

Walk The Heavenly Way According To The Heavenly Vision (2)

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Bible verses

Hebrews 12:1 *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

11: 1 – 3 *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.*

11: 13 – 16 *All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.*

11: 33 – 40 *who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.*

I was asked to share on 'Walking the Heavenly Way According to the Heavenly Vision'. In our last meeting, I already shared that God has put us onto this heavenly way when we were born of the Holy Spirit. He has also called us to run this heavenly way. If we are to run well and correctly this heavenly way, we need to be under the governance and guidance of the vision. Without vision, there will be no purpose and no direction. We saw at certain periods in the Old Testament, because of the lack of vision, there were turmoil among God's people. As we read the Book of Judges, we can clearly see that God's people on earth at that time were without vision. Their plight was very pitiful and they lived under the oppression of their enemies. They were not like their forefathers. During the time when Moses led the people in the wilderness, it was an era where there was vision. And the people lived under the guidance of the vision. After they entered into Canaan under Joshua it was also a time when they had glorious vision. And thus they were able to conquer all their enemies in Canaan. But when this glorious period ended, the latter generation did not know God. That generation also did not know the works of God. They lacked the inner spiritual seeing. The result was that the people of Israel fell into a period of great darkness for about four hundred years. This was recorded in the time of the Judges. Later God did some work and then during the time of Samuel, there was a great revival among the Israelites. But sadly, during the latter years of Solomon, the people of Israel again lost the vision. Thus there was chaos in Israel as recorded in the Book of Kings. This can be easily seen in the Old Testament when we read the Bible.

We know from the church history, because of the lack of vision, the church on earth is full of turmoil. God said, 'without vision, the people became unrestrained and they run around in chaos'. Therefore, today for us to run this heavenly way, we have to have clear vision. We already mentioned before that when God worked on earth, He used vision to guide and direct His people. We can clearly see in the Bible that through vision, God reveals the mystery of His will and His eternal purpose and gives a clear path to His people. Even during the times when situations cause many people to become dispirited and confused, the vision did not leave them. Vision has corrected the mistakes of many of God's people and caused His people never to give up but to be faithful till death even when they were in terrible or hopeless situations. Thus, vision is very important to us who run God's way.

Spiritual Seeing

What is vision? It is spiritual seeing. It is what our inner spiritual eyes see and not what we see with our physical eyes. Many of God's people misunderstand what vision is. Thus today, there is a lot of seeing among the people in this world. Whatever we see with our physical eyes is not reliable. A

vision actually is the inner seeing. These days we have talked quite a bit about visions and people who have visions. Maybe many of you feel bewildered or even anxious thinking why you cannot see anything. Is it that only Isaiah, the prophets or the apostles could see and you cannot see? Brothers and sisters do not lose heart.

Thank the Lord. In the Book of Hebrews, the author used faith to explain the spiritual seeing. This is a very wise teaching. Hebrews 11: 1 said, 'Faith is the assurance of things hope for, the conviction of things not seen'. Thus faith is a spiritual seeing. It tells us that when we exercise faith, it will substantiate the truth. It means that some truth, because of our faith, they became a spiritual reality in us. And we then have the assurance. I think there are still some who do not understand what I am saying. So I will use a simple example to illustrate it so you can understand.

Before we believe in the Lord, when people preached the gospel to us, saying, 'You are a sinner. But if you come before God and sincerely repent and confess your sins, the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse all you sins'. We doubted it and wondered what gospel this is. Can it be possible? Some people might even say, 'You are talking nonsense. Jesus died two thousand years ago. The blood He shed on the cross was already dried, how can it cleanse my sins today?' But at some point, God put that faith in you and once that faith came in, the matter of the precious blood became a reality. Then you prayed before the Lord, 'Lord, please cleanse me with Your precious blood'. After you prayed, you feel a burden lifted off you and you are filled with peace and joy inside. I believe this was our experience when we first got saved by grace. No one will say that it was psychological. Indeed, our sins had been forgiven. From that day on, you developed a faith inside. That means your inner spiritual eye is opened because you already saw the effectiveness of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. From then on, every time you sinned, you come before the Lord and say, 'Lord, please cleanse me with Your blood'. And when our sins are cleansed by the precious blood of our Lord, we feel relieved inside and the fellowship with our Lord was restored.

Thus the author of the Book of Hebrews told us that faith is actually a spiritual seeing. But the degree of faith in each individual varies. God's vision indeed is the action of a very abundant God. For example, as we read the Book of Revelation, the vision that John saw in the Book of Revelation includes the vision of the Son of Man. He saw the Lord Jesus as the High Priest. He also saw the throne of God and the Lamb, the wife of the Lamb and the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. So we know that God's vision embodies abundant things, from the basic experience to the

deepest experience of a Christian and it is infinite. Thus your degree of faith governs the degree of your inner seeing.

Last time I mentioned that for the past few years, I lost my eyesight suddenly due to an illness. At its worst, I could not even see things close-up. Thank the Lord, He gradually healed me. This was a very special experience. My wife made many dishes when we had meals at home. At first when I had the illness, I could only see the plate but I could not see what was on the plate. I would ask what was this or that at every meal. I could only tell what it was after I tasted it. Because my eyesight was blurry, I discovered a strange phenomenon. I saw that every brother or sister was very young and very pretty. Why was that? It was because I could see their face but not their wrinkles or scars. Thus everyone appeared very beautiful. This led me to think that when a Christian was just saved, and our spiritual eyes were just opened, we saw that every brother and sister is so lovely. Everyone was nice and affectionate. But slowly as our spiritual eyes grew brighter, we no longer see them as lovable.

We need to learn to look at things with our spiritual eyes. If our spiritual eyes are opened, then it will be like what David said in Psalm 16 'As for the saints who are in the earth, they are the majestic ones in who is all thy delight'. Brothers and sisters, can we say these words today? Maybe the words we just said can apply only to the saints that God delights in but not to the entire assembly.

The Degree of Faith

This experience told me that the inner seeing correlates to the degree of faith in us. In the Old Testament, we see that Ezekiel was one with vision. As we read the Book of Ezekiel, we can see there is a progression in the vision he saw. In chapter one, when he saw the glory of God, he was thirty years old. When he saw the city of Jerusalem, he was fifty years old. There was a progression in the course of his life. To us today, the progression is the process of the maturity of faith. The brothers who had experiences told us that vision is alive, not dead. It is not mechanical. Because the work of our God is unlimited and eternal, thus the vision we see will gradually continue to enlarge in us.

Hebrews chapter 11 told us faith is a spiritual seeing. We can also see in chapter 11 all those who ran the heavenly way are those who had faith. It means that they were the ones governed by the vision and they had spiritual seeing. They ran on earth for God's will. Thus we need our spiritual eyes to become brighter as time passes and we need to accept the guidance of the vision. Not only do we

need to see the general truth, but we need to see the eternal purpose of God. Then we will have a definite direction when we run this way and we will be able to run on the right path.

The Different Experiences of Faith

In addition to this, as we read the Book of Hebrews chapter 11, we saw many people who ran the same heavenly way listed here. But because of the difference in their experience of the Lord, their run also differed and had different characteristics. The differences were their lives and their experiences. Brothers and sisters, we know that although our experiences can be different, yet there is only one way. And that way has to be the same. The way to God's purpose cannot be many. There should be only one. The Bible shows us there is only one way leading to the will of God. Jesus Christ is the way. Apart from Him there is no way. But our experiences can be different as we follow the Lord in His way. The Bible recorded the experiences of those who were faithful. And their experiences proved that they ran the heavenly way. And these recordings in the Bible are helpful to us.

Some brothers and sisters might say, now we know we need to run the heavenly way but how do we run the heavenly way? What does it really mean to run the heavenly way? Thank the Lord, He showed us through the experiences of other saints. He tells us if we can live in those experiences, then it proves we indeed are running the heavenly way. It is not that just because we think we are running the heavenly way, then that way must be the heavenly way. If we cannot see this way, how can we run on it? Only experiences can tell us that this is the heavenly way.

As I meditated before the Lord, I felt that if I fellowshiped from the Book of Genesis and the Book of Exodus the experiences of some individuals and then the experiences of a corporate body, then those experiences would be pretty complete. It means that the experiences of the people who came after them, including the saints in the New Testament would be within that scope. Of course, within this group, there were some whose experiences were very rich and were recorded in detail in the Bible. Many times, in those cases, we see that sharing on just one character can take up an entire conference. So it is impossible for me to share their experiences in detail and it is not necessary to do that. I will try to take a few characteristics from each individual, though maybe it might not be very accurate, so you can use them as references and help.

Abel

We will start from Genesis. We know that the first person is Abel. He was the first heavenly pilgrim of mankind; the first to run the heavenly way. His greatest characteristic was that he was a shepherd and he offered his sheep to God. Our brother already explained the meaning of the sacrifice of the lamb. I do not need to say more on that. But the question is that though Abel knew his parents were sinners and he himself was a sinner, how would he know to use lamb as a sacrifice? What do the Chinese use to offer as sacrifice? They use pigs and chickens. How would Abel think of using a lamb? The Book of Hebrews explained this. It said, by faith, Abel knew. That means Abel had the inner seeing. He knew to offer up the lamb because God revealed it to him. He knew because he clearly saw the vision from God. Those who knew the New Testament know that the lamb is an image of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is also a symbol of the spiritual life because when our Lord was on earth, He manifested the life of the lamb.

We are amazed as to why use such an insignificant lamb as an image of such a great Lord. Even though the Bible said He is the lion of Judah, yet our Lord had never exhibited the image of a lion. He was always like a lamb. In the Book of Revelation, the elders said, 'Look, the lion that is from the tribe of Judah.' John thought he would see a lion but when he turned to look he saw a lamb. Our Lord uses the lamb as His image. This lamb embodies rich meaning. It is a sign of spiritual life. Verse 10 in the Gospel of John chapter 10 is a very familiar verse. We changed it from the original language so that it reads 'I come that they may have life'. In the original language it is 'I come that the sheep may have life'. The meaning is that the Lord Jesus took on the image as a lamb when He was on earth. He was a lamb so we should be a lamb. So what is to increase in us? It is to increase the life of the lamb in us. This is a very meaningful matter. Christians should live more in the image of a lamb; expressing the life of a lamb.

Therefore if a person follows the lamb and lives out the image of the lamb, it proves that this person is running the heavenly way. In the Book of Revelation chapter 14, it talks about the one hundred and forty- four thousand. They stand together with the Lord on Mount Zion. Mount Zion represents God's eternal purpose, indicating the realm that is under God's authority. Why will this group be able to stand together with the Lord on Mount Zion? Verse 4 is very precious and it says, 'These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes'. These are the ones who, when they were on earth, followed the Lamb. What does that mean? It means that they were just like the Lord when He was on earth. Whatever circumstances this group encountered, they behaved just like the Lord, like a lamb. When John the Baptist first saw the Lord standing, he said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God'. The

next day, the Lord Jesus was walking and John said again, 'Behold, the Lamb of God'. This tells us the Lord is the Lamb whether He was standing still or moving.

I always thought when we sat quietly people will think that we are lambs. But once we move, people can see how terrible we are. But here, there is a group of people who were determined to follow the Lamb. They never let people see any fleshly weaknesses or ugliness in them. They really took up the cross and followed the Lord. No matter what difficulties, misunderstandings or insults they encountered, they still behaved like the Lamb. In arguments, they behaved like the Lamb. When they lost a lot of things, they still behaved like the Lamb. This is called 'the ones who followed the Lamb wherever He goes'. Thus, these were the ones who ran the heavenly way. And that is why they can stand together with the Lord on Mount Zion.

On the contrary, Cain represented the natural man's perspective of the things on earth. So in the beginning of the Book of Genesis, the Bible already put these two people in front of us. This gives us a clear revelation; if you are not Abel, then you are Cain. There is nothing in between. If you lack Abel's seeing, then you naturally will be Cain. The experiences of Abel tell us if one follows the Lamb and lives the life of the Lamb, then he is one who runs the heavenly way.

Enoch

The second person is Enoch. His characteristic was that he walked with God. Our God walks. Of course the way He walks is the heavenly way. Our God will not walk the earthly way. So if you walk with God, surely you are walking on the heavenly way. It is not possible to walk with God if He is walking the heavenly way and you are walking the earthly way.

When the apostles were first attracted by the Lord, they followed the Lord for three-and-half years on earth. In reality, they already had started to walk the heavenly way because our Lord walked the heavenly way. Thus today if we walk with the Lord, then we are walking the heavenly way. Here it reminds us that we are to walk with God and not that we ask God to walk with us. A lot of times we make the mistake that if we want to go somewhere, then we say to the Lord, 'Lord, You have to come with me'. The Lord will say, 'That is the earthly way and therefore I will not walk with you'. If you are to walk with the Lord, you do not drag God to go along with you. Many times we made the decision and then we pray, 'God, bless us'. This is not walking with the Lord. This is forcing God to walk with us. Of course there are times when God is merciful to us. It will be just like the parents walking with their child; the child holding the hands of the parents, asking them to follow him. Sometimes when there is nothing the parents can do, they will just carry the child with them and go

their way. Do you know this is how God leads us? Thank God that He has mercy for our weakness. A lot of times He carries us on the heavenly way. Of course the best scenario is that we willingly walk the heavenly way with Him. Wherever He is, we are with Him. If He stops, we also stop.

It is not easy for Enoch to walk with God. The Bible said he had children and he walked with God for three hundred years. Indeed, it was not easy to do that when one has a family life. But thank the Lord; Enoch had a strong desire to walk with the Lord. So there is one important lesson we have to learn if we are to walk with God. We have to lay down ourselves. Today, if my brother drags me to go with him, and I do not want to, then I will not go. I need to lay down myself in order to go with him. For one who lives in oneself, it is always my opinion, my feeling, my plan and my handiwork. Sometimes we go so far as to say it is my good will and my good heart. If we hold fast to these things, then it is hard to walk with God. The Bible asks us to deny ourselves. This is a very important matter.

Thank the Lord, starting from Enoch, throughout the church history, there were many brothers and sisters who denied themselves and followed the Lord. They were willing even though they had to pay a great price. Thus, if a person walks with God, then he is one who runs the heavenly way.

Many brothers and sisters have heard the story of Margaret Barber. Today in China, many brothers and sisters remember her. Even though Margaret Barber did not seem to have done anything much, yet she was one who walked with God. She had abundant knowledge of the Bible. She had profound experience of the cross. She was one who really knew God. When she arrived in China, God led her to a small port city. The Lord had not moved and she followed the Lord's wish. She stayed there for three decades. But the influence she had on the church in China would not be fully understood until we are in eternity. This was one who ran the heavenly way. The characteristic of Enoch and his experiences showed us that if we are to run the heavenly way, we have to walk with God.

Noah

The characteristic of Noah was the building of the ark. At that time, the condition of the people was extremely corrupt and God already decided to destroy the earth by flood. The Bible said before the flood, God revealed to Noah about the flood and told him to build an ark. Noah was moved with fear. Thus he and his family rose up and built the ark. Today we may understand the meaning that the ark points to our Lord – expounding 'in Christ' and 'abide in Christ'. If we are to escape the judgment of God in the end times, then we need to live in Christ. It is because the entire family of

Noah entered into the ark and they escaped the judgment of the flood. Thus abiding in Christ becomes an important spiritual experience for Christians. Noah was one who preached righteousness. So if we are those who abide in the Lord, then we are the ones who run the heavenly way. Here we see that it was not just Noah himself, but he brought his entire family into this grace. And we should not run the heavenly way just by ourselves but we should bring our entire family to run the heavenly way with us. This is a beautiful picture.

Abiding in the Lord is a very important experience. Maybe some brothers and sisters will ask how we can abide in the Lord. I John chapter 2 told us very clearly that if we follow the teaching of the anointing, we will abide in Him. Therefore in our daily living, we need to learn to submit to the teaching of the anointing inside us. If we follow the anointing in our words and in our deeds, then we are those who abide in the Lord. The experience of Noah was an important reminder to the people in the last days. Remember what our Lord said? He said, 'And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man'. Thus this experience not only helps us to run the heavenly way, but it also causes us to be able to escape the great final judgment at the end days so we can boldly meet our Lord.

Abraham

We will now look at Abraham. He was one who ran the heavenly way. We know Abraham's characteristic was his faith. This is a very important matter. God, in His glorious will, prepared all the fullness and then He laid down the principle of faith. By faith, we can enter into His fullness. And Abraham was the first person to live out this faith. In the Book of Romans chapter 4, Paul defined the principle of faith. 'Abraham believed in the God who calls into being that which does not exist and who gives life to the dead'. He believed this God is One in whom everything is possible. Why would Abraham leave his own country Ur to go to Canaan? Of course, Canaan was the type of the abundance of Christ that God has prepared. Abraham forsook his country and his kinsmen and crossed the Jordan to Canaan with no possession. The reason he did it was because he believed in the God who calls into being that which does not exist. This also became the principle of living by faith of many saints through the generations. Many of God's children were willing to follow the Lord by faith. Sadly, this kind of faith has been destroyed in the churches today. Fewer and fewer people are willing to live by faith. So Paul said we need to have the unfeigned kind of faith. Today, many places still preach about faith. But those who truly follow the Lord like Abraham are becoming fewer. Nowadays, both the individual life and church life are very weak. We know without faith we

will not have an amazing life. This is a very important matter. And Abraham believed in God in this way.

Abraham also believed God can resurrect the dead. This was shown in the birth of Isaac. He had Isaac when he was one hundred years old. This was indeed not very easy. As a matter of fact, Abraham had his weaknesses. He made the mistake by using his own way to help God. Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham and Ishmael was born. God told Abraham a son would be born of him. Abraham was very happy. But he was getting older and older and there was still no son. He thought that there was no hope and that the promise of God failed. So he discussed it with his wife. Both of them really loved the Lord. They did not want God to be embarrassed. They thought they would help God along and thus they had Ishmael. Abraham then said, 'God, Your word had been realized'. But God said, 'It would not do'. We know later on that Ishmael became a big problem. I always say the whole world has been affected by this family. And the problem goes on even today. We see that we have to be careful if we want to help God with our hand. Through this God tells us one thing - that He is totally trustworthy.

Later on when Abraham's faith had been established, God told Abraham to offer up to Him the only son that he loved. And Abraham did not hesitate at all. His faith reached its peak. It was such a glorious picture in Genesis chapter 22. He tied up his son and laid him on the altar; he took the knife to slaughter his son. God immediately stopped him. We Christians need to have Abraham's kind of faith. Because of his faith, he became a Hebrew. He became a sojourner who closely followed God on earth. His whole life on earth was under the governance of heaven. Today one who has the kind of faith in life is one who truly runs the heavenly way. And Abraham is a very good example.

Isaac

Let us look at his son Isaac. He indeed was an unusual person. Every time when I read about him in the Bible, I found he was very special. What did he tell us? His life told us about absolute obedience. When Isaac was a youth, the father took him to sacrifice him and Isaac just allowed him. He did not resist at all. At that time, Abraham was already old. If Isaac wanted to run away, there was no way Abraham could catch him. Yet Isaac let Abraham tied him up. So Isaac was very special. He did not struggle at all. This talked of how our Lord completely submitted to the Father. The Lord prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, 'Father, if Thou will, remove this cup from Me; but then, not My will, but Thine will be done'. He completely submitted to the Father.

There are not many examples of absolute obedience in the New Testament. Joseph, the husband of Mary did not do much but he had a characteristic. We called it obedience without saying anything. He did not say even a word. God asked him to do certain things and he did what he was told to do without saying a word. It was just like the servants who poured the water into the big water vessels at the wedding in Cana. How can we arrive at this level of absolute obedience? It is when we know how great our God is, how almighty He is. We always pray, saying 'God, You are the almighty God'. But when we finished the prayer and get up, we just run away. It is just a slogan to us. But to some people, it is their inner knowing. Isaac had an absolute submission characteristic in him.

There was another special matter in Isaac's life and it was his marriage. He waited a long time on his marriage. His father Abraham became worried. He sent out his most trusted servant to go find a wife for Isaac from his kinsmen. It was recorded in Genesis chapter 24. If you were Isaac, what would you do? Nowadays the young people are very afraid that their parents will find a wife for them. You will say, no, please do not ever do that; especially if they send out an old person to go find a wife for you.

So I think Isaac would get worried. He did not know what kind of a wife the old servant would find. But he was very peaceful. This old servant was very nervous. His master trusted him so much. The servant was on a mission that he was not confident in the result. So he prayed continuously on the road, 'Jehovah, God of my master, let me have good luck and be able to find a good wife'. Thank God for He led him to meet Rebecca and she was a good wife. The Bible recorded that Isaac loved Rebecca as soon as he saw her and he married her. Today in the states, most probably there is no such kind of marriages. Maybe it is still possible to do this in villages back in China. The parents find a girl; ask the son to marry her and the son obeys. So we see the character of Isaac was total obedience to and total trust in the father.

Our Lord is like this too. Ephesians chapter 1 tells us we are chosen and predestined by the Father. The Father found us in the world and gave us as a gift to His Son to be His wife. We are the wife of the Lamb. Just think what kind of people we are. We are very ugly, but the Father gave us to His Son and our Lord joyfully accepts us. We thank God that our Lord did not reject any of us. We also thank God that even though today we are ugly, full of sin and corrupted, yet Ephesians 2:10 said God is an all-powerful God; He has the power to change our ugliness into beauty. That is why the Holy Spirit works each day to make us conform to Christ. If you reject the Holy Spirit, you are rejecting His working in you to change you. Simply put, our Lord is joyful when the Holy Spirit can work

even a little bit on us. When He returns, we all will be like Him. Our Lord then will happily receive us as His bride. Thus we need to learn to be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit in us.

There was another characteristic to Isaac and that was digging wells. Whenever he finished digging a well, others would come and take it by force. Because Isaac had a total submissive heart, he would not fight or complain with the world. Brother and sister, only a person who is completely obedient to God can he accept the arrangement of all situations for him. Today there are many brothers and sisters who are dissatisfied with a lot of things. They are not satisfied with a lot of fellowships. They came out of one hardship but then fell into another bigger hardship. If we are submissive, then we can have peace in whatever situation the Lord leads us into. The Bible tells us the next day Isaac again dug another well with living water. We know that our life needs living water. The living water cleanses us, nurtures us and allows our life to be filled with strength. Isaac was one who ran the heavenly way. Whoever can submit to God like him, he is one who runs the heavenly way.

Jacob

Let us look at his son Jacob. His life was pretty remarkable. He had an important characteristic and that was his dream in the wilderness of Haran. And that dream was a vision. At that time he was forced to leave his home. He used a stone for pillow in the wilderness. He was very sorrowful and worried. The hymn said it well. Jacob established the house of God in his sorrowful days. In this vision, he saw the heavenly ladder. God was on the top of the ladder and the angels of God were going up and down. He immediately understood the meaning of the house of God. This vision controlled the entire life of Jacob.

Jacob was a difficult person. He started grabbing as soon as he was born. Many brothers took Jacob as their names. They must not have known that the meaning of Jacob is 'grab'. Jacob's character matched his name very well. But we know Jacob also had this characteristic that even though he loved to grab and he was cunning, yet he loved spiritual things. He seized the name and the blessings of the firstborn. As a result, he suffered a lot. God dealt with him through different situations. Many people used the sufferings Jacob to explain the meaning of the cross. The most important thing was that God raised up the nation of Israel from him. Thank God that Jacob lived under the governance of the vision. Thus today if we suffer on earth, it is God's working in us for the building of His church. We then are running the heavenly way. In the last days of Jacob, he worshipped God while leaning on his staff. He submitted to the leading of God throughout his life.

Joseph

We will look at Joseph. He also had two dreams and these two dreams were the vision that controlled his whole life. What was its use? It was that God wanted Jacob to learn that because of God's presence with him, he learned how to manage and to keep his life. For the first thirteen years, he was really in a lot of sufferings. He did not understand the sufferings. His brothers treated him badly and so did the Egyptians. But because the presence of God was with him, he accepted all these sufferings without a word. We have a hymn which talks about accepting unreasonable ill-treatment with a gentle acceptance. And the reason we can do that is because the presence of God is with us. Brothers and sisters, when we are in harsh situations, we need to see that God is with us. In the end, it was such a touching picture in the Bible when Joseph made himself know to his brothers.

Jacob's brothers still did not trust him. When the father died, they were very worried. They thought the reason Joseph did not retaliate was because their father was still alive. Now that the father was dead, they thought Joseph would certainly deal harshly with them. When Joseph heard of it, he cried. Then he cleaned up and asked his brother to meet him. He told his brothers, 'You intended to harm me. But God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done for the preservation of many lives'. We know today, living in this world is not easy. But we need to live in the presence of God. His presence is our contentment. No matter what situations we are in, we still need to say to the Lord, 'Only you and that is enough; no matter how dark the night is or how long the day is'. Joseph could rule for God. Thus today if one can learn to rely on God's presence, then God will give him His authority and he is one who runs the heavenly way.

Moses

We now look at Moses. What was the greatest characteristic of Moses? Hebrews 3:2 explains it best. There it says 'Moses was faithful in all his house'. Thus his greatest characteristic in his entire life was his faithfulness in the house of God. We know that it is hard to get a person to be faithful. Today on this earth, God is looking for people who are faithful. He wants faithful stewards. He does not mind how great our gifts are; how much knowledge we have or how great our ability is. He cares whether we are faithful or not. From Moses, we see that it is not easy to be faithful. His own self had to be completely dealt with before he could be faithful. In Exodus, we see that he was handsome even when he was born. He was very intelligent. He was very lucky to be adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. He was taken into the palace. He enjoyed great splendor, wealth and honor. He had the best education. All these puffed up his self-image. When he was forty years old, he thought he could save his fellow Hebrews. As a result, he caused a great disaster and he became a

fugitive. He had to escape to the wilderness and he became a shepherd. Thus the one who was very eloquent and capable had to become a shepherd in the wilderness, tending to a few sheep every day.

Moses had to be patient. When he was fifty years old, he thought perhaps God would send him back to Egypt. He had suffered for ten years and he thought that was enough. But God did not move.

There was still no movement when Moses got to sixty. I think that Moses wrote Psalm 90 when he was close to seventy. He was reminding God, 'As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years'. He was reminding God that he had suffered for thirty years and maybe he was ready. But still God did not move. When he got to eighty years old, all his intelligence and ability were lost. Then God said, 'Now you could go back'. God told Moses, 'You go and speak for Me'. Moses answered, 'I do not know how to speak. I was with the sheep every day. I lost all my eloquence.' God became angry. All brothers and sisters knew this story well. In order to have a faithful servant, God used this way to deal with His servant. Today we all know that if a person lives in the 'self' life, he cannot be faithful. Everything will be based on my interest, my opinion and my feeling. God cannot use such a person. Thank God when Moses was eighty years old, God knew then he would be faithful. When Moses was eighty years old, God took Moses up the mountain and covered the mountain top with a cloud. God had waited for a thousand years. He wanted to find a faithful person with whom He can entrust His heart's desire. Maybe among the forefathers, there might be a few faithful but still God could not entrust to them. Now He saw there was a person who had given up all hope in himself. Therefore when Moses led the two million Israelites to Mount Sinai, God immediately took Moses up to the mountain and covered the mountain with a cloud. God said, 'Do not eat or drink or sleep; we have to fellowship'. For forty days and forty nights, God revealed to Moses His laws. He also revealed in detail the pattern of the tabernacle. You can see how careful God talked about the tabernacle and how God treasured it. I think within these forty days, God asked Moses many times whether he understood and remembered what he was told. Of course we only imagine God's questions. And that was why it took forty days.

Moses himself was a very capable person. He could build storage cities for the Pharaoh. So what was a small tabernacle to him? But he did not say to God, 'Do not worry, just leave it to me. I can build you one ten times as big'. Brothers and sisters, oftentimes this is our attitude in our service to God. A lot of times we say to God, 'Do not worry, just leave this work to me'. God said to Moses, 'After you go down the mountain, you have to do according to all that I have shown you on the mountain, even to the minute detail'. After Moses descended the mountain, he faithfully built the tabernacle according to the pattern on the mountain. Brother and sister, today if a person is to serve

God and can stand before God in this manner, building the house of God entirely according to God's will, then that person is one who runs the heavenly way. You can see today how casually we act in the house of God. We must have done a lot of things that offended God. We change the gathering according to how we want it to be. How terrible that is! Moses understood the heart of God and he honored the decision of God. Today on this earth, God is looking for faithful servants. And in Moses we can see the faithfulness.

Israel

Quickly we will talk about Israel - a corporate testimony. God wants not just a person running the heavenly way, but a corporate body running the heavenly way. God saved the Israelites out of Egypt. They became a group of people who ran the heavenly way. They are a corporate body which runs the heavenly way. There are a few characteristics. 1. They were to become a holy nation; a people with the law. They had to live before God according to His law. 2. They were to become a nation of priests; every person should be a priest. 3. They were to carry the ark with them when they ran the heavenly way; they were to carry the testimony of the Lord. This is a very important revelation to the corporate church today. Brother and sister, we assemble in different locations. Is our assembly running the heavenly way? If our assembly is one which runs the heavenly way, then we need to be set apart and to be holy; separated from the world. We need to honor the law of God and walk according to the word of God.

In the New Testament time, we all are members of the body of Christ. Every brother and sister should be a priest. There is no difference in status here. We need to see that each brother and sister offer their best to serve. If there are only a few who serve responsibly and the rest cannot see the body and do not join in to serve, then we are not a corporate body running the heavenly way. If our assembly is one that runs the heavenly way, then we are living for the testimony of our Lord and not for any other purposes.

Thus, from individual to corporate body, from Genesis to Exodus, we can see the experiences and the characteristics of those running the heavenly way and this is a great encouragement to us. We have to become a people which run the heavenly way. To run well, we need to be governed by the vision. We need to follow the Lord in our experiences. We need to live in this condition as an individual or as a corporate body. In these end times, we feel the way of the church in the world is so confusing, just like the period of the judges when there was no king and everyone walked according to what was right in their own eyes. At that time there was no guidance from vision, no purpose and no clear

direction. Dear brother and sister, how we need the Lord's mercy. The word of the Lord is so clear. From Genesis to Exodus, these experiences can almost encompass all the experiences in Christ in the Bible. Thank the Lord because their experiences are clear confirmation to us. And now we can know what it means to run and how to run the heavenly way. We indeed thank God for His grace.

I still need a few minutes to talk about an important matter. The end of chapter 11 in the Book of Hebrews tells us that this heavenly way is full of hardship and we have to pay a price. We should not be afraid of the worldly loss, and the misunderstanding of other people. We should not be ashamed. We need to go against the power of the world and war against them.

From all those people, we see that everyone had to pay a price. From the corporate body of Israel, we see they had numerous battles. Though the Israelites failed in the wilderness, yet the principle was there. Today we need spiritual warfare. We ask for the Lord's mercy, so that we can whole heartedly trust in Him and submit to His leading in these times. We ask God to open our eyes and put His vision before us so that on this earth, we can have a definite purpose and a clear path to follow. Can we make a decision in this conference? May the Holy Spirit enlighten us. If our life and our service do not agree with God's heart, are we willing to put aside all those things? If we are willing, then we are very smart and we are one who truly runs the heavenly way. May the Lord lead us to the end. And when the Lord returns, we can meet Him with gladness.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you with all our heart. We are not worthy but You put us on this path even though You well know our weaknesses. We thank you that throughout the generations You have chosen people who were weak. Lord, just as You have, through Your grace helped them in their life to accept the guidance of the vision and had good experiences on the path they ran, today You can work the same in our life. Lord, give us the faith so we will offer again ourselves to You. Do not let us grab onto the things that are not Yours because of our foolishness. And do not let our pride prevent us from following You. Lord, we are willing to surrender to You. Let us return to You as long as it is today, so we can again follow You going forward to the end. Lord, may all of us can joyfully meet You. We deeply trust in Your mercy. Lord, please listen to our prayer. Please listen to the prayer of all the saints and the prayer of the church. May You glorify Your holy name. We pray in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.