International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones
Fall 2012

THE UNIQUE WORK IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

(Thursday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

The Pattern of the Lord Jesus— the Work of Christ in His Human Living and Earthly Ministry

Scripture Reading: John 1:18; 4:34; 5:19, 30; 6:57; 7:18; 14:9-11; 17:4

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.
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 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 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 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.
John 14:9 Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how is it that you say, Show us the Father?
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 14:11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; but if not, believe because of the works themselves.
John 17:4 I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do.

I. The work of Christ in His human living is a pattern for all who aspire to participate in the unique work in the Lord's recovery—Phil. 2:7-8:

Phil 2:7 But emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men;
Phil 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross.

A. The human living of the Lord Jesus was His work—John 6:57a:

John 6:57a As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, …

1. With Christ in His human living, there was no difference between life and work; His life was His work, and His work was His life—Mark 1:14-45:

Mark 1:14 And after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,
Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the gospel.
Mark 1:16 And passing beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, Simon's brother, casting a net in the sea, for they were fishermen.
Mark 1:17 And Jesus said to them, Come after Me, and I will cause you to become fishers of men.
Mark 1:18 And immediately leaving the nets, they followed Him.
Mark 1:19 And going on a little, He saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who also were in their boat, mending the nets.
Mark 1:20 And immediately He called them, and leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, they went after Him.
Mark 1:21 And they went into Capernaum, and immediately, on the Sabbath, He entered into the synagogue and taught.

Mark 1:22 And they were astounded at His teaching, for He taught them as One having authority and not like the scribes.
Mark 1:23 And immediately, there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, saying,
Mark 1:24 What have we to do with You, Jesus, Nazarene? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are-the Holy One of God.
Mark 1:25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be quiet and come out of him!
Mark 1:26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and shouting with a loud voice, came out of him.
Mark 1:27 And they were all amazed, so that they discussed among themselves, saying, What is this? A new teaching! With authority He orders even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.
Mark 1:28 And immediately the report concerning Him went out everywhere into all the surrounding region of Galilee.
Mark 1:29 And immediately, going out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.
Mark 1:30 And Simon's mother-in-law was lying down with a fever, and immediately they told Him about her.
Mark 1:31 And He came to her and raised her up, holding her hand, and the fever left her, and she served them.
Mark 1:32 And when evening fell and the sun had set, they brought to Him all those who were ill and those who were demon-possessed.
Mark 1:33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door.
Mark 1:34 And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and He cast out many demons and did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.
Mark 1:35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still night, He went out and went away to a deserted place, and there He prayed.
Mark 1:36 And Simon and those with him hunted for Him,
Mark 1:37 And they found Him and said to Him, All are seeking You.
Mark 1:38 And He said to them, Let us go elsewhere into the nearby towns that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I came out.
Mark 1:39 And He went preaching in their synagogues in the whole of Galilee and casting out the demons.
Mark 1:40 And a leper came to Him, entreating Him and falling on his knees and saying to Him, If You are willing, You can cleanse me.
Mark 1:41 And He was moved with compassion, and stretching out His hand, He touched him and said to him, I am willing; be cleansed!
Mark 1:42 And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.
Mark 1:43 And sternly charging him, immediately He thrust him out,
Mark 1:44 And said to him, See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing the things which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.
Mark 1:45 But he went out and began to proclaim it much and to spread the matter abroad, so that He could no longer enter openly into a city, but He stayed outside in deserted places. And they came to Him from everywhere.

a. The Lord Jesus lived His work; He lived His ministry.

b. With Him there was only one thing—His life, which was His work, His ministry—Luke 4:42-43.

Luke 4:42 And when day came, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds sought Him, and they came up to Him and tried to hold on to Him so that He would not go away from them.
Luke 4:43 But He said to them, I must announce the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this I was sent.

c. The Lord Jesus worked everywhere and all the time because His work was His life, His life was His move, and His move was His work.

2. Just as Christ's life was His work, so our living as Christians should be our working; we need a living that matches our ministry for the Lord, a living that is the ground and support of our service for Him—John 6:57b; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 6:3-11.

John 6:57b … so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
2 Cor 6:3 We give no occasion of stumbling in anything that the ministry may not be faulted,
2 Cor 6:4 But in everything we commend ourselves as ministers of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,
2 Cor 6:5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings;
2 Cor 6:6 In pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in a holy spirit, in unfeigned love,
2 Cor 6:7 In the word of truth, in the power of God; through the weapons of righteousness on the right and on the left,
2 Cor 6:8 Through glory and dishonor, through evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true;
2 Cor 6:9 As unknown and yet well known; as dying and yet behold we live; as being disciplined and yet not being put to death;
2 Cor 6:10 As made sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things.
2 Cor 6:11 Our mouth is opened to you, Corinthians; our heart is enlarged.

B. In His human living Christ was found in fashion as a man, even in the form of a slave—Phil. 2:7-8:

Phil 2:7 But emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men;
Phil 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross.

1. The Lord's work in His human living to build up the fashion of a man and to take the form of a slave was the foundation and background of His ministry—Luke 4:14-19.

Luke 4:14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. And reports about Him went out through all the surrounding region.
Luke 4:15 And He taught in their synagogues and was glorified by all.
Luke 4:16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and according to His custom He entered on the Sabbath day into the synagogue and stood up to read.
Luke 4:17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,
Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to announce the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed,
Luke 4:19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of jubilee."

2. As those who want to serve the Lord, we need to have a work not by doing but by living, building up a work that will be the solid ground and strong background for our coming service to the Lord—Acts 16:1-3a; 2 Tim. 4:5, 11b; Col. 4:17.

Acts 16:1 And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple named Timothy was there, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but of a Greek father;
Acts 16:2 He was well attested to by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium.
Acts 16:3a Paul wanted this one to go forth with him; …
2 Tim 4:5 But you, be sober in all things, suffer evil, do the work of an evangelist, fully accomplish your ministry.
2 Tim 4:11b … Take Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for the ministry.
Col 4:17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it.

C. In His human living the Lord Jesus carried out the work of declaring God— John 1:18:

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

1. His human living declared God; thus, what others saw in the human living of the Lord Jesus was the declaration of God in Him—14:9-11.

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how is it that you say, Show us the Father?

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 14:11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; but if not, believe because of the works themselves.

2. If we want to serve the Lord today, in our daily living there should be a work that declares God—Phil. 1:20-21a.

Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.

Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ …

D. The Lord's work in His human living included His expressing the Father; Christ did not express Himself—the Father was expressed through Him in His human living—John 14:9; 7:17-18; 17:4a.

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how is it that you say, Show us the Father?

John 7:17 If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.

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.

John 17:4a I have glorified You on earth, …

E. In His human living the Lord Jesus cared for the things of the Father; in His humanity Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, cared for the things of the Father, for God's interests—Luke 2:43-49.

Luke 2:43 And when they had completed the days, while they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, and His parents did not know it.

Luke 2:44 But supposing that He was in the company, they went a day's journey and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances.

Luke 2:45 And when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem searching for Him.

Luke 2:46 And after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them and questioning them.

Luke 2:47 And all those who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

Luke 2:48 And when they saw Him, they were astounded; and His mother said to Him, Child, why have You treated us like this? Behold, Your father and I, being greatly distressed, have been seeking You.

Luke 2:49 And He said to them, Why is it that you were seeking Me? Did you not know that I must be in the things of My Father?

II. In His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus did the work that the Father had given Him to do—John 17:4:

John 17:4 I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do.

A. In His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus preached the gospel (Mark 1:14-15, 38; Luke 4:18a); served people (Matt. 20:28a); sought and saved the lost, the sinners (Luke 19:1-10); preached the kingdom (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15a); sowed the seed of the kingdom (Matt. 13:3; Mark 4:3, 26-29); and taught the truths (Matt. 7:28-29; John 8:40, 45-46).

Mark 1:14 And after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the gospel.

Mark 1:38 And He said to them, Let us go elsewhere into the nearby towns that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I came out.
Luke 4:18a "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to announce the gospel to the poor; …
Matt 20:28a Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, …
Luke 19:1 And He entered and was passing through Jericho.
Luke 19:2 And behold, there was a man whose name was called Zaccheus; and he was a chief tax collector, and he was rich.
Luke 19:3 And he was seeking to see Jesus, who He was, and could not because of the crowd, for he was small in stature.
Luke 19:4 And he ran on ahead and climbed up in a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.
Luke 19:5 And as He came to the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay in your house.
Luke 19:6 And he hurried and came down, and received Him, rejoicing.
Luke 19:7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He has gone in to lodge with a sinful man.
Luke 19:8 And Zaccheus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, the half of my possessions, Lord, I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four times as much.
Luke 19:9 And Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham.
Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost.
Matt 4:17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.
Mark 1:15a And saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near. …
Matt 13:3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went out to sow.
Mark 4:3 Listen! Behold, the sower went out to sow.
Mark 4:26 And He said, So is the kingdom of God: as if a man cast seed on the earth,
Mark 4:27 And sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and lengthens-how, he does not know.
Mark 4:28 The earth bears fruit by itself: first a blade, then an ear, then full grain in the ear.
Mark 4:29 But when the fruit is ripe, immediately he sends forth the sickle, because the harvest has come.
Matt 7:28 And when Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astounded at His teaching,
Matt 7:29 For He taught them as One having authority and not like their scribes.
John 8:40 But now you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; Abraham did not do this.
John 8:45 But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.
John 8:46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? Since I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?

B. In His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus was one with the Father and had no work, no will, no word, no glory, and no ambition for Himself—5:43; 10:25; 3:34a; 14:24; 7:16-18; 12:47-50:

John 5:43 I have come in the name of My Father, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.
John 10:25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe. The works which I do in My Father's name, these testify concerning Me;
John 3:34a For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, …
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 7:17 If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.
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.
John 12:47 And if anyone hears My words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

John 12:48 He who rejects Me and does not receive My words has one who judges him; the word which I have spoken, that will judge him in the last day.
John 12:49 For I have not spoken from Myself; but the Father who sent Me, He Himself has given Me commandment, what to say and what to speak.
John 12:50 And I know that His commandment is eternal life. The things therefore that I speak, even as the Father has said to Me, so I speak.

1. Christ was one with the Father, living a life that showed that He and the Father were one; His looking up to the Father in heaven indicated that as the Son on earth sent by the Father in heaven, He was one with the Father, trusting in the Father—10:30; 17:22; Matt. 14:19.
   John 10:30 I and the Father are one.
   John 17:22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;
   Matt 14:19 And after commanding the crowds to recline on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds.
2. The Lord Jesus lived the Father—John 6:57a:
   John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, …
   a. Christ lived on earth not merely by the Father or through the Father but because of the Father; His living had a cause, and that cause was the Father—v. 57a.
      John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, …
   b. Today Christ should be the cause of our daily living; we should live not only by Him and through Him but also because of Him—v. 57b.
      John 6:57b … so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
3. The Lord Jesus did not do anything from Himself but always denied the self—5:19; Matt. 16:24.
   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.
   Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

C. In His earthly ministry Christ worked with the Father—John 5:17:
   John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father is working until now, and I also am working.
   1. The Lord Jesus never did any work without the Father but always with the Father; this required the absolute denial of the self—Matt. 16:24.
      Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
   2. When Christ worked with the Father, He worked with the Father who was with Him and in Him; while Christ the Son was working on earth, the Father was living in Him and working with Him—John 14:9-11.
      John 14:9 Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how is it that you say, Show us the Father?
      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 14:11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; but if not, believe because of the works themselves.

D. The Lord Jesus worked in the name of the Father—10:25:
   John 10:25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe. The works which I do in My Father's name, these testify concerning Me;
   1. Having come in the Father's name, He never did anything in His own name; He did everything in the Father's name—5:43.
      John 5:43 I have come in the name of My Father, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.

2. For the Lord Jesus to work in the name of the Father meant that He worked as the Father; He was working with the Father as one—10:30.

John 10:30 I and the Father are one.

E. In His work the Lord Jesus did not seek His own will but the will of the One who had sent Him—5:30:

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.

1. He denied Himself, and He rejected His idea, intention, and purpose.
2. He never sought anything of Himself or for Himself—He only sought the will of the Father, who had sent Him—6:38.

John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.

3. The Lord's food was to do the will of the Father and to finish His work—4:34.

John 4:34 Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work.

4. We should not have our own purpose; instead, we should have only God's will—Rom. 12:2.

Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

F. In His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus never spoke His own word; what He spoke was the Father's speaking—John 7:16, 18; 12:49-50; 14:10:

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.

John 12:49 For I have not spoken from Myself; but the Father who sent Me, He Himself has given Me commandment, what to say and what to speak.

John 12:50 And I know that His commandment is eternal life. The things therefore that I speak, even as the Father has said to Me, so I speak.

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.

1. Instead of speaking His own words, He spoke God—1:18.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

2. When He spoke God's word, God was expressed through His speaking; God came forth from Him through His words—7:17-18, 46.

John 7:17 If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.

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.

John 7:46 The attendants answered, Never has a man spoken as this man has.

3. The Lord Jesus lived a life of speaking God, a life of expressing God for His glory—v. 18.

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.

G. The Lord Jesus could say, "I do not seek My glory"—8:50:

John 8:50 But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks glory for Me and judges.

1. With Him there was no ground for the self—Matt. 16:24.

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

2. He did not seek His own glory but the glory of the Father who sent Him— John 7:18.

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.

H. If we would participate in the unique work in the Lord's recovery today, our self must be denied, our purpose must be rejected, and our ambition must be given up; furthermore, we must know only to work with the Lord by allowing Christ to live in us, to work in us, and to make us the duplication of Himself for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose—12:24-26; Rom. 8:2, 29; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:9; 3:11.

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.

John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

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.

Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Eph 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Excerpts from the Ministry:

CHRIST'S WORK IN HIS HUMAN LIVING AND EARTHLY MINISTRY

Through His incarnation Christ became a man living on earth. The time required for Christ to become a man was much longer than that required for Him to create the universe, and the time of His work in His human living was far greater than the time of His work in becoming a man, thirty years compared to nine months. For thirty years the Lord Jesus was working in His human living. We may wonder why He, the Creator, the eternal God, spent such a long period of time simply living on earth. According to the record of the New Testament, we do not see much of what the Lord did during those years. It may seem to us that He only lived and that He did not do any work at all. However, the human living of the Lord Jesus was His work.

With Christ in His human living, there was no difference between life and work. His life was His work, and His work was His life. We may say that the Lord Jesus lived His work; He lived His ministry. With Him there was just one thing—His life, which was His work, His ministry. Whatever He did, whatever He spoke, and wherever He went were all a part of His life and work. He was continually living and working. For this reason, we cannot say how much the Lord Jesus worked. He worked everywhere and all the time because His work was His life, His life was His move, and His move was His work. With the Lord Jesus every aspect of His life was the same. With Him there was no distinction between life and work.

Just as Christ's life was His work, so our living as Christians should be our working. This means that we need a living that matches our ministry for the Lord, a living that is the ground and support of our service for Him. Because we need such a living, it takes many years before one who desires to serve the Lord can be truly useful to Him in His ministry.

Being Found in Fashion as a Man, Even in the Form of a Slave

In His human living Christ was found in fashion as a man, even in the form of a slave. Paul says that He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross" (Phil. 2:7-8). The likeness of men denotes the outward appearance of His humanity. He appeared outwardly to men as a man, but inwardly He had the reality of deity. Furthermore, when Christ became in the likeness of men, entering into the condition of humanity, He was found in fashion as a man by men. The word "fashion" signifies the outward guise, the semblance. What Christ looked like in His humanity was found by men to be in fashion as a man.

Philippians 2:7 says that Christ even took the form of a slave. In His incarnation the Lord Jesus did not alter His divine nature but only His outward expression of the form of God (Phil. 2:6) to that of a slave. This was not a change of essence but of state.

Although Christ was God in the form of God, He was seen by others as being in fashion as a man. Before His incarnation He was, of course, not in fashion as a man. He was only in the form of God. But after He became a man it was necessary for Him to live and work in such a way as to build up the fashion of man in order to be found by others in fashion as a man. It took the Lord Jesus thirty years to build up such a fashion of man in His human living. Therefore, this should be considered part of His work in His human living.

While the Lord Jesus was living in His humanity on earth, He was working to build up the fashion of man. The Lord did not simply behave like a man for a short period of time. He became a man and then lived a human life for thirty years, living in the poor and lowly home of a carpenter. As He lived there, He built up the fashion of man and was found in fashion as a man. The Lord, therefore, carried out the great work of building up a human fashion. This is what He was doing during the first thirty years of His human life.

When Paul wrote about Christ's human living in Philippians 2, he was very careful. He no doubt considered how to compose this part of the Epistle to the Philippians. Paul surely selected the right words, telling us that Christ was found in fashion as a man and that He took the form of a slave. Christ did not work to build up the fashion of a highly exalted man or of a man with a high rank. On the contrary, He worked to build up the fashion of a man who was a slave. It was not an easy thing that the Lord Jesus built up a fashion of a man in such a low state. This was a very fine work, and it took Him thirty years to accomplish it in full. After He finished this work, He came forth to begin His ministry. His ministry was based upon His work of building up in Himself the fashion of a man.

It is crucial for us to see that Christ's work in His human living to build up the fashion of a man and to take on the form of a slave was the foundation and background of His ministry. Those who aspire to serve the Lord need to have a work not by doing but by living. This is a work carried out by one's daily living. Those who wish to serve the Lord need to live to build up a work that will be the solid ground and strong background for their coming service to the Lord.

Declaring God

Another aspect of Christ's work in His human living was to declare God. "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18). In His human living Christ declared God. According to John 1:1-18, Christ declared God by the Word (vv. 1, 14), life (v. 4), light (vv. 4-5), grace (vv. 14, 16, 17), and reality (vv. 14, 17). The Word is God expressed, life is God imparted, light is God shining, grace is God enjoyed, and reality is God realized. God is declared in the Son through these five things. Although no one has ever seen God, Christ in His human living has declared God in the way of being the Word, life, light, grace, and reality. The more we receive the Word, have the divine life, and let the light of life shine within us, and the more we enjoy God as grace and apprehend Him as reality, the more He is declared to us. In His human living Christ carried out the work of declaring God in this way. During the thirty years of His living and working as a carpenter, Christ declared God. While He was living to build up the fashion of a man, He declared God to His mother, brothers, and sisters. They must have realized that there was something excellent and extraordinary with Him, something higher than the expression only of humanity. What they saw in the human living of the Lord Jesus was the declaration of God in Him. His human living declared God.

If you want to serve the Lord, you should not begin by trying to do a great work for the Lord. This is contrary to the divine principle. You should simply live a life that declares God. Then others will see in you something excellent, something divine. This indicates that in your daily living there is a work that declares God.

As we read the New Testament, we may wonder what the Lord Jesus was doing day after day for thirty years. In a sense, He was not doing anything. He was just living, and that living was His unique work to build up a fashion of a genuine man. Because the Lord Jesus was built up in this way, when He came out to minister, He did not need to pretend or to perform. There was no need for Him to deliberately try to behave like a God-man, a man with God in Him, for He was a genuine man and was found in fashion as a man. As a real man, He spontaneously declared God. Before the three and a half years of His ministry, He accomplished a preparatory work for thirty years. Therefore, with the Lord Jesus, thirty years were for the work of preparation. Afterward, the Lord Jesus was used by God in His ministry for only three and a half years.

Expressing the Father

Christ's work in His human living also includes His expressing the Father (John 14:9). According to the Gospel of John, Christ the Son came in the Father's name (5:43), worked in the Father's name (10:25), did the Father's will (6:38), spoke the Father's word (3:34a; 14:24; 7:16-17; 12:47-50), and sought the Father's glory (7:18). He was one with the Father (10:30). He had no work, no will, no word, no glory, and no ambition for Himself. As such a one, Christ expressed only the Father. He did not express Himself. He was the Son, yet He expressed the Father.

Because the Son expresses not Himself but the Father, the Son's expression is the Father's expression. Therefore, when we see the Son, we see the Father. This is proved by the exchange between the Lord Jesus and Philip in John 14. In verse 7 the Lord pointed out to the disciples that if they had known Him, they would have known His Father also. Then He said, "Henceforth you know Him and have seen Him." However, Philip replied, "Lord, show us the Father and it suffices us" (v. 8). To this the Lord Jesus answered, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father. How is it that you say, Show us the Father?" (v. 9). In the Son the Father is expressed and seen, for the Son is the expression of the Father. If we have seen the Son, we have seen the Father because the Father is embodied in the Son to be expressed through Him in His human living.

This was true of the Lord Jesus even at the age of twelve. When the Lord was twelve, He was a human child. But as we read the account in Luke 2, we see that in this child there was the divine element. God's attributes were expressed in Christ's human living. The Lord Jesus lived a genuine human life, yet in His human life we see the divine element and also certain divine factors. This life did not express man; it expressed God the Father.

Caring for the Things of the Father

In His human living the Lord Jesus cared for the things of the Father. Luke 2:41-51 reveals that at the age of twelve He cared for God's interests. Verse 42 says, "When He became twelve years old, they went up according to the custom of the feast." At the age of twelve, a boy was called by the Jews "son of the law," and first incurred legal obligation (Alford). The number twelve also signifies eternal perfection in God's administration. Hence, "twelve years old" indicates that what the Lord Jesus did here was perfectly related to God's administration.

According to verses 43 through 48, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, and His parents did not know it. When they realized that He was not with them in the caravan, they returned to Jerusalem searching for Him. When they found Him, His mother said to Him, "Child, why did You treat us like this? Behold, Your father and I are greatly distressed seeking You" (v. 48). The Lord replied, "Why is it that you were seeking Me? Did you not know that I must be in the things of My Father?" (v. 49). This indicates that the boy Jesus was caring for the interests of God. The words "My Father" in verse 49 point to the deity of Jesus (John 5:18). In His humanity He was the son of His parents; in His deity He was the Son of God the Father. Here we see the Lord's dual status, His status as the Son of God and the Son of Man. In His humanity Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, cared for the things of the Father, for God's interests. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 683-688)

Living the Father

In John 6:57 the Lord Jesus said that He lived because of the Father. Christ lived on earth not merely by the Father or through the Father but because of the Father. His living had a cause, and that cause was the Father. Hence, the Father was not simply an instrument through which or by which the Son lived; rather, the Father was the cause of the Son's living on earth. Today Christ should be the cause of our daily living. We should live not only by Him and through Him but also because of Him. He should be the cause of our living. Otherwise, our living will be meaningless. Without the Father as His cause, the Son's living on earth for thirty-three and a half years would have been vain. But His living was not vain, because the Son's living had the Father as the cause.

Working with the Father

In John 5 the Lord Jesus did the work of enlivening an impotent man. The religious Jews persecuted Him because He enlivened the impotent man on the Sabbath. He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working" (5:17). In their religious concept they were resting and keeping their Sabbath. They did not know that there was no rest for the Father and the Son as long as the poor sinners were not saved. While the religious Jews were resting in keeping their Sabbath, the Father and the Son were working so that sinners might receive life and have rest.

Although God's work in creation was finished (Gen. 2:1-3), in Christ's earthly ministry the Father and the Son were still working for redemption and building (John 5:19-20). This work includes the Son's life-giving, which is manifested in John 5. In this matter the Father and the Son are one. Whatever the Father wants to do in the matter of life-giving, the Son does accordingly.

The Lord Jesus never did any work without the Father. He always worked with the Father. This required the absolute denial of the self. Christ denied Himself in order to work with the Father.

As the Lord Jesus worked with the Father, He worked in the name of the Father (John 10:25). Having come in the Father's name (John 5:43), He never did anything in His own name; He did everything in the Father's name. For Him to work in the name of the Father means that He worked as the Father. The Lord Jesus and the Father were not working separately. On the contrary, the Lord was working with the Father as one.

When Christ worked with the Father, He worked not with the Father who was merely in heaven, but with the Father who was with Him and in Him. This truth concerning Christ's working with the Father is contrary to the traditional teaching which says that when the Son was on earth, the Father was merely in the heavens. Economically, the Son was on earth and the Father was in the heavens. Essentially, however, while the Son was working on earth, the Father was living in Him and working with Him. Essentially, the Father and the Son are one (John 10:30); They cannot be separated. Therefore, Christ worked with the Father in the way of being one with Him.

Speaking the Father's Word

In His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus never spoke His own word. Whatever He spoke was the Father's speaking. On one occasion He said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me" (John 7:16). In not speaking from Himself the Lord did not seek His own glory but the glory of the One who sent Him (v. 18). Instead of speaking His own words, He spoke God. When He spoke God's word, God was expressed through His speaking. God came forth from Him through His words. He lived a life of speaking God, a life of expressing God for His glory.

In John 12:49 and 50 the Lord Jesus says, "I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who sent Me has Himself given Me commandment what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life. The things therefore that I speak, even as the Father has said to Me, so I speak." This clearly reveals that in His ministry the Lord spoke the Father's word. In particular, the commandment that the Father gave Him to speak was eternal life. Therefore, He came with living words, and whoever receives His words will have eternal life.

In John 14:10 the Lord Jesus goes on to say, "The words which I speak to you, I do not speak from Myself; but the Father who abides in Me, He does His works." Once again the Lord makes it clear that He did not speak His own word but the Father's word. While the Son was speaking in this way, the Father was working. The Son's speaking was the Father's working.

Doing the Father's Will

A number of times the Lord Jesus declared strongly that He did not do His own will, but that everything He did was the Father's will. One day He said to His disciples, who had returned with food and were urging Him to eat: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). The Lord's food was to do the will of the Father. In John 4 this means that, in particular, His food was to save and satisfy sinners. The Lord Jesus had come to Samaria with a purpose—to find a sinful Samaritan woman and satisfy her. In doing this He did God's will, and doing God's will was His food and satisfaction.

In John 6:38 the Lord Jesus says that He came down from heaven not to do His own will but the will of the Father who sent Him. In John 5:30 He says that He did not seek His own will but the will of the Father who sent Him. These verses indicate clearly that in His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus did not carry out His own will but the Father's will. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 742-744)