

Message Three

Loving the Lord with the First Love, Enjoying the Lord as the Tree of Life, and Being the Golden Lampstand as the Testimony of Jesus for the Building Up of the New Jerusalem as the Goal of God's Eternal Economy

Scripture Reading: Rev. 2:1-7; Eph. 6:24; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2 Cor. 11:2-3; John 14:21, 23; 21:15-17

- I. In Revelation 2:7 the tree of life signifies the crucified (implied in the tree as a piece of wood—1 Pet. 2:24) and resurrected (implied in the life of God—John 11:25) Christ, who today is in the church, the consummation of which will be the New Jerusalem, in which the crucified and resurrected Christ will be the tree of life for the nourishment and enjoyment of all God's redeemed people for eternity (Rev. 22:2, 14; cf. Exo. 15:25-26).**
- II. The churches in Asia, including the church in Ephesus, had turned away from the apostle Paul's betrothing ministry (2 Tim. 1:15; 2 Cor. 11:2-3); thus, we see that approximately twenty-six years later, when the apostle John wrote the epistle to the church in Ephesus, they had left their first love and lost the genuine enjoyment of Christ as the tree of life (Rev. 2:4-5, 7):**
- A. The genuine ministry of the New Testament always stirs us up to love the Lord Jesus with the first love, strengthening us in the simplicity of eating and enjoying Christ as the tree of life for our life supply—2 Cor. 11:2-3; 3:3-6.
 - B. To love the Lord with the first love is to give Him the preeminence, the first place, in all things, being constrained by His love to regard and take Him as everything in our life—Rev. 2:4-5; Col. 1:18b; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Mark 12:30; Psa. 73:25-26.
 - C. Paul's concluding word in the Epistle to the Ephesians is a blessing of grace to "all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility" (6:24); in the book of Ephesians the phrase *in love*, which is rich in feeling, is used repeatedly (1:4; 3:17; 4:2, 15-16; 5:2).
 - D. The goal of the book of Ephesians is to bring us into love, God's inner substance, that we may enjoy God as love and enjoy His presence in the sweetness of the divine love and thereby love others as Christ did—1:15; 2:4; 3:19; 5:2, 25; 6:23; cf. 1 John 4:16-19.
 - E. The church in Ephesus failed in the matter of loving the Lord; such a failure became the main reason for the failure of the church throughout the ages—Matt. 24:12; Mark 12:30-31; cf. Dan. 7:25.
 - F. There are four main points in the Lord's epistle to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7; these four main points are four words that begin with the letter *l*—*love, life, light, and lampstand*:
 1. We must give the Lord Jesus the preeminence in every way and in everything to recover the first love; then we will enjoy Him as the tree of life, and this life will become the light of life—John 8:12; Eph. 5:8-9, 13.
 2. Then we will be shining as the golden lampstand, as the testimony of Jesus; otherwise, the lampstand will be removed from us—Rev. 1:9-12, 20:
 - a. The golden lampstand symbolizes the Triune God—the Father as the substance is embodied in the Son, the Son as the embodiment is expressed through the Spirit, the Spirit is fully realized and expressed as the churches, and the churches are the testimony of Jesus—Exo. 25:31-40; Zech. 4:2-10; Rev. 1:10-12.
 - b. In the divine thought the golden lampstand is actually a living and growing tree with calyxes and almond blossoms; thus, the lampstand portrays the Triune God embodied in Christ as a living, golden tree of resurrection—growing, branching, budding,

and blossoming in us, with us, by us, and out of us as the fruit of the light (the fruit of the Spirit), which is good in nature, righteous in procedure, and real in expression, that God may be expressed as reality in our daily walk—Exo. 25:31, 35; Eph. 5:8-9; Gal. 5:22-23; John 12:36.

- G. Eating the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life; Christ as the tree of life is “good for food” (Gen. 2:9) so that we may eat Him for our enjoyment and be constituted with Him for God’s expression (1:26; John 6:57, 63):
 1. The content of the church life depends on the enjoyment of Christ—the more we enjoy Him, the richer the content will be; but to enjoy Christ requires us to love Him with the first love.
 2. If we leave our first love toward the Lord, we will miss the enjoyment of Christ and lose the testimony of Jesus; consequently, the lampstand will be removed from us—Rev. 2:1-7.
 3. These three things—loving the Lord, enjoying the Lord, and being the testimony of the Lord—go together.

III. The Lord’s recovery is a recovery of loving the Lord Jesus with the first love, the best love, and of eating the Lord Jesus as the tree of life for the building up of the organic Body of Christ, which is the building up of the New Jerusalem as the goal of God’s eternal economy—Eph. 4:15-16; Rev. 22:14:

- A. To enjoy Christ as the tree of life, we must tell Him all the time, “Lord Jesus, I love You”; if we have a burning love toward the Lord Jesus, giving Him the first place in all things, we will enjoy all that He is—2:4-5, 7; 1 Cor. 2:9.
- B. To believe in the Lord is to receive Him as life, and to love the Lord is to enjoy Him as life, to enjoy the very person whom we have received; faith is given to us by God so that by it we may receive Christ as our life; love issues out of such a wonderful faith and enables us to live out all the riches of the Triune God in Christ as our life—2 Pet. 1:1; Heb. 12:1-2a; 2 Cor. 4:13; Gal. 5:6; John 1:12-13; 21:15-17; Col. 3:4.
- C. The very life that we received when we believed in the Lord Jesus is a person, and the only way to apply and enjoy this person is by loving Him with the first love; since the Lord Jesus as our life is a person, we need a new contact with Him to enjoy His present presence at this very moment and day by day—John 11:25; 14:5-6; 1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rev. 2:4-7; Col. 1:18b; Rom. 6:4; 7:6.
- D. “Give yourself to love the Lord. No other way is so prevailing, and no other way is so safe, so rich, and so full of enjoyment. Just love Him. Do not care for anything else”—*Life and Building as Portrayed in the Song of Songs*, pp. 23-24.
- E. When we love Him, He will manifest Himself to us, and He and the Father will come to us and make Their abode with us (John 14:21, 23); thus, we need to pray prayers such as, “Lord, show me Your love, and constrain me with Your love that I may love You and live to You”; “Lord, keep me loving You all the time”; we must continually tell the Lord, “Lord Jesus, I love You; Lord, keep me in Your love! Attract me with Yourself! Keep me all the time in Your loving and present presence.”
- F. The more we love Him, the more we will have His presence in our fellowship with Him; for us to be in the Lord’s recovery in an intrinsic way is for us to love the Lord Jesus; if we do not love Him, we are finished with His recovery—S. S. 1:1-4; 1 Cor. 2:9; 16:22.
- G. Based upon this, we should sing and pray, “I love my Lord, but with no love of mine, / For I have none to give; / I love Thee, Lord, but all the love is Thine, / For by Thy love I live” (*Hymns*, #546, stanza 1); “Something every heart is loving: / If not Jesus, none can rest; / Lord, my heart to Thee is given; / Take it, for it loves Thee best” (*Hymns*, #547, stanza 1).