

International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones

September 2025

GENERAL SUBJECT: CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF MATTHEW 5 THROUGH 7

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Seven Entering through the Narrow Gate and Walking on the Constricted Way That Leads to Life, the Ever-blessed Condition of the Kingdom

JL Hymns: 822

Scripture Reading: Rev. 2:7; John 6:57, 63

- 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.
- John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
- John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

I. In the decree of the kingdom's constitution, Christ displayed the two possible ways of people's life and work before God—"Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it"—Matt. 7:13-14:

- A. "The way that leads to life" is the way that leads to a living reward in life; it is the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22)—the way of the truth (2 Pet. 2:2), the straight way (v. 15), the way of righteousness (v. 21), the way of peace (Luke 1:79; Rom. 3:17), the way of salvation (Acts 16:17), the way of God (Matt. 22:16; Acts 18:26), and the way of the Lord (John 1:23; Acts 18:25).
- Acts 9:2 And asked for letters from him to Damascus for the synagogues, so that if he found any who were of the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- Acts 19:9 But when some were hardened and would not be persuaded, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.
- Acts 19:23 And about that time no small disturbance took place concerning the Way.
- Acts 22:4 And I persecuted this Way unto death, binding and delivering to prisons both men and women,
- Acts 24:22 But Felix, knowing more accurately the things concerning the Way, deferred them, saying, When Lysias the commander comes down, I will determine your affairs.
- 2 Pet 2:2 And many will follow their licentiousness, because of whom the way of the truth will be reviled.
- 2 Pet 2:15 Forsaking the straight way, they have gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the

- son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness
- 2 Pet 2:21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.
- Luke 1:79 To shine upon those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.
- Rom 3:17 And the way of peace they have not known.
- Acts 16:17 This woman followed after Paul and us and cried out, saying, These men are slaves of the Most High God, who announce to you a way of salvation.
- Matt 22:16 And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that You are true and that You teach the way of God in truth and do not fear anyone, for You do not regard the person of men.
- Acts 18:26 And this man began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him to themselves and expounded the way of God to him more accurately.
- John 1:23 He said, I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord!" as Isaiah the prophet said.
- Acts 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.
- B. The broad way leading to destruction is according to the worldly systems, satisfying the natural tastes; to get the crowd; to maintain a career of man; and to achieve man's enterprise—Matt. 13:31-33; Rev. 2:13, 20; 17:4-5.
- 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.
- Rev 2:13 I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name and have not denied My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.
- Rev 2:20 But I have something against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and leads My slaves astray to commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices.
- 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.
- C. The constricted way leading to life is according to the divine regulations, fulfilling the spiritual requests; to bring in God's elect; to bear the testimony of Jesus Christ; and to carry out God's economy for the building up of the Body of Christ—Rom. 1:9; Heb. 11:5-6; Rev. 1:1-2, 9-10.
- Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,
- Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God.
- Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
- Rev 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show to His slaves the things that must quickly take place; and He made it known by signs, sending it by His angel to His slave John,
- Rev 1:2 Who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, even all that he saw.
- Rev 1:9 I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the

- testimony of Jesus.
- Rev 1:10 I was in spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,
- D. The God-ordained way is to have a living and working that are always narrow and constricted, according to the pattern of the Lord's indescribable life and ministry—John 5:19, 30; 4:34; 17:4; 14:10, 24; 7:16, 18.
- John 5:19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner.
- John 5:30 I can do nothing from Myself; as I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.
- John 4:34 Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work.
- John 17:4 I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do.
- John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.
- John 14:24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.
- John 7:16 Jesus therefore answered them and said, My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.
- John 7:18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, this One is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him.
- E. We in the Lord's recovery must walk in our spirit; walking in spirit restricts us, causing us to live a normal Christian life and making us vital, healthy believers who take the way of life for God's building—Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 22-23; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.
- Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
- Gal 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.
- Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
- Gal 5:23 Meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
- 1 Thes 5:16 Always rejoice,
- 1 Thes 5:17 Unceasingly pray,
- 1 Thes 5:18 In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
- F. We must learn to restrict ourselves in our labor according to the measure of the rule that the God of measure, the ruling God, has apportioned to us—2 Cor. 10:13-15.
- 2 Cor 10:13 But we will not boast beyond our measure but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us, to reach even as far as you.
- 2 Cor 10:14 For we are not extending ourselves beyond our bounds, as if we did not reach you, for we were the first to come even as far as unto you in the gospel of Christ.
- 2 Cor 10:15 We are not boasting beyond our measure in others' labors, but have the hope, as your faith is increasing, to be magnified in you according to our rule unto abundance,
- G. The more we are constricted, the more we are regulated; and the more we are regulated, the more we are healthy; to be vital means to be healthy; Paul desired to admonish every man and to teach every man in all wisdom that he might present every man full-grown in Christ; Paul did not depend on miracles, but his work was much more in the "every man" way—Col. 1:28-29; Acts 20:19-20, 31.
- Col 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;
- Col 1:29 For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.
- Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews;
- Acts 20:20 How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house,
- Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease

admonishing each one with tears.

II. We must stay on the way of life, the line of life, in the maintenance of life by enjoying Christ as the tree of life in the flow of life for God's building in life by our growth in life—John 10:10b; Rev. 22:1-2; Eph. 4:16; 2:21-22:

- John 10:10b ... I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.
- Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
- Rev 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
- Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
- A. We stay on the way of life by living and serving according to the principle of life, not according to the principle of right and wrong.
- B. We stay on the way of life by loving the Lord to the uttermost, drawing others to run after Him—Mark 12:30; S. S. 1:4a.
- Mark 12:30 And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength."
- S. S. 1:4a Draw me; ...
- C. We stay on the way of life by eating Jesus through pray-reading and musing on the word and by ministering the word as the Spirit into others by the exercise of our spirit—John 6:57, 63; Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15 and footnote; Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4; 24:45; 1 Cor. 2:4-5, 13.
- John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
- John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.
- Eph 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,
- Eph 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,
- Psa 119:15 I will ¹muse upon Your precepts / And regard Your ways.
- Note 1 Rich in meaning, the Hebrew word for muse (often translated meditate in the KJV) implies to worship, to converse with oneself, and to speak aloud. To muse on the word is to taste and enjoy it through careful considering. Prayer, speaking to oneself, and praising the Lord may also be included in musing on the word. To muse on the word of God is to enjoy His word as His breath (2 Tim. 3:16) and thus to be infused with God, to breathe God in, and to receive spiritual nourishment.
- Jer 15:16 Your words were found and I ate them, / And Your word became to me / The gladness and joy of my heart, / For I am called by Your name, / O Jehovah, God of hosts.
- Matt 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."
- Matt 24:45 Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time?
- 1 Cor 2:4 And my speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
- 1 Cor 2:5 In order that your faith would not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
- 1 Cor 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things with spiritual words.
- D. We stay on the way of life by enjoying the Triune God as the law of the Spirit of life with its divine capacity—Rom. 8:2; Jer. 32:39.
- Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of

- death.
- Jer 32:39 And I will give them one heart and one way, to fear Me all the days, for their own good and for the good of their children after them.
- E. We stay on the way of life by abiding in Christ as the tree of life in the flow of life under His headship and according to His divine nature—Rev. 22:1-2.
- Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
- Rev 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
- F. We stay on the way of life by being careful about the people whom we contact and being separated unto God from every kind of spiritual death—wild death, mild death, and subtle death—Lev. 5:2; 11:1-40; Num. 6:6-7.
- Lev 5:2 Or if anyone touches any unclean thing, whether the carcass of an unclean animal or the carcass of unclean cattle or the carcass of unclean swarming things, and it escapes his notice, and he is unclean, then he will be guilty.
- Lev 11:1 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them,
- Lev 11:2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, These are the animals which you may eat among all the beasts that are on the earth.
- Lev 11:3 Whatever has a divided hoof, that is, has its hoof split in two, and chews the cud among the beasts, that you may eat.
- Lev 11:4 However these you shall not eat: of those that only chew the cud or of those that only have a divided hoof: the camel, for though it chews the cud, it does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean to you.
- Lev 11:5 And the hyrax, for though it chews the cud, it does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean to you.
- Lev 11:6 And the hare, for though it chews the cud, it does not have a divided hoof; it is unclean to you.
- Lev 11:7 And the pig, for though it has a divided hoof, that is, it has its hoof split in two, it does not chew the cud; it is unclean to you.
- Lev 11:8 You shall not eat of their flesh, nor shall you touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you.
- Lev 11:9 These you may eat of all that are in the water: anything in the water that has fins and scales, in the seas or in the rivers; these you may eat.
- Lev 11:10 But anything that does not have fins and scales in the seas and in the rivers, of anything that swarms in the waters and of any living animal which is in the waters, they are an abomination to you,
- Lev 11:11 And they shall be an abomination to you; you shall not eat of their flesh, and their carcasses you shall regard as an abomination.
- Lev 11:12 Anything in the water that does not have fins or scales is an abomination to you.
- Lev 11:13 And these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten; they are an abomination: the great vulture and the bearded vulture and the black vulture
- Lev 11:14 And the kite and the falcon of every kind,
- Lev 11:15 Every raven of every kind,
- Lev 11:16 And the ostrich and the nighthawk and the sea gull and the hawk of every kind,
- Lev 11:17 And the little owl and the cormorant and the great owl
- Lev 11:18 And the white owl and the pelican and the carrion vulture
- Lev 11:19 And the stork; the heron of every kind and the hoopoe and the bat;
- Lev 11:20 All flying insects that go on all fours are an abomination to you.
- Lev 11:21 Yet these you may eat of all flying insects that go on all fours, which have legs above their feet with which to leap on the earth;
- Lev 11:22 These of them you may eat: the swarming locust of every kind and the swallowing locust of every kind and the cricket of every kind and the grasshopper of every kind.
- Lev 11:23 But all the other flying insects which have four feet are an abomination to you.
- Lev 11:24 And by these you shall become unclean; whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening,
- Lev 11:25 And whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening.

- Lev 11:26 For every beast which has a divided hoof but does not have its hoof split in two or chew the cud is unclean to you; everyone who touches them shall be unclean.
- Lev 11:27 And whatever goes on its paws, among all beasts that go on all fours, are unclean to you; whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening.
- Lev 11:28 And the one who carries their carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening; they are unclean to you.
- Lev 11:29 And these are unclean to you among the swarming things that swarm on the earth: the weasel and the mouse and the great lizard of every kind,
- Lev 11:30 And the gecko and the land crocodile and the lizard and the sand lizard and the chameleon.
- Lev 11:31 These are unclean to you among all the swarming things; whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening.
- Lev 11:32 And anything on which one of them may fall when they are dead shall be unclean, whether it is any article of wood or clothing or skin or sackcloth; any article which is used for any work must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening; then it shall be clean.
- Lev 11:33 And any earthen vessel into which any of them falls, whatever is in it shall be unclean, and the vessel you shall break.
- Lev 11:34 Any food that could be eaten shall be unclean if water from such a vessel comes upon it, and any liquid that may be drunk shall be unclean if it was in any such vessel.
- Lev 11:35 And everything on which part of their carcass falls shall be unclean-an oven or a stove shall be broken in pieces; they are unclean and shall continue to be unclean to you.
- Lev 11:36 Nevertheless a spring or a cistern collecting water shall be clean, but whatever touches their carcass shall be unclean.
- Lev 11:37 And if any part of their carcass falls on any seed for sowing, which is to be sown, it is clean.
- Lev 11:38 But if water is put on the seed, and any part of their carcass fall on it, it is unclean to you.
- Lev 11:39 And if any beast which you have for food dies, the one who touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening.
- Lev 11:40 And he who eats some of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening; the one who carries its carcass shall also wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening.
- Num 6:6 All the days that he separates himself to Jehovah he shall not come near a dead person.
- Num 6:7 He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is upon his head.

G. We stay on the way of life by living in resurrection, in the reality of the church as the Body of Christ, signified by the golden lampstand, a tree of resurrection life—Eph. 1:22-23; Exo. 25:31-40; Rev. 1:11-12.

- Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
- Exo 25:31 And you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand with its base and its shaft shall be made of beaten work; its cups, its calyxes, and its blossom buds shall be of one piece with it.
- Exo 25:32 And there shall be six branches going out of its sides; three branches of the lampstand out of one of its sides, and three branches of the lampstand out of its other side;
- Exo 25:33 Three cups made like almond blossoms in one branch, a calyx and a blossom bud; and three cups made like almond blossoms in the other branch, a calyx and a blossom bud—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand.
- Exo 25:34 And there shall be on the lampstand four cups made like almond blossoms, its calyxes and its blossom buds;
- Exo 25:35 And a calyx under two branches of one piece with it, and a calyx under two branches of one piece with it, and a calyx under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of the lampstand.
- Exo 25:36 Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it; all of it one beaten work of pure gold.
- Exo 25:37 And you shall make its lamps, seven; and set up its lamps to give light to the area in

- front of it.
- Exo 25:38 And its tongs and its firepans shall be of pure gold.
- Exo 25:39 It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils.
- Exo 25:40 And see that you make them according to their pattern, which was shown to you in the mountain.
- 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.
- Rev 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands,

III. The God-ordained pathway for the church is the way of Philadelphia; this God-ordained pathway is the constricted way that leads to life:

- A. The characteristic of the overcomers in Philadelphia is their brotherly love (3:7-8); love prevails among them so that they shepherd people according to God (1 Pet. 5:2) by cherishing them with the cheering presence of God and nourishing them with the healthy teaching of the economy of God (Eph. 4:11; 5:29; Acts 20:28).
- Rev 3:7 And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: 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:
- Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.
- 1 Pet 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly;
- Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
- Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church,
- 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.
- B. The Lord's recovery with Philadelphia is a recovery in quality, a recovery of the original substance of the church, the inner substance of God, which is love (1 John 4:8); to stand on the genuine ground of oneness, the ground of the church, is to choose to love all the brothers (Rev. 3:7a; cf. 2:4, 7).
- 1 John 4:8 He who does not love has not known God, because God is love.
- Rev 3:7a And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: ...
- Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.
- 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.
- C. The Lord's using the key of David to open the door for the spread of His recovery is objective to us, but Christ is also using the key of David to subjectively open the door in our inner being for us to be transformed and built into the house of God as a pillar with the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the new name of the Lord—v. 17; 3:12; cf. 21:22:
- Rev 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except he who receives it.
- 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.
- Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.
1. *The name of My God* indicates that the pillar is God; *the name of the city of My God* indicates that the pillar is the New Jerusalem; and *My new name* indicates that the

pillar is Christ in a new significance; the overcomer as a pillar becomes God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead, he becomes a constituent of the New Jerusalem, and he becomes Christ in a new experiential sense—3:12.

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.

2. The New Jerusalem is the new Christ; as God's enlargement and expansion, we are Christ in a new sense as the New Jerusalem; the new Christ is not the same as He was in the four Gospels; the bride, who is the increase of the Bridegroom, is the New Jerusalem, including all of God's regenerated ones—John 3:29-30; Rev. 21:9-10.

John 3:29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full.

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

Rev 21:9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

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,

3. For us to be built into God, become a constituent of the New Jerusalem, and become a part of the new Christ is humanly impossible, but the law of the Spirit of life within us contains an element that deals with impossibility—Rom. 8:2; Luke 18:27; cf. Gen. 28:12-19; John 1:51.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Luke 18:27 But He said, The things that are impossible with men are possible with God.

Gen 28:12 And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

Gen 28:13 And there was Jehovah, standing above it; and He said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, I will give to you and to your seed.

Gen 28:14 And your seed will be as the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and in your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed.

Gen 28:15 And, behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will cause you to return to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

Gen 28:16 And Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I did not know it.

Gen 28:17 And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Gen 28:18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning and took the stone that he had put under his head, and he set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

Gen 28:19 And he called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz previously.

John 1:51 And He said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, You shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

- D. The overcomers in Philadelphia pay more attention to life than to work, caring more about quality than quantity (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12); they have "a little power" with the realization that what pleases the Lord is not their doing much for Him but their doing their best for Him with what they have (Rev. 3:8; Mark 14:8).

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

Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

- Mark 14:8 She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.
- E. The overcomers in Philadelphia keep the Lord's word in His unique New Testament ministry (Rev. 3:8), which brings them into the genuine appreciation, love, and enjoyment of the precious person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as their life and everything (2 Cor. 11:2-3).
- Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.
- 2 Cor 11:2 For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.
- 2 Cor 11:3 But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ.
- F. Because those in Philadelphia keep the Lord's word, they are "rich toward God" (Rev. 3:8; Luke 12:21) by pray-reading and musing upon His word to treasure up His word in their heart (Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:11, 15); we can lift up our hands unto the word of God, indicating that we receive it warmly and gladly and that we say Amen to it (v. 48; Neh. 8:5-6).
- Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.
- Luke 12:21 So is he who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.
- Eph 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,
- Eph 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,
- Psa 119:11 In my heart I have treasured up Your word / That I might not sin against You.
- Psa 119:15 I will muse upon Your precepts / And regard Your ways.
- Psa 119:48 And I will lift up my hand to Your commandments, which I love; / And I will muse upon Your statutes.
- Neh 8:5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up.
- Neh 8:6 And Ezra blessed Jehovah the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground.
- G. The overcomers in Philadelphia do not deny the Lord's name; they have abandoned all names other than that of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they call upon the name of the Lord, who is rich to all who call upon Him (Rom. 10:9-10, 12-13); they openly confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11), and they do not preach themselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and themselves as the believers' slaves for Jesus' sake (2 Cor. 4:5).
- Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;
- Rom 10:10 For with the heart there is believing unto righteousness, and with the mouth there is confession unto salvation.
- Rom 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;
- Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
- Phil 2:11 And every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.
- 2 Cor 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.
- H. Brother Lee's final word to the elders in Anaheim: "The elders need to love one another, their wives need to love one another, and they need to love one another's children."

IV. Once Philadelphia fails, she becomes Laodicea:

- A. Laodicea is a distorted Philadelphia; when brotherly love is gone, the opinion of the

majority is the accepted opinion; as long as the majority is in favor, it is all right.

- B. In the eyes of the Lord, the characteristics of Laodicea are lukewarmness and spiritual pride—Rev. 3:15-18:

Rev 3:15 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

Rev 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.

Rev 3:17 Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.

1. Spiritual pride comes from history; some were once rich, and they think that they are still rich; they still remember their history, but they have lost their former life.
2. The Lord was once merciful to them, and they remember their history, but now they have lost that reality.
3. They remember that they were once wealthy and had become rich and had need of nothing, but now they are poor and blind.

- C. If we want to continue in the way of Philadelphia and avoid becoming Laodicea, we have to remember to humble ourselves before God—Matt. 5:3; Isa. 57:15; Gal. 6:3.

Matt 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

Isa 57:15 For thus says the high and exalted One, / Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: / I will dwell in the high and holy place, / And with the contrite and lowly of spirit, / To revive the spirit of the lowly / And to revive the heart of the contrite.

Gal 6:3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

- D. Laodicea means to know everything but, in reality, to be fervent about nothing; in name it has everything, but it cannot sacrifice its life for anything; it remembers its former glory but forgets its present condition before God; formerly, it was Philadelphia, but today it is Laodicea—Rev. 3:15-18:

Rev 3:15 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

Rev 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.

Rev 3:17 Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.

1. The degraded recovered church has the knowledge of the doctrines concerning Christ but not much living faith to partake of the divine element of Christ.
2. White garments signify conduct that can be approved by the Lord; such conduct is the Lord Himself lived out of the church, and it is required by the degraded recovered church for the covering of her nakedness.
3. The eyesalve needed to anoint their eyes must be the anointing Spirit (1 John 2:27), who is the Lord Himself as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b); the degraded recovered church needs this kind of eyesalve for the healing of her blindness (cf. Job 42:5-6).

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Job 42:5 I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, / But now my eye has seen You;

Job 42:6 Therefore I abhor myself, and I repent / In dust and ashes.

- E. Dead, vain knowledge and doctrinal forms have made the degraded recovered church lukewarm; she needs to repent of her lukewarmness and be zealous, boiling, burning, that thereby she may regain the enjoyment of the reality of Christ.

- F. “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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”—Rev. 3:21-22:
1. Here to overcome is to overcome the lukewarmness and pride of the degraded recovered church, to pay the price to buy the needed items, and to open the door so that the Lord can come in; Christ as the unique Overcomer includes all the overcomers.
 2. To sit with the Lord on His throne will be a prize to the overcomer so that he may participate in the Lord’s authority and be a co-king with Him in ruling over the whole earth in the coming millennial kingdom.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE REVELATION OF THE PATHWAY OF THE CHURCH

The Sixth Church—Philadelphia

Next comes the sixth church; it has the name Philadelphia. *Phil* means “love” and *adelphia* means “brotherly.” *Philadelphia* means “brotherly love.”

Returning to Brotherly Love

Among the seven churches, this is the only one which does not receive any rebuke from the Lord. The Roman Catholic Church was rebuked, and so were the Protestant churches. Only Philadelphia is not rebuked. One only finds praise in Philadelphia.

What are the characteristics of Philadelphia? Revelation 3:8 says, “I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.” This is the characteristic of Philadelphia. The characteristic of Thyatira is the teaching of a woman. The characteristic of Sardis is a union between the church and the world and a constant need for separation; it is a continuous struggle between life and death. But the characteristic of Philadelphia is brotherly love. Here is a return to brotherly love. There is no worldliness here because all are brothers. There is no need to struggle to separate oneself from death. It is a return to the original state of brotherhood. Here we find brotherly love.

Just as Sardis comes out of Thyatira, Philadelphia comes out of Sardis. The Protestants came out of the Roman Catholic Church, and Philadelphia came out of the Protestants. This was clearly a new move of the Holy Spirit. This new move attracted people from the dead Sardis and put them on the ground of brotherly love. In other words, they stood on the Body ground. They did not recognize any other relationship except the relationship of brothers. They did not recognize any other fellowship except the fellowship of love. This is Philadelphia.

Keeping the Lord’s Word

Philadelphia had two characteristics: They kept the Lord’s word, and they did not deny the Lord’s name. Here was a group of people who were led by God to keep His word. God opened up the Word to them, and others were able to understand His Word through them. They had no creed, doctrine, or tradition, only the Word of God. At the time of Philadelphia, we find a group of people returning fully to the Word of the Lord, who did not recognize any other authority, doctrine, or creed.

A man can understand and even preach a doctrine, but this does not mean that he understands the Bible. He can memorize creeds and proclaim his faith in them, but this does not mean that he understands the Bible. The Lord would have given us creeds long ago if the church needed them. Today men analyze the Bible and condense its teachings into creeds. Creeds are limited, but the Bible is unlimited. Creeds are simple, while the Bible is complicated. A foolish man can understand creeds if he studies them. But a foolish man cannot understand the Bible. Only a certain type of people can understand the Bible. Only under certain conditions can a man understand God’s Word. Creeds open a wide door and anyone can go in. But the door to God’s Word is not that wide, and only those with life

can enter it. The door of the creeds is so wide that a smart mind is all one needs to enter it. But God's Word is not that simple. Unless a man has life and is single before the Lord, he will not see or understand His Word.

Many people think that God's Word is too narrow. They want to broaden it so that they can bring more people into it. But those in Philadelphia rejected all creeds and doctrines. They turned back to the Word of the Lord. The Lord said, "You...have kept My word." In church history, there was never an age when men understood God's Word more than those in Philadelphia. In Philadelphia God's Word was given its rightful place. In other ages men accepted creeds and traditions. But Philadelphia accepted nothing other than God's Word. It returned to His Word and walked in it. In church history there was never a time when the ministry of the Word was as rich as that which we find in Philadelphia.

Not Denying the Lord's Name

The Lord said, "You...have not denied My name" (v. 8). This is another characteristic of Philadelphia. In the long history of the church throughout the ages, the name of the Lord Jesus has always been last in importance. Men pay attention to names of saints, such as Peter and other apostles. They pay attention to names they like or to names of doctrines and nations. Many say proudly, "I am a Lutheran," or "I am a Wesleyan." Oh, the names of men! Many claim proudly, "I am a Coptic" (of a place), or "I am an Anglican" (meaning British). These are names of countries. These names have divided God's children into divisions! It is as if the name of Christ were not enough to separate us from the world.

If someone asks you, "Who are you?" and you answer, "I am a Christian," he will not be satisfied. He will ask again, "What kind of Christian are you?" I remember once when I was in another country, a man asked me, "What are you really?" I said, "I am a Christian." He said, "This is meaningless!"

The Lord's Name Being Enough

To the Lord, His name is enough for His children. But we have to wait until Philadelphia before we see men who are satisfied with the Lord's name alone. There is no need to have so many divisive names. His name alone is enough! The Lord takes note that they "have not denied My name." This is what He cares for.

There was never a time in church history when men loathed other names as much as they did in Philadelphia. When one returns to Philadelphia, all other names are denied! Philadelphia has abolished all other names and has exalted only the name of Christ. Please bear in mind that the Lord cares for this one thing. This one thing is the basis for His praise. This is something pleasing to Him. Do not belittle this and do not be careless about it. The Lord takes the time to point out that they have confessed His name and have not denied His name. He pays attention to this and praises it!

The Question of Overcoming

Some brothers have asked, "What have the overcomers in Philadelphia overcome?" Do you see the problem posed by this question? The overcomers in Ephesus overcame forsaking their first love. The overcomers in Smyrna overcame the outward threat of death. The overcomers in Pergamos overcame the bondage and temptations of the world. The overcomers in Thyatira overcame the teaching of the woman. The overcomers in Sardis overcame spiritual death—the condition of being living in name and dead in reality. The overcomers of Laodicea overcame lukewarmness and vainglory. But what do the overcomers in Philadelphia overcome? The entire epistle to them shows only the Lord's pleasure in what they have done. Of the seven epistles, this is the only one which has the Lord's full approval. What is there to overcome if the Lord is fully pleased? It is a church fully approved and rated as the best; it is altogether according to the Lord's heart's desire. But the Lord has a promise for the overcomers in the church in Philadelphia. What do they have to overcome? There is nothing to overcome because there is no problem with this church.

Holding Fast What You Have

But the Lord has a warning here. Verse 11 says, “I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown.” This is the only warning in the entire epistle. Those in Philadelphia are reminded to hold fast what they have. In other words, they have what is right, and they should not lose it. They should not be weary of doing the same things for a long time and should not ask for a change. They should not contemplate doing something new after all the years of doing the same things. They have to hold fast what they have and not let it go! This is the only warning for Philadelphia. The Lord has only one charge for Philadelphia—to hold fast what they have. What they have done is right and is blessed by the Lord; therefore, they should continue in it.

If Philadelphia does not hold fast what it has, God will raise up others to take away its crown. The crown has already been given to Philadelphia. But others will come and take its crown if it does not hold it fast. This is the only warning to Philadelphia. Philadelphia overcomes by not losing what it has. This is different from the other six churches. We must pay attention to the Lord’s Word. There is only one church which meets the Lord’s standard—Philadelphia. Her characteristic is keeping the Lord’s word and not denying His name. We must not overlook these two matters.

The Seventh Church—Laodicea

Five of the seven churches were rebuked. One did not receive a rebuke, and one received only praise. The one which received only praise was Philadelphia. Catholicism, Protestantism, and Philadelphia will all remain until the Lord Jesus comes again. The last church, the seventh one, Laodicea, also will continue until the Lord Jesus comes again. Since Sardis came out of Thyatira and Philadelphia came out of Sardis, Laodicea naturally has to come out of Philadelphia. One begets the other.

Laodicea Being the Result of Philadelphia’s Degradation

This is where the issue lies today. Once Philadelphia fails, it becomes Laodicea. Do not think that Protestantism is Laodicea. It is altogether wrong to think this way. Protestantism is Sardis, not Laodicea. Protestantism can only be Sardis today; it cannot be Laodicea. No Bible reader should be so foolish as to think that Protestantism is Laodicea. No, Protestantism is Sardis. After Philadelphia has fallen, it becomes Laodicea. Sardis came out of Thyatira, and it was one step beyond Thyatira. Philadelphia came out of Sardis, and it was one step beyond Sardis. Laodicea, however, comes out of Philadelphia, but it is one step behind Philadelphia. These four churches will remain until the Lord Jesus comes again.

Laodicea is a distorted Philadelphia. When brotherly love is gone, Philadelphia immediately turns into the opinions of many. This is the meaning of the word *Laodicea*. Laodicea was a city whose name came from a Roman prince, Entiochus. He had a wife whose name was Laodios. He took his wife’s name, dropped the *os* and added *kea* or *cea* to become *Laodikea* or *Laodicea*. *Lao* in Greek means “many people,” and *dikea* or *dicea* means “opinion.”

As soon as Philadelphia becomes degraded, the “brothers” become the “many people,” and its “brotherly love” becomes “the opinions of the many.” Love has degenerated into opinion. Brotherly love is something living, but the opinion of many people is something dead. When brotherly love is lost, the Body relationship is lost. The fellowship of life is cut off as well, leaving only the opinion of men. The opinion of the Lord is lost, and the only things left are the vote of the majority, ballots, and the show of hands. Once Philadelphia falls, it becomes Laodicea.

Lukewarmness and Spiritual Pride

Revelation 3:15 says, “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.” This is the characteristic of Laodicea. Verse 17 says, “Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.” These are the characteristics of Laodicea. In the eyes of the Lord, the

characteristics of Laodicea are lukewarmness and spiritual pride. It is bad enough for it to say, "I am wealthy," but it continues, saying, "and have become rich." The two statements are evil enough, yet it goes on to say that it has "need of nothing." In the eyes of the Lord it is "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." Where does spiritual pride come from? It comes from history. Some were once rich, and they think that they are still rich. The Lord was once merciful to them, and they remember their history. But now they have lost that reality.

The Life That Was Present Being Lost Today

There is hardly any person in Protestantism today who boasts of his own spiritual riches. I have met many Protestant leaders overseas as well as Protestant pastors in China. They all say, "We are poor! We are poor!" It is hard to find a proud person in Sardis. There is only one group of proud people—those who were Philadelphia and who had once kept God's word and not denied His name. Yet the life which they once had is lost. They still remember their history, but they have lost their former life! They remember that they were once wealthy and had become rich and had need of nothing. But they are now poor and blind! There is only one group of people who can boast of their riches—fallen Philadelphia, the Philadelphia which has lost its power and life.

Learning to Humble Ourselves before God

Brothers and sisters, if you want to continue in the way of Philadelphia, remember to humble yourselves before God. Sometimes I hear some brothers say, "God's blessing is with us." God's blessing is with us, but we must be careful when we say this. As soon as we are not careful, we have the flavor of Laodicea: "We are wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing." Let me say that the day we take this position, we have become Laodicea.

Please bear in mind that we have nothing that we have not received. Those around us may be full of death, but we do not need to be conscious of the fact that we are full of life. Those around us may be poor, but we do not need to be conscious of the fact that we are rich. Those who live before the Lord will not be conscious of their own riches. May the Lord be merciful to us that we may learn to live before Him. May we be rich and yet not know that we are rich. It was better for Moses not to know that his face was shining, even though it did shine! Once a person knows himself, he becomes Laodicea, and the result is lukewarmness. Laodicea means to know everything, but in reality to be fervent about nothing. In name it has everything, but it cannot sacrifice its life for anything. It remembers its former glory but forgets its present condition before God. Formerly, it was Philadelphia; today it is Laodicea.

CHOOSING FOR OURSELVES THE PATHWAY OF THE CHURCH

Today I present these four churches to us all. The last three came out of Roman Catholicism, and all four will remain until the Lord Jesus comes again. Today every child of God has to choose the pathway he should take with regard to the church. Do you want to be a Roman Catholic? Do you want to be a Protestant? Do you want to follow the oneness of Roman Catholicism? Do you want to follow the many denominations of Protestantism? Or do you want to take the way of Philadelphia? Or were you once Philadelphia but are now living in the shadow of history and boasting of your former glory, thus becoming Laodicean? When a person becomes proud, forsakes the way of life, and neglects reality, while reminiscing on his history and his own riches, the only thing left will be the opinions of many. Among such ones there can only be discussion and consensus. It appears to be a democratic society but bears no resemblance to the Body relationship. If you do not know the binding, authority, and life of the Body, you do not know brotherly love.

These four churches will remain with us. We must be faithful to continue in Philadelphia. Do not be curious about Roman Catholicism. Those who are curious will always suffer loss. Do not touch the denominations in Protestantism. This is not God's way. The Bible shows us clearly that the Protestant movement as a whole had God's blessing, but that there are also many things which the Lord condemns and rebukes. We do not need to delve into these things or ask about them.

We must learn to stand on the ground of Philadelphia. Always keep the Lord's word and never deny His name. Hold fast the brotherly stand and never be proud! Do not be proud in the face of Catholicism, Protestantism, or the denominations. Once you are proud, you become Laodicea and are no longer Philadelphia! As soon as you show your pride before them, you are no longer Philadelphia but Laodicea. Which way do you want to take? May God bless His children and may the brothers take the upright path with regard to the church.

The God-ordained pathway for the church is the way of Philadelphia. I may not have tens of thousands of cases to prove that the best of God's children speak the same thing and take this same way. But I have hundreds of cases to prove what I am saying. Once the general issue of Protestantism is settled, we need not nit-pick the minor issues. Similarly, once the overall issue of Roman Catholicism is settled, we do not have to be so concerned about its minor issues. The Roman Catholic Church has twenty-one different organizations in China. There is no need to involve ourselves with the Catholic Church, and there is no need to learn about the organizations of its different daughters. Once the overall issue of Roman Catholicism is settled, these twenty-one organizations are no longer a problem. Likewise, once the general issue of Protestantism is settled, we do not need to deal with all of its fifteen hundred denominations one by one.

The Lord's way is unique. It is the way of Philadelphia. Walk on this way, but be careful not to be proud. Once we take the way of Philadelphia, the greatest temptation is to become proud and say, "We are better than you are. Our truths are clearer than yours, and we understand them better than you do! We have only the Lord's name and we are different!" Once we become proud, we fall into Laodicea. Those who follow the Lord have no pride. The Lord will spew the proud ones out of His mouth. May the Lord be merciful to us! This is a warning to all of us: We must not be proud in our speaking! A person must live before the Lord continually before he can refrain from proud words. Only those who live before God continually will not consider themselves rich. Only they will not be proud! (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 50, pp. 779-787)