

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST IN THE STAGE OF INCLUSION

by Witness Lee

The first stage of Christ's full ministry was the stage of His incarnation, from His birth through His human living to His death. The second stage is the stage of His inclusion, from His resurrection to the degradation of the church. We need to see why we call it the stage of inclusion. In His first stage He possessed only two elements—divinity and humanity. This was a little more complicated than what He had prior to His incarnation. Before His incarnation, in eternity past, He possessed only one element—divinity. From the time of His incarnation, when He put on human nature, He possessed humanity in addition to His divinity; hence, He had two natures. After His death and resurrection, more elements were added to Him in His resurrection.

In His resurrection, the last Adam, Christ in the stage of His incarnation, became the life-giving Spirit. This “becoming” made Him the Christ of inclusion, with the divine element and the human element included in Him, with the element of His death and its effectiveness included in Him, and with the element of His resurrection and its power included in Him. Hence, in the Old Testament there is the type of the holy anointing ointment (Exo. 30:22-25). The holy anointing ointment was not merely oil, which was just one of the ingredients; it was an ointment compounded with many ingredients. The holy anointing ointment typifies the compound, life-giving Spirit whom Christ became in the stage of His inclusion.

This light was hidden from us until 1954 when we saw it clearly through *The Spirit of Christ*, a book written by Andrew Murray. In chapter five of his book, Andrew Murray indicates that in the Spirit of the glorified Jesus today there is not only His human nature but also His death with its effectiveness and His resurrection with its power. In 1954, in Hong Kong, I released a message saying that in the Spirit of the glorified Jesus there are the divine element,

the human element, the element of His death with its effectiveness, and the element of His resurrection with its power. All these elements can be likened to the ingredients in a dose which contains a germ-killing element like the effectiveness of death and a life-supplying element like the power of resurrection. The elements contained in the Spirit of Christ are bountiful and all-inclusive. In the stage of His inclusion Christ accomplished three great things. First, He was begotten as God's firstborn Son; second, He became the life-giving Spirit; and third, He regenerated His believers for His Body. Apparently, these great things are quite simple, but actually they are very complicated.

To Be Begotten as God's Firstborn Son

From Eternity Past without Beginning, Christ Was God's Only Begotten Son

From eternity past without beginning, Christ was God's only begotten Son. As such, He possessed only divinity and was without humanity, because He had not yet become flesh to pass through death and enter into resurrection. In the Gospel of John the Lord said, “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25). In eternity past He was already resurrection just as He was life, but He had not yet entered into the experience of resurrection. For example, you may be a professor but still lack the experience of being a professor. The Lord is resurrection, and He has been resurrection from eternity past because He is God, who is resurrection.

To be resurrected is to overcome and transcend death, that is, to enter into and come out of death. As the only begotten Son of God, Christ is resurrection from eternity, but then He did not have the experience of resurrection. It was not until after He had accomplished His ministry in the flesh through His death that He entered into resurrection.

***In Incarnation the Only Begotten Son of God
Became Flesh to Be a God-man, a Man Possessing
Both the Divine Nature and the Human Nature***

In His incarnation the only begotten Son of God became flesh to be a God-man, a man possessing both the divine nature and the human nature.

***Through Death and Resurrection
Christ in the Flesh as the
Seed of David Was Designated
to Be the Firstborn Son of God***

Romans 1:3-4 tells us that through His death and resurrection Christ in the flesh as the seed of David was designated to be the firstborn Son of God. Before His incarnation, Christ, the divine One, was already the Son of God (John 1:18; Rom. 8:3). By incarnation He put on an element, the human flesh, which had nothing to do with divinity; that part of Him needed to be sanctified and uplifted by passing through death and resurrection. By resurrection His human nature was sanctified, uplifted, and transformed. Hence, by resurrection He was designated the Son of God with His humanity (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5). His resurrection was His designation.

***In Death His Humanity
Was Crucified***

In His death Christ's humanity was crucified. When Christ was crucified on the cross, His humanity was crucified there. First Peter 3:18 says, "Christ...on the one hand being put to death in the flesh, but on the other, made alive in the Spirit." Here we can see that when He died, it was His flesh that was crucified. His divinity was not crucified; rather, it became very active. It is not easy for the readers of the Bible to see that when Christ was on the cross, while His flesh was being put to death, His divinity was actively working.

***In Resurrection His Crucified Humanity Was Made
Alive by the Spirit of His Divinity and Was Uplifted
into the Sonship of the Only Begotten Son of God***

Then, in the resurrection of Christ, His crucified humanity was made alive by the Spirit of His divinity and was uplifted into the sonship of the only begotten Son of God. For example, a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies. That death causes the shell of the grain to be broken and destroyed, yet at the same time, the life

within the grain is made active. The outward shell is broken and dies, but the life within is activated and begins to germinate and grow. This germination, this growth, is resurrection. In *Hymns*, #482 the first two lines of stanza 1 say, "I am crucified with Christ, / And the cross hath set me free"; then the first two lines of stanza 3 say, "This the secret nature hideth, / Harvest grows from buried grain."

When a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, is it dying or living? If the grain of wheat were merely dying, no farmer would want to sow any grain. Everyone who sows knows that although a grain dies alone when it is sown, it brings forth thirty grains, sixty grains, and even a hundred grains.

John 12:24 says, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." To bear much fruit is to be made alive, and this takes place at the time of dying. The grain of wheat, on the one hand, is dying, but on the other hand, is being made alive. The same is true with Christ when He was on the cross. Although His humanity, His flesh, as His outer shell, was crucified on the cross, the Spirit as the essence of His divinity was greatly activated so that His crucified humanity might be made alive in resurrection.

Not only so, when His humanity was made alive, it was uplifted into the sonship of the only begotten Son of God. In other words, as soon as He was resurrected, His humanity was uplifted into the divine sonship. Thus, He was begotten to be the firstborn Son of God.

***Thus, He Was Begotten by God
in His Resurrection to Be the Firstborn Son of God***

The only begotten son is different from the firstborn son. The "only begotten son" means that there is only one son, whereas the "firstborn son" means that there are at least two sons. Those who were begotten with Christ in His resurrection were not just two, but millions. Ephesians 2:5 says that God "made us alive together with Christ," and verse 6 says that He "raised us up together with Him." We were enlivened by being made alive together with Christ and then we were resurrected together with Him. When He died on the cross, we also died with Him there. While He was dying on the cross, His Spirit of life was making Him alive and also making us alive. Thus, we were made alive with Him and were resurrected with Him. His resurrection was His birth, in which He was begotten to be God's firstborn Son (Acts 13:33). Our resurrection was also our birth, in which we were

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born to be God's many sons (1 Pet. 1:3). He is God's firstborn Son; we are God's many sons (Rom. 8:29).

To Become the Life-giving Spirit

The second great thing accomplished by Christ in the stage of His inclusion was that He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). In His resurrection, not only was He begotten to be the firstborn Son of God, but also as the last Adam in the flesh He became the life-giving Spirit. Christ's being the last Adam means that after Him there is no more Adam. In Christ, Adam was ended. In resurrection Christ as the last Adam in the flesh became the life-giving Spirit.

The Last Adam (Christ in the Flesh) Became a Life-giving Spirit

First Corinthians 15:45b says, "The last Adam [Christ in the flesh] became a life-giving Spirit." First, in His incarnation, Christ became flesh for accomplishing redemption. Then in His resurrection, Christ, the last Adam, became the life-giving Spirit for dispensing life.

This Life-giving Spirit "Was Not Yet" before the Resurrection of Christ— the Glorification of Christ

John 7:39 says, "...for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." In my youth, when I read this portion of the Word, I wondered why "the Spirit was not yet." Had not the Spirit of God already been there for a long time? Does not Genesis 1:2 say that the Spirit of God was moving upon the face of the waters? Then in the Old Testament, in God's relationship with man, the Spirit of Jehovah is mentioned (Judg. 6:34; Isa. 61:1). At the beginning of the New Testament, in the conception of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit came (Matt. 1:18, 20). The *Holy Spirit* in Greek is also "the Spirit, the holy." The word *holy* here indicates that the Spirit can make the common people holy. Therefore, Mary, a common virgin, brought forth a son named Jesus who was called the holy thing (Luke 1:35). Thus, according to the holy Scriptures and the facts, had not the Holy Spirit been there? Why is it that John 7 says that the Spirit was not yet because Jesus had not yet been glorified, that is, had not yet been resurrected?

After many years of study, I became clear that indeed Jesus was glorified when He was resurrected (Luke 24:26). Before He was resurrected, that is, before He was glorified, the Spirit of God was not the life-giving Spirit. Before the resurrection of Christ, the Spirit of God could move upon the face of the waters, could contact people, and could sanctify people, but He could not impart life into people, because He was not yet the life-giving Spirit.

The title *the Spirit of life* was not mentioned until Romans 8:2. Therefore, prior to the resurrection of Christ, *the Spirit was not yet* means that there was not yet the life-giving Spirit.

Christ Was Transfigured into the Life-giving Spirit in His Resurrection

Christ, the Son of God as the second of the Divine Trinity, after completing His ministry on the earth, became (was transfigured into) the life-giving Spirit in His resurrection. In the previous stage Christ was a man in the flesh, but after He had entered into resurrection, He was transfigured into a life-giving Spirit.

This life-giving Spirit is signified by the water that flowed out of the pierced side of Jesus on the cross (John 19:34). The four Gospels all give a record of the death of the Lord Jesus, but only John tells us that blood and water flowed out from His pierced side. The blood signifies redemption, and the water signifies life-imparting. Christ as the life-giving Spirit is signified by the water.

Furthermore, through His death on the cross, Christ released the divine life that was confined in the shell of His humanity and dispensed it into His believers to make them the many members which constitute His Body (John 12:24). When Christ was in His flesh, His divine life was held and confined in the shell of His flesh. This can be illustrated by a grain of wheat. Unless the grain of wheat is sown into the ground and dies, the life within the grain is confined within its shell. But when the grain is sown into the ground and dies, the shell of the grain is broken and the life within is released.

This Life-giving Spirit Being the Pneumatic Christ

This life-giving Spirit, who is the pneumatic Christ, is also called the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2), the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7), the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9), the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19), and the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

Here, we are speaking about "the pneumatic Christ," not "the spiritual Christ." "The pneumatic Christ" means that Christ is the Spirit. When I first came to the United States, I began to speak concerning Christ as the Spirit. That stirred up a strong opposition from some in Christianity, and they called me a preacher of heresy. However, up to this day I am still speaking about this, and the more I speak, the more I have to speak. Consequently, they can no longer say that I am preaching heresy, because this is an important truth in the Bible which no one can refute.

This pneumatic Christ, who is the Spirit of life, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

and the Lord Spirit, supplies our needs in every way that we may gradually grow in His life and nature unto maturity.

To Regenerate the Believers for His Body

The third great thing accomplished by Christ in the stage of His inclusion was that He regenerated the believers for His Body (1 Pet. 1:3).

To Regenerate the Believers, Making Them the Many Sons of God

The purpose of Christ's being begotten to be the firstborn Son of God and becoming the life-giving Spirit was to regenerate the believers that they may become the many sons of God, born of God with Him in the one universally big delivery. Therefore, the birth of Christ in resurrection was indeed a big delivery, one delivery giving birth to millions of sons of God.

The first One was the firstborn Son, Christ, and the rest were the many sons, all the believers belonging to Christ. This is for the composition of the house of God, even the household of God. This is also for the constitution of the Body of Christ to be His fullness, His expression and expansion, to consummate the eternal expression and expansion of the processed and consummated Triune God.

Concerning the constitution of the Body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13 says that in one Spirit all the believers have been baptized into the one Body of Christ. This one Spirit is Christ Himself. In Him as the one Spirit we all have been baptized into one Body. At the same time, all the believers who were baptized in the one Spirit have been given to drink this Spirit.

To be baptized is to enter into the one Spirit, whereas to drink is to receive the one Spirit into us. The people in the region of the lower course of the Yangtze River in China had the habit of going in the morning to drink tea at the tea house and going at night to bathe by soaking in the pool. In the morning they drank to their full, and at night they soaked in the pool. They said that to soak in the pool was to have "the water enveloping the skin" and to drink to one's full was to have "the skin enveloping the water"; that is, there was water both inside and outside. This should be our condition today since we have been baptized into the Spirit and have been given to drink one Spirit. We have been baptized into Christ as the life-giving Spirit—this is "the Spirit enveloping us." Furthermore, we have been given to drink the Spirit—this is "us enveloping the Spirit." Consequently, we have the Spirit within and without. Thus, in this Spirit, we all become one organic entity—the Body of Christ.

Giving the Spirit without Measure

In His resurrection Christ gave Himself as the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit without measure through His speaking of the words of God (John 3:34). Today people in the Pentecostal movement claim that if you have received the baptism of the Spirit, you must speak in tongues. However, the Bible says that when you receive the words of God and the words of God enter into you, you have the Spirit. In John 6:63 the Lord told us, "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." Once we receive the words of God into us, these words that are in us become spirit and life. Therefore, when the Lord speaks to us, He gives us life and the Spirit without measure. I truly can testify that the more I receive the Lord's words, the more I am filled with the Spirit, even without measure.

All the Believers in Christ Are Built Up into a Dwelling Place of God in Their Spirit Indwelt by Him as the Spirit

Christ regenerated the believers for His Body that all the believers in Christ may be built up into a dwelling place of God in their spirit indwelt by Him as the Spirit (Eph. 2:22). Here, to be built up is to be constituted together. We are being built up into a dwelling place of God in our spirit indwelt by Him as the Spirit. Ultimately, this dwelling place is the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:3). The New Jerusalem is a city, a large, corporate dwelling place. The dwelling place of a single person is a house; the dwelling place of a multitude is a city. All the believers in Christ will be built up, constituted, that they may be filled with the Spirit, within and without, to become the dwelling place of God. The consummation of such a dwelling place is a large city—the New Jerusalem.

Such a constitution, such a building, is consummated through dispositional sanctification (Rom. 15:16), renewing (Titus 3:5), transformation (2 Cor. 3:18), and conformation (Rom. 8:29). After regenerating us, God sanctifies us in our disposition, renews us in our old creation, and transforms us in our entire being. Not only so, He conforms us to the image of His firstborn Son that all of us may be God's sons in life and nature and, with His firstborn Son, become God's corporate son as God's expression, God's expansion. The New Jerusalem is such a corporate expression, expansion, and enlargement of God. The Bible begins with "In the beginning God..." (Gen. 1:1). At that time, the unique God was "alone." However, at the end, the Bible mentions a city, the New Jerusalem. This city is not simple, requiring the explanation of the Bible with sixty-six books. This is because this city, the New Jerusalem, is the enlarged God. All the sixty-six books of the Bible explain the enlarged God, the New Jerusalem. AFC

From *How to Be a Co-worker and an Elder*, pp. 26-36.