

THE CRUCIAL POINTS OF THE MAJOR ITEMS OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY TODAY

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Nine

The Lord's Recovery versus the Present Evil Age and the Eschatology of the Church

RK Hymns: 1226, 972

Scripture Reading: Gal. 1:4; 5:4; 6:13-15; Rev. 11:15; 19:7-9; 21:2, 10-11

- Gal 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father,
- Gal 5:4 You have been brought to nought, separated from Christ, you who are being justified by law; you have fallen from grace.
- Gal 6:13 For neither do they that become circumcised keep the law themselves, but they desire you to be circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.
- Gal 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.
- Gal 6:15 For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is what matters.
- Rev 11:15 And the seventh angel trumpeted; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.
- Rev 19:7 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.
- Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousneses of the saints.
- Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
- Rev 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
- Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
- Rev 21:11 Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

I. The Lord's recovery is versus the present evil age—the evil age of religion— Gal. 1:4:

- Gal 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father,
- A. Galatians 1:4 says that the Lord Jesus Christ “gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father”:
1. An age refers to a section, an aspect, the present or modern appearance, of the world as the satanic system, which is used by Satan to usurp and occupy God's people in order to keep them away from God and His purpose—Eph. 2:2; 1 John 2:15-16.

Eph 2:2 In which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience;

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him;

1 John 2:16 Because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world.
 2. According to the context of Galatians, the present evil age in 1:4 refers to the religious world, the religious course of the world, the Jewish religion; this is confirmed by

6:14-15, which speaks of the religious world which to the apostle Paul was crucified.
 Gal 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father,
 Gal 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.
 Gal 6:15 For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is what matters.

3. The purpose of Christ's giving Himself for our sins was to rescue us, to pluck us, to extricate us, out of the present evil age—1:4.

Gal 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father,

4. Christ's death on the cross to deliver us from the present evil age was according to the will of God, which concerns Christ and the church—Col. 1:9.

Col 1:9 Therefore we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease praying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

B. Religion is something formed by the human mind under Satan's instigation and inspiration in order to oppose God's economy—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 1:10; 3:9:

1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

Eph 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph 3:9 And 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,

1. Religion is something for God and for the benefit of people, yet it is without Christ and apart from the Spirit of Christ—Gal. 5:4-5; 3:1, 5, 14, 24.

Gal 5:4 You have been brought to nought, separated from Christ, you who are being justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Gal 5:5 For we by the Spirit out of faith eagerly await the hope of righteousness.

Gal 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly portrayed crucified?

Gal 3:5 He therefore who bountifully supplies to you the Spirit and does works of power among you, does He do it out of the works of law or out of the hearing of faith?

Gal 3:14 In order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Gal 3:24 So then the law has become our child-conductor unto Christ that we might be justified out of faith.

2. To be religious is to worship God and serve God without Christ or the Spirit; whenever we become religious, we become ensnared in the present evil age.

3. Satan formed the religious world to keep us away from God, the will of God, and God's eternal purpose—1:4; 5:4:

Gal 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father,

Gal 5:4 You have been brought to nought, separated from Christ, you who are being justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

a. Satan utilizes religion to keep people from Christ and the church as God's will.

b. As long as Satan can keep us away from Christ and His Body as the will of God, he is satisfied—Col. 1:9; 4:12; 1:18; 2:19:

Col 1:9 Therefore we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease praying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
- 1) The religious age is evil because it keeps people from Christ and the church—Eph. 5:32.
Eph 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.
 - 2) Nothing is more evil in the sight of God than that which keeps us from Christ—Gal. 1:4; 5:4.
Gal 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father,
Gal 5:4 You have been brought to nought, separated from Christ, you who are being justified by law; you have fallen from grace.
 - 3) The religious snare deprives us of all the benefits of the indwelling Christ—1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19.
Gal 1:15 But when it pleased God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace,
Gal 1:16 To reveal His Son in me that I might announce Him as the gospel among the Gentiles, immediately I did not confer with flesh and blood,
Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,
 4. The Lord has no way to fulfill His purpose in religion, including Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism.
 5. Between us and religion is the cross; religion as a world has been crucified to us, and we have been crucified to religion—6:13-14.
Gal 6:13 For neither do they that become circumcised keep the law themselves, but they desire you to be circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.
Gal 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.
- C. For Paul, the present evil age was Judaism; for us today, the present evil age is deformed and degraded Christianity—1:4; Matt. 13:31-33, 44-46:
Gal 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father,
Matt 13:31 Another parable He set before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field,
Matt 13:32 And which is smaller than all the seeds; but when it has grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches.
Matt 13:33 Another parable He spoke to them: The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened.
Matt 13:44 The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid, and in his joy goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.
Matt 13:45 Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a merchant seeking fine pearls;
Matt 13:46 And finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
1. We need to realize how much we need to be delivered from the influence of religion in the present evil age.
 2. The church is the living Body of Christ, but what surrounds us today is a religion—deformed and degraded Christianity—full of traditions, organizations, performances, and falsehoods; the Lord cannot accomplish His purpose in this situation.
 3. We all need to be delivered from religion, from Christianity as the present evil age;

we must come out of Babylon, and Babylon must come out of us—Ezra 1; Rev. 18:4; Zech. 3:1-4.

Ezra 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus the king of Persia, so that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus the king of Persia; and he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it also in writing, saying,

Ezra 1:2 Thus says Cyrus the king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has Jehovah the God of heaven given to me; and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Ezra 1:3 Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him; and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and let him build the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—He is God—who is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:4 And everyone who is left, in whatever place he sojourns, let the men of his place support him with silver and with gold and with goods and with cattle, besides the freewill offering for the house of God, which is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:5 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites rose up, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred up to go up to build the house of Jehovah, which is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:6 And all those around them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with cattle and with precious things, besides all that was offered willingly.

Ezra 1:7 Also King Cyrus brought out the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought out from Jerusalem and had put in the house of his gods;

Ezra 1:8 And Cyrus the king of Persia had them brought out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer and had them enumerated to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

Ezra 1:9 And this was their number: thirty gold dishes, one thousand silver dishes, twenty-nine knives,

Ezra 1:10 Thirty gold bowls, four hundred ten silver bowls of a different kind, and one thousand other vessels.

Ezra 1:11 There were five thousand four hundred vessels of gold and silver in all. Sheshbazzar brought up all of them with those of the captivity who were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Rev 18:4 And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that you do not participate in her sins and that you do not receive her plagues;

Zech 3:1 Then He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of Jehovah and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary.

Zech 3:2 And Jehovah said to Satan, Jehovah rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, Jehovah, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?

Zech 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and was standing before the Angel.

Zech 3:4 And He answered and spoke to those standing before Him, saying, Remove the filthy garments from him. Then He said to him, See, I hereby make your iniquity pass from you and clothe you with stately robes.

4. The history among us in the Lord's recovery has been a history of coming out of Christianity—a history of coming out of and being outside of the present evil age—Gal. 1:4; Heb. 13:12-13.

Gal 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father,

Heb 13:12 Therefore also Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

Heb 13:13 Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

5. Because the Lord's recovery is different from today's religion—deformed and degraded Christianity—it is impossible for there to be reconciliation between the recovery and Christianity—Matt. 13:31-33, 44-46; Rev. 18:4; 19:1-3, 7-9.

Matt 13:31 Another parable He set before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field,

- Matt 13:32 And which is smaller than all the seeds; but when it has grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches.
- Matt 13:33 Another parable He spoke to them: The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened.
- Matt 13:44 The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid, and in his joy goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.
- Matt 13:45 Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a merchant seeking fine pearls;
- Matt 13:46 And finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
- Rev 18:4 And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that you do not participate in her sins and that you do not receive her plagues;
- Rev 19:1 After these things I heard as it were a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power are of our God.
- Rev 19:2 For true and righteous are His judgments; for He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He avenged the blood of His slaves at her hand.
- Rev 19:3 And a second time they said, Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up forever and ever.
- Rev 19:7 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.
- Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
- Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
6. We need to maintain the gap between the Lord's recovery and Christianity; the wider this gap is, the better, because it is a gap between us and the present evil age—Gal. 1:4.
- Gal 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father,

II. There is not only an eschatology of the world, the study of the end of the world, but also an eschatology of the church—Rev. 11:15; 12:10; 21:2, 10-11; 22:16:

- Rev 11:15 And the seventh angel trumpeted; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.
- Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night.
- Rev 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
- Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
- Rev 21:11 Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.
- Rev 22:16 I Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright morning star.
- A. The eschatology of the church involves the Catholic Church, the Protestant church, and the original and recovered church.
- B. The expression *the recovered church* refers to the original church, the church according to the divine revelation in the Scriptures—Matt. 16:18; 18:17; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:11:
- Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- Matt 18:17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you just like the Gentile and the tax collector.
- 1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:

Rev 1:11 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.

1. The apostles established the original church, but even while Peter, John, and Paul were still living, the church fell from its original state to a degraded state, a deformed state, even a transmuted state—1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:18-21.

1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

2 Tim 2:18 Who concerning the truth have misaimed, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and overthrow the faith of some.

2 Tim 2:19 However the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are His, and, Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness.

2 Tim 2:20 But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor.

2 Tim 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.

2. As indicated by 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John—letters of recovery—the recovered church came into being not long after the original church had been established—Acts 14:23.

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church and had prayed with fastings, they committed them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

C. The real condition and end of the Catholic Church are revealed in Revelation 17.

Rev 17:1 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits upon the many waters,

Rev 17:2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and those who dwell on the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

Rev 17:3 And he carried me away in spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Rev 17:4 And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication.

Rev 17:5 And on her forehead there was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And I marveled with great marvel when I saw her.

Rev 17:7 And the angel said to me, Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast who bears her, who has the seven heads and the ten horns.

Rev 17:8 The beast that you saw was and is not and is about to come up out of the abyss and go into perdition. And those who dwell on the earth, those whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life, will marvel when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will be present.

Rev 17:9 Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are the seven mountains where the woman sits

Rev 17:10 And are seven kings: five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain only a short time.

Rev 17:11 And the beast who was and is not, he himself is also the eighth and is out of the seven and goes into perdition.

Rev 17:12 And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom but receive authority as kings for one hour with the beast.

Rev 17:13 These have one mind, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

Rev 17:14 These 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.

Rev 17:15 And he said to me, The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.

- Rev 17:16 And the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked and will eat her flesh and burn her utterly with fire.
- Rev 17:17 For God has put it into their hearts to perform His mind and to perform one mind and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are accomplished.
- Rev 17:18 And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which has a kingdom over the kings of the earth.
- D. In the Protestant church there are many “tares,” false believers—Matt. 13:37-42.
- Matt 13:37 And He answered and said, He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man;
- Matt 13:38 And the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one;
- Matt 13:39 And the enemy who sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is the consummation of the age; and the reapers are angels.
- Matt 13:40 Therefore just as the tares are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the consummation of the age.
- Matt 13:41 The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will collect out of His kingdom all the stumbling blocks and those who practice lawlessness,
- Matt 13:42 And will cast them into the furnace of fire. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.
- E. The original and recovered church is the genuine church—1 Cor. 1:2; 3:9, 16-17:
- 1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:
- 1 Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building.
- 1 Cor 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
- 1 Cor 3:17 If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.
1. In the recovered church we always take the narrow way—Matt. 7:14.

Matt 7:14 Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.
 2. Those who participate in the recovered church learn the special lessons of the Christian life:
 - a. To know Christ—Phil. 3:10.

Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 - b. To know the flesh and the self—Rom. 7:18; Matt. 16:24.

Rom 7:18 For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not.

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
 - c. To learn how to be crucified to live the God-man life—Gal. 2:20.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- F. Protestant church, and the original and recovered church:
1. He will summon all His genuine believers in every kind of church to His judgment seat to be judged and dealt with by Him—2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 4:5.

2 Cor 5:10 For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad.

Rom 14:10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God,

1 Cor 4:5 So then do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then there will be praise to each from God.
 2. In that judgment the Lord will discern whether they have built with gold, silver, and

precious stones or with wood, grass, and stubble—3:12-15.

1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,

1 Cor 3:13 The work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it is revealed by fire, and the fire itself will prove each one's work, of what sort it is.

1 Cor 3:14 If anyone's work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward;

1 Cor 3:15 If anyone's work is consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

3. The overcomers who are transformed into gold, silver, and precious stones will be rewarded to be in the New Jerusalem in the thousand years of the kingdom—Rev. 2:7; 3:12.

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Rev 3:12 He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, 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.

4. Religion will be terminated, but the bride of Christ will be prepared—19:1-4, 7-9.

Rev 19:1 After these things I heard as it were a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power are of our God.

Rev 19:2 For true and righteous are His judgments; for He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He avenged the blood of His slaves at her hand.

Rev 19:3 And a second time they said, Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up forever and ever.

Rev 19:4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who sits upon the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah!

Rev 19:7 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.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

- G. Eventually, all genuine believers will be in the ultimate consummation of God's purpose—the New Jerusalem—21:2, 10-11.

Rev 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

Rev 21:11 Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

EXPERIENCING AND ENJOYING CHRIST AS THE ONE WHO RESCUES US OUT OF THE RELIGIOUS AGE

Giving Himself for Our Sins

That He Might Rescue Us out of the Religious World according to the Will of God

In Galatians 1:4 Paul says that Christ “gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.” This verse reveals Christ as the One who rescues us out of the religious world.

Giving Himself for Our Sins

That He Might Rescue Us out of the Religious World

Although Christ was crucified for our sins, the goal of His crucifixion was to rescue us out of the present evil age. An age is a part of the world as the satanic system. An age refers to a section, an aspect, the present or modern appearance, of the system of Satan, which he uses to usurp and occupy people and keep them away from God and His purpose. The world system of Satan has different ages or sections. We may regard each decade as a distinct age or section of Satan's world system. The present age is the present section of Satan's cosmos, his world system. Whereas sins are devilish, the present age is satanic. As the devil, the enemy of God is involved with sins, and as Satan, he is involved with the evil age. God's enemy is subtle, lurking behind sins and the evil age. Apart from the crucifixion of Christ, we have no way to deal with sins, behind which the devil hides, or the evil age, behind which Satan hides. Christ was crucified for our sins so that He might rescue us from this evil age. This indicates that only Christ can save us from the devil, Satan. Both sins and the evil age have been dealt with by the crucified Christ. He gave Himself for us on the cross according to the will of God. He died for our sins so that we might be delivered from the present evil age. Therefore, if we would be delivered from this evil age, our sins must be dealt with. If we, through the preaching of the gospel, help others to receive the forgiveness of sins, they will begin to realize that they need to be rescued from the present evil age.

Literally, the Greek word translated *rescue* in Galatians 1:4 means "to pluck out of, to draw out of, or to extricate from." According to the context of this book, the present evil age here refers to the religious world, the religious course of the world, the Jewish religion. Paul tells us in verses 13 and 14 how he conducted himself in the present evil age, the religious world under Satan's usurpation: "You have heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism, that I persecuted the church of God excessively and ravaged it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my race, being more abundantly a zealot for the traditions of my fathers." That in this book the present evil age mainly refers to the religious world and not the secular world is also confirmed by 6:14-15, where circumcision is considered a part of the world—the religious world, which to the apostle Paul was crucified. Here the apostle emphasizes that the purpose of Christ's giving Himself for our sins was to rescue us, to pluck us, out of the Jewish religion, the present evil age. This is to release God's chosen people from the custody of the law (3:23), to bring them out of the sheepfold (John 10:1, 3), according to the will of God. Thus, in his opening word Paul indicates what he intended to deal with: he wanted to rescue the churches, which were distracted by Judaism with its law, and bring them back to the grace of the gospel.

At the time of John 10 God's people, His sheep, were in the fold of Judaism. But as Galatians 1 makes clear, Christ came to bring His sheep out of the fold and to form them with the Gentile believers into one flock, the church (John 10:16). Hence, the fold is religion, whereas the flock is the one universal church, the one Body of Christ, consisting of all the believers in Christ. Today in the sight of God the various denominations, sects, and independent groups are folds. Furthermore, a fold is anything formed into a legality. Anything that is first used by God and then becomes a legality is a fold. For example, baptism by immersion is correct, but if we make this a legality, we will form another fold. Today Christ is seeking to rescue His sheep out of the various religious folds and to bring them together as the one flock.

The Lord Jesus came into the fold, opened the door, and led the sheep out of the fold. The Judaizers crucified Him, but through His death on the cross, the Lord gave Himself for our sins in order to rescue us from the religious fold. The principle is the same both with the believers in Paul's time and with us today.

According to the Will of God

Although many Christians know that Christ died for our sins to deliver us from God's condemnation and the lake of fire, few realize that Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us from the religious world. This is a crucial matter because Christ gave Himself for our sins to

rescue us out of the religious world, not according to His choice but according to the will of God. It was not because Christ was rejected by the Jews that He hated Judaism and went to the cross in order to rescue His disciples out of Judaism. Rather, it was according to God's will, that is, His plan, His economy, that Christ gave Himself for our sins to deliver us out of the Jewish religion. In His economy God planned that Christ would rescue His chosen people out of Judaism, the law, traditions, and rituals.

The book of Ephesians reveals that the will of God is to have the church as a living Body for Christ (1:22-23; 3:10-11); it is not to have an organization but an organism. The will of God is not to have the Jewish religion or the religion of Christianity. Rather, it is to have the organic Body of Christ. The will of God is not to have circumcision or uncircumcision. Rather, it is to have a new creation (Gal. 6:15), which is the church as the new man (Col. 3:10).

Furthermore, Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect." According to the context of this chapter, the will of God is the Body life (vv. 4-5). We need to enter into the Body life. As long as we are outside the Body life, we are outside God's will.

In contrast to the will of God, which is to have the Body of Christ, Satan's aim is to systematize people into his world and keep them away from God's will. In Paul's day Satan used Judaism to systematize all Pharisees, scribes, priests, and elders among the Jewish people. Today Satan uses the religion of Christianity to systematize many of the Lord's people away from God's will, the organic Body of Christ. Just as Paul was delivered out of the age of Judaism, today genuine believers and seekers must be delivered out of the religious system of Christianity to accomplish God's will to have the organic Body of Christ. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 3251-3254)

SATAN UTILIZING RELIGION TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM CHRIST AND THE CHURCH AS GOD'S WILL

Nothing used by Satan is as subtle as religion. Satan uses sin and worldliness to keep people from God, but it is easy to understand that sin and the world are not good. However, it is difficult to realize that religion is a strong enemy of Christ. Satan utilizes the veil of religion to deceive people. This is true not only of Judaism but even of Christianity, which is a more developed religion. We may compare Satan's system to a large university, in which there are many departments. In Satan's "university" there are departments of dancing and drinking for those who like those things, but if someone considers those things to be ungodly, Satan will offer them a better department—the department of religion. Because the people in this department kneel, pray, fear God, and praise Him, it seems very attractive.

As long as Satan can keep someone away from Christ and His Body as the will of God, he is satisfied. However, there is no "department" of the genuine church in Satan's system. The Lord said, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Satan is truly afraid of the church. If someone seeks after dead and doctrinal knowledge, he can find it in Satan's department of religion, but if some proclaim themselves in a proper way to be the church, Satan trembles. Many good Christians today have been cheated by Satan. They may speak about the Body of Christ, but they have no practice of the Body. They may even say, "It is too difficult to have the church life. Once you touch the matter of the church, you have many problems. It is wiser to stay away from it." This is the subtlety of the enemy. The wonderful Jesus has been imparted into the believers for the purpose of the Body and the practical church life. We must not expect that some day in the future the church will arrive or that the church will be in heaven. Rather, the church must be here today on the earth, even in our own locality. If we are not in the church life, we are still veiled and are being cheated.

CHRIST, THE CHURCH, GOD, AND REVELATION BEING VERSUS

RELIGION, TRADITION, MAN, AND THE TEACHING OF MAN

In Galatians 1 there are four negative items and four positive ones. On the negative side there are religion (represented by Judaism—vv. 13-14), tradition (v. 14), man (vv. 1, 11-12), and the teaching of man (v. 12). Then on the positive side we have Christ, who is versus religion (vv. 1, 12, 16); the church, which is versus tradition (v. 13); God, who is versus man (vv. 10, 15); and revelation, which is versus the teaching of man (vv. 12, 16). Paul was “an apostle (not from men nor through man but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)” (v. 1). Paul’s source and origin as an apostle was not man but God. Moreover, the gospel he announced to the Galatians was not according to man, received from man, or taught by man (vv. 11-12). Rather, his gospel was received through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Teaching produces a religion, in which there are many traditions, but a revelation conveys and imparts Christ, issuing in the church, which is God’s will. God, Christ, the church, and revelation are versus man, religion, tradition, and the teaching of man.

RELIGION BEING THE PRESENT EVIL AGE

Verse 4 says, “Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age.” Paul’s emphasis here is not that we are rescued from hell but that we are rescued out of the present age. The world as a whole is Satan’s system, which is divided into many different ages. The nineteenth century was one age, and the twentieth century is another. Before World War I was one age, and after World War II was another. The 1960s brought yet another age with a certain kind of behavior, dress, and appearance. All these ages put together compose the world. Paul says that Christ gave Himself for our sins to rescue us out of the present evil age. According to the context of Galatians, the present age at Paul’s time was religion. To be rescued from religion at that time was to be delivered from the present evil age.

At the time of the apostle Paul, Judaism had become the “modern” religion in the regions of the Mediterranean Sea, including Asia Minor, where Galatia was. To be one who was circumcised, who kept the Sabbath, and who kept the ordinances concerning eating according to Leviticus was to be an up-to-date religious person. In the same principle today, Christianity is the modern, popular religion of much of the world. To be modern is simply to be according to the present age. Thus, to be delivered out of the present evil age is to be delivered out of something modern. Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us out of the religion of the modern age, which in Paul’s time was the religion of Judaism and in our own time is the religion of Christianity.

A dictionary may tell us that *religion* is a good word, but Galatians 1 indicates that religion is versus Christ. It is something that persecutes the church, ravages it, and tries to root it out. Some may say that Judaism is the wrong religion, and now we have the right religion. However, this is not accurate. Religion is anything done for Christ but not having the presence and reality of Christ. Judaism was a religion founded according to the holy Word, just as today the fundamental things of Christianity are also based on the Word of God. Nevertheless, many in Christianity honor only its outward traditions and holidays without being truly for Christ in a pure way. By this we can see that religion is versus Christ. Today we still need to be delivered from the present evil age of religion.

In God’s eyes, the old and traditional practices in Christianity without the presence and reality of Christ are a part of the present evil age. The religious age is evil because it keeps people from Christ and the church as God’s will. There is nothing as evil in God’s eyes as that which keeps us from Christ. In this principle, traditional and religious Christianity today is the present evil age, just as Judaism was in the days of the apostles. At that time, it was not mainly the world or the sinners that opposed the apostles. It was Judaism as the present evil age. The Jewish religion even condemned the Lord Jesus to death according to their understanding of the Scriptures. Paul says, “You have heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism, that I persecuted the church of God excessively and ravaged it” (v. 13). Is this not evil? What can be more evil than this? Man discerns religion according to the view of tradition and morality, but God discerns it from the view of His eternal purpose. Nothing damages God’s eternal purpose as much as religion. Millions of people have been distracted by Catholicism and

the Christian denominations. On the one hand, they bring people to God initially, but on the other hand, they distract people from God's eternal purpose to have the church as the built-up Body of Christ in oneness. Even today, the Lord's recovery is confronting opposition from traditional Christianity as the present evil age.

**RELIGION BEING SOMETHING FOR GOD
YET APART FROM CHRIST
AND WITHOUT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST**

Religion is something for God and for the benefit of people, yet it is apart from Christ and without the Spirit of Christ. As long as Christ is not in something, no matter how good it may be, it is only religion. Even if we pray or study the Bible but are not in the spirit and do not have the Spirit of Christ, we are in religion, which does not bring forth the church. The Lord's recovery is to bring us back to the proper church life, and Christ as the Spirit is the only element that produces the church. As long as we do things in the spirit and with the Spirit of Christ, we have the church life. Otherwise, whatever we do may be good, may be for God, and may be for people's benefit, but we will simply produce another kind of religion. We all must pray, "Lord, be merciful to me that I would not do anything that produces a religion." Whatever we do must be realized and practiced in our spirit with the Spirit of Christ as the presence and reality of Christ.

We all need this revelation, and all the veils upon us need to be removed. Then we will see that what matters is not to have certain practices but to have the living Christ revealed in us (v. 16). Mere teaching is not able to help us. Rather, the more we speak, fellowship, and meet in the way of the church, the more the veils are removed and the more we receive a revelation in our spirit. God's desire is not a matter of religion but of the living Christ, the life-giving Spirit, dwelling in our human spirit. On his way to Damascus, Paul received not mere teaching but a revelation from the heavens so that he could see Christ and God's will to have the church, which comes out of Christ. At that time Paul became clear not by man's teaching but by a revelation of Christ from God. This is what we need today, and this is what the Lord is bringing to pass at this time.

Do not think that the Lord's recovery is here to produce another religion. If we are practicing even the best things in a religious way, we should give them up. Verse 15 of chapter 6 says, "Neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is what matters." The new creation—the new man, the church—is produced only by Christ in our spirit. If we read Galatians again and pray-read the crucial verses in it, we will see that Christ is versus religion, and the church is versus traditions. Moreover, the proper gospel is not out of man but from God, and we receive it not by mere teaching but by revelation. In Galatians 1:15-16 Paul tells us that at a certain time it pleased God to reveal His Son in him. God's will today is to bring us back to Himself as the origin, the beginning, and to bring forth the church life by revealing Christ in us, not as an outward teaching but as an inward reality.

**HAVING OUR ENTIRE BEING UNVEILED
TO SEE CHRIST AND RECEIVE HIM INTO US**

God's will is simply to reveal His Son, Christ, in us. We need to leave behind the religious ways of meeting, praying, and teaching in today's Christianity. We should even leave behind our old traditional knowledge of the Bible. What we need is to have our entire being unveiled to see Christ and receive Him into us. As we experience the indwelling Christ's operating within us, we all love one another, and the result is that we have the church life. The church life is not a matter of religious teachings, gifts, regulations, forms, or ordinances. Galatians 3:28 says, "There cannot be Jew nor Greek, there cannot be slave nor free man, there cannot be male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Here there is nothing but Christ. Therefore, we should never argue about such matters as who is right and who is wrong. Both right and wrong avail nothing; Christ is everything.

We all, both young and old, must be saved from religion as the present evil age. May the Lord

have mercy upon us so that our veils can be removed, that we may with unveiled face behold the living, indwelling, and transforming One to have a wonderful, direct fellowship with Him (2 Cor. 3:18). Out of this experience we will have the church life, not according to religious teachings, gifts, regulations, forms, or ordinances but by the indwelling Christ. It pleased God to reveal His Son in us, all our veils are being removed, and we see only God's eternal purpose—Christ and the church. We should not care for anything other than this. (*Enjoying Christ as the All-inclusive Spirit for the Practical, Genuine, and Real Church Life*, pp. 11-16)