

# CHRIST—THE LIVING WORD OF GOD

## Message 2

### The Bible—God’s Written Word

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 3:15-17; John 5:39; Exo. 31:18; Acts 2:42; Eph. 6:17-18; Col. 3:16

#### **I. The Bible, composed of the Old Testament and the New Testament, is the complete written divine revelation of God to man:**

- A. Christ, the living Word, needs a written word; without the written word, we are not able to apprehend the living Word—Luke 24:27, 44-45; John 5:39; *Hymns*, #801, s. 2.
- B. The Bible is the Book of books, and Christ is *the* person; the Book is the definition of the person—Matt. 1:1, footnote 1.
- C. The Word, which is solid and concrete, is the embodiment of the mysterious and abstract Christ—John 6:63.

#### **II. In the Old Testament the law was the testimony of God, the expression of God, the revelation of who God is to His people—Exo. 31:18; Psa. 19:7:**

- A. A law is always a revelation of what kind of person has enacted that law.
- B. As the word of God and the testimony, the expression, of God, the law is a type of Christ as God’s Word and God’s testimony, God’s expression—John 1:1, 18; Rev. 19:13; 1:5; Col. 1:15.
- C. The function of the law has two aspects:
  - 1. On the negative side, the law exposes man’s sin (Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:7-8) and subdues sinners before God (3:19).
  - 2. On the positive side, as God’s living testimony, the law functions to minister the living God to His seekers (Psa. 119:2, 88), and as God’s living word, the law functions to dispense God Himself as life and light into those who love the law (vv. 25, 116, 130).

#### **III. The entire speaking of God in the New Testament—first in the Son as a man, then in the Son as the Spirit through the apostles—is the teaching of the apostles—Heb. 1:1-2; Acts 2:42; Titus 1:9:**

- A. First, God spoke in the Son as a man in the four gospels—Heb. 1:1-3; John 14:10; 5:24; 16:12; 10:30.
- B. Then He spoke in the Son as the Spirit through the apostles in Acts through Revelation—16:12-15; Matt. 28:19-20; Heb. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:15-16.
- C. The proper ministry is the ministry according to the apostles’ teaching, the teaching of God’s New Testament economy, for the building up of the Body of Christ—Titus 1:9; 1 Tim. 1:3-4.

#### **IV. We need to allow the Word of God dwell in us richly by reading, praying, and singing the Word—Matt. 4:4; Eph. 6:17-18; Col. 3:16:**

- A. Reading the Bible is a life necessity—Matt. 4:4; 1 Pet. 2:2:
  - 1. Some may think that we can read the Bible only when the Spirit inspires us; however, no healthy person eats food only when he is inspired; reading the Bible is no different from eating physical food, for both are life necessities.
  - 2. We need to daily touch and receive a portion of the Bible regularly and even “legally.”
  - 3. We should read through the Bible consecutively, not according to our preference or randomly.
- B. We can breathe in the word by exercising our spirit to pray-read the Word; if we want to receive the Lord’s words, we must use our spirit, because His words are spirit—Eph. 6:17-18; John 6:63.
- C. There is no better way to receive the Word into our being than by singing the Word; the more we sing and psalm the Word of God, the more it will sink into the depths of our being and saturate us—Col. 3:16:
  - 1. The highest way to enjoy reading the Bible is to sing the words with a spontaneous melody.
  - 2. Singing the Word is an excellent way to exercise the spirit; to pray is to exercise the spirit, but to sing is an especially good way to exercise the spirit.

**Focus:** Christ as God's living Word is defined and embodied in the Bible as God's written Word. Hence, every day we need to exercise our spirit to read, pray, and sing the Word in order to take it into our being for our spiritual nourishment.

**Hymns:** 805, 811

### **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

Christ is the living Word and that the Bible is the written Word. Actually, these are not two words. The living Word and the written Word are one and correspond to each other. Although I knew this, I did not apply this understanding to the Word in John 1:1. Now I see that the Word in John 1:1 involves the written Word with the living Word as its reality.

In order to have the proper understanding of the Word in John 1:1, we need to come to the Bible and see what the Word refers to in the Holy Scriptures. If we do this, we will see that first it refers to Christ as the living Word. This living Word needs a written Word. Without the written Word, we are not able to apprehend the living Word. We need a book, the Bible, to define and explain the living person of Christ. Christ, the universal person, is the living Word of God, and the Bible is the written Word. The Bible is the Book of books, and Christ is *the* person. The Book is the definition of the person. The written Word, the Bible, is the definition of the living Word, the living person of Christ. This is the living Word with the written Word.

When we have the living Word with the written Word, we have the defined God. Because God is abstract, mysterious, and invisible, there is the need for God to be the Word in order to explain Himself, define Himself, and reveal Himself. The Word in John 1:1 refers to the defined God, the explained God, the expressed God, the revealed God, the God made known to human beings. This is the Word. The Word in John 1:1 refers to our Lord, the living Word, with the Bible, the written Word.

In Revelation 19:11-13 we have a picture of Christ judging and making war. Verse 13 says, "He is clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God." The name on the Lord's thigh may be likened to a badge, label, or sign. As He fights against the enemy, He wears a sign saying "the Word of God." This indicates that the Lord Himself is the Word of God. Do you want to know God? In order to know God, you need to read Christ, study Christ, behold Christ, contemplate Christ, gaze on Christ.

However, we cannot know the Lord, the living Word, simply by studying Him or contemplating Him. We also need *the* Book, the Bible, the written Word. If we would know God, on the one hand, we need to contemplate this living person and, on the other hand, we need to study the Book. (*CWWL*, 1982, vol. 2, "The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John," pp. 68-69)

The Bible reveals that Christ is the embodiment of God. Colossians 2:9 says, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." God is mysterious, yet all His fullness is embodied in Christ. Christ also is mysterious, but the mysterious Christ is embodied in the word (John 6:63; 1 Cor. 15:45b). The word is not mysterious or abstract. The word, which is solid and concrete, is the embodiment of the mysterious and abstract Christ. Through the word Christ has been made solid and tangible. We Christians should daily handle the word as the solid embodiment of the abstract Christ. Our contacting the Lord in order to abide in Him depends upon our handling of His word. (*CWWL*, 1978, vol. 3, "Crucial Principles for the Proper Church Life," p. 27)

Many believers do not touch and receive the word regularly. We need to daily read and pray-read the Bible. We need to daily touch and receive a portion of the Bible regularly and even legally...Some may ask where a law is in the New Testament that we must read the Bible legally. This law is found in Matthew 4:4, where the Lord Jesus said, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God." The law in this verse is that just as we eat physical food every day, so we must receive the word of God every day.

Some saints may think that we do not need to be legal in our Bible reading and that we can read the Bible only when the Spirit inspires us. Thinking this way is equivalent to thinking that we do not need to be legal in eating physical food every day and that we can eat only when we are inspired. No healthy person eats only when he is inspired. Reading the Bible is no different from eating physical food, for both are life necessities.

Reading the Word is our spiritual eating, praying is our spiritual drinking, and praying unceasingly is our spiritual breathing. These are all life necessities, for spiritually we live by them, just as physically we live by eating, drinking, and breathing. We do not depend on inspiration to take care of our life necessities. Just as we do not wait for inspiration to eat physically, neither should we wait for inspiration to read the Bible. Because eating the word, drinking the Spirit, and breathing the Spirit are necessities of our spiritual life, we should do each one legally.

Those who have only coffee and a doughnut for breakfast will be unhealthy. However, if we are legal to eat a nutritious breakfast every day, we will be strong and healthy. We need to legalize our breakfast. My wife is very strict with me—every day she serves me the same kind of nutritious breakfast. My health, my strength, and my energy come mainly from eating such a breakfast each day. We need to eat the word every morning to have a healthy breakfast for our spiritual life.

Some saints may find it difficult to spend time in the Word each morning because they must go to school or work very early. I sympathize with these saints, but I do not want to see them die spiritually. Regardless of how early we go to school or work, if we set our will, we will all be able to spend at least ten minutes to read the Word and five minutes to pray each morning in order to spiritually eat and drink. Eating requires more time than drinking. Practicing this faithfully will cause us to be spiritually healthy. It is possible for everyone to do this. To reduce our sleep by fifteen minutes will not hurt us.

If we spend only ten minutes to read and pray over a few verses and five minutes to pray each morning, we will have a nourishing and satisfying spiritual breakfast. We can pray-read the Word to eat the riches of the Lord, and we can even mingle our pray-reading and our prayer together to have a good breakfast. If we practice this, within one month we will see a difference in our life. Many saints have testified that this small practice changed their life. If possible, at lunchtime or in the evening we can spend some time to read a few chapters of the Bible. If we read three chapters of the Old Testament and one chapter of the New Testament each day, we will finish reading the whole Bible in less than a year. If we continue doing this for several years, we will experience much growth in life.

In both our pray-reading in the morning and our reading of the Bible later in the day, we need to read consecutively. We should not read the Bible according to our preference or randomly. In reading the Old Testament, we should begin from Genesis 1 and continue until we finish Malachi. Likewise, we should read the New Testament from Matthew to Revelation. For our morning time of reading and pray-reading, we need to look to the Lord, praying, “Lord, which book do You intend for me to enter into at the present time?” We should pray-read from the first verse to the last verse of whichever book the Lord chooses, taking a few verses each morning. In this way we will receive much nourishment. We need to make a vow to the Lord that we will spend time in the Word every morning. If we keep this vow, the Lord will bless us. (*CWWL*, 1978, vol. 2, “Crucial Principles for the Christian Life and Church Life,” pp. 545-549)

### **References and Further Reading:**

1. *The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John*, ch. 2.
2. *Crucial Principles for the Proper Church Life*, ch. 1.
3. *Crucial Principles for the Christian Life and Church Life*, ch. 1.
4. *Life-study of Philippians*, msg. 40.
5. *The Healthy Word*, ch. 8.