

REEVALUATING IN THE LIGHT OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT

AN OPEN LETTER

Issue No. 1

The time of the Lord's return is at hand. For this reason we are reevaluating many matters in the light of the judgment seat.... We are deeply convinced that the present time is a preparatory period. If the children of God are to become a harvest that God can reap, they must first become ripe (Mark 4:29). We may say that the time of rapture is at hand. But the most important question is whether or not the church is ready. The Lord Jesus was caught up after His crucifixion; therefore, how can the church take a different path? We deeply believe that in the last days God will lead His children into a deeper experience of the cross of His Son so that they might ascend to the heavens. God's goal today is to quickly perfect the Body of His Son and destroy His enemy in order that He might usher in His kingdom. We can say that all of God's purpose in this age is being hindered by the church. We firmly believe that within a short period of time, God will surely gather His children into oneness so that His church might cease to be an object of hindrance, but rather would work together with God to accomplish His eternal ordination. We humbly desire that we might have a little part in this glorious work under God's hand. (CWWN Vol. 8: The Present Testimony (1), Chapter 2)

The above quote is from "An Open Letter" in Issue No. 1 of The Present Testimony by Brother Watchman Nee published in January of 1928. Today, ninety-two years later, we are even closer to the time of the Lord's return. Today, seeing all the things happening around us, we feel even more deeply that the time of the Lord's return is closer than any of the previous ages.

The Believers' Life and Work in the Light of the Judgment Seat

[W]e shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God...each one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:10, 12) The "judgment-seat of God" of verse 10 is the "judgment seat of Christ" of 2 Corinthians 5:10. The judgment at the judgment seat of God will be held before the millennium, immediately after Christ's return (1 Cor. 4:5; Matt. 16:27; 25:19; Luke 19:15), and the life and work of the believers will be judged at that time (Rev. 22:12; Matt. 16:27; 1 Cor. 4:5; 3:13-15; Matt. 25:19; Luke 19:15). This judgment has nothing to do with a believer's salvation, for everyone who appears at the judgment seat of God will have already been saved. This judgment will judge the believers' life and work after they have been saved. This judgment will determine a believer's reward in the millennial kingdom (Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17, 19; 1 Cor. 3:14-15; Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12; Luke 14:14; 2 Tim. 4:8). The believers will stand before this judgment seat to give account to God of their life and work.

The judgment at the judgment seat of Christ [2 Cor. 5:10] will judge the life and work of the believers and it will determine whether the believers will receive a reward for the "good" or suffer a type of loss for the "bad."... Matthew 16:27 also speaks of the judgment of the believers. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." This verse tells us that at His coming the Lord will reward us according to our works. We find a similar thought in Matthew 25:19. "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." What does this mean? It means that the Lord will look into our record and that we will have to render a full account to Him of our life and work after we were saved. This will occur at the judgment seat of Christ.

We need to pay close attention to 1 Corinthians 3:13-15. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."... [We] must listen to Paul's clear word in 1 Corinthians 3:15. Paul definitely says that if a man's work is burned, he will suffer a loss. What kind of work will be burned? The wood, hay, and stubble mentioned in verse 12. What kind of loss will this be? Although we cannot say with certainty, it is definite that some loss will be incurred. It is not the loss of our salvation, for Paul says of the man whose work is burned that "he himself shall be saved." Nevertheless, we should not be complacent, because Paul concludes the verse by saying that the man will be saved "so as by fire," a phrase which is better rendered as "as through fire." (Life-Study of Romans, Message Twenty-Eight, pp. 336-339)

REEVALUATE OUR LIVING

"Do not be Anxious for Tomorrow"

First we need to reevaluate our living. The Lord said, "Do not be anxious for tomorrow," but "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33, 34). Do we trust in God in everything to live the life of the tent on the earth, having a living that is uprooted from the earth and storing up our treasures in heaven? Or are we still anxious for tomorrow?

Here we come to the crucial matter in verses 19 through 34. Apparently, in this section of the constitution, the Lord is speaking about the dealing of the kingdom people with material riches. Actually, He is dealing with the matter of anxiety. The Lord is wise... In these verses the word "anxious" is used six times (vv. 25, 27, 28, 31, 34) ...

The constitution of the kingdom of the heavens is composed with the Father's life and nature. Although these chapters do not actually use the words "life" and "nature,"

from the context we can see that apart from the Father's divine life and nature, these chapters are in vain. No one would be able to fulfill the requirements of the kingdom of the heavens without having the Father's life and nature... [The] constitution given by the Lord Jesus on the mount was for the sons of God, and it was based upon the life and nature of the Father. Two verses in chapter five indicate this fact. Verse 9 says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God," and verse 48 says, "You, therefore, shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

There is no anxiety in the divine life and the divine nature. Anxiety is not of the divine life, but of the human life, just as barking is of the dog life, not of the bird life. Our human life is a life of anxiety, whereas God's life is a life of enjoyment, rest, comfort, and satisfaction. To God, anxiety is a strange term. With Him, there is no such thing as anxiety. Do you think that God has ever been anxious? Has He ever been afflicted with anxiety? Although God has many desires, He has no anxiety. Our human life, on the contrary, is virtually composed of anxiety; it is constituted with it. Take anxiety away from a human being and the result will be death. A dead man has no anxiety. A figure in a wax museum or a statue in front of a Catholic cathedral has no anxiety, but as long as you are a living person, you cannot escape from anxiety.

My burden in this message is to dig out this basic point. We all have our duty to do. As we are fulfilling our duty, we should not do anything for the sake of our anxiety, because we have a divine life that knows no anxiety. And we have an almighty and all-inclusive heavenly Father who takes care of us in every way. Today's world is filled with anxiety, but the kingdom people should not be anxious about anything. We are not able to add one cubit to our stature by our anxiety (v. 27)... Although we must fulfill our duty, we should have no anxiety. Like the children of Israel who had enough to live on and who gave certain portions away for various purposes, we also should have a harvest and be willing to give a certain amount away for various purposes. Eventually, all we give will be laid up in the heavenly bank, and all our riches will be there.

This also is related to our daily growth in life. Both sloppiness and anxiety will delay your growth in life. No one who is idle, who does not fulfill his duty, will ever grow in life. Everyone who grows in life is diligent and industrious. Of course, this diligence and industriousness will yield a reward, and some material riches will come to you. All these riches must be used, not for your anxiety, but for your giving. Anxiety must go. Do not allow anxiety to occupy your daily living. Because the life of the Father within you knows no anxiety, you should not have any anxiety. Any surplus you have should not be used for the sake of your anxiety. Use it to build up savings in the heavenly bank. I assure you that if you do this, you will grow in life. The only kind of person who grows in life is one who is diligent, yet who does not use his surplus for his anxiety. (Life-study of Matthew, Chapter 22, Section 2)

“Seek First the Kingdom and His Righteousness”

The Lord said, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (v. 33). Here it does not say that we need to beseech but to seek, meaning to find. What we seek should be God’s kingdom and His righteousness. We not only need to pray or beseech, but we also need to find. We have to first find God’s kingdom and His righteousness, and then what we need will be added to us. The first half of this word—“seek first His kingdom and His righteousness”—is a command, and the second half—“all these things will be added to you”—is a promise. He did not say that all these things would be given to us; He said that they would be added to us. Besides God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness, He has to add to us all these things. In a similar way, when we buy something at a store, the store may give us a small gift that does not cost anything. This is something added.

Today God’s kingdom is the church, and God’s righteousness is Christ. If we seek God’s kingdom but are detached from the church and do not live the church life, then we are not truly seeking God’s kingdom. Today God’s kingdom is the church. Romans 14:17 says, “The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” The kingdom of God is the church, and the righteousness of God is Christ. When we come to the church and live the church life, we are seeking the kingdom of God. When we live Christ, we are seeking God’s righteousness. As a result, we have both the kingdom and righteousness. In other words, when we have the church life, we have Christ as well.

Does the heavenly Father give us only these things? No, He adds to us our food, our clothing, our transportation, our traveling, and our housing. All that we need regarding food, clothing, housing, and transportation are added to us. I have been saved for sixty-two years and have been serving the Lord for fifty-five years. I have never seen anyone who seeks God’s kingdom and His righteousness suffer from hunger, coldness, or a lack of food, clothing, housing, or transportation. On the contrary, all those whom I saw were in the church, living Christ and living the kingdom life. Ultimately, they had God’s kingdom and His righteousness, and God also added to them the four essential requirements for living—food, clothing, housing, and transportation. Hence, these three verses in Matthew 6 contain a command, a warning, a fact, and a promise. (Being Up to Date for the Rebuilding of the Temple, Chapter 3, Section 1)

This verse is a great, rich promise. If we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, He will not only give us His kingdom and His righteousness but also clothing, food, and other necessities of life... If the Lord opens our eyes to see this precious promise, we will see that entering the kingdom of the heavens is no longer as difficult as we thought.

Many brothers and sisters feel that they should love the Lord, give their all to follow Him, and pursue the kingdom of the heavens. However, they think that if they love the Lord, give their all, follow Him, and pursue the kingdom, they will have no way to make a living. Therefore, they live in the world for the sake of their livelihood and cannot follow the Lord in a good way. They also think that they will be forgiven because they had no other choice but to take care of their livelihood; however, this concept is wrong. Since the Lord promised that He would bear the responsibility for our livelihood, we should not allow these things to entangle us and prevent us from following the Lord in the way that enables us to pursue the kingdom of God. Since the Lord promises that all these things would be added if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, it is best to pursue the kingdom of God. If we are willing to pursue the kingdom of God today, God will not only give us His kingdom but also add all the things we need for our living today. Therefore, it is easy to pursue the kingdom of God based on this promise. (Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 5, Chapter 2, Section 25)

“You cannot serve God and mammon.”

The apostles called people to be delivered from sins and turn to the Lord, but the Lord called people to be delivered from mammon to follow Him (Matt. 6:24). Many preach the gospel of prosperity, but the Lord preached the gospel of poverty. The age is coming to an end, and one of the signs of the Lord's coming is that people are storing up treasures (James 5:3) ... The harvest needs to be “dried of all the earthly water” (Rev. 14:15, note 2) to be ripe for reaping...

WHERE TREASURE IS, THERE THE HEART IS

We say that we are giving our heart to the Lord, yet our mammon is in the bank. First, let us consecrate the mammon in our bank, and then the heart will follow. Only the Lord can see our heart, because only He is the one who searches the inward parts and the hearts (Rev. 2:23). This is the reason the Lord said that where a man's treasure is, there is his heart also (Matt. 6:21). It is very easy for us to set our heart on the things above. All we have to do is to send our money there. It is impossible for our heart to be set on the things above while our mammon is in the bank below. Every man's heart is set on the earthly things because his mammon is on earth. The Lord never tries to eradicate the root of sin in us. Similarly, He never asks us to give up mammon to love God. He only says, "If your heart is truly after God, you have to place your mammon on God's side. If you bring your mammon to God, your heart will truly love God." The Lord does not ask us to give Him our heart, but He does ask us to bring Him our money. Our mammon must be deposited in heaven first before our heart will go to heaven. When we say that we want to hand ourselves over, we have to bring our heart and mammon to God at the same time. Let me shout this again: The Lord does not say that we should not love mammon and love God instead. Rather, He says that

we should send our mammon to heaven. This is because our heart follows our mammon. Not only does the world's heart follow mammon, even a Christian's heart follows mammon. Our heart will always go where our mammon is....

We can feel our love for the Lord by offering up our mammon. Moreover, we should not just offer up what we have in excess. We have to offer until our heart hurts. When the heart hurts, we know that our heart has gone out to where our money is, and we will find joy. It will be easy for us to love God, and our love for Him will flow out. Let me repeat this: Where our treasure is, there is our heart also. Following this statement the Lord said that no man can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). When the Lord says no man, He means no man. No man can serve two masters. If we want to serve God, our money has to go. I do not aspire to be anything in this world. I only aspire to gain God. Let me say this in a most respectful way: Our God can be bought with money. No one can accumulate mammon on earth yet have his heart in heaven. We should not fool ourselves. (CWWN, Vol. 61: Matured Leadings in the Lord's Recovery (1), Chapter 9, Section 6)

Finally, I would like to say that during the past few days I have had a deep feeling that our handing over of ourselves opens the way for us to love the Lord. If a man does not hand over himself, he can never succeed in loving the Lord. Mr. F. B. Meyer was a person very experienced in the matter of consecration. One young sister consecrated herself over ten times at the age of twelve. She kept saying that she consecrated her heart to the Lord, but there was no breakthrough. She said to Mr. Meyer, "I do not know why I fail all the time. Whenever I pray and give my heart to the Lord, I still feel as if it is with me." Mr. Meyer answered, "Tell the Lord that you cannot give your heart to Him, and ask Him to take it away instead."

Let me say this: Our heart cannot go to Him, because it is stuck in the world and in its treasures, the mammon. This is the reason our mouth can say as much as we want about loving the Lord but our heart will not follow. If we send our treasures and our mammon to the Lord, our heart will follow. We cannot control our heart, and we cannot consecrate ourselves. The Lord said that where our treasure is, there is our heart also (Matt. 6:21). How do we consecrate? There is no need to deal with the heart, just deal with the treasure. When we give the Lord our treasure, our heart will go to Him. The happiest experience on earth is when our heart goes to the Lord. We can jump up and sing, "Hallelujah!" A Christian suffers when his heart cannot love the Lord. In order for our heart to love the Lord, we must not pay attention only to our heart, but to our treasure. Once we hand over our treasure, our heart will surely follow. We can only love the Lord when we hand over ourselves. (CWWN Vol. 61: Matured Leadings in the Lord's Recovery (1), Chapter 16, Section 4)

Be Filled with the Spirit Inwardly and Outwardly Every Day

In order to have this kind of living, we need to be filled with the Spirit inwardly and outwardly every day (see *The Way to Practice the Lord's Present Move*, ch. 2). If a balloon is not filled with air, it cannot ascend. Why do we need to have much and thorough prayer? It is for us to be filled both inwardly and outwardly. Why do we need to confess our sins and repent? It is because they are the requirements for us to be filled with the Spirit. Without a living that is daily filled with the Spirit both inwardly and outwardly, we cannot have a living that has dispensational value.

Repent and Obey

Merely to say that we need to claim the essential and economical aspects of the one Spirit by faith, though, is still too objective. Acts 2:38 and 5:32b tell us that if we are going to receive, enjoy, and experience the Spirit, we need to repent and we have to obey. God gives the Spirit to those who obey Him. If we mean business to believe that the Spirit has been given to us within essentially and has been poured out upon us outwardly and economically, we have to repent of all of our sins, our weaknesses, our filthiness, our mistakes, our wrongdoings, our offenses, and whatever is an evil and sinful thing in the eyes of God, toward God, and toward man. You must have a thorough repentance. Then you obey. To do this is to rise up. You can never go without rising up.

In the New Testament the principle is that we need to rise up and go. You can only go by rising up. How can we rise up? A balloon can only rise up by being filled within with air. Just to have the air within the balloon, however, will not make the balloon buoyant. The air outside the balloon is also needed. When the balloon is filled with air inwardly and outwardly, it becomes buoyant. We all need to go, but shall we go by our own effort and our own resolution? This does not mean anything. We need to go by rising up, by being filled with the consummated Spirit.

The Spirit has been consummated and has been breathed into us and poured upon us. He is here waiting for us to participate in Him. The food and drink may be here, but you can participate in the food and drink only by eating and drinking. How are you going to drink the Spirit, and how are you going to eat the Spirit? By repenting and obeying. Sometimes a mother may tell a naughty child that if he does not behave, he will get nothing to eat. To obey is to behave. We all need to behave by obeying what the Lord says. Then we will get something divine to eat, with which to be filled.

We need to obey and repent to empty out all the dirt, the filthiness, within us to be filled with the Spirit. We need to get ourselves cleared up fully. We cannot redeem ourselves, but we have to repent. The Lord has redeemed us, and His blood has been shed for the forgiveness of our sins. He is ready to forgive us and wash us all the time, yet the forgiveness and the washing of the blood need our repentance. Without

repentance, even God cannot forgive us. The basic principle for both the unbelievers and the believers is that we all need to repent. God cannot forgive anyone unless that person repents. First John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Confessing is the practical repentance. If you repent, surely you would confess. You would confess specific sins, failures, and wrongdoings.

Every day that we live on this earth we get dirty to some extent. This is why we need to wash our hands at least several times a day. This earth is full of dirt, which requires our regular washing. Even our physical body itself discharges waste. Because we sweat, we need to wash regularly. In the spiritual realm we also need much washing, but the washing, the forgiveness, depends upon our repenting.

The Need of Thorough Confession

If we are going to rise up, we have to repent and make a thorough confession. Some may say that they were saved years ago and have already been forgiven of all their sins. I agree with this. However, you cannot say that because you washed your hands two weeks ago, you do not need to wash your hands anymore. Neither can you say that you took a shower two months ago, so there is no need for you to take another shower. This is wrong. Even after half a day you need to wash again. In like manner, you need to make a thorough confession of all your shortcomings, weaknesses, wrongdoings, and sinfulness to have a conscience without offense toward God and men (Acts 24:16). Man may not know what you have been doing, but God surely knows. According to Matthew 12:36-37, every man will have to render an account in the day of judgment of every idle word that they speak. It is possible to deceive man, but you cannot deceive God. If we mean business with Him, we need to repent and make a thorough confession.

It would be wonderful if all of us could spend one or two hours with the Lord personally to make a thorough confession. I once spent more than two hours in fellowship with the Lord to make a thorough confession, and that was after I had been saved for at least ten years. It is always better to make such a confession by yourself. Do not make confession corporately. Corporate confession is not so good. You can never make a thorough confession corporately, because you are afraid of other people hearing you. We all need a private time to confess everything to God. We do not need to be afraid of Him knowing our sins since He knows them all already. Since He knows the record of all our sinful doings, it is best for us to ask Him to rid us of that record by confessing. All of us need this.

In order to go by rising up, we need to make a thorough confession—a fine, detailed confession. We need to confess all the small things. Even if you were unhappy with a

brother, you have to confess that unhappiness. If you were unhappy with your wife, you need the confession of that unhappiness. You have to confess all your sins. Do not go to the Lord in a rough way. It is not sufficient to tell the Lord, "Lord, You know I am sinful. I don't have the time to confess everything, but thank You that You shed Your blood and that Your blood washes me." In order to have a fine forgiveness, you must make a fine confession, confessing to the Lord in a detailed way. Everyone who has done this and who does this can testify that after a thorough confession, they are filled with the Spirit within and clothed with the Spirit without. They have the inward, essential filling of the Spirit and the outward, economical filling of the Spirit. (The Way to Practice the Lord's Present Move, Chapter 2, Section 3)

"Going out of the World" to Meet the bridegroom

The ten virgins are "going out of the world" to meet the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1, note 5) ... In order for the virgins to meet the bridegroom, the requirement is that their vessels be filled with oil (Matt. 25:4). In order for us to redeem the time, we must be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:16, 18).

Watchfulness and Readiness

Matthew 25:1-13 is...a section on watchfulness and readiness. The way to be watchful is through the infilling of the Holy Spirit; it is by having the extra portion of oil. By ourselves we can be neither watchful nor ready. The only way to have the extra portion of oil is by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. This is the way for us to be watchful and ready.

Virgins signify believers in the aspect of life (2 Cor. 11:2). Believers, who are the kingdom people, are like chaste virgins, bearing the Lord's testimony (the lamp) in the dark age and going out of the world to meet the Lord. For this they need not only the indwelling, but also the fullness of the Spirit of God.

[T]he virgins took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. Lamps signify the spirit of the believers (Prov. 20:27), which contains the Spirit of God as the oil (Rom. 8:16). The believers shine with the light of the Spirit of God from within their spirit. Thus, they become the light of the world, like a lamp shining in the darkness of this age (Matt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:15-16) to bear the testimony of the Lord for the glorification of God.

The virgins went forth. This signifies that the believers are going out of the world to meet the coming Christ. The virgins do not linger or settle in any place. Instead, they are going out of the world. In one of his writings, D. M. Panton said that the world was just a pathway to him and at the end of this pathway there would be a grave. If the Lord delays His coming back, the world eventually will afford me only a resting

place, a tomb in which to lie as I wait for the Lord's coming. We are not settled in this world. We are going out of the world.

[F]ive of the virgins were foolish and five were prudent. The Lord Jesus mentions the foolish first because in the bearing of responsibility the problem is not with the prudent ones, but with the foolish ones.

[T]he reason they were foolish: "For the foolish, when they took their lamps, did not take oil with them." (v.3) Oil signifies the Spirit of God (Isa. 61:1; Heb. 1:9). The foolish ones were foolish because they had oil only in the lamp, but not the extra portion of oil in the vessel. In addition to the regenerating Spirit, they did not have the infilling Spirit, the extra portion of the Holy Spirit.

"But the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps." (v.4) Man is a vessel made for God (Rom. 9:21, 23-24), and man's personality is in his soul. Hence, vessels here signify the soul of the believers. The five prudent virgins not only have oil in their lamps, but also take oil in their vessels. Having oil in their lamps signifies that they have the Spirit of God dwelling in their spirit (Rom. 8:9, 16), and taking oil in their vessels signifies that they have the fullness of the Spirit of God saturating their souls.

Through regeneration we have the Spirit of God in our spirit. This causes our lamp to burn. But the question is whether or not we have the extra portion of the Holy Spirit filling our soul. Although we have the oil in our lamp, we need the extra portion of the oil in our soul. This signifies that the Spirit must spread from within our spirit to every part of our soul. Then in our soul we shall have an extra amount of the Holy Spirit. If we have this extra portion, we are prudent. If we do not have it, we are foolish. In other words, if we are indifferent to the infilling of the Holy Spirit, we are foolish. If we are wise, we shall pray, "Lord, have mercy on me. I want to have Your Spirit not only in my spirit, but also in my soul. Lord, I need the infilling of the Spirit. I need the extra portion of the Holy Spirit to fill my entire being." Without this extra portion of the Spirit, we cannot be watchful or ready. In order to be watchful and ready, we need the infilling of the Holy Spirit, the spreading of the Spirit Himself from our spirit to every part of our inward being. (Life-Study of Matthew, Message Sixty-Four, pp. 746-751)