

OVERCOMING IN THE LAST DAYS TO TURN THE AGE

by Ed Marks

Receiving a Revelation of the Mystery of God's Economy and of What Will Happen in the Last Days

In Daniel 2 Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about a great human image, and he was so troubled by this dream that he called together all of his wise men, conjurers, and counselors and commanded them to tell him the dream and its interpretation, lest they be put to death. When Daniel became aware of this situation, he reported it to his three companions: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Then together these four young overcomers, who were a real vital group, prayed, requesting compassions from God so that He might reveal this mystery to them. Then Daniel received a revelation of the dream in a night vision, and he went to Nebuchadnezzar and said, "There is a God in the heavens who reveals mysteries" (v. 28). Praise the Lord that our God is a God who reveals mysteries.

In order to be the overcomers and the constituents of the Lord's overcoming bride to bring the Lord back, we need the inner-operating, indwelling Triune God embodied in Christ and realized as the Spirit in our spirit to grant us a spirit of wisdom and revelation to see Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ. It is only by revelation that we can see the great mystery concerning Christ and the church, which is the great mystery of God's economy, the great mystery of godliness, the corporate manifestation of God in the flesh as the Body of Christ, and consummately, the corporate manifestation of God in regenerated, transformed, and glorified humanity as the New Jerusalem. We need to receive revelation, and we need to continue to receive revelation day by day in order to see more and more of this great mystery. We cannot receive a revelation of this mystery by merely exercising our natural human intelligence to understand teachings and doctrines. Instead, we need to be like little children who are poor in spirit, empty, and open to

receive something fresh of the Lord and to see the secrets and hidden treasures in His innermost being (Matt. 5:3). Furthermore, we need to be pure in heart, having the Lord as our unique goal and His perfect will as our only desire (v. 8). Then we will see the great mystery of God's economy, and the Lord will constitute us into His overcoming bride so that this mystery may be fully realized and the Lord may come back to reign on the earth.

It is possible to have a correct doctrinal understanding of the end times yet be left behind to pass through the great tribulation. It is possible to know the doctrinal facts concerning the last days but have very little revelation. We must realize that it is only through revelation that we can enter into the divine and mystical realm of the mingling of the Triune God with the tripartite man. Only a revelation from God can usher us into the realm of the great mystery of godliness.

To present eschatology apart from God's economy is wrong. We should never present any truth apart from God's eternal economy. We need to know what will happen in the last days, but we must know this according to revelation so that we can fulfill God's eternal economy. We need to have a revelation of where we are in God's economy; we need to see that these are the last days. This is a very serious matter, and we need a proper understanding of these truths but not to satisfy our curiosity.

The Lord's move is in the realm of revelation and vision. To be intrinsically in His move is to be in the revelation and reality of the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity in His divine economy. It is to be infused with the Triune God day by day, buying the oil so that the oil not only is in our lamp, our spirit, but saturates and fills our vessel, our soul, so that we may be prepared to be the constituents of Christ's overcoming bride to bring Him back

to the earth. This is the reason we must see that these are the last days. When we see this, it becomes an impetus and a motivating factor within us, causing us to prepare ourselves to be ready for the Lord's coming. Revelation 19:7 says, "The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." As the wife, we need to make ourselves ready. On one hand, Revelation 21:2 says that the New Jerusalem is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." In other words, it is God who prepares the bride by dispensing Himself into her as gold, pearl, and precious stone to make her a miraculous structure of treasure of the Divine Trinity. On the other hand, it is the bride who makes herself ready by cooperating with the Triune God. Thus, we need to be the wise virgins who redeem the time and buy the oil.

Being a Proper Person in Order to Receive a Revelation

Daniel was able to receive a vision of God's economy and of what will happen in the last days because he was a certain kind of person. First, he was a person whose heart was set on God's economy. Every day we need to maintain our heart by staying in the vision of God's economy and by giving our hearts to the Lord, saying, "Lord, I set my heart on You and on Your interests." Daniel was a person with a proper heart. When he prayed, he opened his windows toward Jerusalem, indicating that his heart was set on the Holy Land, the holy temple, and the holy city (Dan. 6:10). Likewise, our heart should be set on God's interests. Whenever we come to the Word of God, we must seek to be constituted with the light of the truth. We must be those who dive into the truth day and night and experience it. We must endeavor to live the life of a God-man and to be the overcomers who keep every principle of the Body of Christ so that we may carry out God's economy for the sake of the Holy Land, the holy temple, and the holy city. We need to declare by faith that our heart is set on Christ as the reality of the all-inclusive good land, whom we enjoy and experience in order to be constituted with His unsearchable riches. We are not here merely to exercise our mind; we are here to enjoy Christ and to encourage one another to enjoy Christ as the good land. Our heart is set on this all-inclusive Christ so that we may be constituted with Him to become His temple. We are working out our own salvation by being built up in our fresh experiences of Christ day by day, and Christ is increasing and growing in us so that together we may become the corporate temple and dwelling place of God, the Body of Christ, filled with the glory of the Triune God for His expression in this universe.

We also need to be built up as the church in the aspect of its being the kingdom of God. In other words, not only should we be filled with His life for His expression, but we should also be filled with His ruling presence for His dominion. We want Him to rule and reign within

us as the life-giving Spirit; we want Him to be our Lord. Paul says in Philippians 3:8, "I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." The phrase *my Lord* is very personal. Paul counted all things loss because he saw a tremendous revelation of the supreme preciousness, the preeminence, and the surpassing worth of Christ Jesus his Lord. Jesus is the Lord of the universe, but He is also *our* Lord. This means that He is the One who decides everything in us and in our life. We should consult Him in everything and let Him be the Decider and the Ruler. This is for the building up of the church as the kingdom of God.

Daniel was a person who was in his spirit and who was fully occupied with prayer and supplications to God. Thus, when Daniel read the prophecy in the Scriptures concerning the children of Israel being in Babylonian captivity for seventy years and then returning to the good land to build up the holy temple and the holy city, he was not satisfied with merely knowing this information. Instead, he prayed this matter back to God, joining himself to God's desire through His word (Dan. 9:2-3). He confessed his sin and the sins of the people, and he cried out to God, praying that God would fulfill His word and His desire by releasing His people from their captivity in Babylon and bringing them back to the good land, to the city of Jerusalem, to God's original intention, and to the genuine ground of oneness so that they could build up the temple for His expression and the city for His dominion. The answer that Daniel received in response to his prayer exceeded his request. In answering Daniel's prayer, the Lord showed Daniel the colossal vision and revelation of the seventy weeks.

The Vision of the Great Human Image and the Seventy Weeks

Because Daniel was such a person, the Lord revealed to him the history of man and, in particular, the history of human government, which is the essence of the history of man. The Lord also revealed to him the history of God within the history of man. Daniel 2 gives the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream concerning the great human image, which consisted of four sections. The first section of the image was the head of gold, signifying the Babylonian Empire with Nebuchadnezzar as the king. The second section was the breast and arms of silver, signifying the Medo-Persian Empire. Due to King Belshazzar's debauchery and his insulting God's holiness, the Medes and Persians overthrew the Babylonian Empire in one night (Dan. 5:30-31). The transfer of the empire from the Babylonians to the Medes and Persians took place in one night. It is very sobering to realize that such a great change in history happened so quickly. The third section of the great human image was the abdomen and thighs of bronze, signifying the

Macedonian-Grecian Empire, which was established under Alexander the Great. The fourth section consisted of the two legs of iron, which signify the Roman Empire, which was divided into two parts, east and west.

According to world history, the four empires typified by the four main sections of this great human image have come and gone. Much of the prophecy concerning the great image and its sections has been fulfilled. The age typified by the feet of the image is upon us. The feet were composed partly of iron and partly of clay, which indicates that human government in this stage of history is a mixture of autocracy and democracy. If we examine the nations of the earth today, we will realize that many governments bear this characteristic. Eventually, we will come to the period of time signified by the ten toes of the great image, which according to the books of Daniel and Revelation, typify the ten kings who will follow Antichrist, the last Caesar of the revived Roman Empire. Thus, the interpretation of the dream of the great human image shows that we are in the last days.

In this article we will examine the matter of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9, focusing on the last week, which signifies the last seven years of this age. The last seven years before the Lord returns to set up His kingdom on the earth will begin when Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel for seven years. Then after three and a half years, Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel, and the great tribulation will begin. If we see all these matters, we will sense an urgent need to prepare ourselves for the Lord's return. Today the enemy uses many things in the world to cause not only the unbelievers but also the believers to become numb to the Lord and to His coming, causing them to waste their entire lives pursuing a career or a worldly lifestyle. We do not want our lives to be wasted. Instead, we want to know the purpose of our life and see where we are in history.

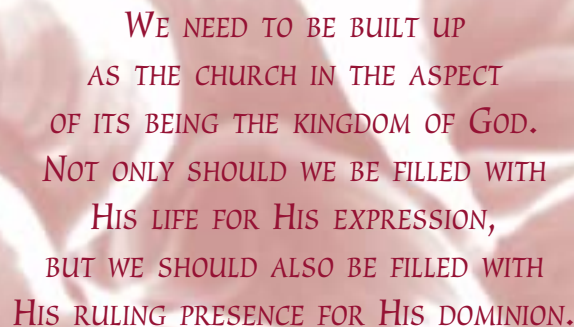
We need to know what will happen in the last days so that we may live an overcoming life and thus be raptured before the great tribulation and spared from that hour of trial. At the beginning of the last seven years of this age, Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel for seven years. But after three and a half years Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel and set himself in the temple, and the great tribulation will begin. This implies that sometime before that last three and a half years the

temple will be rebuilt. Today there are some Israelites who have prepared everything and are ready to rebuild the temple in an instant. Along with the fragile world situation, this is a further indication that we are very close to the last seven years of this age. Whether or not we are alive when the Lord returns is according to the Lord's desire and His will for each one of us. Nevertheless, if we live an overcoming life, we will either be a part of the man-child, which is composed of the dead overcomers, or the firstfruits, which are the living overcomers. Both the man-child and the firstfruits will be raptured immediately before the great tribulation, indicating that the living overcomers will be on the earth when Antichrist makes the covenant with Israel. Thus, we need to know about Antichrist. The Bible does not speak of Antichrist merely for our mental understanding or to satisfy our curiosity. We need to know who Antichrist is and what his characteristics are in order to be the overcomers, because the

spirit of Antichrist, the mystery of lawlessness, is already operating in human society and will continue to operate until the man of lawlessness is revealed.

Daniel 7:3-7 mentions four beasts, which represent the governments throughout world history and their respective leaders. The lion signifies the Babylonian Empire with

Nebuchadnezzar as its king, the bear signifies the Medo-Persian Empire, and the leopard signifies the Macedonian-Grecian Empire, its leader being Alexander the Great with his swift and cruel movement. The fourth beast represents the Roman Empire and, more specifically, Antichrist, who is the totality of all the evil powers in world history. This vision indicates that in God's eyes all the worldly powers are beasts. In Revelation 13:1 Antichrist is even called the beast. He will be the last Caesar of the revived Roman Empire, the embodiment of Satan. However, to the people of the earth, he will be a very popular, charismatic, and eloquent leader who can perform miracles, signs, and wonders. The whole earth will be captivated by him. There will be a great problem on the earth that no one can solve, but he will solve it and will make a covenant of peace with Israel for seven years. However, after three and a half years he will change and will stop the oblation and the offering of the sacrifices. Then he will sit in the temple and command everyone to worship him. The false prophet, who has the spirit of Judas Iscariot, will set up an image of Antichrist and cause everyone on earth to worship it. Furthermore, he will



WE NEED TO BE BUILT UP
AS THE CHURCH IN THE ASPECT
OF ITS BEING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.
NOT ONLY SHOULD WE BE FILLED WITH
HIS LIFE FOR HIS EXPRESSION,
BUT WE SHOULD ALSO BE FILLED WITH
HIS RULING PRESENCE FOR HIS DOMINION.

cause this image to speak. This is the truth from God's word; someday this will happen. The reason we must study and receive a revelation of these matters is that we need to be motivated to love the Lord's appearing, to buy the oil, and to invest our talent so that we would receive the reward of the out-resurrection and be His overcoming bride.

Just before the last three and a half years of this age, the Overcomers will be raptured and will become the Lord's bridal army. Then at the end of this age, they will return with Him as the corporate smiting stone from the heavens. They will smite the great image of the beast, and all human government will be reduced to dust. The wind will blow away every trace of human government that rebels against God, exalts man, and worships idols, and Christ with His bridal army will become a great mountain, the kingdom of God, filling the whole earth. This is the divine history that we are making. During the time of the Babylonian Empire, the most powerful empire on the earth, there were many people who made human history, but the ones who made the real history and who turned the age were Daniel and his three companions. The real history, the divine history, was made by a vital group of four young people.

Needing a Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation to See "What Will Happen in the Last Days" So That We Can Be Prepared to Be Christ's Bridal Army to Turn the Age for the Glory of God and the Kingdom of God

We need a spirit of wisdom and revelation to see "what will happen in the last days" so that we can be prepared to be Christ's bridal army to turn the age for the glory of God and the kingdom of God (Dan. 2:28; 9:1-27; Gen. 1:26; 1 Cor. 2:9-10; Eph. 1:17; 5:25-27; 6:10-20; Rev. 19:7-9, 13-16). The Lord needs a dispensational instrument. Thus, we need to be that instrument; we must have dispensational value to God. The reason the Lord brought us into His move was so that we would turn the age. Therefore, we should ask ourselves, "What am I doing to close this age and to bring in the next age?"

We need to be those who turn the age and who are prepared to be Christ's bridal army in the midst of this dark age, which is against Christ and against the exercise of our spirit. It is a great thing for us to exercise our spirit. Antichrist is a man of the soul, a man with an over-developed and over-exercised soul. In society today there are many who exercise not merely the flesh but also the soul. Those who over-exercise their soul will eventually end up in the flesh, and those who neglect their spirit will be in darkness. The trend in society today is toward the development of the soul. For instance, the purpose of self-help books is to develop the soul apart from the spirit. To develop our soul in this way is not according to God's economy. God does not want to help our soul, which is

our self. Rather, He wants to crucify our self so that He can work Himself into us. He does not want us to be a success in our self. Instead, He wants us to realize that we are nothing and that Christ is everything. We need to realize that apart from Him we can do nothing. We need Him to live in us, to work Himself into us, and even to become us so that we can become Him.

In order to be prepared to be Christ's bridal army, we first need to give ourselves to love the Lord. Simply love Him by telling Him, "Lord Jesus, I love You." Loving the Lord is a great recovery. We need to have a heart to love God. First Corinthians 2:9 says, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him." We do not want to merely study or learn about the Lord; we want to love Him. Thus, when we wake up in the morning, the first thing we should do is love Him by saying, "O Lord Jesus, I love You. I give myself to love You." First Corinthians 2:10 says, "To us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God." We need to pray, "Lord, I want to know You as the depths of God." When we say, "Lord Jesus, I love You," the Spirit in our spirit does active research, exploring Christ as the depths of God and revealing Christ to us in our spirit for our revelation, participation, enjoyment, and experience. As a result of our loving the Lord, the Spirit does active research and shows us the various aspects of Christ. In order to live in the revelation of God's economy and be prepared to be His bride, we must love the Lord.

Second, we need to exercise our spirit so that we may have a spirit of wisdom and revelation. In Ephesians 1:17 Paul prayed that the Father would grant to us a spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we would be prepared to be His bride. Third, according to Ephesians 5:25-27, we need to be daily beautified to be His bride by the washing of the water in the word. In a sense, we are still ugly because there are many things in our being that are not Christ, and anything other than Christ is ugly. Thus, we need to be Christified, which is to be beautified, and the way to be beautified is by the washing of the water in the word, which metabolically washes away our spots and wrinkles. As a result, we become the prepared bride, and according to Ephesians 6:10-20, this bride is also the warrior. This matches Revelation 19, which reveals the bridal army, the bridal warrior. The key to this bride-warrior is the word of God. On one hand, the word of God beautifies us; on the other hand, it is a killing sword that kills all the negative things within our being. When we pray over God's word, we are beautified for His expression and subdued for His dominion. Then He can reign in us and through us, and we will become His bridal army. The name of our Husband and General is the Word of God (v. 13). We will follow Him all our lives, be constituted with Him, and enjoy Him

as the Word. Eventually, we will follow Him down from the heavens to the earth where He will slay Antichrist with the breath of His mouth. Together with Him, we will become a corporate man of God with the word as the breath of God and the Spirit as the sword, and we will slay Antichrist and his armies with the breath and the sword.

The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 Showing That the Day of the Lord's Coming Is Very Near; the Seventy Weeks Being Divided into Three Parts, Each Week Being Seven Years in Length

The prophecy of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 shows that the day of the Lord's coming is very near; the seventy weeks are divided into three parts, each week being seven years in length. First, seven weeks (49 years) were apportioned from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1-8) to the completion of the rebuilding. This prophecy has been fulfilled in history.

Second, sixty-two weeks (434 years) were apportioned from the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the cutting off (crucifixion) of the Messiah (Dan. 9:26). Through Daniel, the Lord predicted the year when Christ would be crucified.

Third, the last week of seven years will be for Antichrist to make a firm covenant with the people of Israel (v. 27); in the middle of that week, he will break the covenant, terminate Israel's sacrifices and oblations to God, and persecute those who fear God (v. 27; Rev. 12:13-17); this will be the beginning of the great tribulation, which will last for three and a half years. Thus, the seventy weeks are divided into three periods, the first period being seven weeks, the second being sixty-two weeks, and the last being one week.

There is a gap of unknown duration between the first sixty-nine weeks and the last week of the seventy weeks; this gap is the age of mystery, the age of grace, the age of the church (Eph. 3:3-11; 5:32; Col. 1:27). This gap is the age in which we are living. We are in the age of mystery, the age of grace, the age of the church. However, we are also very close to the last week. Therefore, we should not be like the people of this age who are befuddled, drugged, and stupefied. God's judgment is coming upon this earth, and at the time of His judgment, there will be a great tribulation and much destruction. As believers, we should be wise and ready, not like the foolish virgins in Matthew 25.

In Matthew 25 ten virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom, and as they arose and trimmed their lamps, the five foolish ones said to the five wise ones, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out" (v. 8). However, it was not possible for the wise ones to share their oil, indicating that at the time of the Lord's appearing it will be too late for us to gain the oil. Buying the oil must be done day by day and little by little. We cannot buy a great quantity of oil at the last minute in order to fill the vessel of our soul. The Christian life is a matter of being filled little by little, day by day, and morning by morning. This is why every day is important. This is why we must redeem the time. The devil likes to use many evil, pernicious things to damage and spoil our time. For example, we may have designated a certain night for a meeting, but because of scheduling problems, we move it to another night. In response, the enemy will shift all the problems to that night. He does everything he can to damage and spoil our time, and he causes us to misuse our time. Therefore, we must redeem the time for the days are evil (Eph. 5:16).

GOD DOES NOT WANT TO HELP OUR SOUL, WHICH IS OUR SELF. RATHER, HE WANTS TO CRUCIFY OUR SELF SO THAT HE CAN WORK HIMSELF INTO US. HE DOES NOT WANT US TO BE A SUCCESS IN OUR SELF. INSTEAD, HE WANTS US TO REALIZE THAT WE ARE NOTHING AND THAT CHRIST IS EVERYTHING.

During This Age Christ Secretly and Mysteriously Building Up the Church in the New Creation to Be His Body and His Bride

During this age Christ is secretly and mysteriously building up the church in the new creation to be His Body and His bride (Eph. 5:25-32; cf. Matt. 24:32-33; 2 Thes. 2:3-4). In Matthew 24 the Lord Jesus prophesied concerning Israel, saying, "Learn the parable from the fig tree: As soon as its branch has become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near. So also you, when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors" (vv. 32-33). That prophecy concerning Israel was spoken nearly two thousand years ago, and today it has been fulfilled. According to the Lord's word, when this prophecy concerning Israel is fulfilled, the summer, that is, the age of the restoration of the kingdom, is near.

The branch's becoming tender is an indication that life has come back to the fig tree. This was fulfilled in 1948 when Israel was restored as a nation. It was a great miracle for the Jews to suddenly become a nation again after centuries of being scattered to the ends of the earth. That was the fulfillment of Matthew 24:32-33. Then in 1967 the fig tree put forth its leaves when Israel regained Jerusalem. The regaining of Jerusalem was a great thing

because when the Lord comes back, He will come back to the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives is the place where the Lord ascended, and it is also the place where He will return with His overcoming bride. Many of us have never visited the country of Israel, but if we are the overcomers, we will visit Israel with the Lord at the end of this age. We should pray, "Lord, I want to return to Israel from the heavens with You. I want to be there on the Mount of Olives and at the battle of Armageddon with You."

At the end of the last week of the seventy weeks, Christ with His overcomers, His bridal army, will come as the smiting stone to crush the totality of human government and become a great mountain, the kingdom of God, that fills the whole earth (Dan. 2:34-35; 2 Thes. 2:8; Rev. 19:19-20).

Giving Heed to the Prophetic Word as to a Lamp Shining in a Dark Place, Until the Day Dawns and the Morning Star Rises in Our Hearts

In order to be the Lord's overcomers to bring in the next age, we need to give heed to the prophetic word as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts (2 Pet. 1:19). The dawning of the day is the Lord's appearing. To the overcomers the prophetic word is like a lamp that guides their living so that they may enjoy Christ as the morning star. Before the Lord returns openly as the rising sun, the Sun of righteousness, the overcomers will enjoy Him as the morning star, which appears before the sun rises. We want to be those who enjoy the Lord as our reward, as our morning star, before His open coming.

Loving the Lord and His Appearing, Awaiting the Lord's Coming, and Always Taking His Coming as an Encouragement

Every "today" that we have is truly the Lord's grace; therefore, as long as we have today, as long as we still have breath, we should love the Lord and His appearing, await the Lord's coming, and always take His coming as an encouragement (2 Tim. 4:1, 6-8; Luke 12:16-20). It is the Lord's grace that we have today. Every "today" that we have is a mercy from the Lord.

At the end of his life, Paul said to Timothy, "I am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Tim. 4:6). Paul was being poured out as a drink offering. This should be a pattern to us. In order to live a life filled with the enjoyment of Christ, we need to take Christ as our drink offering and enjoy Him as the poured-out One, the One who pours Himself out for the satisfaction of God and man. When we enjoy Christ as the sacrificing One and as the new wine, our lives become full

of meaning. In other words, when we are filled with Him as the new wine, which is the vigorous life of the Triune God that stirs us to excitement, when we are enjoying Him and our romance is fresh with Him, when we are under the influence of Him as the new wine, and when we are filled with the Spirit every day, we can live a poured-out life for the saints. According to Judges 9:13, this kind of life can cheer both God and man. A noble life is a life that cheers God and the saints with Christ as the new wine, the eternal joy and real delight in this universe.

In 2 Timothy 4:6-8 Paul said,

I am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.

The crown of righteousness is not only for Paul but also for all those who love the Lord's appearing. We need to be those who love the Lord and His appearing. We want Him to be real to us, and we want to enjoy His manifestation every day. In John 14 the Lord said, "He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him...If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him" (vv. 21, 23). Thus, when we love the Lord Jesus, He manifests Himself to us. Surely the Lord lives in us, but do we enjoy His manifestation? We want His manifestation and we want Him to make His abode with us every day. This is to love His appearing in reality, and this is what we must live for.

In Luke 12:16-20 the Lord gives us a warning in the parable of a man whose land brought forth much material wealth. This man told himself that he would build larger barns in which to store all his riches, and he said to his soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; rest, eat, drink, be merry" (v. 19). Many people today are building up their "nest egg" for their retirement so that they may rest, eat, drink, and be merry. However, they are never satisfied with how big their nest egg is. After the man spoke to himself, the Lord said to him, "Foolish one, this night they are requiring your soul from you; and the things which you have prepared, whose will they be?" (v. 20). Today the Lord is looking at our soul. Our spirit is regenerated, but what is the condition of our soul? The Lord said, "What shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life?" (Matt. 16:26). How terrible it would be if a man were to gain the whole world but lose his soul. Even though we may be regenerated in our spirit, it is possible for us to lose our soul in the kingdom age. This does not mean that we will

suffer eternal perdition; rather, it means that we will lose the reward of the enjoyment of the Lord in our soul for a thousand years. Losing that portion of the enjoyment of the Lord would be a tremendous loss.

According to Hebrews 13:17, the proper elders in the church life are those who “watch over your souls.” When we care for people, we should not merely watch over their physical well-being; we should also watch over their souls. Of course, we need to provide for ourselves and for others in a physical and material way. We need to be practical and prudent. The ones who were taken in Matthew 24:40-41 were not meditating on a mountain, wearing white robes; instead, they were working in the field and grinding at the mill, doing practical things. However, while those brothers and sisters were working at their jobs and taking care of their families and homes, their souls were being saturated with the Spirit. First Peter 2:25 says that the Lord is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, meaning that He is concerned with our soul. He is concerned with the condition of our mind, emotion, and will and with how much God has occupied our mind, emotion, and will.

Those in Christianity know something of regeneration and glorification, but they know very little about transformation. Regeneration takes place in an instant, and according to 1 Corinthians 15:52, glorification takes place in the twinkling of an eye. However, the transformation of our soul takes a long time. Our spirit has been regenerated, and in the future our body will be glorified, but right now we must pass through the long process of the transformation of our soul. This is what the Lord is concerned with. He is not concerned with outward miracles. Of course, we believe that the Lord can perform outward miracles, but the Lord’s main concern is with the miracle of transformation. The Lord did many outward miracles for the children of Israel. They ate the daily manna from heaven and drank of the water out of a cleft rock. However, those outward miracles did nothing to transform their soul, and they all died in the wilderness. Only Joshua and Caleb made it into the good land. We should be a corporate Joshua and Caleb. We want the first generation—our natural life—to be crucified and the second generation—our new man—to cross the River Jordan and possess Christ as the good land so that we may have the Spirit in our soul.

After speaking the parable of the rich man, the Lord said, “So is he who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21). We want to be rich toward God. When God looks at us, we want Him to be able to say, “These people are rich.” This is what He says to the church in Smyrna: “I know your tribulation and poverty (but you are rich)” (Rev. 2:9). To the church in Laodicea, however, He says, “You say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (3:17). When we fail, we realize how short of Christ and how poor we truly are. At those times we must cry out to the Lord, “Lord, I need the real gaining of Christ in my being.” Life is short, and we do not want to waste time.

Our Needing to Watch and Make Ourselves Ready to Be His Bride

When the Lord comes, He will come secretly as a thief to those who love Him and will steal them away as His treasures to bring them into His presence in the heavens; hence, we need to watch and make ourselves ready to be His bride (Dan. 10:19; Matt. 24:42-44; 25:13; Rev. 19:7; 22:20). We must be His treasures in order to be stolen by Him.

BEFORE THE LORD RETURNS OPENLY
AS THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,
THE OVERCOMERS WILL ENJOY HIM AS THE
MORNING STAR, WHICH APPEARS BEFORE THE
SUN RISES. WE WANT TO BE THOSE WHO ENJOY
THE LORD AS OUR REWARD, AS OUR
MORNING STAR, BEFORE HIS OPEN COMING.

The last prayer in the Bible is, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20). The Lord says to John, “Yes, I come quickly,” and John pray-reads that word, saying, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” This is genuine pray-reading. When the Lord says to us, “I come quickly,” we should not merely say, “That is wonderful.” Rather, we should say, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” This was Daniel’s reaction when he read the prophecy concerning the seventy weeks. When we say, “Lord, work Yourself into me today,” we are praying that we would be prepared to be His bride so that He may come again from without and come from within us so that we may enter into a full marriage union with Him.

We must have an absolute consecration unto God in Christ as the real Nazarite to be His anti-testimony, a testimony against anything that deviates from the testimony of Jesus (Num. 6:1-8; Dan. 1:8; Rev. 2:13). We need to be reminded to keep our consecration to the Lord fresh every day. We should ask ourselves whether or not our consecration is fresh and up-to-date. In a sense, it does not matter whether or not we were consecrated ten

years ago or even yesterday; we must be consecrated right now. We need an up-to-date, absolute consecration day by day. Furthermore, we need to realize that the only real Nazarite in this universe is the Lord Jesus, and we can take Him as our real Nazarite and be an anti-testimony just like Daniel and his companions.

We must be reconstituted with the holy Word of God, reading the Bible all the days of our life (1 Tim. 4:6; Col. 3:16; Deut. 17:18-20). We need to muse on the word, enjoying God's word as His breath; the Hebrew word for *muse* implies to worship, to converse with oneself, and to speak aloud (Psa. 119:15-16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). To muse on the word is to taste and enjoy it through careful considering; prayer, speaking to oneself, and praising the Lord may also be included in musing on the word.

We should not take a break from reading the Bible. To take a break from reading the Bible is to take a vacation from the light and to be in darkness. We should read the Bible all the days of our life. Deuteronomy 17:18-19, in speaking concerning the setting of a king over the people, says, "When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write out for himself a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him." In order to be a good king, one had to write out his own personal copy of the Pentateuch, which includes the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. He had to copy these books by hand, and that copy became his personal copy. Moreover, he had to have that copy with him all the time. Similarly, wherever we go, we should always have the Bible with us.

Deuteronomy 17:19-20 says,

It shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, in order that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes and doing them, so that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers and he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right or to the left; that he and his sons may extend their days over their kingdom in the midst of Israel.

According to this word, the king who wrote out his own personal copy of the Bible and read it all the days of his life would be saved from pride and would fear the Lord all the days of his life. It is a great thing to read the Bible. We may think that we know this already. However, it is one thing to know this, and it is another thing to practice this day by day. We must read the Bible every day.

Note 1 on Deuteronomy 17:18 says,

The law here refers to the Pentateuch, the first five books

of the Old Testament, which were written by Moses. In ruling over the people, the king first had to be instructed, governed, ruled, and controlled by the word of God. The principle should be the same with the elders in the churches. In order to administrate, to manage, the church, the elders must be reconstituted with the holy word of God (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17). As a result, they will be under God's government, under God's rule and control. Then spontaneously God will be in their decisions, and the elders will represent God to manage the affairs of the church. This kind of management is theocracy. (Recovery Version)

This word may be applied not only to the elders but also to all of us. God needs to be in our decisions, and we need to represent God in all that we do. For this reason, we need to be in the word. Every day we need to make sure that we read the Bible, even if we can read only a little. Day by day we need to read the Bible in a spirit and atmosphere of prayer.

We need to persevere in prayer to glorify God, thank God, worship God, and serve God; our prayer and our being should be totally for God's interests (Dan. 6:10; 9:17; 1 Kings 8:48; cf. Rom. 1:21, 25). In Romans 1 we see man's progressive degradation into terrible immorality. In this chapter Paul says that "though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or thank Him...and worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator" (vv. 21, 25). This is the opposite of what we should do. We should live a life of glorifying God, thanking God, worshipping God, and serving God. According to Daniel 6:10, when Daniel opened his windows toward Jerusalem, knelt on his knees, and prayed, he gave thanks before God. It is a great thing to say, "Thank You, Lord Jesus." We need to be thankful. Ephesians 5:18 and 20 say, "Be filled in spirit...giving thanks at all times for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father." Thanking the Lord is a way to be filled in spirit. Initially, when we are filled in spirit, we are thankful. However, it is also true that by thanking the Lord we may be filled in spirit. This is a cycle. Before we were saved, many of us were very unthankful people. We always found something to complain about. However, after we were saved, we became thankful. We all need to be thankful because we all have much for which to thank the Lord. We may even say, "Lord, thank You that I am still alive." We need to give thanks at all times for all things, including not only the good things but also the bad things.

We need to be self-sacrificing persons in oneness with Christ as the One who sacrifices Himself for others; we should be afraid of only one thing, that is, to offend God and lose His presence (Phil. 1:22-26; 2 Cor. 1:24; Psa. 27:4). Once we lose His presence, we have lost everything. T. Austin-Sparks told Witness Lee that when he

left Taipei after stirring up turmoil over the ground of the church, the flow within ceased, and he never got it back. That was a tragedy. We do not want to lose the inner flow of the Spirit. Nothing is worth losing the flow of life and God's presence.

To attain maturity is not an overnight matter; therefore, for His coming we must prepare ourselves, love Him, and grow in Him, that at His appearing we may be mature to be raptured and receive the reward (Luke 21:34-36; cf. Rev. 3:10; 12:5-6, 14).

We must be watchful in life every day and all day in order to buy an extra portion of the oil and be faithful in service to feed the Lord's people at the proper time (Matt. 24:32—25:30). We must be watchful, on the alert, for our prayer life so that we may walk by the Spirit, sow unto the Spirit, and minister the Spirit (Eph. 6:17-18; Col. 4:2; Gal. 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:4; Gal. 6:8; 2 Cor. 3:6; Rom. 1:9). All of us, especially those of us who are serving the Lord full time, must be watchful regarding our personal time with the Lord. Sometimes those of us who are serving the Lord full time become so busy that we neglect the most important thing, which is spending personal time with God to be infused with God. To have this personal time with the Lord, that is, to have a prayer life, is the most important item in our service to the Lord. If we do not have a prayer life, there will be no fresh infusion of God. This is the reason the apostles say in Acts 6:4, "We will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word." And in 1 Timothy 2:1 Paul says to Timothy, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men."

Our personal time with the Lord is very important. Our first order of business is to be soaked with the word of God and infused with God. Otherwise, we have nothing with which to feed people.

We must not be those who are beating our fellow slaves, eating and drinking with the drunken, or burying the Lord's gift; instead, we must spread the truth of the gospel of the kingdom to the whole inhabited earth (Matt. 24:14, 45-51; 25:25; Dan. 11:32). To beat our fellow slaves is not to physically hit our fellow believers; rather, it is to criticize them. Some people criticize others all the time. Others may not criticize out loud, but they may criticize in their heart. When we are criticizing others, we are in our mind and not in our spirit. When we are in our mind, everything and everyone seems wrong, but when we are in our spirit, we are not critical because every brother and sister is lovely. At the same time, we may feel that we are the ones who are short.

Whenever something rises up in us to be critical, there should be a warning light in our being. To be critical of

others is to beat our fellow slaves. In the church life there have been some with a critical disposition, who constantly criticized others. As a result of their criticizing, their usefulness to the Lord was damaged to the uttermost. Do not be this kind of person. Do not abuse the saints or lord it over the saints. Instead, be slaves to one another.

Once we were fellowshiping with Witness Lee concerning a certain brother, and we were all pointing out this brother's faults when he said, "Isn't he a lovely brother?" All our mouths were stopped. Today this brother is a lovely and very useful brother. If it were up to us, we would be the only ones in the church life, because to our thought, everyone but us is no good. This is the way we are in our natural life. We need to condemn our pride. When pride rises up in our being, we need to say, "Lord, forgive me for being proud. I do not want to be proud. Instead, I want to humble myself before You. I want to love all the brothers and sisters." In Psalm 16:3 David says concerning the saints, "As for the saints who are on the earth, they are the excellent; / All my delight is in them." This should be our attitude. All our delight should be in the saints. The saints should be the excellent ones to us. When we see the saints, our delight should be in them.

We should not eat and drink with the drunken, which is to keep company with the worldly people. Neither should we bury the Lord's gift. We have a gift, and we should invest it by spreading the truth of the gospel of the kingdom to the whole inhabited earth.

Keeping the Word of the Lord's Endurance, Standing against the Wearing-out Tactics of Satan

We must keep the word of the Lord's endurance, standing against the wearing-out tactics of Satan (Rev. 3:10; Dan. 7:25). Under God's heavenly rule everything is working together for our good for the purpose of making Christ preeminent (4:26; Rom. 8:28-29). We must stay under the restriction, limitation, and authority of the Lord's ruling presence in order to know the Lord, to be saved from pride, and to receive the dispensing of grace (Rev. 22:1-2; Jer. 9:23-25; 1 Pet. 5:5).

Satan likes to wear us out. This is also what Antichrist will do. According to Daniel 7:25, he will "wear out the saints of the Most High." For instance, Satan often wears down our consecration. Previously, we may have been absolutely consecrated, but today we may not be as consecrated. Previously, we may have spent much time with the Lord, but now we may spend less time with the Lord. This is due to the wearing-out tactics of Satan. We need to say No to the enemy and to his wearing-out tactics. In this way we will be prepared to be the Lord's treasure and will overcome in the last days to turn the age. **AFC**