

VITAL FACTORS FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH LIFE, Week 1

The Factor of Cooperating with the Lord to Bring In a New Revival That Will End This Age

Scripture Reading: Hab. 3:2; Acts 26:19, 22; Matt. 14:19, 22-23; Phil. 1:19-22, 25; John 21:15-17

- Habakkuk 3:2 O Jehovah, I have heard the report concerning You and am afraid. / O Jehovah, **revive Your work** / In the midst of the years; / In the midst of the years make it known; / In wrath remember compassion.
- Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was **not disobedient to the heavenly vision**,
- Acts 26:22 Having therefore obtained the help which is from God, I have stood unto this day, testifying both to small and great, **saying nothing apart from the things which both the prophets and Moses have said would take place**,
- Matthew 14:19 And after commanding the crowds to recline on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds.
- Matthew 14:22 And immediately He compelled the disciples to step into the boat and to go before Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away.
- Matthew 14:23 And after He sent the crowds away, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. And when night fell, He was there alone.
- Philippians 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your **petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ**,
- Philippians 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, **even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death**.
- Philippians 1:21 For to me, **to live is Christ and to die is gain**.
- Philippians 1:22 But if I am to live in the flesh, if this to me is fruit for my work, then I do not know what I will choose.
- Philippians 1:25 And being confident of this, I know that **I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith**,
- John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, **Feed My lambs**.
- John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, **Shepherd My sheep**.
- John 21:17 He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, **Feed My sheep**.

The economy of God consists of ten main items. The first three items are the **incarnation of the Triune God**, the **living of the Triune God in humanity on earth**, and the **all-inclusive death of Christ** which He died on the cross to solve all the problems and to terminate all the negative things in the universe. The fourth item is the **life-dispensing resurrection of Christ**, in which Christ in His humanity was begotten to be the firstborn Son of God to bring in many more sons after Him, in which the Triune God in humanity became the life-giving Spirit for the divine dispensing, and in which all the believers in Christ were regenerated to be sons of God and members of Christ. The fifth item is the **ascension of Christ with the pouring out of the consummated Spirit to produce the church**. The remaining five items are the church of God, the Body of Christ, the new man, the organism of the processed and consummated Triune God, and the New Jerusalem. All the other items unveiled in the New Testament are related to these ten main items either directly or indirectly.

Whenever Christians stress anything other than these ten items that constitute God's economy, many different schools of **opinion** are brought in, resulting in **divisions** among the believers. For example, some emphasize baptism by immersion, a New Testament teaching but not one of the ten basic items in God's economy. This emphasis has issued not only in a denomination devoted to baptism by immersion but also in disputes about the kind of water that should be used, about whether one should be baptized backward, forward, or downward, and about whether baptism should be in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit or simply in the name of Jesus. Other believers argue about matters such as presbytery (the management of the church by the elders) and about what kind of musical instruments, if any, may be used in the church meetings. Years ago I was told that a certain Brethren assembly was divided over the issue of whether a piano or an organ should be used in their meetings. This kind of situation is widespread among today's Christians. Hardly anyone holds to the eternal economy of God for the divine dispensing. (*Life-Study of Job, Chapter 12*)

Day 1

Habakkuk 3:2 O Jehovah, I have heard the report concerning You and am afraid. / O Jehovah, revive Your work / In the midst of the years; / In the midst of the years make it known; / In wrath remember compassion.

Hosea 6:2 He will enliven us after two days; / On the third day He will raise us up, / And we will live in His presence.

Psalms 119:25 My soul clings to the dust; / Enliven me according to Your word.

- I. Among God's elect there has always been an **aspiration to be revived**—Hab. 3:2; Hosea 6:2; Rom. 8:20-22; Psa. 119:25, 50, 107, 154; John 6:57, 63; 2 Cor. 3:3, 6.
- II. We can enter into a new revival by arriving at the highest peak of the divine revelation given to us by God—the revelation of the **eternal economy of God** (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 1 Cor. 9:17; Acts 26:19, 22); this is the **great answer to the great question** concerning God's purpose in His creation of man and in His dealing with His chosen people (Gen. 1:26; Job 10:13; cf. Eph. 3:9):
- A. The mystery hidden in God's heart is **God's eternal economy** (1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4), which is God's eternal intention with His heart's desire to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity as the Father in the Son by the Spirit into His chosen people to be their life and nature that they may be the same as He is as His duplication (Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2) to become an organism, the Body of Christ as the new man (Eph. 2:15-16), for God's fullness, God's expression (1:22-23; 3:19), which will consummate in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2—22:5).
 - B. **God becoming man that man might become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead** for the producing and building up of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem is the essence of the entire Bible, the “diamond” in the “box” of the Bible, the eternal economy of God—Gen. 1:26; John 12:24; Rom. 8:29:
 1. God became man through incarnation by participating in man's humanity; man becomes God in life and nature but not in the Godhead **through transformation by participating in God's divinity**—John 1:14; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:4; 2 Pet. 1:4; Phil. 2:5; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:10; Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:19; 1 John 3:2; John 1:12-13.
 2. This **divine-human romance** is the subject of the entire Bible, the content of God's economy, and the secret of the entire universe—S. S. 1:1; 6:13; cf. Hab. 1:1; 2:4; Rom. 1:17:
 - a. Christ is divine and human, and His transformed lover is human and divine; they are the **same in life and nature**, perfectly matching each other.
 - b. The Triune God consummated to be the Husband and the tripartite man transformed to be the bride are to be one couple, a **corporate, great God-man**—Rev. 21:2, 9; 22:17a.

Day 2

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

1 Corinthians 15:45 So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul”; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Revelation 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

- C. The central revelation of God and of the Lord's recovery is **God becoming the flesh** (John 1:1, 14), the flesh **becoming the life-giving Spirit** (1 Cor. 15:45b), and the life-giving Spirit becoming the sevenfold intensified Spirit (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6) to **build up the church** (Matt. 16:18) that becomes the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:15-16) and that **consummates the New Jerusalem** (Rev. 21:2, 9; 22:17a; cf. Gen. 2:22; John 19:34).
- D. God and man will become **one entity**, and that one entity is the mingling of divinity with humanity, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the conclusion of the entire Bible—Rev. 21:3, 22, 2, 9; cf. Lev. 2:4-5; Psa. 92:10.
- E. “I hope that the saints in all the churches throughout the earth, especially the co-workers and the elders, will see this revelation and then rise up to pray that God would give us a new revival—a revival which has never been recorded in history”—Life-study of 1 and 2 Chronicles, p. 15.

III. If we practice living the life of a God-man, which is the reality of the Body of Christ, spontaneously a **corporate model** will be built up, a **model living in the economy of God**; this model will be the greatest revival in the history of the church to bring the Lord back—Psa. 48:2 and footnote 1; Rev. 3:12, 21:

Day 3

1 Peter 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you a model so that you may follow in His steps;

1 Corinthians 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

- A. God needs a **corporate people** to be raised up by His grace through the high peak of the divine revelation to live a life according to this revelation; a revival is the practice, the practicality, of the vision we have seen.
- B. The followers of Christ (Matt. 5:1; 28:19) were **discipled through Christ's human living** on the earth, as the **model of a God-man**—living God by denying Himself in humanity (John 5:19, 30), revolutionizing their concept concerning man (Phil. 3:10; 1:21a).
- C. Our life should be a copy, a reproduction, of the **model of the life of Christ**, the first God-man—1 Pet. 2:21; Matt. 11:28-29; Eph. 4:20-21; John 17:4; 5:17; Phil. 1:19-22, 25.
- D. The Spirit of life and reality who was breathed into the disciples would guide them into all the reality of what they had observed of the Lord when they were with Him for three and a half years—John 16:13; 20:22:

Day 4

Matthew 3:15-16 But Jesus answered and said to him, Permit it for now, for it is fitting for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness. Then he permitted Him. And having been baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him.

Matthew 11:29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

1. At the commencement of the first God-man's ministry, He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, recognizing that **according to His flesh** (His humanity—1:14; Rom. 1:3; 8:3), **He was good for nothing but death and burial**—Matt. 3:15-17.
 2. He trained His disciples to **learn from Him** (11:29) in the miracle of feeding five thousand people with five loaves and two fish; His "looking up to heaven" to bless the five loaves and two fish (14:19) indicates His realizing that the source of blessing was not Him, the sent One, but the **Father**, the **sending One** (John 10:30; 5:19, 30; 7:6, 8, 18).
 3. The Lord did not remain in the issue of the miracle with the crowds but went away from them **to be with the Father privately on the mountain in prayer**—Matt. 14:22-23; Luke 6:12.
 4. The Lord **lived a life of contacting God** (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:28; Heb. 7:25), living in the presence of God without ceasing (Acts 10:38c; John 8:29; 16:32), and of contacting people, ministering God into them to bring them into the jubilee of God's New Testament economy (Luke 4:18-19; Heb. 8:2; cf. Gen. 14:18; Acts 6:4).
 5. He was a man in whom Satan, the ruler of the world, had nothing (no ground, no chance, no hope, no possibility in anything)—John 14:30b, cf. v. 20; 2 Cor. 12:2a; Col. 1:27; 2 Tim. 4:22; John 3:6b; 4:23-24; 1 John 5:4, 18.
- E. The only way to live the life of a God-man according to the Lord's model is to **set our entire being on the mingled spirit**, walking, living, and having our being according to the mingled spirit—Rom. 8:2, 4, 10, 6, 11, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 10:12; Gal. 5:25; Eph. 6:17-18; 1 Thes. 5:16-20; 1 Tim. 4:6-7; 2 Tim. 1:6-7.
 - F. "We should all declare that **we want to live the life of a God-man**. Eventually, the God-men will be the victors, the overcomers, the Zion within Jerusalem. This will bring in a new revival which has never been seen in history, and this will end this age"—Life-study of 1 and 2 Chronicles, p. 28.

To carry out God's economy according to the high peak of God's revelation, we need all these practices. We are charged to **walk**, to **live**, and to **have our being in and according to the mingled spirit** (Rom. 8:4). How can we do this? We can do this only by these few steps: **calling** on the name of the Lord, **pray-reading** His word as the Spirit, **praying** unceasingly, **not quenching the Spirit**, and **not despising or ignoring prophesying**. If you cut yourself off from these things, you are finished; you can never live the life of a God-man. A God-man's life is a life of calling on the Lord, pray-reading His word as the Spirit, praying unceasingly, not quenching but fanning the Spirit into flame, and not despising but respecting prophesying. If you miss any part of these few things, you miss a lot. (*Living a Life according to the High Peak of God's Revelation, chapter 4*)

Day 5

John 10:10-11 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly. I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

IV. We can enter into a new revival by participating in Christ's heavenly ministry to **feed His lambs** and **shepherd His sheep** in order to take care of God's flock, which is the church that issues in the Body of Christ; this is to incorporate the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry—John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:1-4; Heb. 13:20-21; Rev. 1:12-13:

- A. We need to shepherd people according to the **pattern of the Lord Jesus** in His ministry for carrying out God's eternal economy—Matt. 9:36; John 10:11; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4:
1. The content of God's entire New Testament economy in His complete salvation is **Christ as the Son of Man cherishing us** by redeeming us from sin, accomplishing His judicial redemption through His death (1 Tim. 1:15; Eph. 1:7), and **Christ as the Son of God nourishing us** to impart the divine life into us abundantly, carrying out His organic salvation in His resurrection (John 10:10; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Eph. 5:29).
 2. Our not having the Father's loving and forgiving heart and the Savior's shepherding and seeking spirit are the reason for our **barrenness**—Luke 15:1-24.
 3. We need to **cherish people** (to make them happy and to make them feel pleasant and comfortable) in the humanity of Jesus (Matt. 9:10; Luke 7:34); we need to **nourish** people (to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His ministry of three stages) in the divinity of Christ—Matt. 24:45-47.
 4. Christ had to pass through Samaria, purposely detouring to Sychar to gain one immoral woman, **cherishing** her by asking her to give Him something to drink in order to **nourish** her with the flowing Triune God as the river of water of life—John 4:3-14; Rev. 22:1.
 5. As the One without sin, He did not condemn the adulterous woman but **cherished her** for the forgiveness of her sins judicially and for the setting free from her sins organically (John 8:1-11, 32, 36); it is also significant that the first one saved by Christ through His crucifixion was a robber sentenced to death (Luke 23:42-43).
 6. The Lord went to Jericho just to visit and gain one person, a chief tax collector, and His preaching was a shepherding (19:1-10); He also **cherished** the parents by laying His hands on their children (Matt. 19:13-15).

Day 6

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

2 Corinthians 12:15 But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?

Philippians 2:17 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice, and I rejoice together with you all.

- B. We need to shepherd people according to the pattern of the apostle Paul, who **shepherded the saints as a nursing mother and an exhorting father** in order to take care of God's flock—1 Thes. 2:7-8, 11-12; 1 Tim. 1:16; Acts 20:28:
1. Paul shepherded the saints in Ephesus by teaching them "publicly and from house to house" (v. 20) and by **admonishing each one of the saints** with tears for three years (vv. 31, 19), declaring to them all the counsel of God (v. 27).
 2. Paul had an **intimate concern for the believers** (2 Cor. 7:2-7; Philem. 7, 12), and he came down to the weak ones' level so that he could gain them (2 Cor. 11:28-29; 1 Cor. 9:22; cf. Matt. 12:20).

3. He was **willing to spend what he had**, referring to his **possessions**, and to **spend what he was**, referring to his **being**, for the sake of the saints (2 Cor. 12:15); he was a drink offering, one with Christ as the wine producer, sacrificing himself for others' enjoyment of Christ (Phil. 2:17; Judg. 9:13; Eph. 3:2).
 4. Paul **walked by the Spirit** to honor God so that he could minister the Spirit to honor man—2 Cor. 3:3, 6, 8; Gal. 5:16, 25; Judg. 9:9.
 5. Paul indicated in his teaching that the church is a **home to raise up people**, a **hospital to heal and recover them**, and a **school to teach and edify them**—Eph. 2:19; 1 Thes. 5:14; 1 Cor. 14:31.
 6. He revealed that **love** is the most excellent way for us to be anything and to do anything for the building up of the Body of Christ—8:1; 12:31; 13:4-8a; Eph. 1:4; 3:17; 4:2, 15-16; 5:2; 6:24; Rev. 2:4-5; Col. 1:18b; 1 Thes. 1:3.
- C. "I hope that there will be a **genuine revival among us by our receiving this burden of shepherding**. If all the churches receive this teaching to participate in Christ's wonderful shepherding, there will be a big revival in the recovery"—The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994–1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," p. 92.

The Bible is composed of both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the **revelation concerning God's economy**—with God, Christ, and the all-inclusive, compound, consummated Spirit—is vague without the explanation and reality of the New Testament.... The word economy is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but it is mentioned in the New Testament by the apostle Paul (Eph. 1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4—the same Greek word is used in 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25). God's New Testament economy covers only one person—the **all-inclusive Christ**. He has two statuses. One is the Son of God, and the other is the Son of Man. The New Testament unveils to us the very God who is the Divine Trinity.

In resurrection He was transfigured to become the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of the bountiful supply. This Spirit is for **nourishing**. As the all-inclusive Spirit from Acts through the Epistles, Christ **nourishes** us. This nourishing produces the church, builds up the Body of Christ, and will consummate the New Jerusalem. Because of the church's degradation, Christ's nourishing becomes sevenfold intensified in the book of Revelation to bring forth the eternal goal of God, the New Jerusalem. The totality of His nourishing will be this great universal city, which is the enlargement and expression of God. This city is the consummation of the bountiful supply of Christ as the life-giving, sevenfold intensified Spirit for nourishing us. The New Testament is composed of just two sections—**cherishing and nourishing**. With this revelation the entire New Testament has become a new book to me. (*The Vital Groups, Chapter 9*)