is expressed in glory.

**T**he kingdom of God is 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. God is life, having the nature, ability, and shape of the divine life, which forms the realm of God's ruling (Eph. 4:18; John 3:15). In actuality, God's reigning over us is not an outward matter but a matter of the innate ability of the divine life (Rom. 8:2). The life of God is the kingdom of God and also our entrance into the kingdom of God; we must see this basic principle.

The kingdom of God is not only the reign of God but also the realm of the divine life (John 18:36). The kingdom of God is the realm of the divine life for this life to move, to work, to rule, and to govern so that life may accomplish its purpose (3:3).

The kingdom of God is an organism constituted with God's life as the realm of life for His ruling, in which He reigns by His life and expresses Himself as the Divine Trinity in the divine life (v. 5; 15:1-8, 16, 26). The kingdom of God is God in Christ being the totality of life with all its activities (11:25; 10:10; 14:6). The unique way to enter into the kingdom of God is to receive God as life and gain God Himself; this is regeneration (3:5, 15;

1 John 5:11-12). The kingdom of God is a divine realm to be entered into, a realm which requires the divine life; hence, for us to see or enter into the kingdom of God requires regeneration. Because through regeneration we receive the divine life, the life of God, regeneration is the unique entrance into the kingdom. We have been born into the kingdom of God, and now the divine life in our spirit knows the kingdom of God. We live in the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life by the sense of life (Rom. 8:6).

**I**n the sense of life and as the realm of the divine life, the kingdom of God is actually God Himself. A kingdom is a matter of life. The plant kingdom is the totality of the plant life, the animal kingdom is the totality of the animal life, the human kingdom is the totality of the human life, and the divine kingdom—the kingdom of God—is the totality of the divine life. Only God has the life of God, and thus (initially) only God is the kingdom in the sense of life and as the realm of the divine life. Before God in Christ made the divine life available to those who believe into Christ (John 3:15-16), the

**In the Gospel of John the corporate expression of God is portrayed in a number of ways—the kingdom, the bride, the one flock under one Shepherd, the Father's house, the Son's vine, the Spirit's child, and the oneness of the believers in the divine glory.**

divine life was in God, not in anyone else. For this reason, the kingdom of God as a realm of the life of God was limited to God alone. The kingdom of God is God. The nature of the kingdom of God is divine because it is the kingdom of God. This is the first thing that we need to see regarding the kingdom of God.

If we realize this, we will begin to perceive related divine and spiritual realities. Because the kingdom of God is God Himself, God's kingdom has God as its content; God Himself is everything as the content of His kingdom (1 Cor. 4:20; 15:28). As we have pointed out, God is life, having the nature, ability, and shape of the divine life, which functions according to the law of life (Rom. 8:2). This life forms the organic realm of God's ruling among His children, who have been born of Him and who possess His life and nature (Eph. 4:18; John 1:12-13; 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:4). Therefore, in the sense of life, God's ruling over the believers in Christ is not an outward matter of power but an inward matter of the innate ability of the divine life. As we will see when we consider regeneration as the unique way to enter into God as the kingdom of

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God, the life of God—being the kingdom of God itself—is also our entrance into the kingdom of God. For the kingdom of God to draw near is for God to draw near. To proclaim, “The kingdom of God has drawn near,” as the Lord Jesus did in Mark 1:15, is to declare that God Himself has drawn near. Not only is the true God the God of life, but this God is the kingdom of God in the sense of life and as a realm of life.

### *The Realm of the Divine Species*

At this juncture we need to consider, soberly and with much exercise of spirit and mind, a tremendous divine truth: The kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life is the realm of the divine species. As the reign of God objectively and subjectively and as the enlargement of the pneumatic Christ, the kingdom of God is a realm, and this realm is not only of the divine dominion but also of the divine species. This is revealed in John 3, where the kingdom of God, being intrinsically related to the believers’ regeneration, their divine birth, refers more to the species of God than to the objective reign, or rule, of God. The crucial point here is this: To be in the kingdom of God in the sense of life and as the realm of the divine life and to become part of the kingdom of God as the enlargement of the pneumatic Christ require that we be born of God to become the species of God. As children of God begotten of God (John 1:12-13), we are the species of God, and as such we are in—and even are a part of—the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine species.

This means that in a very real but limited sense we, the believers in Christ, have become God. We have become God in the sense that, being the children of God, we are God (divine) in life and in nature, but we will never become God in the Godhead or as an object of worship, or as in any way possessing God’s incommunicable attributes. This is another way of saying that in Christ God became man so that in Christ man might become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. Through Christ’s incarnation God entered into the human species and was generated to become a man in life and in nature. Through Christ’s resurrection we enter into the divine species and are regenerated to become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

### *Regeneration—the Unique Entrance into the Kingdom of God*

As indicated above, we enter into the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life—the enlargement of the pneumatic Christ and the sphere of the divine species—through regeneration. The Lord Jesus made this emphatically clear in John 3, where He reveals that if we would enter into the divine realm, the kingdom of God in the sense of the divine life, we need to be born of God to have

the life and nature of God. To be regenerated—to be born anew, born of God—is to receive another life, the uncreated, divine life, in addition to our natural, created, human life. Just as possessing the human life is the requirement for entering into the human kingdom, the realm of the human species, so possessing the divine life is the requirement for entering into the divine kingdom, the realm of the divine species. Entrance into the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life requires that we receive the divine life, and we receive the divine life through the divine birth, that is, through regeneration.

In John 3:3 the Lord Jesus said, “Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” In verse 5 He went on to say, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Verse 3 speaks of seeing the kingdom of God, and verse 5, of entering into the kingdom of God. In order to see, to perceive, the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life, we must receive the life of the kingdom of God through regeneration. Recall that the Lord told the Pharisees that the kingdom of God does not come “with observation” (Luke 17:20). The kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life is not physical, and its existence and reality cannot be discerned by natural, human sight. To see the kingdom of God, we must be born anew; that is, we must be born of the Spirit in our spirit (John 3:6) by believing into Christ, the Son of God (vv. 15-16), and receiving the pneumatic Christ into our spirit to become children of God, Godmen, those who possess the divine life and nature, who are part of the increase of the pneumatic Christ, who live in the sphere of the divine species, and thus who enter into and live in the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life.

The religious people to whom the Lord was speaking in Luke 17 and John 3 were blind; they could not see that the kingdom of God was actually present with them in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In principle, the situation is the same today. Religious blindness hinders many, including unregenerate pastors and theologians, from seeing the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life. To them the Lord Jesus continues to say, “Unless you are born anew, you cannot see.”

Whereas we see the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life by being born anew, we enter into this kingdom by being born of water and the Spirit. In John 3:5 *water* signifies the death of Christ, into which we have been baptized (Rom. 6:4-6), and *Spirit* signifies resurrection, through which we have been regenerated (1 Pet. 1:3). Water is to terminate, to bury, the people of the old creation, and the Spirit is to germinate, to resurrect, people for and in the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Only by being terminated and germinated in this way can we enter into the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life.

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## A Realm of Light

The kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life, being the kingdom of the Son of God's love, is a realm of light. The divine light is the nature of God's expression. Light is God's shining, God's expression. When God is expressed, the nature of that expression is light (1 John 1:5). Since the kingdom of God in the sense of life is God Himself as life, the kingdom of God is light.

**T**he divine light shines in and with the divine life. For this reason, the fountain of life is intrinsically related to light. After declaring that the fountain of life is with God, the psalmist goes on to testify, "In Your light we see light" (Psa. 36:9). Both in the divine revelation and in the experience of believers, life and light always go together (John 1:1-7). Where life is, there is light, and where light is, there is life; this is a principle in the Bible. Where light shines, life enters (2 Cor. 4:6), and where life is manifested, light shines. On the one hand, the divine light shines and brings in life; on the other hand, the divine life is manifested, and light shines. Actually, life and light are inseparable. John 3:15-16 says that if we believe into the Son of God, we will have eternal life; however, John 12:36, referring to Christ as the light of the world and the light of life (8:12), says that we should believe into the light so that we may become sons of light—light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8).

According to Psalm 36:9, light is both objective and subjective. First, we enter into the realm of God's light, or, more exactly, the realm of God as light (1 John 1:5), and then, being in the light, we see light. "Your light"—this is the light that belongs to God, the light that is God Himself in His expression. "See light"—this is the experience of the objective light in the realm of light entering into us subjectively and causing us to see the divine reality (Matt. 5:8). The more we know God as the fountain of life, the more we will know Him as light, see light, abide in the light, and walk in the light (1 John 1:7). To walk in the divine light, that is, to live in the divine kingdom as the realm of the divine light, is to live, move, act, and have our being in the divine light, which is God Himself.

The divine light is the source of the divine truth (John 8:12, 32, 36). When the divine light shines upon us, it becomes to us the divine truth, which is the divine reality. Moreover, when the divine light shines upon us and within us, the divine things, which hitherto might have been mere doctrines to us, become real to us. Because the divine light is the source of truth, and truth is the issue of light, when we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we practice the divine truth and thereby live not only in the realm of the divine light but also in the realm of the divine reality.

To walk in God as light is to live in the realm of the divine light where, under the shining of God in Christ as light, we live in the reality of the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine light. This claim is based on the truth that, in its essential reality, the kingdom of God is the shining of the Lord Jesus over us to deliver us from the authority of darkness (Col. 1:12-13). The kingdom is the shining of the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whenever He is shining over us and in us and we are under this shining and open to receive it, we are in the kingdom. Where light shines, light rules.

**T**he Lord Jesus rules by shining; His shining is His reigning in His kingdom. The more He shines on us and in us, the more He reigns over us, not by outward regulations but by His governing light. To abide under the shining of this light is to dwell in the kingdom of the Son of God's love as the realm of the divine life, where the Lord rules over us in life, light, and love. This is a lovely and beautiful realm—a realm of radiance, peace, joy, delight, order, harmony, fellowship, and oneness of the believers with the Triune God and with one another in

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the Triune God. In this blessed sphere we have a foretaste of "the economy of the fullness of the times," of God's plan "to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him" (Eph. 1:10). At that time, the divine economy will have been completely fulfilled, and God in Christ will have in the new heaven and new earth the New Jerusalem as the glorious consummation of the divine economy according to the high peak of the divine revelation as revealed in the Gospel of John. **AF**

### Works Cited

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