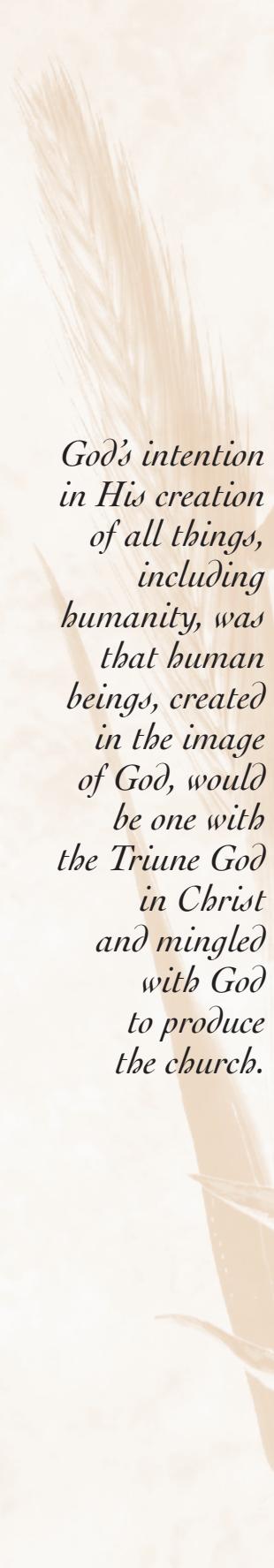


# *The Mystery of Christ and the Church as Revealed in Matthew and Revelation*

*by Ron Kangas*

In his Epistles the apostle Paul uses a word that is central to his portion of the unique New Testament ministry; the word is *mystery*. The first use of this word in his writings is in Romans 11:25, where Paul speaks of not wanting the brothers to be “ignorant of this mystery.” In Romans 16:25 Paul declares, “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, that is, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages.” This mystery had been hidden from the time of the beginning of the world until it was “revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit” (Eph. 3:5). In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks about announcing the mystery of God (2:1), speaking God’s wisdom in a mystery (v. 7), and telling a mystery concerning the transfiguration of our body into an incorruptible one (15:51-52). In Ephesians 1:9 Paul testifies that God has made known to us “the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself.” In 3:9 Paul goes on to say that he was given grace “to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.” Toward the end of Ephesians Paul refers to genuine prayer that utterance be given to him, “to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel,” a mystery related to Christ and the church (6:19). In Colossians 1:26 Paul speaks to the new believers in Colossae of “the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations but now has been manifested to His saints.” Immediately after, in verse 27, he speaks once again of mystery: “To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” His last recorded speaking concerning “mystery” is in 1 Timothy 3. There he says that deacons must hold “the mystery of the faith” (v. 9), the mystery concerning the objective faith—the things that all believers in Christ and children of God must believe in. The first part of verse 16 says, “Confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness,” that is, the mystery regarding God manifested in the flesh, personally in Christ and corporately in the church.

In the New Testament there are mainly two outstanding mysteries—the mystery of God and the mystery of Christ. The first mystery is revealed in Colossians 2:2, which speaks of “the mystery of God, Christ.” As the mystery of God, Christ is the Word of God (John 1:1; Rev. 19:13); Christ is the definition of God, the explanation of God, and the expression of God. Furthermore, “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). *All the fullness* refers to the entire Godhead, to the complete God. Since the Godhead comprises the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the fullness of the Godhead must be the fullness of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The fact that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily means that the Triune God is embodied in Him.



*God's intention in His creation of all things, including humanity, was that human beings, created in the image of God, would be one with the Triune God in Christ and mingled with God to produce the church.*

The second mystery of the two marvelous mysteries—the mystery of Christ—is revealed in the book of Ephesians, especially in chapter 3, verse 4. According to this verse, the church has a particular title—*the mystery of Christ*. Although Christ is mysterious, the church is the manifestation of Christ (1:22-23). The church, as the Body of Christ, is the corporate expression of Christ (4:15-16). In a real sense, when we see the church as revealed in the New Testament, we see Christ; when we come into a genuine local church (Matt. 18:17; Acts 13:1; Rev. 1:11; 2:1), we come into Christ; and when we contact the church, we contact Christ. The church is a corporate unit produced out of Christ, who is the mystery of God (Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4; 5:30-32). The all-inclusive Christ is the mystery of the mysterious God, and such a Christ as the mystery of God produces a unit, which is the church, the mystery of Christ. This gives us the ground to say that mystery produces mystery; Christ, who is the mystery of God, brings forth the church, which is the mystery of Christ.

The mystery of Christ, the church, was revealed to the apostles and prophets in their spirit by revelation (3:5). The mingled spirit—the regenerated human spirit joined to the divine Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17)—is the means through which the New Testament revelation concerning Christ and the church was unveiled to the apostles and prophets. Since our spirit is mingled with the divine Spirit, our spirit is the organ in which the mystery of Christ is revealed by the Spirit through the written word of God (Eph. 1:17; 3:5).

**G**od's intention in His creation of all things, including humanity, was that human beings, created in the image of God, would be one with the Triune God in Christ and mingled with God to produce the church (Zech. 12:1; Eph. 3:9). The desire of God's heart is to have the mystery of Christ—the Body of Christ—as the increase and expression of Christ (1:5, 9, 11, 22-23). As believers in Christ, with Christ dwelling in us, we will be fully satisfied only when we realize that we are part of the mystery of Christ and live as members of the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-5). In order to fully understand and experience the Christian life, we need to know the mystery of Christ (Col. 1:27; Phil. 1:19-21). Without the church as the mystery of Christ, our life would be merely the life of a human being, not the life of a Christian as revealed in the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42; Eph. 3:4; 1 Tim. 3:15-16).

When the mystery of God, Christ, is joined to the mystery of Christ, the church, there is a great mystery: "This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). A husband and his wife being of one flesh (v. 31) typifies the great mystery concerning Christ and the church being one in spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). The great mystery—Christ and the church—is the meaning of the universe and of human life (Rev. 4:11; Eph. 5:32).

The great mystery of Christ and the church is presented in various ways throughout the New Testament, beginning with the Gospel of Matthew and consummating with the book of Revelation. In this article we will explore the mystery of Christ and the church in the Gospel of Matthew and in the book of Revelation.

### **Christ and the Church in the Gospel of Matthew**

In Matthew 16 Christ and the church are mentioned together for the first time in the New Testament. When the Lord Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" (v. 15), Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Immediately afterward, the Lord Jesus told Peter that this was revealed to him by the Father who is in the heavens (v. 17), and then He prophetically declared, "I will build My church" (v. 18). Here we have the beginning of the unveiling of the great mystery—Christ and the church.

## **The Christ, the Son of the Living God**

The revelation given to Peter in Matthew 16:16 includes two aspects of the Lord Jesus: the aspect of His person—"the Son of the living God"—and the aspect of His work, His commission—"the Christ." The definite article before the word *Christ* is very important because it indicates that only the Lord Jesus is the person anointed and appointed by God. *Christ* is the anglicized form of the Greek word *Christos*, which is the equivalent to the Hebrew word *Messiah*. Both *Messiah* in Hebrew and *Christos* in Greek mean "the anointed One." As the Christ, Jesus is the One whose coming to accomplish God's will was prophesied in the Old Testament. Christ's commission was to accomplish God's eternal purpose through His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and second coming. As the Son of the living God, Christ is the embodiment and expression of God.

As far as the Lord's person is concerned, He is the Son of God. As far as His work is concerned, He is the Christ of God. His being the Son speaks of who He is, and His being the Christ speaks of what He does. His being the Son speaks of His relationship with God, and His being the Christ speaks of His relationship with God's plan. (Nee 110)

We need to know, experience, and testify that the Lord Jesus is the Christ, the One anointed to accomplish the plan of God, and the Son of the living God, the One who is the embodiment and expression of God for us to receive, through faith in Him, the life of God, eternal life.

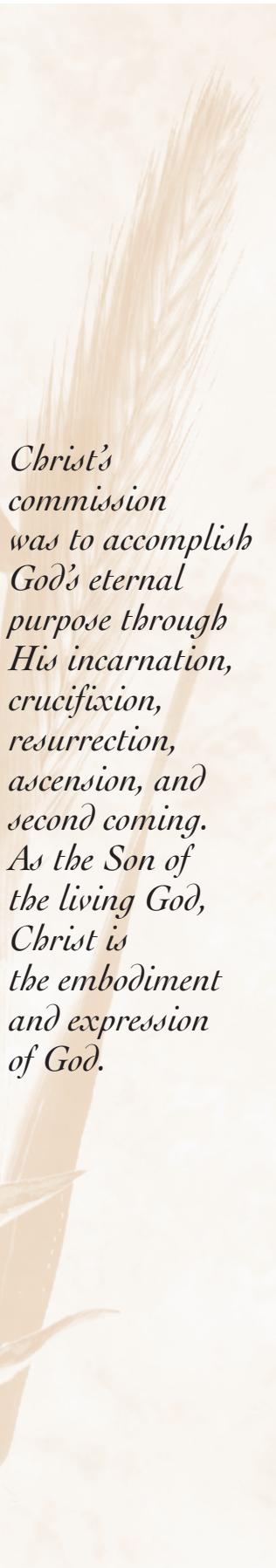
## **The Son of David, the Son of Abraham**

The Gospel of Matthew presents many aspects of Christ. The New Testament opens with the words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). In this verse there are two titles of Christ: *the son of David* and *the son of Abraham*. It is significant that the first verse in the New Testament mentions these two titles.

**T**he Gospel of Matthew emphasizes the fact that Christ is the son of David (9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9). Solomon, the son of David, is a type of Christ inheriting the kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-13; Jer. 23:5; Luke 1:32-33), having wisdom and speaking the word of wisdom (Matt. 12:42), and building the temple of God (2 Sam. 7:13). As the son of David, Christ brings us into the kingdom of the heavens; thus, the title *son of David* signifies the kingdom (Matt. 5:3). Christ's being the son of David is also for us to be trained to exercise divine authority in prayer and in preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God (16:19; 18:17-18; 28:18-19).

The title *son of David* signifies the kingdom. Christ, the son of David, is the King, who brings us into the kingdom of the heavens (5:3). Furthermore, Christ's being the son of David points to the fact that God wants us, His children through regeneration, to participate in the divine authority, especially in the matter of exercising the keys of the kingdom with the authority to bind and to loose (16:19; 18:17-18). Matthew 28:18-19 reveals that we can participate in the divine authority by being sent forth by the Lord to disciple all nations, to baptize them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and to teach them to observe all that the Lord has commanded us.

Christ's being also the son of Abraham is a fulfillment of the prophecy in the Old Testament that Christ would be the son, the seed, of Abraham. Isaac, the son of Abraham, is a type of Christ as the One who brings us the divine blessings promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. This promise was fulfilled in Christ and by Christ through His redemption by the cross. Amazingly, the promise includes the blessing for us to inherit God Himself (Gal. 3:16, 29).



*Christ's  
commission  
was to accomplish  
God's eternal  
purpose through  
His incarnation,  
crucifixion,  
resurrection,  
ascension, and  
second coming.  
As the Son of  
the living God,  
Christ is  
the embodiment  
and expression  
of God.*

*Christ as  
the seed of  
David is the  
resurrected King  
as God's sure  
mercies for  
the dispensing  
of God Himself  
into all  
the believers  
of Christ  
so that they  
might share  
His kingship  
for God's  
administration.*

God made a covenant with Abraham and also with David (Gen. 12:2-3; 15:4-18; 17:1-2; 22:17-18; 2 Sam. 7:8-16). The covenant that God made with Abraham concerned God's coming to be the blessing to His chosen people (Gen. 22:17-18). As a result of this covenant, the processed Triune God as the consummated Spirit has become our blessing (Gal. 3:14). Christ as the seed of Abraham became the life-giving Spirit to impart Himself into His believers to bless all the nations of the earth (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16, 14; 1 Cor. 15:45b).

Whereas God's covenant with Abraham concerned blessings, the covenant that God made with David concerned the kingdom (2 Sam. 7:8-16). God must have a kingdom, a realm, on the earth with His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people in order to exercise His administration under His divine authority. Once God has a kingdom filled with His authority, then in His administration He can carry out whatever is on His heart to be the blessing promised to His chosen people. Christ as the seed of David is the resurrected King as God's sure mercies for the dispensing of God Himself into all the believers of Christ so that they might share His kingship for God's administration (vv. 12-13; Acts 13:32-35; Isa. 55:3-4; Rom. 5:17; Rev. 20:4, 6).

**A**s believers in Christ, we need to be impressed with the fact that we must receive Christ first as the son of David and then as the son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1). To receive Christ as the son of David is to recognize His kingly status and to realize that we should be under His kingship and sovereignty. If we have Christ as the son of David, we will also have Him as the son of Abraham. If we have the kingdom, we will also have the blessing. By receiving Christ as our King and living under His ruling, we enjoy the processed Triune God as our blessing. As the son of David and the son of Abraham, Christ brings us into the Triune God (28:19).

### ***Jesus and Emmanuel***

Speaking of Mary, Matthew 1:21 says, "She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." *Jesus* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name *Joshua*, which means "Jehovah the Savior," or "the salvation of Jehovah." The name *Jesus* includes the name *Jehovah*, which means "I Am Who I Am" (Exo. 3:14). Jesus is Jehovah becoming our Savior and our salvation (Rom. 10:12-13; 5:10; cf. Phil. 1:19). Jesus is our Joshua, the One who brings us into rest, which is Himself as the good land to us (Heb. 4:8; Matt. 11:28-29). The name of Jesus is above every name (Phil. 2:9-10). The name of Jesus is for us to believe into (John 1:12), for us to be baptized into (Acts 8:16; 19:5), for us to be healed and saved (3:6; 4:10, 12), for us to be washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor. 6:11), for us to call upon (Rom. 10:13; 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 9:14), for us to pray in (John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:24), for us to be gathered into (Matt. 18:20), for us to cast out demons (Acts 16:18), and for us to speak boldly in (9:27).

Matthew 1:23 mentions another name: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel' (which is translated, God with us)." "Jesus was the name given by God, whereas Emmanuel, meaning *God with us*, was the name by which man called Him" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 23, note 2). Today, the Lord Jesus continues to be Emmanuel to us in our daily living. "Christ as the very Emmanuel not only was with us when He was on earth, but also is with us, since His ascension, whenever we are gathered into His name (18:20). Moreover, He will be with us all the days until the consummation of the age (28:20)" (1:23, note 3).

### ***The All-inclusive Christ***

Although the Gospel of Matthew is a book of the kingdom, it is full of the riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8). Some of the many aspects of the all-inclusive Christ include:

(1) Christ is the heavenly King (Matt. 2:1-2; 21:5). Matthew proves that Jesus is the King, the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament (1:1, 17; 2:1-2; 27:11, 37). The heavenly King did not come with haughty splendor but with gentle, humble meekness (21:5).

(2) Christ is the Son of Man (8:20; 11:19; 13:37; 16:13). He is the man who brings God's dominion to earth and makes God's name excellent on earth (9:6; 12:8; 13:41; 16:27-28). In order for the kingdom of the heavens to be established, the Lord Jesus stood as a victorious man—a man who could defeat Satan and withstand any hardship, opposition, or attack (12:40; 26:64).

(3) Christ is the Baptizer (3:11). The Lord's baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is based on His redemption, initiated the kingdom of the heavens, bringing His believers into the kingdom of the heavens. The Lord's baptism in fire, which is based on His judgment, will conclude the kingdom of the heavens, putting the unbelievers into the lake of fire (v. 12).

(4) Christ is the light of life shining in the darkness of death (4:12-16). Christ's ministry for the kingdom of the heavens began not with earthly power but with heavenly light. The Lord Jesus did not start a movement or a revolution; rather, He attracted the disciples to Himself as the great light for the establishment of the kingdom of the heavens.

(5) Christ ministered as a Physician and revealed Himself as the Bridegroom in calling people to follow Him for the kingdom (9:9-15). He came as a Physician to heal and enliven us so that we might be reconstituted to be citizens of the kingdom of the heavens (vv. 9-13). We need to appreciate Him as the Bridegroom that we might have the enjoyment of living in His presence (vv. 14-15).

(6) Christ is the unfulled cloth for making a new garment (v. 16; Luke 5:36). From His incarnation to His crucifixion, He was the unfulled cloth for making a new garment. Through His death and resurrection Christ was made a new garment to cover us as our righteousness before God that we might be justified by God and be acceptable to Him (15:22; Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 1:30).

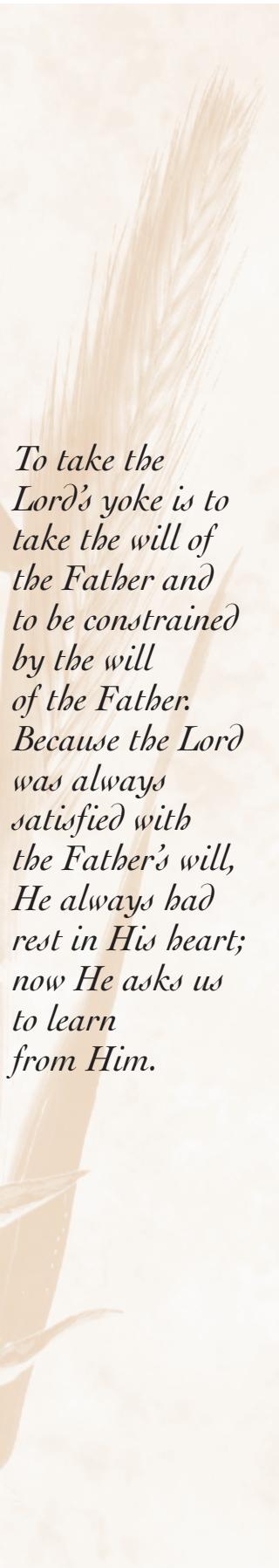
(7) Christ is the new wine individually, and He is the fresh wineskin corporately (Matt. 9:17). The new wine signifies Christ as the new life, full of vigor and cheering strength, stirring us to excitement and satisfying us. The fresh wineskin signifies the corporate Christ, the outward container that holds the new wine (1 Cor. 12:12).

(8) Christ is the Shepherd and the Lord of the harvest (Matt. 9:35-38). In His ministry for the establishing of His heavenly kingdom, the Lord Jesus ministered as a Shepherd (vv. 35-36). If we see the vision of Christ as the Lord of the harvest, we will beseech Him to thrust out workers into His harvest (vv. 37-38).

(9) Christ is the Friend of sinners and the wisdom of God (11:19). As the Friend of sinners, Christ sympathizes with their problems and senses their grief (v. 19). Whatever Christ did was done by the wisdom of God, which is Himself; this wisdom was vindicated by His wise works (v. 19; 1 Cor. 1:24, 30).

(10) Christ is the One who gives rest (Matt. 11:28-30). To take the Lord's yoke is to take the will of the Father and to be constrained by the will of the Father (v. 29; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). Because the Lord was always satisfied with the Father's will, He always had rest in His heart; now He asks us to learn from Him (Matt. 11:28-30).

(11) Christ is the greater Jonah (12:39-41; 16:4). Jonah is a type of Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (12:39-41). For the evil and adulterous Jewish and religious



*To take the  
Lord's yoke is to  
take the will of  
the Father and  
to be constrained  
by the will  
of the Father:  
Because the Lord  
was always  
satisfied with  
the Father's will,  
He always had  
rest in His heart;  
now He asks us  
to learn  
from Him.*

*The Father's  
revelation  
concerning Christ  
is the first half  
of the great  
mystery—  
Christ and  
the church. In  
Matthew 16:18  
the Lord needed  
an "also"  
in order to reveal  
the second half  
of the great  
mystery—  
the church.*

generation, the Lord Jesus would do nothing but die and be resurrected as the greatest sign to them that they might be saved if they would believe (16:4).

(12) Christ is the bread and crumbs under the table (15:21-38). God's economy is not a matter of outward things but of Christ coming into us as food (vv. 26, 34, 36). We need to take in the edible Christ by eating Him as bread, even as the crumbs under the table (v. 27).

(13) Christ in His humanity is the resurrected One with all authority in heaven and on earth (28:18-19). Christ has been given all authority in His humanity, as the Son of Man and the heavenly King, after His resurrection (v. 18). Because the Gospel of Matthew is concerned with the kingdom and the kingdom requires authority, in Matthew Christ's resurrection is a matter of authority for discipling the nations (v. 19).

### ***My Church***

The revelation of the church through Christ is based upon the revelation of Christ, the Son of the living God. In Matthew 16:18 this wonderful, all-inclusive Christ proclaimed the greatest prophecy in the Bible: "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church." The word *also*, as used by the Lord, is significant. The Father's revelation concerning Christ is the first half of the great mystery—Christ and the church. The Lord needed an "also" in order to reveal the second half of the great mystery—the church. The words *My church* indicate that the church is of the Lord, not of any other person or thing. Before the Lord Jesus returns to the earth with His overcomers, He must (and He will) see on the earth the church built up by Christ—the genuine church, about which He will be able to say, "My church."

**T**he Lord Jesus is building His church on "this rock." Stated simply, the word *rock* in verse 18 refers to Christ Himself and to the revelation concerning Christ. The apostles taught that Christ and the revelation regarding Christ are the unique rock upon which we should build the church. Sadly, among the millions of believers on earth today, only a very small number are one with Christ to build His church on "this rock."

The church that is built upon the revelation concerning Christ is the genuine church, and it is not sectarian. The problem today is that Christians like to form groups or so-called churches according to their concept and viewpoint...Any group that is built upon doctrines, views, practices, or concepts is not the church built upon the revelation concerning Christ. (Lee, Conclusion 12: 2070)

### ***The Gates of Hades***

Referring to "My church," the Lord declared, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (v. 18). *The gates of Hades* is a biblical term denoting the power of Satan—Satan's authority or power of darkness (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13)—and the power and authority of death, Satan's ultimate weapon in attacking the church that Christ is building on "this rock." The Lord's word regarding the gates of Hades indicates that Satan's power of darkness will attack the church, causing a spiritual warfare between Satan's power, which is his kingdom (Matt. 12:26), and the church, which is God's kingdom (John 3:3, 5; Rom. 14:17). "The authority of darkness denotes the authority of Satan. God is light, and Satan is darkness. Satan's authority of darkness is the authority of evil in the heavens, in the air (Eph. 6:12). This evil refers to something that is in rebellion against God" (Lee, Conclusion 12: 2071). The authority of darkness, the gates of Hades, will attack again and again, but it cannot, and will not, prevail against the church built by Christ, the Son of the living God. The word *prevail* in Matthew 16:18 implies warfare between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God, but in this warfare the gates of Hades cannot prevail against the church.

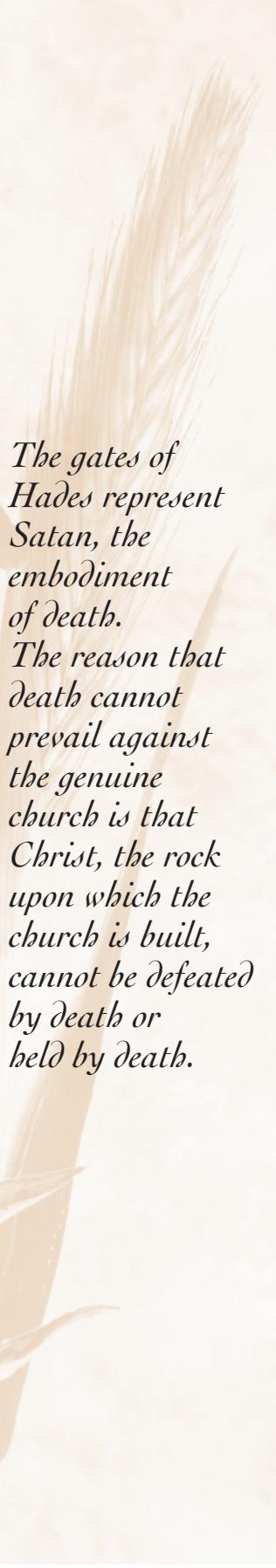
**I**t is important to realize and be deeply touched by the fact that the term *the gates of Hades* denotes the authority of death. The gates of Hades represent Satan, the embodiment of death. The reason that death cannot prevail against the genuine church is that Christ, the rock upon which the church is built, cannot be defeated by death or held by death. Witnessing to the death and resurrection of Christ, Peter proclaimed that the Lord Jesus, who had been nailed to a cross and killed, was raised up by God, “having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it” (Acts 2:23-24). Christ Himself is resurrection (John 11:25) and possesses the indestructible life (Heb. 7:16). “Since He is such an ever-living One, death is not able to hold Him. He delivered Himself to death, but death had no way to detain Him; rather, death was defeated by Him, and He rose up from it” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Acts 2:24, note 2). Because the church is built upon the resurrected Christ—the One who is resurrection and life—death will not prevail against the church, designated by the Lord as “My church.”

Matthew 16:18 shows from what source the attack upon the church will come—“the gates of Hades,” that is, death. Death is the characteristic of Satan’s work; the ultimate goal of his work is to saturate man with death (Heb. 2:15). From Eden onwards God’s controversy with Satan has been over the issue of death and life (Rom. 8:6, 10-11). *The gates of Hades* is plural; this indicates that Hades tries to affect the church in various ways. From the time the church came into being, the gates of Hades have been attacking the church through various ways of injecting death into the church and holding it in death. Satan’s special object is to spread death within the church, and his greatest fear with regard to the church is her resistance to his power of death (Rev. 2:8, 10-11). The church that is built upon “this rock”—Christ and the revelation concerning Christ—can discern the attack of death, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). By the resurrection life of Christ in our spirit, we can be victorious over the attack of death upon the church (v. 18; Acts 2:24; 2 Cor. 1:9; Rom. 5:17; 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:26, 54-57; 2 Cor. 5:4; 2 Tim. 1:10). The more we experience and live by the resurrected Christ, the more we will conquer death in the name of our Lord, who, through death, destroyed “him who has the might of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). The more we are constituted with Christ as resurrection, the more we will sing, “Death cannot hold the resurrection life, / Through every block and barrier it breaks; / Conqu’ring the pow’r of darkness and of hell, / It swallows death and victory partakes” (Lee “Death,” 587).

### ***The Two Aspects of the Church***

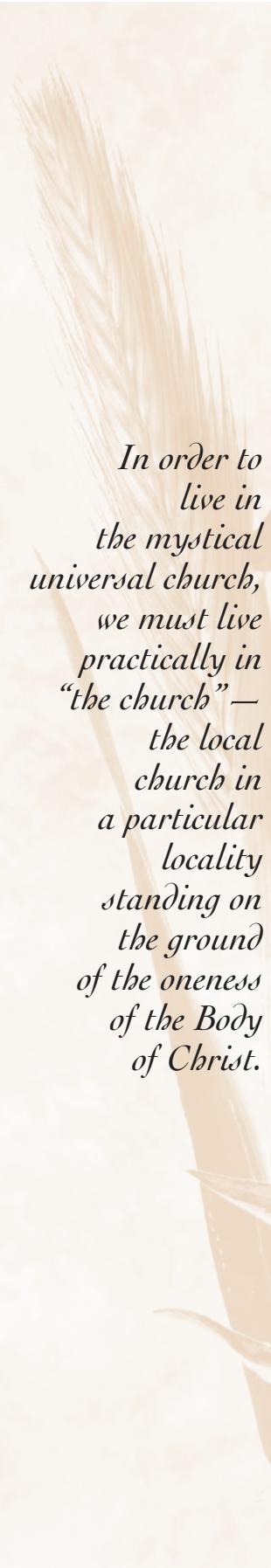
The church as revealed by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 16 and 18 has two aspects: the universal aspect and the local aspect. The church revealed in Matthew 16:18—“My church”—is the universal church, the unique Body of Christ, “His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:23). The church mentioned in Matthew 18:17 is the local church, the expression of the universal Body of Christ in a certain locality. The one universal church—the organic, mystical Body of Christ—becomes in space and time the many local churches—local expressions of the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-5; 16:16). For the universal church to be real and practical, there is the need of the local churches. Without the local churches, we cannot have the universal church in a practical, experiential way. We, as believers in Christ and children of God, cannot live directly in the universal church; it is impossible for anyone to live in the universal church without living in a local church. Every local church is a part of the universal church. The Lord prophesied that He would build His church, the Body of Christ, the goal of God’s will, purpose, and economy. The universal church is the goal; the local churches are the procedure that God takes to reach His goal.

After the Lord revealed His universal church in Matthew 16:18, He revealed “the church” in 18:17. The Lord’s use of the definite article when speaking of local churches is of utmost importance and is radically different from saying “a church.” According to the divinely unveiled truth in the New Testament, there is only one church—the one Body



*The gates of  
Hades represent  
Satan, the  
embodiment  
of death.*

*The reason that  
death cannot  
prevail against  
the genuine  
church is that  
Christ, the rock  
upon which the  
church is built,  
cannot be defeated  
by death or  
held by death.*



*In order to live in the mystical universal church, we must live practically in “the church”—the local church in a particular locality standing on the ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ.*

universally—and only one church in a locality. In order to live in the mystical universal church, we must live practically in “the church”—the local church in a particular locality standing on the ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ. The apostles who heard, received, and obeyed Christ’s word concerning “My church” and “the church” established and lived in “the church which was in Jerusalem” (Acts 8:1).

**W**hen the gospel of the kingdom was proclaimed in other localities, a local church was established in each of those localities. “Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers” (13:1). Simultaneously, the apostles appointed elders in every church (14:23) and in every city (Titus 1:5) because in “the church” in a city there was only one eldership, one administration. In writing to the believers in Thessalonica, Paul addresses the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1). In composing his first Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul addresses it “to the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints” (1:2). The church in Corinth was the church of God in a city, Corinth. In 12:27 Paul links the church in Corinth—“the church”—with the Body—“My church”—saying, “Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.” These members of the Body of Christ expressed by the church in Corinth had been baptized in one spirit “into one Body” (v. 13).

When considering Christ and the church as revealed in the book of Revelation, we see that our Lord Jesus, who said, “Tell it to the church” (Matt. 18:17), directed the apostle John to write on a scroll what he had seen and send it to seven churches; then He mentioned seven cities and, shortly thereafter, said, “To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write” (Rev. 2:1). In the first book of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew, and in the last book, Revelation, Christ, the Son of the living God, spoke clearly about and to “the church”—the local expression of the universal church.

#### **Christ and the Church in Revelation**

Although the Gospel of Matthew is the initial unveiling of Christ and the church, and the book of Revelation is the consummate revelation of Christ and the church, these two books are connected by a verse in Matthew 28 and a verse in Revelation 1. The resurrected Jesus came and spoke to the disciples, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). In His divinity as the only begotten Son of God in the Godhead, the Lord had authority over all matters, things, and persons. In His humanity as the Son of Man and the King in the kingdom of God, authority in heaven and on earth was given to Him after His resurrection, making Him the Lord of all (Acts 10:36). Revelation 1:5 speaks of “Jesus Christ,...the Ruler of the kings of the earth.” The Lord Jesus has been made the Lord by God (Acts 2:33, 36), He has been exalted as the Leader over all the rulers (5:31), and He has been made the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5). As the Ruler of the kings of the earth, the God-exalted Jesus is the Ruler over all the ones who are in power. The affairs of all the nations are under the hand of Christ as the Ruler of the kings.

The connection of Revelation 1:5 to Matthew 28:18 enables us to realize that the subject of Revelation, a book of administration (4:2, 5; 5:6), is Christ as the center of God’s administration according to God’s eternal economy. The focus of “the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him” (1:1) is the all-inclusive Christ speaking to and caring for the churches while He, the enthroned God-man in the divine administration, is functioning as the Ruler of the kings of the earth, ruling the whole earth so that God’s will may be done (4:11) and God’s purposed may be accomplished.

#### **Christ, the Worthy and Enthroned Lion-Lamb as the Heavenly Administrator in God’s Universal Government**

It is crucial for us to see a vision of God’s sovereignty (Dan. 4:1-3, 34-37; Rom. 9:19-23).

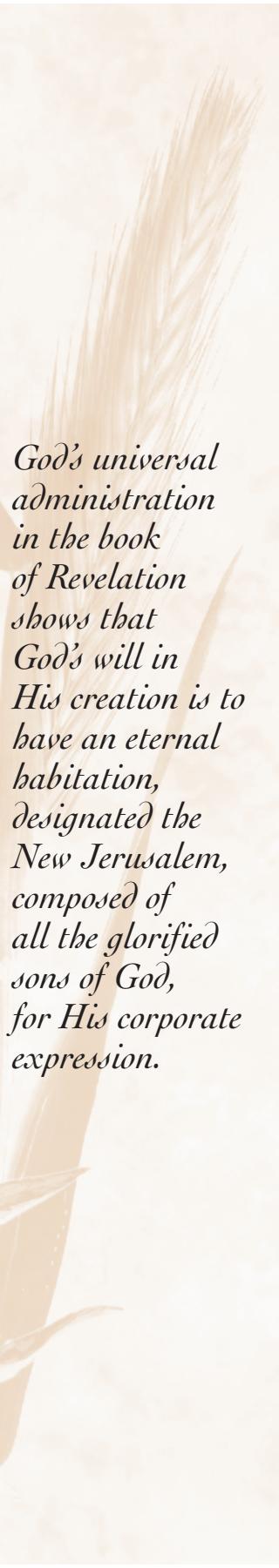
Sovereignty refers to God's unlimited authority and power (Rev. 4:11; 5:13). As the sovereign One, God is above everything, behind everything, and in everything (1 Kings 22:19). The sovereign God has the full capacity to carry out what He wants according to the desire of His heart and according to His eternal economy (Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:10). The book of Revelation presents a clear view of God's universal administration, revealing the fact that the universe operates according to God's administration.

We need to see a vision of the throne of God as the center of God's administration (1 Kings 22:19; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26). The book of Revelation as a book of God's administration unveils the throne of God for the divine administration throughout the universe (4:2; 5:1; 6:16; 7:9; 8:3; 21:5). The throne in Revelation 4 and 5, the throne of divine authority, is related to God's administration, which, intrinsically, is related to His economy (1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10; 3:9). Apparently, the throne is invisible and is not realized by human beings on earth; actually, the throne is behind the scene ruling over everyone and everything (Isa. 6:1). Whether we realize it or not, everything in the present world situation is subject to the rule of God's throne. The throne of God is not only for God to reign but also for God to fulfill His eternal purpose (Eph. 1:9, 11; 3:11; Rom. 8:28; Rev. 4:11). The unveiling of God's universal administration in the book of Revelation shows that God's will in His creation is to have an eternal habitation, designated the New Jerusalem, composed of all the glorified sons of God, for His corporate expression.

As the One enthroned to be the heavenly Administrator in God's universal government, Christ is the worthy Lion-Lamb, the overcoming Redeemer. The resurrected and ascended Son of Man, to whom all authority has been given, is now on the throne, exercising the authority given to Him by God for the fulfillment of God's eternal plan. The apostle John was granted a vision of the enthroned Christ: "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome...And I saw...a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (5:5-6). As the Lion, Christ is the Fighter against the enemy, Satan; as the Lamb, He is the Redeemer for us. To the enemy, Christ is the Lion, but to us, the redeemed ones, He is the precious Lamb; thus, He is the Lion-Lamb. The Lamb, the Redeemer, the One slain on the cross for our sins, is now on the throne carrying out God's administration.

The main figure in the book of Revelation is Christ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (v. 5). The lion is a symbol of Christ, portraying Him as a strong fighter against the enemy, as prophesied in Genesis 49:8-9. The title *the Lion of the tribe of Judah* signifies Christ as the triumphant King (Rev. 5:5; 1:5; 19:16). All living creatures are under Him, and none can subdue Him; rather, He subdues everyone and everything (17:14). Revelation is the unveiling of this Lion; therefore, we should fix our gaze upon the Lion of the tribe of Judah (1:1; 5:5). Christ, the Redeemer, has become the Victor, conquering all His enemies and bringing in His kingdom to the earth (11:15; 12:10).

At this very moment, there is a Lion-Lamb standing in the center of the universe with "seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (5:6; 1:4; 3:1; 4:5). The title *the seven Spirits* indicates that all the elements of the all-inclusive Spirit have been intensified for our experience (Phil. 1:19; Rev. 1:4; 3:1). Christ as the Lion-Lamb has seven observing and searching eyes for executing God's judgment upon the universe to fulfill God's eternal purpose, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem (4:11; 21:2, 10-11). The Lion-Lamb has seven eyes for the carrying out of God's administration; the way Christ carries out God's universal administration is by the seven Spirits as His eyes (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). The seven eyes are also for transfusing all that the Lamb is into our being so that we may become the same as He is in life, nature, and expression for God's building (Zech. 3:9).



*God's universal administration in the book of Revelation shows that God's will in His creation is to have an eternal habitation, designated the New Jerusalem, composed of all the glorified sons of God, for His corporate expression.*

*As the overcoming Lion, Christ defeated Satan for God, and as the redeeming Lamb, He put sin away for us; therefore, He is the One worthy to unveil and carry out the mystery of God's economy. The Lord's worthiness is universal and immeasurable.*

As the One enthroned to be the heavenly Administrator in God's universal government, Christ as the Lion-Lamb, the overcoming Redeemer, is worthy to open the scroll of God's economy (Rev. 5:1-5, 9). The Lion-Lamb removed the hindrances to the fulfillment of God's purpose; therefore, He is qualified to open the scroll concerning God's economy. When Christ ascended to the heavens, He took the scroll from God and opened the secret of the universe for the carrying out of God's administration (vv. 7-10). As the overcoming Lion, He defeated Satan for God, and as the redeeming Lamb, He put sin away for us; therefore, He is the One worthy to unveil and carry out the mystery of God's economy (v. 5). This aspect of the Lord's worthiness is universal and immeasurable (v. 9). Christ, the Administrator of the heavens and of all the nations on earth, can know and make known the schedule of God's administration, the timetable of what will take place from the ascension of Christ to the New Jerusalem (v. 6; 21:2). Christ opens the mystery of God's economy and carries out the mystery because He has received the authority to administrate the universe for the fulfillment of God's economy.

**A**s the consummate unveiling of the all-inclusive Christ, the book of Revelation discloses many aspects of Christ, including the faithful Witness (1:5; 3:14), the First-born of the dead (1:5), the Alpha and the Omega (vv. 8, 17; 2:8; 22:13), the living One (1:18), the Holy One and true One (3:7), the faithful One (19:11), the Amen (3:14), the Root and the Offspring of David (5:5; 22:16), another Angel (7:2; 8:3; 10:1; 18:1), the morning star (22:16; 2:28), the Son of Man (1:13), the Shepherd (7:17), the Bridegroom (19:7-9), the eternal Husband (21:2, 9-10), the lamp (v. 23), the Lamb-God on the throne (22:1-5), the eternal King (11:15-18; 12:10), and the Word of God—the King of kings and the Lord of lords (19:16, 19-21). Due to various limitations, we will consider only three aspects of our wonderful all-inclusive Christ.

#### **Christ Our Eternal Shepherd**

Revelation 7:17 says, "The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them." In this verse the word *them* refers to all of God's redeemed ones, who are considered God's flock, the "one flock" mentioned by the Lord Jesus, the "one Shepherd" (John 10:16). To shepherd people is to cherish and nourish them. In eternity Christ our eternal Shepherd will continue to cherish and nourish us, rendering to us all-inclusive, tender care. Under Christ's endearing shepherding we, the glorified sons of God, the constituents of the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9-11), "will lack nothing" (Psa. 23:1). The One who is the Shepherd of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25), the Chief Shepherd (5:4), and the great Shepherd of God's flock (Heb. 13:20) will shepherd us for eternity.

Under the Lord's shepherding, we will not hunger or thirst anymore (Rev. 7:16). For us to hunger and thirst speaks of a hope that is not yet satisfied. Christ our Shepherd will satisfy our hunger and quench our thirst, nourishing us with the fruit that He bears as the tree of life.

Under the Lord's shepherding, the beating sun and the scorching heat will not strike us (v. 16). The Lamb-God sitting upon the throne will tabernacle over us, overshadowing us with Himself (v. 15; 2 Cor. 12:9). There is one kind of life that is under God's overshadowing—a life that is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3-4; Psa. 36:7-9; Eph. 6:17; Psa. 91:1; 17:8; 57:1; Ruth 2:12). Christ as Jehovah and also as man is the King who is supplying, caring for, and covering God's people; He is the King for ruling and a man who is like a refuge from the wind and a covering from the tempest, like streams of water in a dry place, and like the shadow of a massive rock in a wasted land (Isa. 32:1-2).

Under the Lord's shepherding, God will wipe away every tear from our eyes (Rev. 7:17). Tears are unavoidable in this age, but our tears are put into God's bottle and recorded in His book (Heb. 5:7; Acts 20:19, 31; Psa. 56:8; cf. Mal. 3:16). Because the Lamb supplies

us with waters of life for our satisfaction, the water of tears is wiped away (Jer. 9:1; 2:13; cf. 15:16; Lam. 3:21-25, 55-56).

Under the Lord's shepherding, we will be guided by the Lamb on the throne to springs of waters of life (Rev. 7:17). In His shepherding, the main thing that Christ does is to guide us to the many different springs of waters of life. *Springs of waters of life* refers to many different waters of life, and as in John 7:38 and Revelation 22:1, it refers to the unique water of life in different aspects. This indicates that for eternity there will be the unique water of life that issues in many rivers for our enjoyment and satisfaction. As our eternal Shepherd, Christ will lead us into Himself as the springs of waters of life so that we may experience the eternal dispensing of the processed and consummated Triune God. Under Christ's shepherding in eternity, there will be no tears, no hunger, and no thirst—only enjoyment (7:16-17).

### ***Christ the Bridegroom***

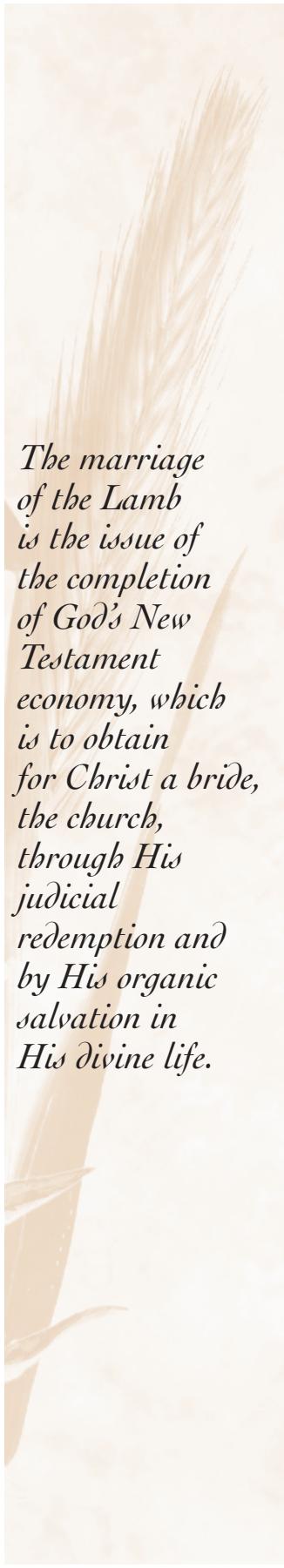
The four Gospels reveal that Christ came as the Bridegroom (Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34). "He who has the bride is the bridegroom" (John 3:29). Matthew 25:1 indicates that in His coming back Christ will be the Bridegroom. In Revelation 19:7 Christ the Lamb is unveiled as having a wedding: "Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

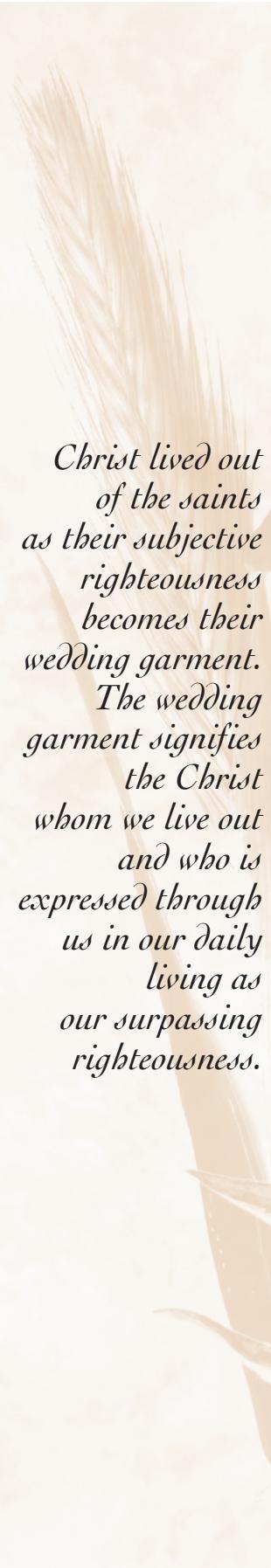
In the book of Revelation there is a universal couple—the Bridegroom and the bride, the Husband and His wife (21:2, 9-11). The marriage of the Lamb is the issue of the completion of God's New Testament economy, which is to obtain for Christ a bride, the church, through His judicial redemption and by His organic salvation in His divine life (Gen. 2:22; Rom. 5:10; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2, 9-11). The bride of Christ in Revelation 19 is composed of all His overcomers (vv. 7-9; cf. Gen. 2:22; Matt. 16:18). All the overcomers will be the New Jerusalem as the bride of Christ for one thousand years in its initial and fresh stage (Rev. 19:7). Eventually, all the believers will join the overcomers to consummate and complete the New Jerusalem in full as the wife of Christ in the new heaven and new earth for eternity (21:2, 9-11).

The readiness of the corporate bride depends on the maturity in life of the overcomers (19:7-9; Heb. 6:1; Phil. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:13-15). In the New Testament the word *perfect* is used to refer to the believers' being full-grown, mature, and perfected in the life of God, indicating that we need to grow and mature unto perfection in the divine life (Matt. 5:48). We need to continue to grow until we are matured in the divine life to become a full-grown man, arriving at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

In order for the bride to be mature, her faith and love need to be fully developed (Titus 3:15). Faith and love are inseparable, excellent virtues of the believers in Christ (1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Tim. 1:13; Gal. 5:6). Through faith we receive the Lord, and through love we enjoy the Lord whom we have received (John 1:12; 14:21; 21:15-17). Faith is given to us by God that by it we may receive Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, and thereby enter into the Triune God and be joined to Him as one, having Him as our life, life supply, and everything (2 Pet. 1:1). Love issues out of faith and enables us to live out all the riches of the Triune God with those who have believed into Christ with us in order that the Triune God may have a glorious corporate expression (Eph. 3:19-21).

In addition to being mature in life, the bride must be built up as a corporate person (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:15-16; Rev. 19:7; 21:2). God's building is the desire of God's heart and the goal of God's salvation (Eph. 1:5, 9; Exo. 25:8; cf. 1:11; 40:2-3, 34-35). God intends to have a building in which God and man, man and God, can be a mutual





*Christ lived out  
of the saints  
as their subjective  
righteousness  
becomes their  
wedding garment.  
The wedding  
garment signifies  
the Christ  
whom we live out  
and who is  
expressed through  
us in our daily  
living as  
our surpassing  
righteousness.*

abode to each other (John 15:4; Rev. 21:2-3, 22). The principle of God's building is that God builds Himself into man and builds man into Himself (John 14:20; 1 John 4:15). God's mingling Himself with us, His redeemed and regenerated people, is God's building Himself into His people. The mingling of us, His people, with God is our being built into God (Eph. 3:17). To be built up with fellow believers into a corporate person is the Lord's supreme and highest requirement of His faithful seekers (4:15-16). Being built up with the fellow partakers of the divine life is the highest virtue of one who pursues Christ in God's eternal economy (1 Tim. 1:4).

The bride's wedding garment is of "fine linen, bright and clean" (Rev. 19:7-8). *Clean* refers to the nature, and *bright* refers to the expression. The fine linen with which the bride is clothed is "the righteousnesses of the saints" (v. 8). Christ is the righteousness by which we have been justified by God so that we may be reborn in our spirit to receive the divine life (1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 8:10). As our objective righteousness, Christ is the One in whom we are justified by God (3:24, 28; 5:1, 9; 4:25; 5:16, 18). As our subjective righteousness, Christ is the One dwelling in us to live for us a life that can be justified by God and that is always acceptable to God (Matt. 5:6, 20). If we are to be found in Christ, we must fulfill the condition of not having our own righteousness but instead having a righteousness which is not our own—a righteousness which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith (Phil. 3:9). Christ lived out of the saints as their subjective righteousness becomes their wedding garment (Rev. 19:8). The righteousness we received for our salvation is objective and enables us to meet the requirement of the righteous God, whereas the righteousnesses of the overcoming saints are subjective and enable them to meet the requirement of the overcomer Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9). The wedding garment in Matthew 22:11-13 signifies the Christ whom we live out and who is expressed through us in our daily living as our surpassing righteousness (5:20; Rev. 3:4-5, 18).

**F**or the presentation of the bride to the Bridegroom, the bride needs beauty (S. S. 1:15-16; 4:1, 7). In Song of Songs the lover and the Beloved both have beauty, and they appreciate the beauty in each other (1:15-16; 4:1-5, 7). Ephesians 5:27 speaks of the beauty of the bride, revealing that Christ will "present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish." The beauty of the bride comes from the Christ who is wrought into the church and who is then expressed through the church (3:17). Our only beauty is the shining out of Christ from within us; what Christ appreciates in us is the expression of Himself (Psa. 50:2). "Your eyes will see the King in His beauty" (Isa. 33:17); "the King will desire your beauty" (Psa. 45:11). "You are as beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, / As lovely as Jerusalem, / As terrible as an army with banners" (S. S. 6:4).

The bride must also be an experienced warrior for the defeating of God's enemy. In Ephesians we see the church as the bride and the warrior (5:25-27; 6:10-20); in Revelation 19 we also have these two aspects of the church. On the day of His wedding, Christ will marry those who have been fighting the battle against God's enemy for years; that is, Christ will marry the overcomers, who have already overcome the evil one (vv. 7-9; 1 John 2:14).

Christ as the Bridegroom and the overcomers as the prepared bride together are a fulfillment of the great mystery, Christ and the church. Those who are parts of the bride are believers who have been permeated with Christ, saturated with Christ, constituted with Christ, and built up in Christ as His corporate expression. The Bridegroom—the Lord Jesus who loved the church and gave Himself up for her on the cross (Eph. 5:25)—is eagerly waiting for His bride to make herself ready. Our position as believers and members of the Body is that of the bride, and the position of Christ who is coming again is that of the Bridegroom. We are on the earth preparing in various ways to become the bride to meet our Beloved, and He is on the throne ready to come as the Bridegroom

---

to meet us. When the overcoming bride is ready, the Lord will come secretly for her just before the beginning of the great tribulation and will come to the earth with her, His warrior-wife, at the end of the years of the great tribulation, deal with the enemy, abolish human government, and reign as the King in the glory of the kingdom of the heavens.

### ***Christ as the Word of God—the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords***

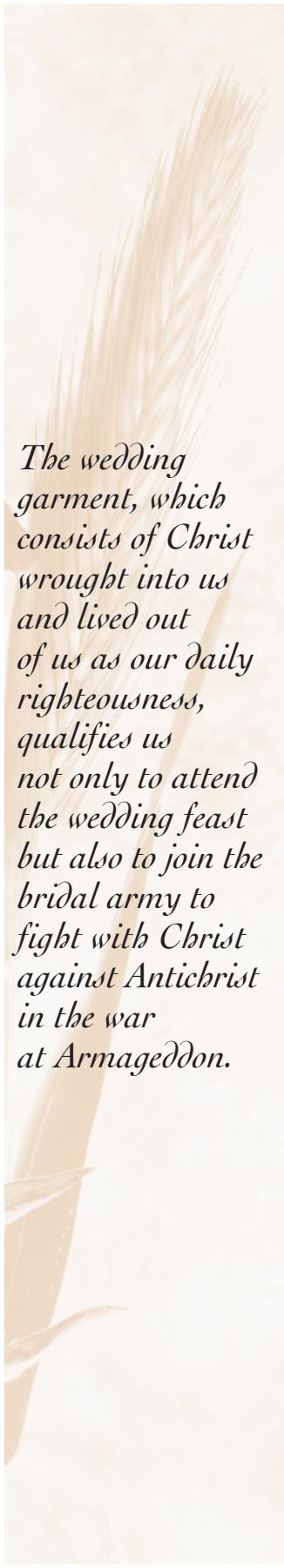
In Revelation 19:11-16 and 19-21, Christ is revealed as the Word of God—the King of kings and the Lord of lords—who returns to defeat and destroy Antichrist and the false prophet. After His wedding feast, Christ will come as a fighting General with His bride, who is His army, to fight against Antichrist, the kings under him, and their armies at Armageddon. Under Antichrist's instigation man will wage war against the King of kings and the Lord of lords (v. 16). Christ is God in man coming to fight against rebellious mankind, and mankind is represented by the Antichrist, a man who is one with Satan (v. 19). The fact that these two parties—Christ and Antichrist—will fight means that man will have the audacity to fight against God directly.

**I**n Revelation 19:11-21 the Bridegroom comes to fight against His enemies with the help of His bride. The Bridegroom will be the Commander in chief, and the bride will be His army. When Christ comes with His army, He will come as the Son of Man, and He will need a counterpart to match and complete Him; this counterpart will be His bride (John 3:29), clothed with a beautiful garment. The wedding garment, which consists of Christ wrought into us and lived out of us as our daily righteousness, qualifies us not only to attend the wedding feast but also to join the bridal army to fight with Christ against Antichrist in the war at Armageddon (Matt. 22:11-12; Rev. 19:7-8, 14).

In Revelation 19:11 John says, "I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war." The title of Christ as the One sitting on the white horse is *Faithful and True*. "Christ is faithful both to God and to those who believe in Him. In His faithfulness He defeats and destroys those who oppose God and persecute the believers. He is also true in carrying out God's economy and in caring for those who believe in Him" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 11, note 2). In righteousness the Lord will judge and make war. Christ is righteous and even righteousness itself (1 Cor. 1:30); therefore, He will be righteous in dealing with those who oppose God and rebel against Him, and in righteousness He will defeat and destroy Antichrist and righteously and severely judge those who followed Antichrist to the war at Armageddon.

In Revelation 19:12 we find something deep and mysterious: "He has a name written which no one knows but Himself." "This indicates that there are certain aspects of Christ that we have not experienced and that only He Himself knows. It also indicates that the Christ whom we experience is inexhaustible" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 12, note 3). For eternity we will experience and enjoy "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8); the all-inclusive Christ will always be inexhaustible and, in a sense, unknowable, even to His counterpart, His wife.

"His name is called the Word of God" (Rev. 19:13). The Lord Himself is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14). His name being the Word of God means that He, the Son of God, is the speaking of God concerning God; He, the Word of God, is the definition, explanation, and expression of God. As the Lord fights for God, He speaks for God. "Out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it He might smite the nations" (Rev. 19:15). The sword proceeding out of the mouth of Christ is the Word of God. With this sword the Lord Jesus will slay the "man of lawlessness," Antichrist, "by the breath of His mouth" and will bring him "to nothing by the manifestation of His coming" (2 Thes. 2:3, 8).



*The wedding garment, which consists of Christ wrought into us and lived out of us as our daily righteousness, qualifies us not only to attend the wedding feast but also to join the bridal army to fight with Christ against Antichrist in the war at Armageddon.*

*As God,  
the Lord was  
the Lord  
all the time,  
but as man,  
He was made  
the Lord in  
His ascension  
after He brought  
His humanity  
into God in  
His resurrection;  
in His ascension  
He was made  
the Lord of all  
to possess all.*

In Revelation 19, as the Word of God, Christ speaks for God by executing God's judgment upon the rebellious people. Even as the Lord fights, He speaks for God and expresses God. The fighting of Christ is the speaking of the Word of God...The Warrior is the Word. His fighting is the speaking of God's Word. The Lord's fighting in the war at Armageddon will be a powerful speaking. (Lee Conclusion 26: 4337-4338)

"The armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean" (Rev. 19:14). According to Revelation 19, which matches Ephesians 5 and 6, the church is both the bride presented to Christ and the warrior who fights with Him against God's enemy. The army in Revelation 19:14 is composed of those in Revelation 17:14: "These [the enemies] will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they who are with Him, the called and chosen and faithful, will also overcome them." The "fine linen, white and clean," is the clothing of the bride, whose wedding garment is of "fine linen, bright and clean" (19:8). The bride's wedding garment will also be her warrior uniform. The crucial point in Revelation 19:14 is that the bride of Christ will follow Him as His army to fight and destroy Antichrist and his army.

"He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (v. 16). *King of kings* refers to the authority of the enthroned Lamb, the Son of Man, and *Lord of lords* refers to His headship. "God highly exalted Him [Jesus] and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9) and seated Him "at His right hand in the heavens, far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:20-21). Now the Lord Jesus is the authority and the Head of the universe.

**T**he Lord Jesus has been made the Lord by God (Acts 2:33, 36), He has been exalted as the Leader over all the rulers (5:31), and He has been made the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5). As God, the Lord was the Lord all the time (Luke 1:43; John 11:21; 20:28), but as man, He was made the Lord in His ascension after He brought His humanity into God in His resurrection; in His ascension He was made the Lord of all to possess all (Acts 2:33, 36; 3:15; 10:36). God exalted the man Jesus, who had been rejected and killed by the Jewish leaders, as the highest Leader, the Prince; He rules sovereignly so that the environment might be fit for God's chosen people to receive His salvation (5:31). As the Ruler of the kings of the earth, the God-exalted Jesus is the Ruler over all the ones who are in power; He is the chief Ruler in the divine government for the fulfillment of God's eternal plan (Rev. 1:5).

In Christ's ascension God made Him the unique Head of the Body, the church, and inaugurated Him into the headship of the universe; the Head of the whole universe is Jesus (Col. 1:18; Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:22-23). Ephesians 1:20-22 states that when Christ ascended to the heavens, God gave Him to be Head over all things to the church; this indicates that before Christ's ascension the headship of Christ was not complete, not fully established. In order for Christ to be the Head, He needs to be both God and man; contrary to the human concept, being God alone is not adequate for Christ to be the Head of the universe (1 Chron. 29:10-13). Christ as the Son of God alone was not fully qualified to be the Head over all things in God's administration (John 5:22, 27). According to His economy, God will not exercise His judgment in His administration as God alone; He needs a man to exercise His judgment in His administration, because His administration is very much related to dealing with Satan (Acts 17:31). God has a governmental administration in the universe mainly for two reasons (Gen. 1:26). On the positive side, God needs an administration in order to carry out His eternal purpose (Eph. 1:10-11; 3:11; Matt. 6:9-10). On the negative side, God needs a government to deal with His enemy and all the evil powers (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). Without man God's eternal purpose could never be fulfilled, and His enemy could not be dealt with; God needs man, another creature, to deal with Satan (Eph. 3:10; 6:10-13; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev.

11:15). Because man is needed to carry out God's eternal purpose and to deal with His enemy, before Christ became a man, His headship could not be fully completed, fully established (John 1:14; Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14; Eph. 1:22-23). By dying on the cross, Christ accomplished God's purpose, and He defeated Satan and destroyed the power of death (John 17:4; 19:30; Heb. 2:14). Because Christ gained the human element in His incarnation and accomplished God's purpose and defeated God's enemy in His crucifixion, He is now fully qualified to be the Head of the universe in God's administration (Phil. 2:5-11; Eph. 1:22-23). In Christ's ascension God inaugurated Him into the universal headship over all things for God's administration; thus, the headship of Christ is fully established (Heb. 1:3; 2:6-9; 12:2; Rev. 5:6; Eph. 1:22-23).

The enthroned Christ, the Head and Ruler of the universe, is now exercising His authority as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Whether they know it or not and like it or not, all those who temporarily have status and power in the government of a country are under the rule of the King of kings and Lord of lords, and they will give an account to the Son of Man and will be judged by Him.

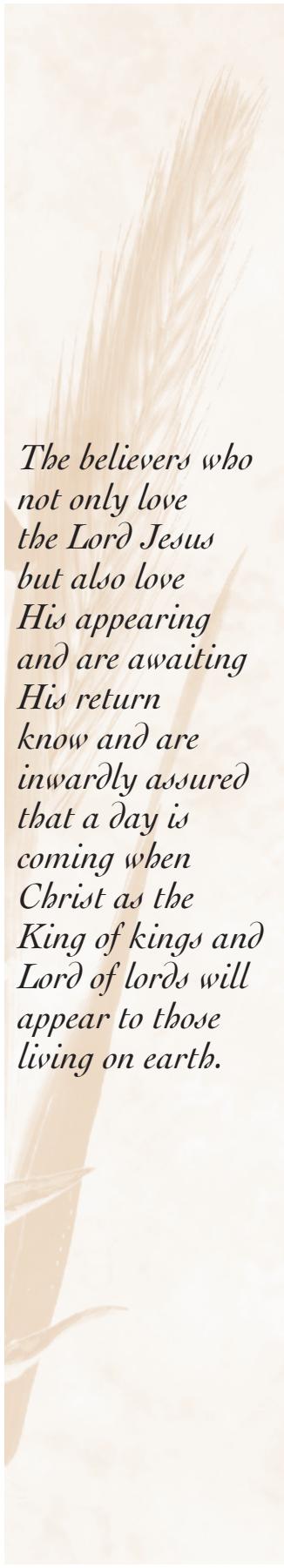
**F**or the time being, the King of kings and Lord of lords cannot be seen by human eyes, for the present age is the age of mystery, the age of faith, and the age of grace. Those believers who not only love the Lord Jesus but also love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8) and are awaiting His return know and are inwardly assured that a day is coming when Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords will appear to those living on earth. "Every eye will see Him" (Rev. 1:7), and no longer will the Lord of all be hidden. KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS will be written on His garment and on His thigh (19:16). "Christ's garment signifies Christ's attributes, His character, especially His righteousness in His humanity, whereas His thigh signifies His standing strength, His stability. His title *King of kings and Lord of lords* is exhibited in His righteousness and stability" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 16, note 1).

### Christ and the Churches in Revelation

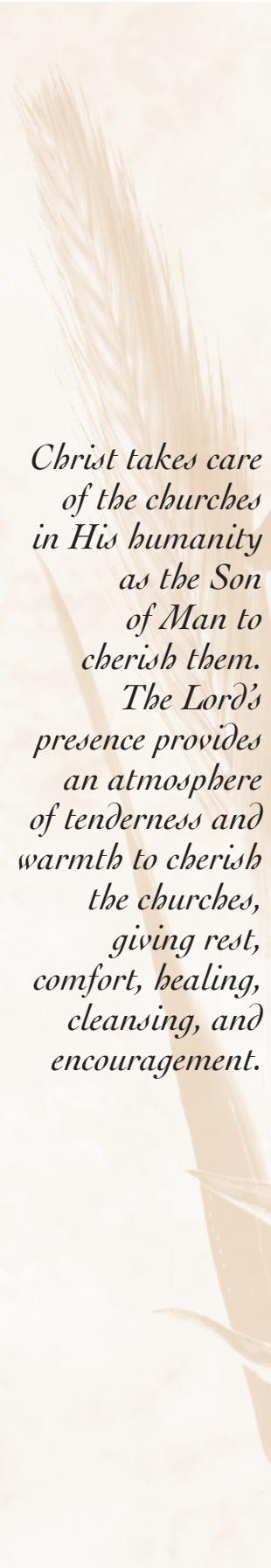
"The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him" was written on a scroll by the apostle John for "the seven churches which are in Asia" (1:1, 4). In spirit on the Lord's Day, John heard behind him "a loud voice like a trumpet, saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea" (vv. 10-11). There were seven churches in seven cities in Asia with one, and only one, church per city. Each church was in one particular city. As the Lord was speaking to each of the seven churches, He linked the church to the city where the church was located, saying, "the church in Ephesus" (2:1), "the church in Smyrna" (v. 8), "the church in Pergamos" (v. 12), "the church in Thyatira" (v. 18), "the church in Sardis" (3:1), "the church in Philadelphia" (v. 7), and "the church in Laodicea" (v. 14). The One who said, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18) continued to regard the church as the church in a certain locality. Toward the end of the book of Revelation, the Lord told the apostle John, "I Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches" (22:16). What the angel testified to John, he received, wrote in a scroll, and sent to seven churches, seven cities. This was, and still is, Christ's speaking and teaching concerning the church as a local expression of "My church," the universal church, the Body of Christ.

### Christ the Son of Man in the Midst of the Golden Lampstands

The glorified Christ on the throne executing divine authority is also the Son of Man in the midst of the golden lampstands, the seven churches. When the apostle John turned to see who was speaking to him, he "saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle" (1:12-13). Christ as the Son of



*The believers who  
not only love  
the Lord Jesus  
but also love  
His appearing  
and are awaiting  
His return  
know and are  
inwardly assured  
that a day is  
coming when  
Christ as the  
King of kings and  
Lord of lords will  
appear to those  
living on earth.*



*Christ takes care  
of the churches  
in His humanity  
as the Son  
of Man to  
cherish them.  
The Lord's  
presence provides  
an atmosphere  
of tenderness and  
warmth to cherish  
the churches,  
giving rest,  
comfort, healing,  
cleansing, and  
encouragement.*

Man is the High Priest cherishing the churches in His humanity and nourishing them in His divinity. The golden girdle signifies Christ's divinity as His divine energy, and the breasts signify that this golden energy is exercised and motivated by and with His love to nourish the churches. Christ takes care of the churches in His humanity as the Son of Man to cherish them. The Lord's presence provides an atmosphere of tenderness and warmth to cherish the churches, giving rest, comfort, healing, cleansing, and encouragement. Christ also takes care of the churches in His divinity with His divine love, signified by the golden girdle on His breasts.

In verses 14 through 16 John describes aspects of the glorified Son of Man. The heavenly ancientness of the Lord is depicted by His head and hair being as white as white wool, as snow (v. 14; Dan. 7:9; Job 15:10; cf. S. S. 5:11). The Lord's seven eyes were like a flame of fire for watching, observing, searching, and judging by enlightening and infusing (Rev. 1:14; 5:6; Dan. 10:6). The Lord's eyes being like a flame of fire were mainly for judgment (7:9-10; Rev. 2:18; 19:11-12). His feet were like shining bronze, as having been fired in a furnace, signifying that His perfect and bright walk qualifies Him to exercise divine judgment (1:15; Ezek. 1:7; Dan. 10:6). The Lord's voice is like the sound of many waters (Rev. 1:15; cf. 14:2), which is a tumultuous sound, the sound of the voice of the Almighty God (Ezek. 1:24; 43:2) in its seriousness and solemnity (cf. Rev. 10:3). Out of Christ's mouth proceeds a sharp two-edged sword, which is His discerning, judging, and slaying word for dealing with negative persons and things (1:16; Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17). Christ's face shone as the sun shines in its power (Rev. 1:16) for judging enlightenment to bring in the kingdom (10:1; Dan. 10:6; Matt. 17:2; cf. Mal. 4:2; Judg. 5:31; Matt. 13:43).

**W**hen John saw the glorified Son of Man, he fell at His feet as dead (Rev. 1:17). Immediately, the Lord Jesus placed His right hand on John and said, "Do not fear; I am the First and the Last and the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (vv. 17-18). Christ nullified death on the cross, destroying the devil, the one who had the power of death, and He overcame Hades in His resurrection. Although death tried to hold Him, it was impossible for Christ, who is resurrection and life, to be held by it (Acts 2:24). The resurrected Christ has the keys, the authority, of death and Hades. In the church that Christ is building, death and Hades have no power, because the keys of death and Hades are in His hand and under His control.

After John saw seven golden lampstands and the Son of Man in the midst of the lampstands, the Lord said to him, "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (Rev. 1:12-13, 20). Genuine local churches, as portrayed in the New Testament, are golden lampstands. This is the Lord's view of the church, and it is crucial that this becomes the view of believers who desire to practice the church life according to the apostles' teaching and thus coordinate with Christ in building the church that He will declare is "My church."

According to the revelation recorded in the New Testament, the church has a sevenfold status: the assembly, the house of God, the kingdom of God, the Body of Christ, the new man, the counterpart of Christ, and the golden lampstands. The lampstands in Revelation 1 signify the local churches addressed, dealt with, and cared for by the Son of Man in chapters 2 and 3, and what He said and did is applicable to all genuine local churches today. Believers who earnestly desire to experience and participate in the great mystery of Christ and the church need to know the nature of the church as a golden lampstand and be constituted with the all-inclusive Christ to become parts of such a lampstand.

In figure, the golden lampstand signifies the church as the embodiment and expression of the Triune God (1:11-12). The more we experience the detailed aspects of the Triune

God that are depicted in the lampstand, the more we will become in reality the golden lampstand as the embodiment and expression of the Triune God (vv. 12, 20). The lampstand is of pure gold, signifying the divine, eternal, incorruptible nature of God the Father. The substance, the element, of the lampstand signifies the divine nature; the golden lampstand exists in the nature of God the Father. We need to experience the golden element of the lampstand, receiving God as the golden element into the depths of our being (2 Pet. 1:4). How much of the divine nature has been wrought into us determines to what extent we are the church in actuality (Rev. 1:20). The solid form, the shape, of the lampstand signifies God the Son as the embodiment of God the Father (Exo. 25:31). Christ has been regenerated in our being, He is being formed in us, and we are being transformed into His being (John 1:12-13; Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 3:18). Through God's organic salvation we are being saved from self-likeness (the expression of the self) and are being conformed to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 5:10; 8:29). The seven lamps signify God the Spirit as the seven Spirits (Rev. 4:5; 5:6). Within us, the children of God, we have two lamps—the first, the sevenfold intensified Spirit of God, is within the second, our regenerated spirit—shining and enlightening our inward parts (4:5; Prov. 20:27; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2:11-12). If we would be transformed, we need to open to the Lord and allow the two lamps to search all the chambers of our soul, enlightening our inward parts to supply them with life (Prov. 20:27; Luke 11:36). In this way the church is the Triune God mingled with His redeemed people to become the lampstand to express God (Rev. 1:20).

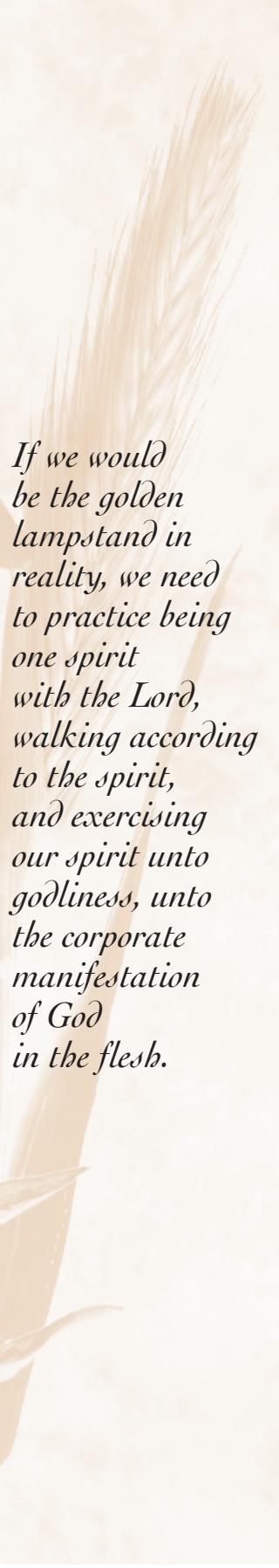
**F**or the church as a golden lampstand to exist as one corporate entity, all the gold—the nature of God experienced by His children—must be brought together as one unit, one entity; this is a matter of building (Exo. 25:31, 36; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:16). God does not desire hundreds of individual units of gold; He wants all the gold put together and beaten to form a lampstand. If we have seen the building, we will not be individualistic; rather, we will realize that whatever we gain of the divine element is for the building and that our gold must be put together with the gold of others and built up as one entity. If we would be the golden lampstand in reality, we need to practice being one spirit with the Lord, walking according to the spirit, and exercising our spirit unto godliness, unto the corporate manifestation of God in the flesh (1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:4; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:23; 1 Tim. 4:7; 3:15-16).

As the multiplied embodiment and expression of the processed Triune God, the golden lampstands are identical (Rev. 1:12, 20). The sign of the golden lampstands reveals that the churches should be one in essence, appearance, and expression. Jesus has one testimony, the embodiment and expression of the Triune God; thus, all the local churches in all the cities of all the nations should be exactly the same (2:1; Col. 3:10-11; John 17:22; Rev. 21:10-11). Eventually, the churches as golden lampstands will be consummated in the New Jerusalem, the totality of all the lampstands (1:20; 21:18, 23).

The book of Revelation begins with the local lampstands and ends with the one universal lampstand (1:20; 21:18, 23). The New Jerusalem, a mountain of gold, is the universal golden lampstand holding the Lamb as the lamp shining out God as the light (vv. 18, 23; 22:1, 5). The New Jerusalem, the aggregate of today's lampstands, will be the universal golden lampstand to shine forth God's glory in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—the ultimate consummation of the great mystery—Christ and the church (21:24).

### ***The Son of Man Speaking to the Churches***

Although the seven churches in Asia were identical in nature, having the same intrinsic significance—that of being a golden lampstand—there were significant differences in their spiritual condition and various local situations. For this reason, in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, the Son of Man spoke to each church in a particular way, revealing aspects of Himself, exposing degradation, and calling for overcomers. Among the seven churches,



*The Son of Man  
warned those  
who held to the  
teaching of the  
Nicolaitans—  
those who  
advocated and  
practiced the  
clergy-laity  
system—that  
He would judge  
them and the  
degraded church  
with the sword,  
the slaying word,  
of His mouth.*

five were degraded and were judged by the Lord, one was passing through suffering and tribulation, and one was the church that was pleasing to Him.

*The church in Ephesus.* The Lord spoke as “He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands” (2:1). To the church in Ephesus he said, “I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works” (vv. 4-5). Because there was a need for overcomers, victorious believers, in Ephesus (and in all the churches), the Lord Jesus concluded by saying, “To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God” (v. 7).

*The church in Smyrna.* To a church under persecution the Son of Man said, “These things says the First and the Last, who became dead and lived again” (v. 8). “In suffering, the church must know that the Lord is the First and the Last, the ever-existing, unchanging One. Whatever the persecuting environment may be, the Lord remains the same...All things are within the limits of His control” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 8, note 2). Even more, a suffering church needs to know and experience Christ as the living, resurrected One, He who has conquered death and has the keys of death and Hades. To this church under intense persecution the Lord said, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (v. 10), and then He declared, “He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death” (v. 11).

*The church in Pergamos.* “These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword” (v. 12). The Lord was against those who held “the teaching of Balaam” and “the teaching of the Nicolaitans” (vv. 14-15). Speaking with authority and power, the Lord said, “Repent therefore; but if not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war with them with the sword of My mouth” (v. 16). The Son of Man warned those who held to the teaching of the Nicolaitans—those who advocated and practiced the clergy-laity system—that He would judge them and the degraded church with the sword, the slaying word, of His mouth. To the overcomers in Pergamos the Lord would give the hidden manna and a white stone with a new name written on it (v. 17).

*The church in Thyatira.* “These things says the Son of God, He who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like shining bronze” (v. 18). He opposed those in that church who tolerated “the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself a prophetess,” and those who held to “the deep things of Satan” (vv. 20, 24). The Lord gave them time to repent, but they were not willing to repent. To the pure and faithful believers in Thyatira who overcame and kept His works until the end, the Lord made this wonderful promise: “To him I will give authority over the nations; and he will shepherd them with an iron rod,...and to him I will give the morning star” (vv. 26-28).

*The church in Sardis.* “These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars” (3:1). Because of the spiritual deadness in Sardis, there was the need for the sevenfold intensified Spirit of God. “I know your works,” the Lord said, “that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead” (v. 1). Certain things in that locality “were about to die,” for He found that none of their works were completed before God (v. 2). “Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and keep it and repent” (v. 3). To the believers in Sardis who overcame the spiritual deadness that was rampant there, the Son of Man said, “He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and...I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (v. 5).

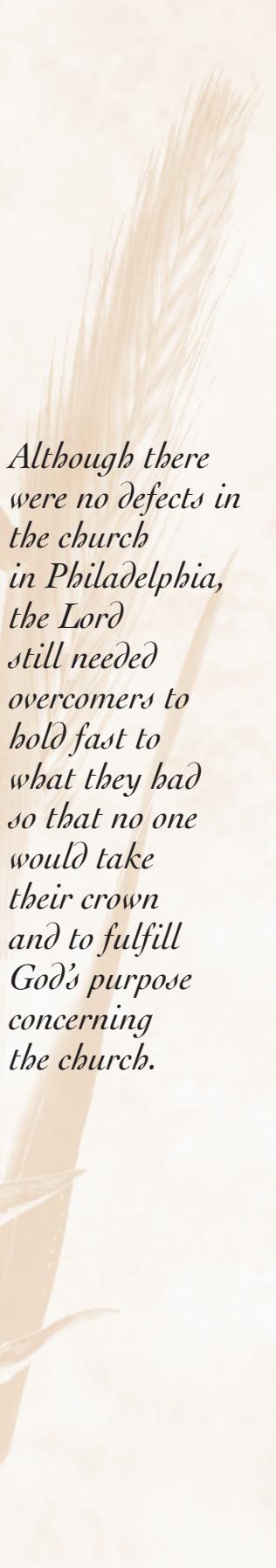
*The church in Laodicea.* “These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (v. 14). Knowing the spiritual condition of the church in Laodicea, the Lord said, “You are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth” (vv. 15-16). Many of the believers in Laodicea thought that they had

need of nothing; actually, they were “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (v. 17). Expressing His care even for such a lukewarm, degraded church, the Lord went on to say, “As many as I love I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent” (v. 19). Once again, the Lord indicated the need for overcomers in all the churches. “He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne” (v. 21).

*The church in Philadelphia.* “These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens” (v. 7). Regarding this church, which He loved in a special way because it was pleasing to Him, the Lord Jesus had only positive things to say. “You have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name” (v. 8). He said that “those of the synagogue of Satan...I will cause...to come and fall prostrate before your feet and to know that I have loved you” (v. 9). Although there were no defects in the church in Philadelphia, the Lord still needed overcomers to hold fast to what they had so that no one would take their crown (v. 11) and to fulfill God’s purpose concerning the church. “He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God,...and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name” (v. 12).

The church in Philadelphia, as depicted by the Lord, is a perfect example of Christ and the church experienced and lived out in a practical way. To such a church Christ was the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David; to Christ, the Lord and the Head of the church, His Body was actually “the church”—a local church that was the means for the Lord to build up His universal church. Among the seven churches, only to the church in Philadelphia did the Lord say, “I come quickly” (v. 11); His saying this, because the church loved Him and was faithful in keeping His word and honoring His name, brought this local church into a realization and sensation of His coming. The Lord also said, “Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth” (v. 10). It is undeniable that the Lord was assuring the overcomers in the church in Philadelphia that prior to the beginning of the great tribulation He would come to them secretly and carry them through rapture.

The Lord’s word to the church in Philadelphia is not only historical—a record of what the Lord spoke hundreds of years ago. His word is also prophetic—a word concerning our situation as Christians waiting for the consummation of the age and the coming of the Bridegroom for His bride. Before our Lord comes for His counterpart, He must be able to declare to the whole universe, especially to Satan and the evil powers in the heavens, that on earth He has built “My church” through “the church”; that is, He has built the universal church, the organic, mystical Body of Christ, through local churches. This entails a recovery of the profound truth concerning the great mystery and the recovery of genuine churches, which the Lord can designate as “the church.” The Lord needs to have throughout the earth many churches that are today’s church in Philadelphia; these churches are composed of believers who are governed by the vision in Matthew and Revelation of the mystery of Christ and the church—believers who have given themselves to the Lord for the building of His church, who experience and enjoy the all-inclusive Christ who is making His home in their hearts (Eph. 3:17), and who earnestly love the Lord and His appearing. When the Lord has recovered such a church, “the church,” in a practical way, He will be able to say to the today’s church in Philadelphia, “I come quickly.” **AC**



*Although there  
were no defects in  
the church  
in Philadelphia,  
the Lord  
still needed  
overcomers to  
hold fast to  
what they had  
so that no one  
would take  
their crown  
and to fulfill  
God’s purpose  
concerning  
the church.*

## Works Cited

Hymns. Living Stream Ministry, 1980.

- 
- Lee, Witness. *The Conclusion of the New Testament*. Living Stream Ministry, 1985-2010. 26 vols.  
———. "Death Cannot Hold the Resurrection Life." *Hymns*, Living Stream Ministry, 1980, p. 587.  
———. Footnotes. *Recovery Version of the Bible*, Living Stream Ministry. 2003.  
Nee, Watchman. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*. Vol. 36, Living Stream Ministry, 1993.

### The Burning Fire and the Flowing Water

**R**evelation is the last book in the Bible and the last book to the church...This book is from the seven Spirits to the local churches. There is no doctrine in this book. It is a long book with twenty-two chapters, yet there is no doctrine. What then is this book about? It is a book about the local churches: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia" (1:4a).

In this book for the local churches, the Spirit of God is the seven Spirits before the throne. "Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne" (v. 4b). Here the sevenfold intensified Spirit is now in the second place of the Triune God. He was in the third place (Matt. 28:19), but now in this book He is in the second place, because the age has been changed. The Lord has turned the age from doctrine to the Spirit...

The seven Spirits are before the throne. Revelation speaks of the throne a number of times. The first occurrence is in 1:4...Then 4:5 says, "Out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." The last is in 22:1: "He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." It is so clear that there are two things that come from the throne of God: one is the burning fire, and the other is the flowing water. There is no doctrine in this book, but there are the fire and the water. The fire is the seven Spirits of God. The seven Spirits of God are the seven lamps of burning fire. What then is the water? To see this we must turn to the Gospel of the same writer. In John's Gospel we are told that the water is also the Spirit. "He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit" (7:38-39). The same Spirit is both the burning fire and the flowing water...When we come to this book, we only meet the throne with the fire and the water. The fire is to burn us, and the water is to supply us. On one hand, we need to be burned, and on the other, we need to be supplied and watered.

...The local churches should not be full of doctrines, but full of burning. Doctrines only stir up different opinions. If a local church is a genuine, proper, normal, and living one, there will be more burning than doctrines. When we turn and touch the throne of God, we are burned...

The more we touch the local church, the more we will be burned. All the old doctrines, the old backgrounds, and every kind of oldness will be burned away. In the book of Revelation, the fire comes before the water, because at that time the church was degraded. Many negative things had come in, and all of these had to be burned away. Teachings can never do this. Only the burning of the seven Spirits can accomplish it. The Spirit is the sevenfold Spirit in the local churches to do a burning work. The more we touch the throne, the more we will be burned...To be burned simply means to be rid of all the old things. If we will call, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" we will sense that we are rid of something. After a few days we will look back and be disgusted with all the old things we used to admire. That is the burning.

From *The Seven Spirits for the Local Churches* by Witness Lee, pp. 45-47