

Four Crucial Elements of the Bible— Christ, the Spirit, Life and the Church

Scripture Reading:

Hymn: 820

- Col. 3:4a When Christ our life is manifested...
- 1 Cor. 15:45b ...the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
- Phil. 1:19-21 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 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. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
- Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

I. The intrinsic, crucial elements of the Bible:

- A. The Bible presents the divine and mystical matters in a way that is easily understandable to us. For this reason, the Bible seems to contain some “bark” and “branches.”
- B. We must go beyond the superficial branches and enter into the depths of the Bible in order to touch its spirit, its kernel, and to know its crucial elements.
- C. Man is of three parts—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23)—The most important part is the innermost part, the spirit, which is the breath of life in man (Gen. 2:7). Without such a breath of life, it is not possible for man to exist, and man thus ceases to be man.
- D. Likewise, the Bible has its kernel, its life, and its center, which is constituted with Christ, the Spirit, life and the church. These four items are the contents of the true substance of the Bible.

II. The four crucial elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, life and the church:

- A. Christ—the emphasis being that Christ is the believers’ life and is united and mingled with the believers—Col. 3:4a; John 15:4-5; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- B. The Spirit—the emphasis being that the Holy Spirit of God has been compounded with Christ’s divinity, humanity, crucifixion, and resurrection to be the compound, life-giving, indwelling, sanctifying, transforming, and sevenfold intensified Spirit—Exo. 30:23-25; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 8:11; 15:16b; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rev. 4:5.
- C. Life—the emphasis being that God in Christ as the Spirit of reality is the believers’ life that they may live Him out as the processed Triune God—1 Cor. 1:30; John 14:17; Phil. 1:19-21a.
- D. The church—the emphasis being that the believers are on the ground of oneness to be the testimony of the Body of Christ—Eph. 1:23; 4:1-6.

III. Christ being the center and extract of the Bible:

- A. Christ is the Triune God; the experience of Christ is the experience of the Triune God—John 1:1; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8.
- B. The Old Testament speaks of Christ with a great part in types and a considerable part in prophecies:
 1. The Old Testament speaks about Christ with types in six major categories: human beings, plants, animals, minerals, offerings, and foods.

2. The genealogy of Christ in Matthew chapter one is a miniature of the entire Old Testament.
- C. The New Testament speaks of Christ altogether in plain words.
 1. Speaking of what Christ is—Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 3:4; Eph. 3:8.
 2. Speaking of how to experience and enjoy Christ—Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Phil. 1:20-21a; 3:8, 10a.

IV. The Spirit—the essence and sphere of the New Testament.

- A. The Christ presented in the New Testament is altogether with the Spirit as the center, element, and sphere.
- B. The Lord is the Spirit, the Spirit is the processed and consummated Triune God—1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17.
- C. The content of the entire New Testament is the Spirit.

V. Life—The life of divinity mingled with humanity is the crucial element of the New Testament.

- A. The Spirit being life—Rom. 8:2.
- B. Our entire person of three parts—spirit, soul, and body—will be life—Rom. 8:6, 10-11.

VI. The Church—The end of the extracts of the revelation of the Bible.

- A. Christ is the beginning, the church is the end, and the process is the Spirit and life.
- B. The church is the reality of the kingdom and brings in the kingdom and the ultimate consummation, that is, the New Jerusalem.

Reference book: *Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, and 10.

Excerpts from the Ministry:**Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life and the Church**

I have been saved for sixty years, and in these sixty years there has not been one day that I did not read the Bible. I also have been writing expositions of biblical truths for over fifty years. After this year, I will have finished writing the notes on the entire New Testament. I can say that not only do I have a general view of the Bible, but I have also studied the Bible in a penetrating and thorough way. In these many years I have spoken a great deal on the crucial subjects in the Bible. I have been constantly considering what this comprehensive Bible talks about and what its essence or extract is. When I first went to Taiwan, I studied the Bible with the brothers and sisters every day. In one year we studied sixty topics, which are the sixty topics in *The Fundamental Truths in the Bible*. However, after studying that many topics, eventually I have to admit that the extracts of the Bible are nothing other than these four items: Christ, the Spirit, life, and the church. In the beginning is Christ, at the end is the church, and in the process are the Spirit and life. These four items—Christ, the Spirit, life, and the church—constitute the biblical science as well as biblical philosophy, astronomy, geography, ethics, history, and theology. Everything spoken of in the Bible is for these four items. Only Christ is the reality; He is the body of all things (Col. 2:17). If there is no Christ, there is no Spirit, and neither are there life and the church. If there is Christ, there is reality and substance. Christ is the Spirit, the Spirit is life, and life produces the church. Without Christ, there is no Spirit; without the Spirit, there is no life; and without life, there is no way to produce the church. Hence, these four items are the extract, the cream, the essence, of the Bible. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, pp. 36-37.)

Christ Being the Center and Extract of the Bible

Christ Being the Triune God, the Experience of Christ being the Experience of the Triune God

The Triune God is intimately related to our experience of Christ. Actually, in our proper experience, this Christ is the Triune God. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” According to flesh, Christ came out of Israel, out of the tribe of Judah, yet Romans 9:5 says that He “is God over all, blessed forever.” He is man, and He is also God. He is God the Son, and He is also the Triune God blessed forever. Hebrews 1:8 says, “But of the Son, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.’” This proves that the Son is God, even the God who sits on the throne. God is triune, including the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. When we say that the Son is God, we do not mean that He is merely one-third of God; rather, we mean that He is the Triune God Himself. This is difficult to explain in doctrine but very easy to understand in experience. When we experience the Son, we experience the Triune God. Not only so, in our experience, God the Father is the Triune God, and so is God the Spirit. We cannot separate the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. All doctrinal problems regarding the Triune God arise out of our subjective mentality. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, pp. 24-25.)

This Christ who is full of attractiveness and rich in magnetism is the essence of the Bible. The Bible covers thousands of items and deals with a great number of doctrines, but it has only one center—Christ Himself. Let us use the human body as an illustration. We can see skin and hair on the surface, touch the flesh and bones within, and examine the internal organs through dissection or by an x-ray. However, the center, the essence, of man, which is man's life, is neither visible nor touchable, yet it is real and crucial. Likewise, the Bible has its "skeleton" and "skin." If we touch or see only these things in our reading of the Bible, we are not different from the unbelievers in their reading of the Bible. We must realize that the Bible also has its life, its essence. The life, the essence, of the Bible is Jesus Christ.

The Bible consists of two sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament speaks of Christ with a great part in types and a considerable part in prophecies but nearly with no plain words. This may be compared to the teaching material in kindergartens that consists of very few plain words but many pictures. The teaching material in graduate schools, however, contains very few pictures; instead, it contains many classical writings. Although the Old Testament, like the teaching material in kindergartens, consists mostly of pictures with very few plain words, it is not simple to understand the meaning of the pictures. Therefore, concerning the types in the Old Testament, we need to understand their significance. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, pp. 51-52.)

The Types in the Old Testament

There are six major categories of types in the Old Testament. The first category is human beings; the second, animals; the third, plants; the fourth, minerals; the fifth, offerings; and the sixth, foods. All these six major categories contain types of Christ. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, p. 52.)

The Plain Words in the New Testament

Each of the twelve verses listed above in the Scripture reading (outline point IIIC) contains an extract. These twelve verses may be divided into two sections. The first six verses tell us what Christ is. Romans 9:5 says that Christ is God, who is above all and blessed forever. First Timothy 2:5 says that Christ is man, while 2 Corinthians 3:17 says that Christ is the Spirit. First Corinthians 1:30 tells us that Christ is wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Colossians 3:4 says that Christ is our life, and Ephesians 3:8 says that Christ is One who is unsearchably rich. The latter six verses give us the way to experience and enjoy Christ. Galatians 2:20 says that Christ lives in us, and 4:19 says that Christ is being formed in us. In Philippians 1:20 Christ will be magnified, as always, in our body, and in verse 21a for us to live is Christ. Philippians 3:8 speaks of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and verse 10a refers to knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection. These are all very sweet experiences. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, p. 35.)

The Spirit—the Essence and Sphere of the New Testament

The Spirit being Life

Romans 8:2 reveals that the Spirit is the Spirit of life and that this Spirit of life has a law. This indicates that the Spirit Himself is life because a life is a law. Since the Spirit has become one with life and contains the element of life, He of course is life. Therefore, the Spirit of life is life. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, p. 122.)

The Christ Presented in the New Testament Being altogether with the Spirit as the Center, Element, and Sphere

The Old Testament speaks of Christ by way of allegories and types. Although this makes it easy for people to comprehend, they still cannot easily have a full understanding. A picture is always better than a thousand words. When we look at the pictures in the Old Testament, we can right away understand their apparent, superficial, and literal side. However, unless the Lord opens the understanding of our mind, we really cannot understand the intrinsic, deep, and essential significance contained in them. As we have seen, the Old Testament speaks about Christ with types in six major categories: human beings, animals, plants, minerals, offerings, and foods. The New Testament continues by speaking of Christ altogether in plain words. In speaking about Christ, the New Testament does not mainly use types, such as human beings, animals, plants, minerals, offerings, and foods. Instead, it speaks of Christ as the Spirit. In the New Testament, Christ is presented altogether with the Spirit as the center, the element, and the sphere. Hence, the Spirit is the essence, the factor, of the New Testament. The New Testament opens with a revelation showing us that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit even when he was in his mother's womb, and then his mother and father were also filled with the Holy Spirit. Then it goes on to show that Jesus was altogether conceived and born through the Holy Spirit's entering into humanity. He was One who had humanity with divinity and who lived on the earth for thirty-three and a half years, died on the cross, and resurrected, through which He brought humanity into divinity. In resurrection He became such a wonderful One, One who is divinity in humanity and humanity in divinity. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, pp. 61-62.)

The Lord Being the Spirit

First Corinthians 15:45b says, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." The last Adam is the One who brought divinity into humanity. Then through death and resurrection He brought humanity into divinity, and He became the life-giving Spirit. Most Christians dare not touch this verse because it does not fit in with their theology and tradition. In a certain part of Christianity, the Father is pictured as an old father sitting down, the Son as a young man standing beside Him, and the Holy Spirit as a dove soaring in the air. This picture represents the Trinity in today's Christianity. The Scriptures, however, indicate that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not separate. When the Son came, the Father came with Him (John 8:16, 29; 16:32). Moreover, the conception of the Son was of the Holy Spirit; He was begotten by divinity entering into humanity. When the Son came out for His ministry, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him as His power. Then, through His death and resurrection He brought humanity into divinity. He is such a mysterious and marvelous One. After passing through these mysterious and marvelous processes, He became the life-giving Spirit. The apostle Paul saw such a revelation clearly and boldly declared, "The Lord is the

Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17). This means that Christ in resurrection is not only the life-giving Spirit but also “the Spirit.” (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, pp. 62-63.)

...Hence, the entire Bible consummates with the Spirit, who is the ultimate consummation of the Triune God. The Triune God came through incarnation and passed through death and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit as the ultimate consummation of the Triune God. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, pp. 65-66.)

The preceding four passages of the New Testament (Eph. 2:18; 3:16-17; 4:4-6; 2 Cor. 3:14) clearly reveal the Triune God, and all prove to us that both the experience of Christ and the experience of the Holy Spirit are in reality the experience of the Triune God. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, p. 100.)

The Content of the Entire New Testament Being the Spirit

The sequence of the four Gospels is wonderful. At the beginning Matthew says that Mary conceived through the Holy Spirit and brought forth a God-man; at the end John says that this God-man became the Spirit and was breathed into His disciples. At the conclusion of the Gospels, the God-man Jesus, who brought divinity into humanity through incarnation and who also brought humanity into divinity through death and resurrection, became the Spirit. As such, He breathed Himself into His disciples as their life and everything and sent them with His commission, qualifying them to represent Him with His authority for the carrying out of His commission (John 20:22-23; Matt. 28:18-20).

After the four Gospels, there is the book of Acts. Acts is altogether a story of the Spirit. Many Bible readers recognize that the Acts of the apostles is the Acts of the Spirit and the biography of the Spirit.... After the book of Acts, there are the Epistles... The fourteen Epistles of Paul all speak at some length concerning this Spirit. ...In Revelation, the last book of the Bible, ...it speaks of “the Spirit.” ...In the beginning of Revelation it was the Spirit speaking to the churches; then it was the Spirit speaking in the church, the believers; and at the end it is the Spirit and the bride, the church, speaking together as one. This indicates that the church’s experience of the Spirit has advanced to such an extent that she has become one with the Spirit. Hence, the entire Bible consummates with the Spirit, who is the ultimate consummation of the Triune God. The Triune God came through incarnation and passed through death and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit as the ultimate consummation of the Triune God. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, pp. 64-65.)

Life—The Life of Divinity Mingled with Humanity Being the Essence of the New Testament

The Entire Person—Spirit, Soul, and Body—Being Life

Christ is the Spirit, and the Spirit is life. Man has three parts: spirit, soul, and body. When we were saved, this life entered into our spirit, making our spirit life. This is why Romans 8:10 says, “If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.” However, we still have the *psuche*

life, the soul-life, within us. Our mind, emotion, and will still remain in the realm of the *psuche*. Therefore, we must continue pursuing to give the Lord the room within us by setting our mind, emotion, and will upon Him. The more we love the Lord and pursue Him, the more room He will have within us. His life will not only fill our spirit but also overflow into our soul to saturate our mind. This is to set our mind on the spirit, and the result is that our mind is life, which issues in peace. This is why Romans 8:6 says, “The mind set on the spirit is life and peace.” When the mind becomes life, the soul becomes life.

If we pursue and exercise further, life will grow a little more. The result will be that the Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead, who dwells in us, will be able to give life to our mortal bodies, as spoken of in Romans 8:11. In this way our entire person of three parts will be life; our spirit is life, our mind, the leading part of the soul, will be life, and our mortal body will also have life. This means that our entire being will be life. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, pp. 129-130.)

The Church—The End of the Extracts of the Revelation of the Bible

Christ Being the Beginning, The Church Being the End,
The Process Being the Spirit and Life

Christ is complete and perfect, and He has passed through all His processes to become the life-giving Spirit—the Spirit, who is life. Christ, the Spirit, and life produce the church. Our publication entitled *The Basic Revelation in the Holy Scriptures* covers seven main points concerning God’s plan, the Son’s redemption, the Spirit’s application, the producing of the believers, the believers becoming the church, the church being the reality of the kingdom and bringing in the kingdom, and the ultimate consummation being the New Jerusalem. The extracts revealed in the Holy Scriptures are Christ, the Spirit, and life. However, the scriptural revelation does not end with these three items; it ends with the church, that is, with the New Jerusalem as the consummation of the church.

Therefore, we have a very clear picture. Our vision has been not only enlarged and advanced but also strengthened and brightened. The two ends of the Bible are Christ and the church, and the process in between is the Spirit and life. During the period from the Lord Jesus’ death, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement to His second coming, the whole universe is altogether a matter of the Spirit and life to us. Our salvation, our growth, our transformation, and our maturity in Christ are all matters of the Spirit and life. Therefore, the Bible is not a book merely about human history, the creation of the heavens and the earth, or much less morality and ethics. The Bible is a book concerning Christ, the Spirit with the human spirit, life, and the church. Christ is the initiation, the church is the consummation, and the process is the Spirit and life. (*Four Crucial Elements of the Bible—Christ, the Spirit, Life, and the Church*, p. 153.)

Questions:

1. Please briefly explain the four crucial elements according to the Bible.
2. Why is Christ the center and extract of the Bible?
3. What are the essence and sphere of the New Testament?

4. What is the element of the New Testament?
5. Why is the church the end of the extracts of the revelation of the Bible?