LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD

The divine revelation in the Scriptures is progressive, unfolding and developing book by book and chapter by chapter. The sixty-six books of the Bible were written over a period of approximately sixteen hundred years. During this long period, God did not speak once for all at one specific time. Rather, He spoke to His people progressively, time after time, over a long period.

In Colossians 1:25 Paul said that he was made a minister according to the economy of God "to complete the word of God." At the time of Paul, God's revelation in the Scriptures had not been completed. Thus, there was the need for Paul to take up the burden to speak and to write in order to complete the Word of God. It is John's writing in the book of Revelation, however, that marks the completion of the divine revelation in the Scriptures. Because the revelation is complete, we are warned neither to add to nor to take away from the words of God's revelation (Rev. 22:18-19). Now that God's progressive revelation in the Scriptures has been completed, no one is permitted to add anything to it. What we need to do today is to read, study, and even search the Bible progressively book by book.

I. A COMPARISON

Having completed the life-study of Genesis, we come now to the book of Exodus. Historically, Exodus is the continuation of Genesis. Experientially, however, Exodus is not a continuation of Genesis. According to spiritual experience, what is portrayed in Exodus is not a continuation of the experience of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as recorded in Genesis. In our study of Genesis we pointed out that the

experiences of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are three sections of the experience of one person, one believer: the experience of being called and of living in fellowship with God by faith (Abraham), the experience of enjoying the inheritance (Isaac), and the experience of transformation (Jacob). In Genesis we have a clear picture of the three main sections of a believer's spiritual experience. Because the Old Testament presents such a vivid and detailed picture of spiritual experience, the Old Testament has become very precious to me, and I have come to regard it highly.

Spiritual experience has not only sections, but also different sides, different aspects. The portrait of our experience in Genesis covers just one side, one line. In Exodus we see another side, another line. The record of experience presented in Genesis is marvelous, but it is not complete. For the completion we need another aspect, which is found in Exodus.

A. A Picture of Redemption

By comparing Exodus with Genesis we can see how Exodus presents a side or line of spiritual experience not found in Genesis. For example, in Genesis we do not have a clear picture of redemption. With Abraham we see God's calling, but there is no account of Abraham's redemption. Abraham was an example of a typical called one; he was called by God out of Chaldea, out of the land of Babel, a land of rebellion and idolatry. When Abraham was still living in Babel, the God of glory appeared to him and called him (Acts 7:2, 3). But there is no clear word concerning redemption. The picture we see in all of Isaac's experience is a picture of the enjoyment of the rich inheritance rather than a picture of redemption. Neither is there a picture of redemption in the record of Jacob's experience. Although Jacob was eventually transformed into an Israel, a prince of God, there is no record regarding Jacob's experience of redemption. Where then were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob redeemed? They were

redeemed in Exodus. In this book we have a clear and full picture concerning God's redemption.

What portrait of redemption could be clearer than that of the Passover? Not even in the New Testament do we find a more detailed picture. The Passover is a beautiful picture of our redemption. In this picture there is even an indication of the cross. I once read an article describing how the Passover lamb was slain by the Jews. According to this article, they took two wooden bars and formed a cross. Then they tied two of the lamb's legs to the foot of the cross and fastened the other outstretched legs to the cross bar. Following this, the lamb was slain so that all its blood was shed. Hence, in the picture of the Passover we see the cross. Furthermore, as we consider the portrait of the Passover, we receive a vivid impression of the powerfulness of the blood of the Lamb of God. Exodus 12:13 says, "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." Such a wonderful picture is in Exodus, but not in Genesis.

B. The Lord's Care for His Redeemed People

Another contrast between Genesis and Exodus is seen in the matter of the Lord's care for His people. After Abraham was called, he began to follow the Lord. Not knowing where he was to go, Abraham enjoyed the presence of the Lord as his living road map. He simply journeyed according to the Lord's presence. Although Abraham traveled the long distance from Chaldea to the land of Canaan, the book of Genesis does not tell us how the Lord supported him or took care of him. We know, of course, in a general way that the Lord supplied Abraham with all he needed, but in Genesis we do not have the same kind of specific instances showing the Lord's direct care for Abraham as we have in Exodus showing His care for His people. In Exodus from the very

beginning we have a clear and detailed record of how the Lord took care of His redeemed people. When they were short of food, He supplied them with manna. When they had no water to drink, He gave them living water out of the cleft rock. In Exodus we see not only the Lord's leading but also a vivid portrait of how the Lord took care of the daily needs of His redeemed people. In this matter Exodus is more detailed and solid than Genesis. Not even in the New Testament do we find such a picture of the spiritual life supply. This should cause us to be impressed with the significance and importance of the book of Exodus.

C. The Lord's Leading

Some further comparisons will make this impression even stronger. Although the Lord led Abraham by His presence, the Lord's leading in Genesis is rather vague and abstract. In Exodus, however, it is much more solid and substantial, for in Exodus the Lord led His people by means of the pillar, something strong and solid. As we all know, in the daytime the Lord's presence was a pillar of cloud, and during the night it was a pillar of fire. Because the Lord's leading had a visible substance, all the people could recognize it.

D. The Revelation and Building of God's Dwelling Place

In Genesis 18 God visited Abraham and ate with him; He stayed with Abraham for part of a day. However, in Genesis there is no clear revelation regarding the tabernacle as God's dwelling place. In Exodus there is not only the revelation of the pattern of God's dwelling place, but there is also a detailed record of the actual building of God's dwelling place in a practical way. In Genesis God appeared to His chosen people again and again, but He did not have a substantial dwelling place among them. The book of Exodus, however, records in a very full way both the revelation and

the building of the tabernacle as God's dwelling place on earth.

E. Individual Experience and Corporate Experience

A further contrast between Genesis and Exodus is seen in the difference between individual experience and corporate experience. The experience in Genesis is primarily individual, but the experience in Exodus is corporate. Abraham, for example, was called as an individual. Even what the Lord gained by transforming Jacob into Israel was an individual matter. Jacob had twelve sons, but all except Joseph were below the standard. The entire experience portrayed in Exodus, on the contrary, is corporate. The redemption, the leading, the revelation, and the building are all corporate matters.

In our spiritual experience there are two sides, the individual side and the corporate side. No doubt, the individual side is basic, but the corporate side is richer, higher, and greater. The ultimate consummation and completion of our experience as believers is not individual; it is corporate. In Genesis we have the basic, individual experience, but in Exodus we have the ultimate, corporate experience.

Consider as an illustration the use of the name "Israel" in these two books. The book of Genesis concludes with an individual Israel, but the book of Exodus concludes with a corporate Israel. Exodus 14:30 says, "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore." In this verse the word "Israel" is used in a corporate way to refer to all the Israelites. But in Genesis the name "Israel" is used in a personal and individual way to refer to the transformed Jacob (Gen. 35:10, 21). In Genesis Israel is an individual person, but in Exodus Israel is a corporate people. The individual Israel at the end of Genesis can be compared to a little sprout of a seed, but the corporate Israel at the end of Exodus is like

a full-grown tree bearing fruit. The corporate Israel, composed of the descendants of the individual Israel, is the increase and enlargement of the individual Israel. In Exodus 40 we have not an Israel limited to one person, but an Israel enlarged to be a corporate entity composed of the descendants of the individual Israel. It is vital that we see this.

Furthermore, in Exodus salvation is not an individual matter; rather it involves all the children of Israel. At the time of the exodus from Egypt there were approximately two million Israelites, all of whom were saved simultaneously; they passed through God's judgment at the same time.

On the one hand, we Christians were saved individually and personally. However, on the other hand and in the eyes of God, we were saved together. We were saved corporately. This is Paul's concept in Ephesians 2:6, where we are told that we were raised up together and seated together in the heavenlies. The word "together" in this verse means with one another. In the eyes of God, we all were raised up at the same time. Peter was not raised up at one time; Stephen, at another; and Paul, at still another. No matter when we were born, we were all raised up in Christ corporately at the same time.

Although we were redeemed collectively, in a sense, we are called individually. None of us was called when the Apostle Paul was called. Concerning God's calling, there is an individual element; however, with God's redemption there is nothing individual, but everything is corporate.

We have pointed out that at the end of Genesis we have an individual Israel. But in the last chapter of Exodus, we have a corporate vessel, God's habitation, God's dwelling place with man on earth. Through this contrast we can see the difference between the line in Genesis and the line in Exodus. In Genesis there is the line of individual spiritual experience, whereas in Exodus there is the line of corporate experience. In Genesis basically two people, Abraham and his wife, came out of

Chaldea, but in Exodus over two million people came out of Egypt. What a contrast!

F. The Glory of God

Although the book of Genesis is rich, in this book we do not see God's glory manifested among His people in a substantial way. However, in chapter forty of Exodus, the glory of God came down visibly and substantially when the tabernacle was erected. Not only did the glory of God come down upon the tabernacle, but it also filled it.

G. The Fall

A further contrast between Genesis and Exodus is seen in the way the fall is presented in these two books. The Bible shows us different aspects of man's fall. In Genesis the fall was a fall into rebellion and idolatry, that is, a fall into Babel. Before we were saved, we were in Babel, in a land of rebellion and idolatry. But we were also in Egypt, the place of the fall as described in Exodus. Egypt is a land of fleshly enjoyment. This enjoyment brings people into slavery, under bondage. Therefore, in the Bible, Egypt signifies the world as the fleshly enjoyment which brings us into slavery. Before we were saved, we were in Babel on the one hand and in Egypt on the other. This means that we were in rebellion and idolatry and also in the world with its enjoyment, including sports and entertainments. The fleshly enjoyment in the world is for the satisfaction of the natural man. Through this fleshly and worldly enjoyment, fallen man is held in slavery under Satan as his Pharaoh. Fallen people are like those in Babel and like the children of Israel in Egypt. If we were limited to the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the book of Genesis, we would see only the aspect of our fall that is depicted by Babel. We would see rebellion and idolatry, but not slavery and bondage through worldly enjoyment. Even with man's fall there are two lines. On one hand, we are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; on the other hand, we are the children of Israel.

Having seen many of the contrasts between Genesis and Exodus, we should no longer consider Exodus a continuation of Genesis as far as our experience is concerned. To repeat, Exodus is not a continuation of the spiritual experience in Genesis; it reveals another side or line of the believer's experience. The experience in Genesis is somewhat vague and abstract, but the experience presented in Exodus is solid and substantial. Every aspect of the experience in Exodus is solid, from the Lord's presence as the pillar to the glory filling the tabernacle.

H. A Book of Pictures

Both Genesis and Exodus contain pictures of the spiritual experiences described in the New Testament. The pictures in Genesis, however, are not as definite as those in Exodus. From beginning to end, Exodus is a picture book. Both Pharaoh and the land of Egypt, for example, are pictures. Pharaoh portrays Satan, and Egypt depicts the rich, productive aspect of the world. (The sinful aspect of the world is represented by Sodom.) Watered by the Nile, the land of Egypt produces cucumbers, garlic, leeks, and onions. During the years of wandering in the wilderness, the children of Israel complained about the lack of those particular foods that they enjoyed abundantly in Egypt. In Egypt the Israelites had much enjoyment of the Egyptian produce, but in the wilderness they had only manna to eat. This is a picture.

As you read the book of Exodus, keep in mind that you are not merely reading words, but looking at pictures. The celebration of the Passover and the smiting of the firstborn by the destroying angel are pictures. While all the firstborn in Egypt were being smitten, the children of Israel were enjoying peace, rest, and safety as they ate the Passover lamb in their houses under the covering of the blood. What a marvelous picture! The pursuit of the Israelites by Pharaoh and his armies is also a picture of Satan and his host of rebellious angels in pursuit of God's redeemed ones.

When we come to the book of Exodus, we are watching a heavenly television. On this television we see pictures of our own redemption and salvation. Pharaoh and his army pursued the children of Israel into the Red Sea and were drowned there. The Israelites, however, marched through the sea triumphantly. Nowhere else in the Bible can we find such a picture.

We see more pictures in the calling of Moses. When God called Moses, He firstly gave him a vision of a burning bush, a bush that was burning without being consumed (3:2-4). Unable to escape God's calling, Moses expressed his concern that the children of Israel would not believe him nor hearken to his voice (4:1). Therefore, God told Moses to cast his rod on the ground. When Moses did so, the rod became a serpent. But when Moses took up the serpent by the tail, it became a rod again in his hand (4:2-4). Then the Lord commanded Moses to put his hand into his bosom. When Moses took his hand out of his bosom, it was "leprous as snow" (4:6). At the Lord's command, he put his hand into his bosom again and took it out, and "it was turned again as his other flesh" (4:7). After showing these signs to Moses, signs that were to be proofs to the children of Israel that the Lord had truly appeared to him, the Lord said, "If they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, … thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land" (4:9). This was to be a further sign.

These signs are very meaningful. The bush denotes our natural man. The fact that the bush was burning without being consumed indicates that when God calls us, He does not intend to use our natural man.

The rod represents anything other than God that we rely on. The rod becoming a serpent reveals that anything apart from God that we rely upon is a serpent, the Devil. Thus, if you rely upon your husband or wife, your husband or wife is a "serpent." The same is true of your education or your bank account. When we obey the Lord to cast down the rod, it

becomes a serpent. But God does not want us to cast away the rod forever. At His command, we need to take it up again by the "tail." We need to grasp our education or bank account by the "tail."

Moses' hand becoming leprous is an indication that in our flesh there is nothing good; our flesh is the embodiment of leprosy. If we touch ourselves, we become leprous.

Finally, the changing of the water of the Nile into blood signifies that the enjoyment of the world is death.

These signs indicate that God will not use our natural man, that everything we rely on other than God is Satan, that our flesh is leprous, and that the enjoyment of the world is death. These are some of the pictures in Exodus. There are other pictures in this book related to the Red Sea, the manna, the water flowing from the smitten rock, and the tabernacle with its furniture.

II. THE GENERAL SKETCH

The general sketch of Exodus firstly shows how the children of Israel were enslaved in Egypt (1:8-14). Then it reveals that the children of Israel were redeemed and saved (12:27; 14:30). After their redemption and salvation, the children of Israel were led by the Lord in the wilderness (13:17-18, 21-22; 17:1; 19:1-2; 40:36-38). They were led by the pillar of cloud and by the pillar of fire. Furthermore, manna rained down from heaven, and living water flowed from the cleft rock. In their journeys the children of Israel eventually were brought by the Lord to Mount Sinai where they received a revelation of God's eternal purpose, which is to have His dwelling place on earth (25:8-9, 40). After receiving this revelation, they built the tabernacle for God's habitation (39:32; 40:2, 34-35).

Exodus is not only a book telling how the Israelites got out of Egypt; it is a book of redemption, supply, revelation, and building. The exodus from Egypt was simply the beginning. This was followed by the supply, the revelation, and the building.

III. THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

The central thought of Exodus is that Christ is the redemption, salvation, and supply of God's people and the means for them to worship and serve God so that in Him they may be built up with God together for them and God to meet, communicate, and dwell mutually. We see Christ throughout the book of Exodus. As the Passover, He is the means of our redemption. As the great salvation for God's people, He saves us out of the hand of Pharaoh, Satan. As the manna and the living water, He is our life supply. Furthermore, the Red Sea signifies Christ's death in which we are baptized (1 Cor. 10:2). Romans 6:3 says that those who are baptized into Christ are baptized into His death.

In Exodus Christ is many other items: the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, the seventy palm trees and twelve springs at Elim, and the tabernacle with all its furniture. Through the tabernacle and its furniture, God's redeemed people could serve Him and worship Him. This indicates that Christ is the means by which we serve God and worship Him. God's chosen people are to be built up together into one entity, the tabernacle, where God and man may mutually meet, communicate, and dwell. In Christ we and God, God and we, are built together, meet together, and dwell together. This is the central thought of the book of Exodus.

IV. THE SECTIONS

We may outline the sections of Exodus in a simple way. The book is arranged in five sections: enslaved (1:1-22), redeemed and saved (2:1—15:21), led (15:22—18:27), receiving revelation (19:1—34:35), and building the tabernacle (35:1—40:38). Having this introductory word before us, we shall get into the details of this book in the following messages.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWO

ISRAEL UNDER SLAVERY

As far as composition is concerned, the book of Exodus is a continuation of Genesis. This is proved by the way Exodus begins: "Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, which came into Egypt" (1:1, Heb.). Genesis has a wonderful beginning but a poor conclusion. It opens with the words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Heb.). But it ends with the statement, "So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt" (Gen. 50:26). Thus, Genesis concludes with a dead man in a coffin in Egypt. This indicates that God's chosen people were in a situation of death.

Exodus 1 is a further exposure of the condition of God's people in Egypt. Although they were in death, they were not inactive, for they were living and active in death. This is Paul's thought in Ephesians 2, where we are told that those who are dead in trespasses and sins walk according to the age of the world, behave in the lusts of the flesh, and carry out the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts. Those who are spiritually dead still have their works, but they are dead works, works of death.

Chapter one of Exodus is a detailed record of the activities of God's people in their situation of death in Egypt. Forced to labor as slaves of Pharaoh, they were already in death and yet they were daily being killed. It may sound strange to say that the dead are being killed, but this is true in spiritual experience. Although the worldly people are already spiritually dead, they are continuously being killed. The situation among the worldly people today, like that among God's people in

Exodus 1, is characterized by slavery and death. People are firstly enslaved by the world and then they are deadened and killed by it. People may think that human culture is progressing in a positive way, but in the eyes of God there is more slavery and death on earth today than ever before. Before we came to Christ and were saved, we also were enslaved and deadened. Furthermore, before we came into the church life in the Lord's recovery, many of us continued to be enslaved and deadened, even after we had been saved. We all need to be on the alert lest we be enslaved and deadened once more.

The book of Genesis has a good beginning but ends with a poor situation, whereas Exodus begins with a poor situation but ends gloriously. We have pointed out that Genesis begins with God's creation but ends with a dead man in a coffin in Egypt. Exodus, on the contrary, opens with a picture of God's people being enslaved and in death, but concludes with the ark in the tabernacle that is filled with the glory of God. What a tremendous difference between the end of Genesis and the end of Exodus! Where do you prefer to be—in a coffin in Egypt or with the ark in the tabernacle that is filled with God's glory?

I. RELATED TO THEIR LIVELIHOOD

In this message we shall consider the slavery of the children of Israel. The Israelites were born in Canaan. Because of a food shortage, they were forced to go down to Egypt, where they eventually were enslaved. By this we see that people become enslaved primarily out of the need to maintain their livelihood, out of the need to make a living. Worldly people are drawn to various entertainments because they desire a better living. Likewise, people today pursue higher education or technical training in order to secure a good living, even the best living. Throughout the world, whether in developed nations or in backward countries, people are enslaved due to the need to earn a living. This was also the situation with the children of Israel in Egypt.

A. Egypt Typifying the World

According to the Bible, the world has at least three aspects: the aspect of rebellion and idolatry, signified by Babel; the aspect of sinfulness, signified by Sodom; and the aspect of enjoyment and pleasure, signified by Egypt. Rebellion is related to idolatry, the worship of anything other than God. Because those who worship idols are in rebellion against God, idol worship signifies rebellion. In the Bible Babel is a symbol of the rebellious and idolatrous world. On earth today there are idols everywhere, even in Christian countries.

Abraham was called out of the land of Babel, that is, out of the world of rebellion and idolatry. God's calling Abraham out of the land of Babel symbolizes our being called out of the rebellious and idolatrous world. But as we have pointed out, the calling of Abraham represents just one aspect of our salvation from the world.

1. Rich in Material Supply and Full of Physical Enjoyment and Pleasure

The exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt represents another aspect. Egypt signifies the world of enjoyment, the world of pleasure. Those who are involved with this aspect of the world are not ensnared primarily by rebellion or idolatry; they are fully occupied by pleasure, by the rich material supply and physical enjoyment of the world (Gen. 12:10; 42:1; Num. 11:4-5). The river Nile, which irrigates the land of Egypt, makes the land rich in produce. When the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, they said, "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic" (Num. 11:5). All these items represent the material riches of the world for enjoyment and pleasure.

Before we were saved, we were not only in the world of rebellion and idolatry, but also in the world of riches and enjoyment. Abraham was called out of the rebellious world,

but the children of Israel made their exodus out of the world of enjoyment. Egypt was rich not only in food supply but also in gold. This is proved by the fact that the Egyptians gave gold to the Israelites at the time of the exodus.

2. Usurping the People Whom God Had Created and Chosen for His Purpose

The world typified by Egypt usurps the people whom God created and chose for His purpose (5:6-9). The children of Israel were enslaved to that aspect of the world which gave them their livelihood and afforded them their enjoyment. Whether they are rich or poor, many today are slaves to money. They work hard to earn a large amount of money and then in a short time they spend all they have to indulge in the pleasures of the world. Thus many today do not serve God, but mammon. This was the situation among the ancient Israelites in the land of Egypt. In Egypt they made a good living and they enjoyed the riches of the world. But Egypt kept them from fulfilling the purpose for which God had originally called them.

In Egypt the children of Israel became strong. Exodus 1:7 says, "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and grew strong exceedingly; and the land was filled with them" (Heb.). In one sense, to become strong is to become rich. Without money, a nation cannot be strong. For example, the United States is a strong nation because of its economy.

The children of Israel enjoyed the aspect of the world typified by Egypt. They were not in the first aspect of the world, typified by Babel, nor in the second aspect, represented by Sodom. But they were enslaved in the third aspect, signified by Egypt. Because they were occupied by the riches and enjoyment of the world, they were kept from fulfilling the purpose for which God had created and chosen them. In the same principle, all the worldly people today have been usurped by Satan. As a result, they do not know

God's purpose. How we need to thank the Lord for delivering us from slavery in the world and for setting us free from the usurping hand of Satan!

B. The Children of Israel Falling into Egyptian Tyranny

Because of their need to maintain their livelihood, the children of Israel fell into Egyptian tyranny (1:10-11). The worldly people today are also under tyranny. Even their occupation with worldly amusements is a sign that they are under Satan's tyranny. Forced to follow a course that holds them under Satan's tyranny and that keeps them from God's purpose, they have no freedom and do not make the proper choices.

II. PHARAOH'S ENSLAVEMENT OF ISRAEL

A. Pharaoh Typifying Satan

The children of Israel were under the enslavement of Pharaoh (1:8-11, 13-14), who typifies Satan, the ruler of the world (John 12:31; Eph. 2:2). Because Pharaoh is the embodiment of Satan, he is a picture of Satan in Exodus, a book of pictures.

B. Pharaoh Making God's People Work for Him

1. Dealing with Them Wisely

Pharaoh forced God's people to work for him (1:10-11, 13-14). In verse 10 Pharaoh said, "Let us deal wisely with them." The worldly people do not realize how wise Satan is and how wisely he deals with people to usurp them, to occupy them, and to enslave them. The goal of Satan's wise dealings is the enslavement of mankind.

2. Forcing Them to Serve with Rigor

Verse 13 says, "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor." Some versions translate the Hebrew word for "rigor" as "harshness." This word indicates that the children of Israel had no liberty, no rights, and no

rest. No matter what their circumstances were, they had to labor as slaves. They had to do what Pharaoh demanded.

3. Making Their Lives Bitter with Hard Work

a. In Mortar, in Brick, and in All Manner of Labor

Verse 14 continues, "And they made their lives bitter with hard labor, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of labor in the field: all their labor, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor" (Heb.). Pharaoh made the lives of the Israelites bitter with hard labor. Today, in the eyes of God, all the people are laboring in the "field." You may work in a hospital, factory, or office, but actually you are laboring in the "field" making "bricks" and cementing them with "mortar."

b. Building Two Treasure Cities for Pharaoh

As slaves in Egypt, the children of Israel "built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses" (v. 11). Pithom means "mouth of integrity," and Raamses means "thunder of the standard." These names indicate that Pharaoh's treasure cities were built for pride and boastful display, just as the pyramids were. I believe that, under Pharaoh, the Egyptians had these treasure cities built in order to boast of their integrity, honesty, and goodness and also to propagate their cultural standard. The mouth of integrity is still sounding forth in the world today. Every race and nation boasts of its goodness. Furthermore, every country, developed or undeveloped, is proud of its standard of attainment. For thousands of years the world has been boasting of its goodness and thundering out its standard. Today the worldly people are building treasure cities for Satan because of pride in their integrity and standard.

In contrast to the worldly people, the Lord Jesus did not boast of His integrity. Instead of boasts, words of grace issued from His mouth (Luke 4:22). Moreover, with the Lord

there was no thundering of the standard. Matthew 12:19 says of Him, "He shall not strive nor cry out, nor shall anyone hear His voice in the streets."

c. The Same as in Babel

The labor of the children of Israel in Egypt was the same as the toil of the rebellious ones in the land of Babel, out of which Abraham was called. Those at Babel made bricks and cemented them with mortar for the building of the city and tower of Babel in order to make a name for themselves (Gen. 11:3-4). In Egypt Pharaoh compelled the children of Israel to build cities for him out of bricks and mortar.

III. PHARAOH'S KILLING THE LIFE OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

A. Killing the Males and Keeping the Females

Pharaoh not only enslaved the children of Israel, but also sought to kill all the baby boys born to the Hebrew women (1:15-19). Verse 22 says, "And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." According to the Bible, the male life is for God's purpose; and, especially among the fallen people, the female life is for man's pleasure. What Pharaoh did in Egypt is exactly what Satan is doing today: Satan is killing the life that is for God's purpose and preserving the life that is for man's pleasure. As believers in Christ, even we ourselves may be used by Satan to kill the male life, the life for God's purpose, and to preserve the female life, the life for man's pleasure. Every believer has both kinds of lives. If we do not have the Lord's grace, daily we shall be a Pharaoh killing the life for God's purpose and keeping the life for man's pleasure. For example, on the Lord's day many Christians have no heart to attend Christian meetings. Instead, they spend that day enjoying sports, entertainments, and amusements. However, on the Lord's day the believers should come together

to worship the Lord, to listen to His Word, and to serve Him. Yet on the Lord's day many believers slaughter the male life, but keep the female life. In regard to worshipping the Lord on the Lord's day, they are deadened, but in regard to partaking of various worldly entertainments and amusements, they are active and very much alive.

Satan is always looking for opportunities to kill the life that is for God's purpose and to preserve the life that is for man's pleasure. Have you ever considered why it is so much easier to gossip than to pray? To pray is to exercise the male life, but to gossip is to exercise the female life. Perhaps even today you have been one with Satan in killing the life in you that is for God's purpose. When the Lord stirs us to pray but we indulge in gossiping instead, we are being utilized by Satan to kill the male life and to preserve the female life. This indicates we are doing the same thing today that Pharaoh did in chapter one of Exodus. Do you live by the life that is for God's purpose or by the life that is for man's pleasure? Perhaps part of the time you are a Pharaoh enthroning the self and killing the life that is for God's purpose, but preserving the life that is for your pleasure.

B. Utilizing the Midwives to Kill the Male Life

In Genesis 3:1-6 we see that Satan used Eve, the female life, to deaden the male life. This means that Satan uses the life that is for man's pleasure to kill the life that is for God's purpose. However, God also uses the female life to accomplish something for Himself. At the beginning of the Old Testament, Satan visited a female, Eve, and used her to kill the male life, but at the beginning of the New Testament, God visited the virgin Mary and used her to bring in His salvation. Satan's visitation of Eve caused the fall, but God's visitation of Mary brought in His salvation. In the same principle, in Exodus 1 Pharaoh sought to utilize

the midwives to kill the male life, but God used them to keep alive the life that is for God and for God's purpose.

It may be easy for the sisters to be used by the enemy, but it is also easy for them to be used by God. Whether the church will be deadened or delivered depends on the sisters. The sisters need to be today's Marys. In the New Testament there is more than one Mary. At the time the Lord Jesus was conceived and brought forth, a Mary was used. When the Lord was crucified and buried, at least two Marys were present. Furthermore, on the morning of His resurrection, the Lord Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. All these Marys were used by the Lord for the fulfillment of His purpose.

What is true of the sisters in the church life is also true of the women in a nation. When the females are used by Satan, the country will be corrupted. But when they are used by God, the country will be preserved.

According to history, it is when the condition of things related to God is wonderful—in the garden of Eden, at a time of revival, at the highlight of a glorious time—that Satan comes in to usurp the females to damage the situation. Seldom is he able to utilize a man in such a way. However, it is in the time of degradation, of desperate need, that God comes to use the female life to rescue the situation and bring in His salvation. Such was the case in Exodus 1. Satan comes to the females in the high times because he knows that they are the weaker vessels. By also coming to the females, the Lord puts Satan to shame. There is a strong indication in the Word that the sisters were present at every time of urgent need. On both the positive and the negative side, history bears out this principle. Therefore, the sisters need to be careful in the wonderful times, but they also need to be ready to stand on the side of the Lord, as the midwives did, and be used by Him in times of degradation and urgent need to rescue the situation and fulfill His purpose.

The key to the second part of Exodus 1 is not with the male life; it is with the female life. Pharaoh, the embodiment

of Satan, sought to use the female life, the midwives, to destroy the male life, but God came in to use these midwives to preserve the male life. The principle is the same both in the case of the midwives and in the case of the virgin Mary. They all were used by God to bring in salvation. This principle also applies in the church life today. Whenever the sisters are used by Satan, there will be corruption in the church. But whenever they are used by the Lord, there will be salvation. We look to the Lord that He will again use the female life to rescue the situation in the church life today!

IV. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

A. Causing the Children of Israel to Multiply and Become Strong

Although Pharaoh enslaved the children of Israel and tried his best to slaughter the male life, God was still sovereign over the whole situation (1:7, 12, 17-21). For example, it was of God's sovereignty that the "children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and grew strong exceedingly" (1:7, Heb.). Today the church often becomes strong for no apparent reason. Only God's sovereignty can account for the strengthening. Throughout the years, I have learned that we should not trust in our work or labor. We should trust only in the Lord's sovereign blessing. When the Lord blesses us, even our mistakes turn out for good. (This does not mean, however, that we should do evil that good may come.) But if there is no blessing from the Lord, we shall not see much positive result, no matter how good or right we may be. Our trust should never be in what we are nor in what we can do. Our trust must be absolutely in the Lord. We should pray, "Lord, we are simply doing our duty as we follow You. But, Lord, You know that we do not trust in what we are nor in what we are able to do. Our trust, Lord, is altogether in what You are. If You sovereignly bless Your church, the church will multiply and become strong."

B. Making the Hebrew Women Lively

God's sovereignty is also seen in His making the Hebrew women lively (1:19). When Pharaoh asked the midwives why the male children were still being kept alive, the midwives replied, "Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them" (v. 19). By answering Pharaoh in this way, the midwives were not lying. It was a fact that the Hebrew women were more lively than the Egyptian women. This was according to the sovereignty of God. The Hebrew women were lively because God sovereignly made them lively.

The same is true with the church today. Whether the church becomes lively or deadened does not depend on what we do. It depends solely on the Lord's sovereignty. But this does not mean that we should be lazy or idle. On the one hand, we should not think that our work will bring in God's blessing. On the other hand, we should not think that because everything depends on the Lord's blessing, we should do nothing. We need to labor, to do our duty, realizing as we do so that the condition of the church and of the saints is a matter of God's sovereignty.

C. Using the Female Life to Save the Male Life

Furthermore, the Lord sovereignly used the female life, the midwives, to save the male life, in the same principle that He used the virgin Mary to bring forth the Savior (Gal. 4:4-5). In his own wisdom Pharaoh planned to terminate the nation of Israel. God did not fight against Pharaoh. Instead, He sovereignly used two midwives to save the male life.

D. Dealing Well with the Midwives and Making Them Households

Verses 20 and 21 say, "Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and became very

strong. And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them households" (Heb.). By dealing well with the midwives, God made them households to bring forth life for the fulfilling of His purpose. This means that He used the life that is for man's pleasure to produce the life that is for God's purpose. In this picture we see that if we refuse to stand with Pharaoh but stand with God, God will deal well with us so that we may produce life for the accomplishment of His purpose. Sisters, when you stand with God, not with Satan, God will establish households for you. This means that God will establish units to produce life for the fulfilling of His purpose.

From this message we may conclude that no matter how much Satan may seek to enslave us or to deaden us, God is still sovereign and He can use us to be today's midwives. We all can be those who turn the life for man's pleasure into the life for God's purpose. If we are such midwives, God will establish households for us filled with people producing life for the accomplishment of God's purpose. In the following message we shall see that Moses was preserved through three women: his mother, his sister, and the daughter of Pharaoh. Praise the Lord for the midwives, for the female life that turns to God for the fulfillment of His purpose! Praise Him that in the darkness of Exodus 1 a bright light is shining.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THREE

PREPARATION OF THE SAVIOR

In chapter one of Exodus Pharaoh held the children of Israel in slavery and also sought to kill all the baby boys born to Hebrew mothers. In the second chapter we see the preparation of a savior for the children of Israel. Although these two chapters are separate, there is an underlying theme that binds them together. This theme is that in times of crisis God uses the female life for His purpose. For example, in Exodus 1 God used the midwives, the female life, to preserve the male life for the fulfillment of God's purpose. Pharaoh's intention was to kill the male life, which represents the life for God's purpose, but to preserve the female life, which represents the life for man's pleasure. No doubt, Pharaoh intended to preserve the female life for his own pleasure. Pharaoh attempted to use the midwives to carry out his evil intention. But in God's sovereignty the midwives refused to cooperate with Pharaoh's plot. Although Pharaoh was a powerful ruler, even a tyrant, the midwives were not afraid of him, nor did they hearken to his word. Instead of killing the baby boys, the midwives preserved them. Hence, God used the female life to maintain the male life for His purpose.

I. THROUGH THE FEMALE LIFE

In Exodus 2 there is the need for the preparation of a savior to deliver God's people out of the hand of Pharaoh's tyranny. In preparing the savior, God firstly used not the male life but the female life (vv. 1-10). The female whom God used strategically for this purpose was found in Pharaoh's very household—it was Pharaoh's own daughter. This reminds us of Paul's word

in Philippians concerning "those of Caesar's household" (4:22). Although Caesar had put the Apostle Paul into prison, at least some of Caesar's household became Christians. In the same principle, although Pharaoh tried to kill all the male infants born among the Hebrews, God sovereignly used Pharaoh's daughter to preserve the most important male born to the children of Israel in Egypt.

Hebrews 11:23 says that Moses "was hid three months by his parents," but Exodus 2:2 mentions only that his mother hid him three months. The reason Exodus 2 mentions only the mother is to emphasize the fact that during times of crisis it is the female life that is useful to God. If it had not been for the midwives in chapter one, Israel could have been exterminated. Likewise, without the female life in chapter two, there would have been no way for God to prepare a savior to rescue the children of Israel. In Exodus 1 God used the female life to preserve His people, and in Exodus 2 He used the female life to prepare a savior for His people, the people He had preserved for the fulfillment of His plan. Not only the sisters but also the brothers should be thankful for the function of the female life. In fact, in a proper sense, all the believers in Christ, both brothers and sisters, should be females in the eyes of God, because the female pictures the dependent life, the life utterly dependent on God.

A. A Daughter of Levi

In chapter two, several females were used by God. The first was Moses' mother, a daughter of Levi (2:1). The name of Moses' father was Amram, and the name of his mother was Jochebed (Num. 26:58-59). The emphasis in Numbers 26 is on names, but the emphasis in Exodus 2 is on the female life. For this reason, with the exception of Zipporah, Moses' wife, this chapter does not mention the names of any females.

After Moses' mother gave birth to Moses, she hid him for three months. When she could no longer hide him, she put him in an ark of papyrus and laid it among the reeds by the bank of

the Nile. Later, however, she was hired by Pharaoh's daughter to nurse him for a period of time. Thus, the first female mentioned in Exodus 2 was the mother of Moses, the life that brought him forth in birth and nursed him.

B. The Sister of the Male Child

The second female was Moses' sister, Miriam. Moses' father, mother, and sister may have held a family conference concerning what to do with Moses when they could no longer hide him. I believe that the Lord led them to make that ark of papyrus. The same Hebrew word is used for this ark and for the ark built by Noah. Although this ark was a great deal smaller than the one built by Noah, the function of both arks was the same: to preserve life by causing the ones in them to pass through water. Moses' family might have known that Pharaoh's daughter was in the habit of bathing at a certain place in the river, and it might have been their hope that Moses would be discovered by her and raised by her. With Moses' father in the background, the mother and the sister worked together to carry out the plan. After the ark had been "laid…in the reeds by the river's brink…his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him" (2:3-4, Heb.). When Pharaoh's daughter saw the baby and had compassion on him, Moses' sister recommended that his mother be asked to nurse him (vv. 7-8). Moses' sister thus watched over the male life and established the connection between Pharaoh's daughter and Moses' mother.

C. The Female Slave of Pharaoh's Daughter

When Pharaoh's daughter "saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her female slave to fetch it" (v. 5, Heb.). Here we see the part played by a female slave. This slave is the third female mentioned in this chapter. Again the name is not given in order to underscore God's intention of impressing us with the female life. In Exodus 2 we see several females gathered about an ark in which a three-month-old baby boy had been

laid. Each of these females had a different function. The function of the female slave was to serve. In particular, her service was fetching the ark.

D. Pharaoh's Daughter

Pharaoh's daughter, the fourth female in this chapter, had her function also. First she rescued Moses and then charged Moses' mother to nurse him. Later, when the child was brought to Pharaoh's daughter, "he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water" (v. 10). We know from Acts 7:21 that "Pharaoh's daughter took him up and nurtured him as her own son."

In Exodus 2 we have a historical record, but in Acts 7 and Hebrews 11 we have a spiritual record. For example, Acts 7:20 says that Moses was "handsome to God." This means that in the sight of God Moses was very comely. His parents must have been godly. Possessing spiritual insight and discernment, they realized that Moses was a very promising child for God's purpose. Therefore, they hid him three months "because they saw that he was a handsome child" (Heb. 11:23).

The emphasis in Exodus 2 is not on the spiritual significance of Moses' early life; it is on the important role played by the female life. Although the writings of Moses are elsewhere very descriptive, in Exodus 2 he gives us a very simple record in order to impress us with the way God uses the female life in times of crisis. During critical times, the only life that can be used by God is the female life that stands with God and is dependent upon Him.

We are living in a critical time, a time when the female life is urgently needed. Anyone who presumes to be a male will become a Pharaoh. All of us, including the brothers, need to be females. In a critical time such as now, the male life that is independent of God is not useful. Only the female life, the life that depends on God, is prevailing. If we see this, we shall have a great appreciation for the female life, the life that is wholly dependent on God.

In chapter two God used a number of females to accomplish His purpose of preparing a savior. One of these females, the mother of Moses, gave birth to him and nursed him. Another, his sister Miriam, watched over him when he was in the ark and served as a connecting link between Pharaoh's daughter and Moses' mother. The female slave fetched the ark, and Pharaoh's daughter raised Moses as her own son. Probably she was also the one through whom Moses learned "all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). Today we also need the various functions of the female life: the conceiving, bearing, and nursing function; the function of watching, recommending, and establishing the proper connections; the function of helping and serving; and the function of raising, teaching, and training. Through four kinds of female life, Moses was born, raised, and trained for God's purpose. For the carrying out of His economy today, the Lord needs these four kinds of female life. He needs many mothers, daughters, female slaves, and royal princesses to make the preparations for the deliverance of His people so that they can fulfill His purpose.

II. THROUGH LEARNING THE WISDOM OF THE EGYPTIANS

Acts 7:22 says, "Moses was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was powerful in his words and deeds." Under God's sovereignty, Moses learned all the Egyptian wisdom while staying in the royal palace as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Through his Egyptian education, he became highly cultured and received the highest learning of the world. Hence, he became mighty both in words and in deeds. However, that was only the preparation on the natural side; he still needed the preparation on the spiritual side.

III. THROUGH BEING REJECTED BY THE BROTHERS

A. Endeavoring to Rescue His Brothers

Acts 7:23 says, "But when he was forty years old, it came

into his heart to visit his brothers, the sons of Israel." In the Bible the number forty signifies trials, tests, and sufferings. The children of Israel were tested by God in the wilderness for forty years, Moses was on the mountain for forty days, and the Lord Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days. The first forty years of Moses' life were years of trial, testing, and suffering. At the end of these years, Moses was confident that he had been furnished, equipped, qualified, and perfected to save the children of Israel. He "supposed that his brothers would understand that God through his hand would give salvation to them" (Acts 7:25). When he spied an Egyptian oppressing a fellow Hebrew, Moses "slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand" (Exo. 2:12).

Acts 7:22 says that Moses was "powerful in his words," but in Exodus 4:10 Moses said to the Lord, "I am not eloquent … but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." How can we reconcile these verses? Was Moses mighty in words or was he slow in speech? At the age of forty, Moses regarded himself as fully educated and qualified. Hence, he acted in a bold, strong manner. But his strength and boldness were altogether natural. God would not use Moses' natural ability, natural strength, or natural boldness. In order to break down Moses' natural strength, God arranged to have him work as a shepherd in the land of Midian. Thus, one who had been raised in the royal Egyptian family and who had attained the highest level of culture became a shepherd. For another forty years Moses kept the flock of his father-in-law in the wilderness. This was the best "graduate school" for Moses. In this "school" he was trained to have no confidence in his natural ability. Naturally speaking, he was eloquent, bold, mighty, and strong. But spiritually speaking, he was disciplined until he realized that he had nothing.

When God called Moses in chapter three, He showed him the sign of a burning bush, a bush that burned without being consumed (3:2-3). It seems that God was saying, "Moses, you are just a bush through whom I desire to

manifest Myself. Although I want you to be My channel, I shall not use your energy, nor your strength. You are the vessel, and I Myself am the fuel. Whatever you do, you must do in dependence on Me."

Do not think that God will use your strength or energy for the fulfillment of His purpose. In order to be used by God, we need to have a heart for Him and His interests, but our natural strength must be set aside. God does not care to use our natural eloquence, knowledge, talent, ability, energy, or power. Anything natural in us cannot be used by Him.

God took the first forty years of Moses' life to build up a man who was strong in the natural life, and then He took another forty years to strip this man of all his natural ability. It may seem to many, especially to the young people, that forty years is too long a time for God to deal with our natural ability and energy. But as an elderly brother with more than fifty years' experience in the Lord, I can testify that forty years go by very quickly. Do not expect to grow and develop like a mushroom. God's way is first to build us up and then, in a sense, to tear us down. God intended that Moses learn all the wisdom and knowledge of the Egyptians, but wisdom and knowledge should not remain raw, unprocessed. Rather, it must always be processed. Whether we like this process or not, we must pass through it in order to learn not to depend upon our natural strength or ability. After all that has been built up in us in a natural way has been set aside, we shall be useful to the Lord.

B. Rejected by the Brothers

In this chapter Moses was raised up by the female life and rejected by the male life (vv. 11-15). In times of crisis, the female life is used by God to raise up something for His purpose. But whatever God raises up through the female life is rejected by the male life. This principle can be applied to the history of God's move on earth.

Which life do you prefer—the raising-up life or the

rejecting life? If this question were addressed to me, I would say that I appreciate both and need both. I need to be raised up, and I also need to be rejected. If in the Lord's recovery you have never been rejected, you cannot know where you are. Only those who have been rejected can be used by God. If you have not been rejected, you are still "raw" and unprocessed. To be processed we need to be rejected. I have been rejected many times. My character and disposition need and deserve this rejection.

We have seen that Moses was naturally very strong and supposed that his Hebrew brothers would recognize him as their deliverer. Because Moses was strong, he was frank. This is characteristic of all strong ones. But, like Moses, the stronger we are, the more we shall be rejected. Perhaps only those who are like "jellyfish" will always be welcomed.

Having a good heart with a good intention, Moses intervened in the struggle between two Hebrews. He said to the one who was in the wrong, "Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?" (2:13). It seems that Moses was saying, "As Hebrew brothers, we should love one another. Why are you wronging your brother?" The one Hebrew who was wronging his fellow Hebrew answered, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" (v. 14). Hence, the one raised up through the female life was rejected.

In the same principle, the Lord Jesus was crucified by the male life, but appreciated by the female life. When the Lord was crucified, the sisters' presence was a display of their love and appreciation. In times of crisis it is always this way. Therefore, we all need to be females.

C. Renouncing a Royal Position

Hebrews 11:24 says, "By faith Moses, having become great, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Some historians believe that if Moses had remained in the Egyptian palace, he would have been the heir to the

throne. Nevertheless, he renounced a royal position in Egypt, the highest rank in the world at that time.

D. Choosing to Suffer Affliction with the People of God

Hebrews 11:25 and 26 continue, "Choosing rather to be ill-treated with the people of God than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin, esteeming the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked away to the reward." Here we see that Moses paid a price to stand with the people of God. He preferred to suffer affliction with God's people rather than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin. The enjoyment in Egypt, that is, the enjoyment of the pleasures in the world, is sinful in the eyes of God. It is the enjoyment of sin, of a sinful life. It is temporary, short-lived, and fleeting.

E. Leaving Egypt by Faith and Not Fearing the Wrath of Pharaoh

Hebrews 11:27 says of Moses, "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." Apparently there is a contradiction between Hebrews 11:27, which says that Moses did not fear the wrath of the king, and Exodus 2:14, which says that "Moses feared." Actually, there is no contradiction. Outwardly, Moses was afraid and sought to escape. Inwardly, however, he considered the cost and voluntarily chose to identify himself with the people of God.

F. Persevering, as Seeing Him Who Is Invisible

Hebrews 11:27 also says that Moses was "steadfast as seeing the invisible One." He was steadfast, persevering, because the invisible God was working on him. God's work was so real that it was just as if Moses saw the invisible God.

IV. THROUGH BEING ACCEPTED BY THE HEATHEN

A. Helping the Weak and Suffering Females and Being Appreciated and Recommended by the Female Life

After Moses was rejected by the brothers and fled to the land of Midian, he helped the weak and suffering females, who had been mistreated by the shepherds (vv. 16-17). In turn, Moses was received by them. Moses was rejected by the brothers because he was too bold, but he was received by the females because he rendered help to them in their suffering. The females, seven daughters of the priest of Midian, were weaker vessels. When some men took control of the well, they could do nothing about it. But "Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock" (v. 17). As a result, they received Moses and spoke well of him to their father. Hence, the female life is not only the life that God can use to raise up something for His purpose, but also the life that receives what He has raised up. In this chapter the picture of the male life is for the most part very dark, but the portrait of the female life is lovely and very positive.

In principle, during times of persecution the suffering ones are comforted mainly by the sisters. For example, when Peter was released from prison, he went not to the home of a brother, but to the home of a sister where some had gathered together to pray (Acts 12:11-12). Brother Nee's experience also illustrates this principle. The sisters appreciated him and comforted him in times of distress. Most of the brothers put Brother Nee on the cross, whereas the sisters received him and comforted him. As I became aware of this in Shanghai, I learned not to be such a male, one who was dissenting, cold, or neutral, but to become a female, one who was receptive and comforting.

B. Accepted by the Mature Male Life

The Hebrew males who rejected Moses were all immature and inexperienced. But in the priest of Midian we see a

mature, experienced, male life that received the vessel which had been raised up by God. In this chapter all the females are positive, but the males are of two categories, ones with the rejecting life and the positive one with the receiving life. The rejecting ones were inexperienced, whereas the accepting one was experienced and mature. Therefore, God could use this mature male life to perfect the vessel He had raised up. No doubt Moses was perfected under the hand of his father-in-law. I certainly desire to be a mature one who can receive others and then perfect them.

In the church life today, we need both the various kinds of female life and the mature male life for the Lord's economy. If something is to be raised up by God, we must have many females like Moses' mother and sister, the female slaves, Pharaoh's daughter, and the seven daughters of the priest of Midian. We must also have the experienced male life to do the final perfecting work. There is a particular need for the mature male life.

In these days many of us have been encouraged by the messages on Ephesians that we all can be perfected to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. In order to be such gifts to the Body, we must not remain those who are unprocessed, immature, and inexperienced, ones who are not able to receive God's chosen vessels. We need to be raised up through the female life and perfected through the mature male life.

C. Gaining a Wife in the Gentile World

During his sojourn in the Gentile world, Moses gained a wife, Zipporah, a daughter of the priest of Midian. She bore him a son, and Moses called "his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land" (v. 22).

D. Staying in Midian for Forty Years

Moses stayed in Midian for forty years (Acts 7:30). During these years, God worked on him to perfect him. When some of the young people hear this, they may be

disappointed, thinking that they are not able to wait such a long time to be perfected. If we would be perfected over a long period of time, we must have the proper heart, the proper attitude, and the proper standing. Where is your heart and what is your standing? Our heart must be for the Lord, and our standing must be with the Lord's people. If we have such a heart and such a standing, we shall be willing to accept the Lord's training, no matter how long it lasts.

V. THE NEED OF A SAVIOR

At the end of this chapter, we see that among the children of Israel there was an urgent need for a savior: "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage" (v. 23). Therefore, God heard their groaning, and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to bring their descendants into the good land. God was obligated to fulfill His promise. Verse 25 concludes the chapter: "And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God took knowledge of them" (Heb.). This indicates that God knew their situation and understood their problems.

The last few verses of Exodus 2 reveal that all that transpired in this chapter was for the preparation of the savior to bring God's people out of bondage. The situation is the same today. If we have both the female life and the proper male life, God will be able to raise up something and to perfect what He has raised up in order to rescue His people and to gain them for the fulfillment of His purpose. In this way He will be able to turn the age.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FOUR

THE LIFE USEFUL TO GOD

The book of Exodus reveals the kind of people God can use in His economy for the fulfillment of His purpose. God's intention as seen in this book is to have a people to build Him a dwelling place on earth. Thus, at the end of Exodus the tabernacle is erected to be God's dwelling place. Furthermore, for the fulfillment of God's purpose, there is also the need for an army to fight for God's interests on earth. The children of Israel came out of Egypt as a collective people, and right away they were formed into an army. From the time of their redemption until the conquest of the good land, they had to subdue the enemies, especially the enemies who had occupied and fully possessed the land promised to them. If the children of Israel were to enjoy the good land and to fulfill God's purpose of building a temple as God's testimony on earth, they had to fight to deliver the land from the usurping hand of the enemy. Therefore, to be useful to God is related to building up His dwelling place and to fighting for His interests on earth.

The life useful to God in these matters is the female life. According to the natural concept, however, it should be the male life that is useful to God. This is because the males are good fighters, whereas the females are regarded as weaker ones.

Not many readers of Exodus 1 and 2 have seen the underlying theme that links these chapters. Chapter one shows that the people of God were under slavery, and chapter two reveals how God prepared one to save His people out of bondage. The underlying theme is that God needs a certain kind of life both to preserve His people and to

prepare a savior to deliver them from bondage. Both the preservation of the people and the preparation of the savior were accomplished only through the female life.

In the Bible the concept of a "male" is rich in meaning. It refers, of course, to a man, but it also indicates an independent life. Furthermore, it refers to Christ as the unique male in the universe. All married brothers need to realize that they are simply husbands in shadow and that the real husband is Christ. Because God is the unique husband, Isaiah 54:5 says, "Thy Maker is thine husband." In the Old Testament God regarded His people as His spouse (Hosea 2:19). No matter whether an Israelite was a male or a female, he or she was part of God's corporate wife.

In the Bible the term "husband" indicates headship, and it also indicates an independent life. When we speak of a male in the positive sense, we have in mind a husband who is the head and who has an independent life. Because God is the unique husband in the universe, only He is the head and only He has an independent life. It is blasphemous to say that God needs to depend on anyone or anything. It is also blasphemous to claim that we can be independent of Him.

As females, the married sisters should not usurp the headship, nor should they live in an independent way. Rather, they must live a life of dependence upon their husbands, who are but shadows of the Lord as the real husband. Although the married brothers are husbands in shadow with respect to their wives, in actuality they are females with respect to the Lord. Therefore, they should not usurp the headship of the Lord nor have an independent life. They also should be submissive and live a life of dependence.

I. GOD BEING THE HEAD OF CHRIST

God is the head of Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). It is not accurate to say that God is our head, for it is Christ who is the head of man.

II. CHRIST, UNDER THE HEADSHIP OF GOD, BEING THE HEAD OF EVERY MAN

First Corinthians 11:3 says, "The head of every man is Christ." In Himself Christ is not the head of every man; He is the head of all men under the headship of God.

III. MAN, UNDER THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST, BEING THE HEAD OF THE WOMAN

Just as the head of every man is Christ, so "the head of the woman is the man" (1 Cor. 11:3). Man, however, should not be the head of the woman in himself. He should be the head only as he himself is under the headship of Christ.

On the one hand, Christ is under the headship of God, and, on the other hand, He is the head over every man. In like manner, man, on the one hand, should be under the headship of Christ, and, on the other hand, he should be the head of the woman. It is not an easy matter to be both under the headship and to be the head over others. But in the life of Christ we see an excellent example of how this is worked out. The four Gospels reveal that Christ was always under the headship of God. Nevertheless, simultaneously He was the head of all His disciples. Christ was never independent of the Father. In John 5:30 He said, "I can do nothing from Myself," and in John 5:19 He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, this also the Son does in like manner." The Son was always under the headship of God the Father. However, He also exercised the headship over others. For example, He dealt with Peter very strictly whenever Peter acted as if he were the head and lived an independent life. The Lord corrected Peter by causing him to realize the headship of Christ. Just as Christ was under the headship of God the Father, so Peter had to be under the headship of Christ. In this we see that God is the head of Christ and that Christ, under the headship of God, is the head of every

man. Likewise, man, under the headship of Christ, is the head of the woman.

IV. MAN, TYPIFYING CHRIST, SIGNIFYING THE INDEPENDENT LIFE

As a picture of the relationship between God and man, man represents God, and woman represents man. In this sense man, typifying Christ, signifies the independent life. With respect to being under the headship of God, Christ has a dependent life. But with respect to being the head of every man, Christ has an independent life. This means that Christ is dependent on God, but independent of us. In relation to God, Christ's life is a dependent life, but in relation to us, His life is independent. Man typifies Christ as the One with an independent life. With respect to Christ, the married brothers have a dependent life, but with respect to their wives, they have an independent life.

V. WOMAN, TYPIFYING MAN, SIGNIFYING THE DEPENDENT LIFE

Just as man represents God, woman represents man in his relation to God. In this sense woman, typifying man, signifies the dependent life. With man there are two aspects, both dependence and independence. But with woman there is only dependence. It is God, not man, who has not allowed the woman to have an independent life.

VI. MAN TO BE A REAL "FEMALE," LIVING A LIFE DEPENDENT ON GOD

Man should not be a male, but a "female," one who lives a life of dependence on God. Only such a "female" life is useful to God. In Exodus, a book of pictures, this female life is portrayed by the midwives in chapter one and by all the females in chapter two—Moses' mother and sister, the female slave, Pharaoh's daughter, and the daughters of the priest of Midian. All men should be such "females."

VII. MAN'S INDEPENDENCE OF GOD BEING REBELLION

Man's independence of God is rebellion. The moment we become independent, we become rebellious against God. Because the male life is independent and rebellious, God cannot use it for the accomplishment of His purpose.

VIII. WOMAN, LIVING AN INDEPENDENT LIFE, BECOMING A REAL "MALE"

If a woman lives an independent life, she becomes a real "male." Today a great many women have become "males." This is the main reason for the many separations and divorces.

IX. ONLY THE REAL "FEMALE" LIFE BEING USEFUL TO GOD

Whether we are sisters or brothers, we all need to be "females" and live by the only life that is useful to God. In order to be "females" we need to depend upon the Lord. The tree of life in Genesis 2 signifies dependence, and the tree of knowledge signifies independence. Life always makes us dependent, whereas knowledge always makes us independent. For example, before you teach a child something, he depends on you concerning that matter. But as soon as he learns that particular thing, he becomes proud and independent. Life, on the contrary, makes us dependent on God. God desires that we choose life instead of knowledge. This means that He wants us to choose dependence rather than independence.

To live an independent life means to live by the tree of knowledge, but to live a dependent life means to live by the tree of life. Living by the tree of life is actually living by the Lord Himself. The vine in John 15 is an excellent illustration of the dependent life. John 15:5 says, "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he

bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." All the branches of the vine are dependent upon the vine. To abide in the vine is to be dependent upon the vine. Thus, as far as abiding is concerned, there can be no independence.

Not only do the worldly people live an independent life, but many Christians also live a life that is independent of God. For this reason, the vast majority of Christians have become useless to God. Therefore, we must learn that, whether we are males or females, we must live a life in constant dependence on God. No matter how long we have been with the Lord, we still must depend upon Him for life today. For example, we cannot graduate from eating, drinking, and breathing. How foolish for a person to say that because he has been breathing for seventy years he no longer needs to breathe! With life, there is no graduation. God's strategy is to put us in a position where we must depend upon Him. We need to pray, "Lord, apart from You, I can do nothing. I must abide in You and take You as my life. Daily I need to eat the tree of life. Lord, I want to live a 'female' life, a life that always depends on You." This is the kind of life God can use for the fulfillment of His purpose.

At the age of forty, Moses lived an independent "male" life. Acting independently of God, he exercised his natural strength to smite an Egyptian. Moses was truly an independent "male." However, during the forty years Moses was set aside, God taught him that He would not use his male life. It is not an easy matter to train a male to live a female life. Nevertheless, in the second forty years of his life, Moses learned to be a female. During his third forty years, from the age of eighty to the age of one hundred twenty, Moses lived the life of a female. Only in one instance, when he struck the rock the second time, was he independent of God (Num. 20:7-13). Because Moses acted as a male on that occasion, he offended the Lord and thus was denied the privilege of entering into the good land.

Readers of the Bible usually regard Moses as the leader

of the children of Israel. Moses, however, did not have this concept about himself; he never assumed a position as the leader. When the children of Israel rebelled against him, he considered it rebellion against God, not against himself. Moses simply went to the Lord and presented the problems to Him. In doing so, Moses honored the Lord as the head, as the unique male. This indicates that Moses was living a female life, a life of dependence on God.

The female life is seen not only in chapters one and two of Exodus, but also throughout the following chapters. We have pointed out that Moses was trained to live a female life. Moreover, all the warriors were living a female life of dependence on God. If you have not learned to be a female, you will not be able to fight for the kingdom of God. God uses only female warriors. This means that if you are living an independent male life, you are useless as far as spiritual warfare is concerned.

I wish to emphasize the point that to be a male is to be independent of God. For example, a husband may deal with his wife in a way that is independent of God, and a wife may deal with her husband in the same manner. This means that both the husband and wife may be "males" in the negative sense. But we should not be such "males," those who are independent of God. We should be "females," those who depend upon God and do nothing apart from Him. In all that we say or do we should depend on Him. If this is our situation, then we are true "females" living a dependent life.

The history of the church reveals that whenever there is such a "female" life, God is able to do something for His purpose. Take Martin Luther as an example. He was a man who learned to depend on God. No doubt, Luther was born with a strong will. Nevertheless, he learned to depend on the Lord. He did not live and act as a strong "male," but as a dependent "female."

The Apostle Paul also was such a "female." His writings bear witness to this fact. As a "female," Paul did not do anything in a way that was independent of the Lord. His work,

his behavior, and his actions issued from a life of dependence on God.

A. God Dealing with Israel as His Spouse

In the Bible God's people are likened to a female. In the Old Testament God told His people that He was their husband and that they were His spouse. Even King David, a mighty warrior, was part of this corporate wife. David was not the husband of the children of Israel; God was.

Whenever the Israelites rebelled against God, they assumed the position of the husband, and it was as if they divorced themselves from God. By separating themselves from the Lord in this way, they were acting independently of Him. But God was merciful and called them back to Himself as the true husband.

B. Christ Regarding His Believers as Virgins

In the New Testament the believers in Christ are considered virgins. In Matthew 25:1 the Lord Jesus likens His disciples to virgins. Furthermore, in 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul says, "For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one Husband, to present a pure virgin to Christ." As believers, our position and our life should be that of a virgin. Christ is the unique husband, and in His eyes we all are virgins.

C. Christ Loving His Church as His Counterpart

Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." Here we see that Christ loves the church as His counterpart, His wife. Therefore, the church should never be independent; she should never be a "male," but always be a "female." This is why we use the feminine pronoun when speaking of the church. The church must always live a life of dependence upon Christ.

D. Christ Marrying the New Jerusalem as His Bride in the Millennium

Revelation 19:7 says, "Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." This refers to Christ's marrying the New Jerusalem as His bride in the millennium. When Christ comes back, He will marry not a "male," but a female, a bride.

E. God Enjoying the New Jerusalem as His Wife for Eternity

For eternity the New Jerusalem will be the wife of God (Rev. 21:2-3, 9). This indicates that for eternity in the new heaven and new earth we shall be living a dependent life.

We all need to live such a dependent life in the local churches today. None of us should behave as "males." The problems among Christians and in the churches are due to brothers or sisters living an independent "male" life. Whenever there are brothers or sisters in a local church living like "males," there will be trouble. How we must learn not to live independently of God! If we learn this lesson, we shall realize that we must not do certain things; this is not because these things are wrong, but because in doing them we would be independent of God. If we all have a healthy fear of independence, there will be no problems in the church life. Furthermore, there will be no problems among married couples. All problems in the church life, in married life, and among the saints come from one source, and that source is independence. We need to be like the midwives in Exodus; we need to pray, "Lord, I don't want to be a strong 'man,' full of opinions and always insisting on my way. Lord, I want to be like the midwives in Exodus 1 and like the females in Exodus 2."

As we shall see, when Moses confronted Pharaoh, Moses was not a "male." In his dealings with Pharaoh, he was a "female" depending on God. Moses made no decisions nor did

he make any proposals. Everything he did was initiated by God. Moses honored God as the unique initiator.

God's initiating work is seen very clearly in the building of the tabernacle. Moses did not wake up one morning with an idea to build a tabernacle for God. On the contrary, he was called by God to ascend the mountain where God revealed to him what was on His heart and then charged him to build the tabernacle according to the pattern shown him on the mountain (25:40). God gave Moses no room to make independent decisions. Moses had to depend on God for every detail. This is the life God can use for His purpose.

In these days we have been speaking much about the perfecting of the saints for the building up of the Body of Christ. If we would be used to perfect others, we ourselves must have a dependent life. The only life the Lord desires to see perfected is the dependent life. If we live and work independently of God, the result of our work will be that other lives will be perfected to be independent. Only a dependent life can produce a dependent life. Only a life that depends on God for all things can perfect others to be "females." Suppose a certain person is very strong in himself, confident of his abilities, proposals, and decisions. Such a one can produce only independent lives, capable persons who are independent of God. The result of such work will not be the New Jerusalem—it will be Babylon the Great, a city independent of God and rebellious against Him. The church, however, is a female. As a female, she does not have the headship, nor does she have an independent life. Her head is Christ, and her life is a dependent life. This should be the situation in the church today. If we would perfect others in a proper way and build up the church, we need such a "female" life.

The reason the church throughout the years has been torn down instead of built up is that the so-called builders have been too independent. They have been males instead of females. Nevertheless, we thank the Lord that there have

been a small number who were willing to live a "female" life in dependence on the Lord.

The crucial point is that it is not a matter of how much we can do, but of how much we depend upon the Lord. We have pointed out that in John 15:5 the Lord Jesus says that apart from Him we can do nothing. Although we are familiar with this word, in our daily living we frequently forget it or set it aside. The Apostle Paul, however, was one who practiced it. In 1 Corinthians 2:3 he said, "And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." Paul was fearful that he might do something in himself independently of the Lord. How we need such a fear today! May the Lord be merciful to us and grant us this proper kind of fear. If we have it, we shall be afraid to say or do anything in ourselves, anything that is independent of God.

Anything we do independently of the Lord is rebellion. Even our preaching of the gospel or our helping of the saints may be a form of rebellion. We may do many things to help the churches; yet all that we do may be rebellion because it is done independently of the Lord.

I am thankful for the light the Lord has shown us concerning the female life in the book of Exodus. The only life useful to Him is the female life. We all must learn that God never uses the male life. The females in chapter one were used to preserve the children of Israel, and the females in chapter two were used to prepare the vessel the Lord had raised up. Eventually, even Moses himself was trained to be a "female"; he became like the midwives in chapter one and like the different females in chapter two. Because he was a "female" for the fulfillment of God's purpose, he could be used by God. But even Moses, when he was provoked by the children of Israel in the wilderness, once acted like a male and in so doing lost God's blessing. In the Lord's economy and in His move today in His recovery, we all must be watchful with fear and trembling not to act independently of God. May we all see that God can use us only if we are "females" depending on Him at all times and for all things. It is crucial

that we learn of the Lord that only the “female” life is useful to Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIVE

GOD'S CALLING OF THE PREPARED ONE

(1)

In chapter one of Exodus we saw the children of Israel under slavery, and in chapter two we saw the preparation of a savior. In this message we come to Exodus 3, where we shall consider God's calling of the prepared one.

I. THE MOTIVATION OF GOD'S CALLING

The motivation of God's calling was the cry of the children of Israel (2:23-25; 3:7, 9). Exodus 3:7 says, "And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows" (Heb.). Not only did God hear their cry, but He also visited them in the place of their affliction. Hence, He fully knew their situation and was eager to rescue them from it.

II. THE TIME OF GOD'S CALLING

Although God wanted to deliver the children of Israel out of bondage, He had to wait until Moses had been fully prepared. These chapters of Exodus reveal that God is very patient. Even before the birth of Moses, the children of Israel were suffering in Egypt. But God still waited for at least eighty years. It is easy to be patient if you do not have the strength or ability to do anything about the situation. In such a case, you have no choice except to wait. But for one who is capable and qualified, it is difficult to be patient. God was certainly able to deliver the children of Israel; His power was sufficient. Nevertheless, He waited patiently.

Sometimes we are exhausted by God's patience and ask,

"How long, Lord? Have You heard our prayers? Lord, where are You? Don't You care for us? How long will it be before You do something for us?" It seems that there is no God in this universe. In the psalms such questions are asked again and again, for the psalmists were the same as we are.

It is good for us to be exhausted by the patience of God because after we are exhausted, we rest. We may be so exhausted that we give up praying. We know that God is true and real and that He has His timing. Therefore, we learn to leave the matter with Him. Then we shall be at rest.

After forty years of his life had gone by, Moses could no longer wait to deliver the children of Israel. He had received the highest education, and he had become a man powerful in words and in deeds (Acts 7:22). According to his own estimation, no doubt he thought he was qualified and ready to act on behalf of his people. But God set Moses aside for another forty years, until he was fully prepared according to God's standard. In this we see the patience of our God.

What made it necessary for God to wait those eighty years? None of us would have been willing to wait such a long time. Surely God wanted a way to come in earlier than He did, but there was no one among the children of Israel to whom He could come. Therefore, God had to wait until Moses was born. Forty years later Moses was there, and had grown up, but God still had to wait because Moses was so natural. God had to wait because there was the lack of a prepared one.

Here we see a principle. In every age God has desired to do something. The problem has not been on His side; it has always been on the side of His people. The question has always been this: where is one who is ready to receive God's call? In our age also God is eager to do certain things. But who is ready for His call? More than nineteen centuries ago the Lord Jesus said that He was coming quickly (Rev. 22:7). But He still has not come. If we ask the Lord why His coming back has been delayed so long, He may reply, "Where are those who

are ready for Me to come back? When I see that a sufficient number are ready, I shall come. I am very eager to come back, but there must be something for Me to come back to."

In Exodus God could not come in when Moses was a child or when he was still trusting in his natural strength and ability. God had to wait until Moses was eighty years of age. Then, after Moses had been prepared, God came in to call him. The children of Israel cried out because of the tyranny, the persecution, and the oppression, but God still had to wait for Moses to be prepared. In the same principle, the Lord continues to delay His coming back because not enough of His people are ready for Him to return.

In chapters two and three of Exodus we see that the persecuted children of God were crying out to Him and that the God of mercy, grace, and love was eager to rescue them. But Moses was growing slowly unto maturity. The cry of the Israelites was desperate and the eagerness of God was great, but the growth of Moses was slow. The situation is the same today. Many saints have been sighing and longing for the Lord to come back, and the Lord is yearning to come back. But where are the prepared ones? Therefore, instead of complaining to the Lord about today's situation, we should give ourselves to grow in life.

When by God's sovereignty Moses was set aside, he must have been very disappointed and he must have lost all hope. Having lost hope, he became content to be a shepherd caring for the flock in the land of Midian. A man who had been educated in the royal palace was now forced to live as a shepherd in the wilderness. As the years went by, he lost everything—his confidence, his future, his interest, his goal. Eventually, Moses probably reached the point where he had no further thought that he was the one whom God would use to rescue the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt. Moses might have said to himself, "I must care for this flock. But not even this flock is mine; it belongs to my father-in-law. I have no empire, no kingdom. There is nothing left for me to do except to labor in support of my family. My immediate concern

is to find fresh grass for the flock and water for them to drink." But one day, when Moses had been thoroughly processed, God appeared to him and called him. At the age of eighty, in the eyes of God Moses was fully prepared and qualified, and at the precise time He came to him.

The record of God's calling of Moses is longer than the record of His calling of any other person in the Bible. The record of His calling of Abraham is brief, and so is that of Isaiah. The same is true of the calling of Peter and of Saul of Tarsus. But the record of the calling of Moses is lengthy and detailed. In this account we find all the basic points concerning God's calling. Thus, if we would know the full significance of God's calling, we must pay close attention to God's calling of Moses in Exodus 3.

Moses was the first complete, qualified, and perfected servant of God in history. Noah was used by God to build the ark, but he was not the kind of servant Moses was. Not even Abraham, the father of faith, was perfected as a servant of God in the way Moses was. Because he was the first fully qualified servant of God in the Bible, Moses is the standard model of God's servant, and God's calling of him is the standard for His calling of all His servants. In principle, we all need to be called the way Moses was.

III. THE PLACE OF GOD'S CALLING

A. The Back Side of the Wilderness

Exodus 3:1 says, "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb." One day Moses led the flock to the back side of the desert. This indicates that we can be called only when we are at the back side of our situation, never when we are at the front. I believe that Moses led the flock to the back side of the desert because he was looking for the best pasture. He might have been dissatisfied with the familiar places, and he might have desired a new place. Thus, he went to the back side.

If we would receive God's calling, we also must be in the proper place. This place is firstly the back side of our situation. If you are a teacher, God cannot call you at the front side of your teaching profession. You must be at the back side. In the same principle, if you are a businessman, you must go to the back side of your business in order to be called by God.

To be at the back side means that we are not content with our present situation. For years Moses fed the flock on the front side of the desert. But one day, discontent and dissatisfied, he decided to go to the back side to see what was there. If you are dissatisfied with your occupation or with your marriage, this dissatisfaction may turn you to the back side. Every one who has been called by God can testify that he was called at the back side.

In the calling of Moses, who came to whom? Did Moses come to God, or did God come to Moses? I would say that both were traveling, and they eventually met at a certain spot. God traveled there from the heavens, and Moses traveled there from where he was living. Thus, it is difficult to say who came to whom. According to our experience, we one day came to a certain place, and there we met God.

B. The Mountain of God

When Moses went to the back side of the desert, he "came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb." Many times the back side of our situation turns out to be the mountain of God. Moses, however, did not know that the mountain of God was at the back side of the desert. Nevertheless, as Moses was slowly making his journey with the flock to the mountain of God, God was already there waiting for him.

C. Holy Soil

In verse 5 God said to Moses, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy sandals from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy soil" (Heb.). The "holy soil" in this verse refers to land untouched by man. This indicates that God's calling occurs in a place where there is no human interference. God's calling always comes to one who is on virgin soil, soil touched

only by God. This means that every genuine calling comes in a place where there is no human manipulation or opinion. If we would be called by God, we must be in a place reserved wholly for Him.

D. The Midst of a Thorn-bush

On this holy soil there is a thorn-bush. Verse 2 says, "And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a thorn-bush: and he looked, and, behold, the thorn-bush burned with fire, and the thorn-bush was not consumed" (Heb.). The thorn-bush represents Moses himself. The fact that God called from the midst of a thorn-bush indicates that the place of God's calling is within us. God does not call us from the heavens; He calls from within us. Some may wonder whether this principle applies in the case of Saul of Tarsus. Initially, Saul was called by the Lord out of heaven, but eventually this calling became something within Saul. The Lord who called him came into him, into the "bush" from Tarsus.

Our experience bears witness to the fact that the place of God's calling is within us. Every one who has truly been called by God can testify of this. At the beginning it might have seemed as if God were calling from the heavens. Eventually, however, it became clear that God was calling from within the "thorn-bush."

E. A Flame of Fire

Verse 2 speaks also of "a flame of fire." This refers to the glory of God's holiness. In the Bible God's holiness is likened to fire. Whenever God calls someone, He calls him in the glory of His holiness. By calling a person in such a way, God separates him unto His holiness.

Apparently God's calling occurred at the back side of the desert; actually it took place at the mountain of God and, particularly, on holy soil. Experientially, it was from within the midst of a thorn-bush, and, ultimately, it was from the flame of fire. This was the place of God's calling of Moses: at the back side, on the mountain, on holy soil, in the midst of a thorn-bush, and in a flame of fire. In the fire God was calling

Moses. In fact, God was the flame of fire, for the voice which called Moses came out of the fire. Hence, it was the fire that was speaking, that was calling. We all need to be in such a place. Then God's calling will come to us.

To be called by God is not simply a matter of consecrating ourselves to the Lord, attending a Bible school or seminary, and then being ordained after graduation. Such a "calling" means nothing in the eyes of God. God's calling takes place at the back side of our life in the world, on the mountain of God, and in a place where there is no human interference. Furthermore, we are called by God in the glory of His holiness from within the midst of a burning thorn-bush.

IV. THE CALLING ONE

It is of vital importance that the one who is called know the name of the One who is calling him. Exodus 3 reveals the name of God, the calling One, in a full way, more fully perhaps than any other portion of the Word. When God called Moses, Moses said, "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" (v. 13). Here we see Moses' concern with the divine name. He wanted to know the name of the One calling him.

A. The Angel of Jehovah

The One who called Moses was firstly the Angel of Jehovah (v. 2). In his translation, Darby capitalizes the word "Angel" to indicate that this Angel was someone unique. Actually, it was Christ, the Son of God, who is God's Angel, the unique sent One. According to the Bible, an angel is a messenger, that is, one who is sent. In the book of Revelation the leading ones in the churches are called angels, messengers, sent ones. The Angel of the Lord, therefore, in 3:2 is God's sent One.

When we put verses 2 and 4 together, we see that this sent One, the Angel of Jehovah, is actually Jehovah Himself.

Verse 4 says, "And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the thorn-bush" (Heb.). This proves that the Angel of Jehovah is Jehovah Himself and that Jehovah is God. The New Testament reveals that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, came as the Father's sent One. As God's sent One, He was God Himself.

For the purpose of calling and sending Moses, God, the sending One, appeared to him as the sent One. Only the One who has been sent can send out the sent ones. For example, the apostles, the sent ones in the New Testament, were sent out by the Lord Jesus, God's sent One. In John 20:21 the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." Therefore, we, the Lord's disciples, are sent out by God's sent One, who is Christ as the Angel of Jehovah.

According to Exodus 3, the calling One is the sent One. This is a crucial point in God's calling. The one who knows how to use his employees and how to properly supervise them is the one who has done their particular job already. In the same principle, because Christ is God's sent One, only He knows how to send forth others.

Regarding creation, Genesis 1 says that in the beginning it was God who created the heavens and the earth. But in Genesis 2, when God came to contact man and to develop a relationship with him, the name "Jehovah" is used. Here in Exodus 3 God came in to call Moses, not directly in the name of God nor firstly in the name of Jehovah, but in the name of the Angel of Jehovah. In this chapter it is not a matter of creation nor of developing a relationship with man; it is a matter of calling Moses. To be such a calling One there is the need for someone with the qualifications of a sent one, qualifications met uniquely by Christ as the Angel of Jehovah. Because it is the sent One who calls the sent one, the Angel of Jehovah, the Son of God, came to send Moses.

Why is the title "the Angel of Jehovah" not used in the first two chapters of Exodus? It is not until chapter three that Moses was prepared and ready. Therefore, God came to him as

the Angel of Jehovah to call him and to send him. For the sending of Moses, there was the need of One with the experience of having been sent. According to Zechariah 2, the sending One is the sent One, and the sent One is the sending One. We see the same principle at work in chapter three of Exodus. The Angel of Jehovah is Jehovah Himself. The sent One of God, the Son of God, is actually God Himself. The very One who was in the beginning with God and who is God Himself was sent by God.

The title "the Angel of Jehovah" mainly refers to Christ, the Son of God, sent to save God's people from their situation of suffering (see Judg. 6:12, 22; 13:3-5, 16-22). Here in Exodus 3 the Lord came to call Moses for the delivery of the children of Israel from bondage. Hence, He came as the Angel of Jehovah.

B. Jehovah

The second title revealed in this chapter is Jehovah, which means "He who was, who is, and who will be." This title is composed basically of the verb "to be." Apart from the Lord, all else is nothing. He is the only One who *is,* the only One who has reality of being. The verb "to be" should not be applied absolutely to anyone or anything except to Him. He is the only self-existent being. In the universe all things are nothing. Only Jehovah is "He who was, who is, and who will be." In the past, He was; in the present, He is; and in the future, He will be.

Hebrews 11:6 says that "he who comes forward to God must believe that He is." According to this verse, God is, and we must believe that He is. God is, but we are not.

If we would be called by God, we must know that the calling One is firstly the sent One of God and secondly, Jehovah, the One who was, who is, and who will be. We must know that the God who calls us is and that we are not. We all need to know God in such a way.

C. God

This calling One is the very God (3:4, 6, 14). The Hebrew word for God is Elohim, which means the mighty One who is

faithful in His oath. God is not only mighty, but also faithful to fulfill His covenant. If we would be called by the Lord, we must realize that He is mighty and faithful, mighty to do everything for us and faithful to keep His word.

D. The God of Our Father

Verse 6 says, "Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The phrase "the God of thy father" denotes history with God. When God comes to call you, He should not be a stranger to you. If He is a stranger as far as you are concerned, then you are not qualified to be called by Him. To say that God is the God of our father does not mean that He is the God of our father in the flesh, for our natural father may not be a child of God. When we were saved, we gained another genealogy, a spiritual lineage. For this reason Paul told the Corinthians that he begot them in the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15). Paul was not married, and thus he had no children in the flesh. But he had a great many spiritual children. Every believer in Christ has a spiritual father. In the eyes of God, the Lord who calls you is the God of your spiritual father. Moses' father in the flesh was a godly man. Therefore, when God called Moses, He referred to Himself as the God of "thy father." This indicates a history with God. When God appeared to Moses and called him, He was not a stranger, for He had been with Moses' family for generations.

The God of Moses' father was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. This means that God is the God of every kind of person. We may be a good person like Abraham, a somewhat neutral person like Isaac, or a supplanter like Jacob. But whatever we are, God is our God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the all-inclusive God. Whenever God comes to call you, He is always the all-inclusive One.

God is the God of our father, and He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. These titles of God also indicate the God of the covenant. The covenanting

God is for everyone. No matter who you may be, He is your God, and He is qualified to call you.

E. I Am That I Am

Now we come to the most wonderful title of God: "I AM THAT I AM" (3:14-15). In verse 14 the Lord instructed Moses, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." The Lord's name is I Am. In other words, His name is simply the verb "to be." We are not qualified to say that we are. We are nothing; only He has being. Therefore, He calls Himself, "I AM THAT I AM." The Chinese version speaks of Him as "the self-existing One and ever-existing One." "I Am" denotes the One who is self-existing, the One whose being depends on nothing apart from Himself. This One is also the ever-existing One, that is, He exists eternally, having neither beginning nor ending.

In John 8:58 the Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham came into being, I am." As the great I Am, the Lord is the eternal, ever-existing God.

We have seen that in 3:14 the Lord told Moses to say to the children of Israel that I Am had sent him. The words "I Am" are not a complete sentence, but function here as a name, even a unique name. This name, as we have seen, is actually the verb "to be." Only God qualifies to have this verb applied to His being, for only He is self-existent. You and I must realize that we are not self-existent.

As I Am, God is everything we need. To the words "I Am" we can add whatever we may need. Are you tired? The I Am is your rest. Are you hungry? He is your food. Are you dying? He is life. In the New Testament the Lord uses many things to describe Himself: "I am the true vine" (John 15:1), "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), "I am the light" (John 8:12). As I Am, God is everything—heaven, earth, air, water, trees, birds, cattle. This is not pantheism, the religious belief that identifies God with the material universe. I do not say that everything is God, but I do declare that God is the reality of every positive thing. This implies that God must be you, even

the reality of your very being. We can say to Him, "Lord, You are me." If the Lord is not us, then we are nothing, and we have no reality. This great I Am, the all-inclusive One, is the One who has come to call us. It is not heresy to say that our God is the all-inclusive One. It is a truth full of light. Only those who are blind and who are in darkness oppose such truth.

I can testify that for the more than fifty years of my Christian life the I Am has been sustaining me. Because of His sustaining me with what He is, I have never backslidden. Furthermore, I have been able to continue in the ministry for more than forty years. I know the One who called me. I have been called by the I Am. The One who called me sustains me all the time. No human language can adequately express what He is.

F. Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews

Finally, the calling One is "Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews" (3:18, Heb.). The word "Hebrew" means river-crosser. The river-crossers are a separated people, people separated from the world. If we would be called by God, we must see that, as the calling One, God is the God of the river-crossers, the separated people. As such a God, He is not the God of those in Babel nor is He the God of those in Egypt, because they are not separated. If we are not separated from the world, God cannot be our God. He is not the God of the Egyptians, but the God of the Hebrews, of the people who have crossed the river for the fulfillment of His purpose.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIX

GOD'S CALLING OF THE PREPARED ONE

(2)

In the foregoing message we covered four aspects of God's calling of the prepared one: the motivation of God's calling, the time of God's calling, the place of God's calling, and the calling One. In this message we shall consider the purpose of God's calling and the called one.

V. THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S CALLING

A. To Deliver the Children of Israel out of the Tyranny of the Egyptians

Both on the negative side and on the positive side, God's purpose in calling Moses was very great. Negatively, God called him to deliver the children of Israel out of the tyranny of the Egyptians. In 3:8 the Lord said, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians." At the time God called Moses, Egypt was the leading country on earth, and Pharaoh had absolute power. Here was a man now eighty years of age, one who had spent the last forty years of his life shepherding a flock in the wilderness. How could such a one deliver the Israelites from Pharaoh's tyrannical power? To Moses, it might have seemed impossible. Nevertheless, this was the purpose of God's calling on the negative side.

B. To Bring the Children of Israel out of Egypt, the Land of Bondage, and into Canaan, a Land Flowing with Milk and Honey

The purpose of God's calling was not only to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, the land of bondage, but to

bring them into Canaan, a land "flowing with milk and honey" (3:8, 10, 17). Humanly speaking, the positive side of God's calling was even more of an impossibility than the negative side. Such a thing could only be a dream. But this is precisely what God was calling Moses to do, even though forty years before he had turned his back on the highest culture on earth in his day and had been shepherding a flock in the wilderness ever since.

The nation of Egypt typifies the kingdom of darkness, and Pharaoh typifies Satan, the Devil. How can God's people be delivered out of the hand of such an evil power and be rescued from the kingdom of darkness? Today this is done through the preaching of the gospel. Do not think that preaching the gospel to bring people to salvation is an easy task. To bring a person out of Satan's hand and out of the kingdom of darkness is a mighty work. For this reason, the divine revelation in the New Testament places a very high value on the preaching of the gospel. Paul says that the gospel is the power of God (Rom. 1:16).

The purpose of God's calling is a matter of tremendous significance. In typology, bringing the children of Israel into the good land signifies bringing people into Christ, the all-inclusive Person typified by the land of Canaan. Christ today is a good land flowing with milk and honey.

In His wisdom God uses the expression "flowing with milk and honey" to describe the riches of the good land. Both milk and honey are products of a combination of the vegetable life and the animal life. Milk comes from cattle, which feed on grass. The animal life produces milk from the supply of the vegetable life. Therefore, milk is a product of the mingling of two kinds of life. The principle is the same with honey. Honey has much to do with the plant life. It is derived mostly from flowers and trees. Of course, a part of the animal life is also involved—that little animal, the bee. Hence, in the production of honey, two kinds of life cooperate. These two kinds of life are mingled together, and honey is produced.

Milk and honey signify the riches of Christ, riches that

come from the two aspects of the life of Christ. Although Christ is one Person, He has the redeeming life, typified by the animal life, and the generating life, typified by the vegetable life. On the one hand, Christ is the Lamb of God to redeem us; on the other hand, He is a loaf of barley to supply us. Both kinds of life were part of the Passover meal, for in the Passover there were the lamb and the unleavened bread with bitter herbs. These lives were combined for the enjoyment of God's redeemed people. The purpose of God's calling, however, is not to give His people a little enjoyment of the animal life and the vegetable life in Egypt; it is to bring them into a spacious land flowing with milk and honey. Do you have the assurance that in the church life today you are enjoying Christ as the good land? I can testify that I daily enjoy Christ as a spacious land flowing with milk and honey.

Who was qualified to bring God's people out of the land of Egypt into such a marvelous land? Before Moses was sovereignly prepared by God, there was no one who could have done this. Even before he reached the age of forty, Moses must have known that his people, the children of Israel, were in bondage and were suffering persecution. Having realized this, he might have determined to learn everything necessary to equip him to rescue his people. However, Moses probably did not see clearly that the goal was not just to deliver God's people out of Egypt, but to bring them into the good land. After the children of Israel had been brought out of Egypt, they needed a goal, a destination. Although Moses was not altogether clear concerning the goal, he still expected to do something on behalf of his people. He "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be ill-treated with the people of God than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin" (Heb. 11:24-25). At the age of forty, he considered himself matured, qualified, and equipped to deliver them. Actually, he was not able to do anything. In himself he did not have the power to rescue the people. As soon as the situation became threatening, he fled.

VI. THE CALLED ONE

A. Having Been Dealt With and Prepared for Forty Years

God spent another forty years to bring this capable yet disappointed man to the end. It is not an easy matter to terminate such a person. It took forty years of discipline to make Moses realize that he was not qualified to deliver God's people out of Egypt and to bring them into the good land.

During his first few years in the wilderness, Moses might have complained about his fellow Hebrew who refused to recognize him as the deliverer of Israel. Moses might have said, "How blind he was! He didn't realize that I was the one to deliver them. Because of him, I was forced to flee. No one among the children of Israel can do what I could have done. But now everything is ruined." I believe that as year after year went by, Moses' attitude began to change; eventually he no longer blamed others for his situation.

It is easy to educate a person, but it is very difficult to terminate him. But after those years in the wilderness, Moses was fully terminated. When God appeared to him in the burning thorn-bush, Moses considered himself good for nothing but death. Nevertheless, at that very juncture, when Moses thought that he was finished, God came in to call him.

God dealt with Moses and prepared him over a span of forty years (Acts 7:30). We know that Moses was dealt with just by the fact that he had to live in the wilderness after having been raised in the royal palace. Suppose someone raised in the United States is suddenly forced to live in a very backward country. Day by day that person will have the feeling that he is being dealt with. Moses, no doubt, had this feeling in the wilderness as he worked as a shepherd to care for a flock that did not even belong to him, but belonged to his father-in-law. Through such a dealing, Moses was gradually prepared.

B. Having Lost Confidence in Himself

After those years in the wilderness, Moses lost all confidence in himself (3:11; cf. 2:11-13). When God called him, Moses said, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (4:10). Why then does Stephen in Acts 7:22 say that Moses was "powerful in his words and deeds"? When Moses was forty, he was mighty in words and deeds. This means that he was eloquent. But after another forty years he lost confidence in himself; he regarded himself as one who was slow of speech. The record in Exodus 4 and the one in Acts 7 are both true. The record in Acts 7 applies to Moses at the age of forty, whereas the record in Exodus 4 applies to him at the age of eighty, after he had been dealt with and after his natural ability had been stripped away.

Few Christians really know God's way of dealing with people. I have met a good number of saints who were extremely confident that they had received a burden from God to do a certain work for Him. However, without exception, as soon as they began to do something, God intervened to deal with them. Whenever we are so assured that we are called and burdened, we should expect God's dealing. We may expect others to stand with us, but they oppose us instead. Disappointed by this rejection, we may decide to drop the burden altogether. But we cannot drop any burden that truly comes from God. If you can drop a burden this indicates that it was not of God in the first place. Whenever we have been burdened by the Lord, we cannot lay aside that burden, no matter how much others may oppose us. Although we may be extremely disappointed, the burden remains with us. Sooner or later, it rises up within us again.

No doubt, when Moses was forty years of age a burden came to him from the Lord. I am convinced that Moses' parents, especially his mother, had consecrated him to God. No doubt Moses willingly accepted God's burden.

However, because he was so confident that he had the ability and the power to carry out this burden, God arranged for him to be rejected. Moses must have been deeply disappointed. Year after year, God worked on Moses, not to eliminate the burden, but to terminate Moses' natural ability and to cause him to have no confidence in himself.

Our problem is this: If we have a burden from the Lord, we tend to use our natural strength to carry it out. But if our natural strength is dealt with, then we tend to cast aside the burden. We do not separate God's burden from our natural strength. We like to marry these two things, but God wants to divorce them, to keep the burden and to set aside our natural strength. Therefore, God took forty years to deal with Moses' natural strength. In principle, He will do the same thing with us.

When God called Moses, Moses said that he was slow of speech. It seems that Moses was saying, "Lord, now that You have dealt with my ability, I no longer accept Your burden. I want to resign. I am not the right person to be sent to Pharaoh to deliver the children of Israel out of his hand. I am slow of speech. How can I speak to Pharaoh?" In speaking this way to the Lord, apparently Moses was sincere. God, however, was angry with him (4:14). This indicates that on Moses' side there was some problem. God wanted to "hire" Moses, but Moses refused to accept the job. As Moses was bargaining with the Lord, God knew what was in his heart. Inwardly Moses might have been saying, "Lord, forty years ago I tried my best to rescue the children of Israel, but You didn't allow me to succeed. I was rejected, and I had to flee to this wilderness, where I have been suffering for forty years. I have forgotten everything I learned in the royal palace. I have become nothing. Now You say that You want me to go to Pharaoh. When I was qualified, You fired me. But now that I am disqualified and incapable, You want to hire me." Secretly, Moses might have been blaming the Lord. This might have been the reason God was not happy with him.

Both in Moses and in God there was something that was not expressed. Within Himself the Lord might have been saying, "Moses, I don't need you to do anything. Don't you see the thorn-bush there? It is burning, but it is not consumed. I want you simply to manifest Me. Moses, don't reject the burden. Receive it, but don't use your ability and strength to carry it out. Because you consider yourself ready for death, I can now use you. Moses, don't reject Me. I do not intend to use you according to your natural concept. I want to use you in My way, as a thorn-bush that is burning without being consumed."

It is not easy to do something for God without using our own strength or ability. Throughout the years I have been learning this very lesson, mainly through sufferings and failures. Often people have the attitude that if they are asked to do something, they should be able to do it their own way without interference or advice from others. Even elders in the church may have this attitude. Our feeling may be, "If you want me to do this, then please stay away and let me do it." However, when God calls us to do something, He wants us to do it, but not by ourselves. When He calls us, it seems that God says, "Yes, I want you to do this, but I want you to do it by Me, not by yourself." Our problem often is that if we cannot do a certain thing by ourselves, then we refuse to do it at all. This attitude has been a great hindrance to the work of the Lord's recovery.

Many saints know that we need the church life, but, because they are disappointed, they are reluctant to come to the meetings. They are like the disappointed Moses in the wilderness who was dealt with by God until he lost his confidence. However, he was still willing to take up the Lord's burden. Moses was burdened by God before he was forty years old. Nevertheless, Moses had to learn to cooperate with God without using his natural ability and strength. God's call could not come until Moses had lost all his confidence in himself. In principle God deals with us in the same way. When we no longer trust ourselves, He comes in to call us.

C. Realizing His Inability

Moses also had to realize his inability (4:10-13). He came to fully realize that in himself he was not the right person to answer God's call. Perhaps during the forty years in the wilderness he even experienced failure in shepherding the flock. God sovereignly might have created certain circumstances which Moses was not able to overcome. All this was designed to help Moses realize his inability.

D. Considering Himself Good for Death

At the time God called him, Moses considered himself good for nothing but death. Remember, when God appeared to Moses in chapter three, Moses was eighty years of age. In Psalm 90, written by Moses, he says, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (v. 10). This indicates that, at the age of eighty, Moses considered himself ready for death. When God called Moses, Moses might have said within his heart, "Lord, why didn't You use me when I was forty? Then I was capable, active, and fresh. But now I am ready to die. I am eighty years old, and the time of my death is at hand. Nevertheless, here You are coming to me and asking me to do something. It seems to me that You are coming at the wrong time. Lord, I am no longer capable or useful. I am just an old man good for death." This was Moses' feeling about himself when God came to him to call him to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt.

In 1950 I gave a message along these lines to the young people in Manila. The next day, the young people began to pretend that they were aged and ready to die. Although many of them were still teen-agers, they acted as if they were eighty years old. This behavior, however, lasted only a few days. If we are old, we are old, and if we are young, we are young. There is no point in pretending or performing. We can only be what we are. If you are like Moses smiting the Egyptian, then that is where you are. And if you are

like Moses at the age of eighty, then that is where you are. One day we all shall reach the point where we consider ourselves good only for death. Everyone called by the Lord must pass through a period of time in which he loses his confidence, realizes his inability, and considers himself good only for death. Eventually, we shall have the same realization about ourselves that Moses had at the age of eighty.

E. Charged to Be a Sent One, Not the Sending One

At the very time Moses considered himself ready for death, God came in to charge him to be a sent one (3:10, 15). God was the sending One, the Initiator, and Moses was to be the sent one to carry out the wishes of the sending One. To emphasize this point, the word "send" is used a number of times in chapters three and four. In His calling of Moses, God seemed to be saying, "Moses, I, the Lord, am sending you. You are not to be the sender or the initiator. You are to be the sent one to carry out My will." In a forthcoming message we shall see that when Moses confronted Pharaoh, he did nothing on his own. On the contrary, he acted as the Lord's sent one, doing whatever God charged him to do.

To be a sent one means that we do nothing by ourselves. Instead, we simply carry out the wishes of the one who has sent us. To be a sent one is blessed and brings us fully into rest. In order to be a sent one, we must pass through a great deal of training and discipline. A number of times I have sent people to do some specific task for me. Although they said they were clear about what I wanted them to do, they eventually did things according to themselves. This indicates that it takes training to be a sent one.

F. A Thorn-bush Burning but Not Consumed

Before God spoke to Moses, He showed him the sign of a

burning thorn-bush. He "appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a thorn-bush" (v. 2, Heb.), a bush that burned with fire without being consumed. Seeing this burning thorn-bush, Moses said, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the thorn-bush is not burnt" (v. 3, Heb.). The thorn-bush represented Moses himself. This indicates that everyone who is called of God must realize that he is just a thorn-bush with a fire burning within him and that this fire is God Himself. Although God desires to burn within us and upon us, He will not burn us; that is, He will not use us as fuel.

According to Genesis 3, thorns signify the curse that came because of sin. This indicates that, as God's called one, Moses was a sinner under God's curse. Moses was a thorn-bush, not a cedar of Lebanon.

The fire burning within the thorn-bush signifies the manifestation of God's holiness. Genesis 3:24, the first mention of fire in the Bible, speaks of "a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." This fire appeared after man fell by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This flame excluded man from the tree of life; it kept him from even touching it. In Exodus 3 fire is mentioned again. Here the fire does not exclude man from anything; rather, it indicates that the glory of God's holiness should burn within Moses and upon him, even though he is a thorn-bush, a sinner under God's curse. How is it possible for God's holiness to burn within us? This is possible only through God's redemption, which fulfills the requirements of God's holiness. Therefore, today God's holiness no longer excludes us from the tree of life; it burns within us, although we once were sinners under God's curse. The holy fire is now one with the cursed sinner and even burns upon him.

The fact that the thorn-bush burned without being consumed indicates that the glory of God's holiness should burn within us, but that we should not be exhausted. If a servant of God is exhausted, it may mean that he is using his own energy to do something for God. God does not want to use

our natural life as fuel. He will burn only with Himself as fuel. We are simply to be a thorn-bush with the divine fire burning within it.

I believe Moses never forgot the sight of that burning thorn-bush. The memory of that vision must have worked within him to constantly remind him not to use his natural strength or ability. Through the sign of the burning thorn-bush, God impressed Moses that he was a vessel, a channel, through which God was to be manifested. It is not easy to learn that we are simply a bush for the manifestation of God. Throughout the years I have been learning one lesson: to work for God without using the natural life as the fuel, but letting God burn within me.

In Mark 12:26 the Lord Jesus refers to the bush of Exodus 3:2. In his translation Darby adds the words "the section of" before "bush"; the American Standard Version adds "the place concerning." The record of the burning thorn-bush is to be a continuing memorial and testimony to God's called ones. It bears witness to the fact that we can be nothing other than thorn-bushes.

In these days we have seen that all the saints can be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. However, if we would function as such gifts to the Body of Christ, we must first be burning thorn-bushes, those, like Moses, who have no confidence in themselves and who do not burn for God according to their natural energy.

From the time God called Moses, Moses no longer had any confidence in himself. When others rebelled against him, he did not argue with them; he went to God and fell down before Him. In doing so, Moses showed that he was a burning thorn-bush. As Moses prostrated himself before God, God came forth as flaming fire, manifesting Himself from within Moses as the thorn-bush.

May this record of the thorn-bush make such a deep impression upon us that we never forget it. In ourselves, we are nothing; we are mere thorn-bushes. But God still treasures us and desires to manifest Himself as a flame of fire

from within us. We should treasure His burning by never putting any trust in what we are according to the natural man. Our natural man with its energy, strength, and ability must be terminated and forgotten. Our ability and strength mean nothing. What can a thorn-bush do? Nothing. Although you may consider yourself to be capable, you will eventually realize that you are merely a useless thorn-bush. We all must have such a view of ourselves. Thank God that He visits us, stays with us, and burns upon us. Although the divine flame burns within us and upon us, we ourselves are not consumed.

After God called Moses and sent him to Pharaoh, it was not Moses but God Himself who did everything and who was glorified. Moses had no weapon; he had only a rod. With that rod he went to Pharaoh at the word of the Lord, and God did everything. Therefore, the glory was manifested not for Moses, but always for God. Within Moses and upon him the glory of God was manifested.

We all should be called ones like Moses. Sooner or later, we all shall behold the very sight Moses saw in chapter three of Exodus, the vision of a bush that burns without being consumed. This vision needs to be stamped upon our being. Then whenever we touch the work of God or the service of the church, we shall be reminded that we are nothing more than a thorn-bush. The day is coming when we all shall realize this.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVEN

THE CORPORATE THORN-BUSH

We have seen that the thorn-bush in Exodus 3 is a symbol of Moses as God's called one. In the eyes of God, Moses was a thorn-bush. No one has much appreciation of a thorn-bush. Although Moses had been rejected by man, he was accepted by God, and the fire of God's glory burned within him and upon him. Therefore, Moses was a thorn-bush burning with the glory of God.

The burning thorn-bush in Exodus 3, however, refers not only to Moses as an individual, but also to the children of Israel as a corporate entity. God's people, the children of Israel, included those who were weak and those who were strong. Moses was only one among God's corporate people. To the Lord, the thorn-bush burning in chapter three was not only an individual, but also a corporate people. My burden in this message is to consider the corporate aspect of the thorn-bush. As individuals, we all are today's Moses. But we are also part of the church as the corporate thorn-bush.

God's goal in dealing with His people, the children of Israel, was to obtain a proper dwelling place. Deuteronomy 33:16 speaks of God as the One who dwelt in the thorn-bush. This word, written by Moses, indicates that God possessed that burning thorn-bush as His house, His dwelling place. Who would ever have thought that God's habitation on earth would be a thorn-bush?

Moses must have realized that the burning thorn-bush he saw when God called him was a symbol of himself. At the time of Deuteronomy 33, Moses regarded himself as a thorn-bush, but to God he was "the man of God" (Deut. 33:1). In the individual aspect Moses was a thorn-bush, and in the

corporate aspect the children of Israel were a thorn-bush. Nevertheless, the God of blessing dwelt in such a bush. If God does not dwell in us, we are finished. Without Him we are nothing more than ordinary thorn-bushes. Although we may be cultured ladies and gentlemen or well-trained professionals, we still are thorn-bushes because our fallen nature is related to thorns and to the curse.

In referring to God as the One who dwelt in the thorn-bush, Moses' heart must have been full of thanks to God. During the last forty years of his life, Moses knew that he was just a thorn-bush. But he knew also that God was with him. We all need to have such a realization. Whenever we have a proper spirit before the Lord, we know that we are a thorn-bush. We know that even our natural virtues, such as kindness, humility, and patience, are "thorns." Sometimes we may even feel like prostrating ourselves before the Lord and confessing to Him how pitiful we are. As he was blessing the children of Israel, Moses must have had such a sense about himself.

A well-known gospel song says, "I'm only a sinner saved by grace." The sense Moses had was much deeper, even more tender and sweet than this, for he realized he was a thorn-bush burned by the glory of God. Today, as believers in Christ, we are not merely sinners saved by grace; we are a thorn-bush burning with the fire of God's glory. Moses had this realization both about himself and about the children of Israel as God's corporate people. Deep within he knew that both he personally and the Israelites corporately were a thorn-bush.

I. THE THORN AND THE FLAME OF FIRE IN GENESIS 3

We need to see that there is a connection between Genesis 3 and Exodus 3. In both chapters we have the thorn and the fire. The thorn in Genesis 3 indicates that man is under a curse (vv. 17-18), and the flame of fire indicates that man is excluded from God as the tree of life (vv. 22-24). According

to Genesis 3, thorns came from the curse due to sin. Hence, thorns are a symbol of fallen man under the curse. Immediately after the curse was pronounced, a flaming sword was placed at the east of the garden "to keep the way of the tree of life" (v. 24). Thus, sin brought in the curse, and the curse brought in the flame of fire. The function of fire in Genesis 3 is to exclude sinners from the tree of life, that is, from God as the source of life.

If the Bible had ended with Genesis 3:24, our situation would be forever hopeless. According to chapters one and two of Genesis, we were created specifically to receive God as life. The man created by God was placed in front of the tree of life. Then in chapter three sin came in, man fell under the curse, and the fire of God's holiness excluded the cursed sinners from any direct contact with God as the tree of life.

II. THE THORN AND THE FLAME OF FIRE IN EXODUS 3

Man's situation in Exodus 3 is much different from that in Genesis 3. In Exodus 3 the cursed thorn becomes the vessel of God, and the flame of fire becomes one with the thorn-bush. Through redemption, signified by the lamb slain and offered to God for fallen man (Gen. 4:4), the curse has been taken away, and the fire has become one with the thorn.

The reality of this picture is seen in Galatians 3:13 and 14. Verse 13 says, "Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse on our behalf." This means that through the death of Christ on the cross the curse has been taken away. Verse 14 continues, "That the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Therefore, according to these verses the curse has been taken away, and the Spirit, the fire, has been given to us.

Acts 2:3 and 4 indicate that the outpoured Spirit is symbolized by tongues of fire. This outpouring of the Spirit as

fire was predicted by the Lord Jesus in Luke 12:49: "I came to cast fire on the earth, and what can I desire if it has already been kindled?" On the day of Pentecost the promised Spirit, given through the redemption of Christ which took away the curse, came upon the disciples in the form of fire. This fire no longer excludes us from God; instead, it is the flame of God's visitation.

Considering this in the light of the picture in Exodus 3, we see that the thorn and the flame are one. In Genesis 3 fallen man was under the curse signified by the thorn. There the flame of fire excluded this fallen man from God as the tree of life. In Exodus 3, however, the thorn-bush, which can be considered a type of vessel, and the fire are one. In Genesis 3 the fire keeps the man who is under the curse away from the tree of life, away from God as the source of life. But in Exodus 3 the flame of fire visits the thorn-bush and indwells it. This indicates that through the redemption of Christ the very God Himself, the holy One whose holiness excludes sinners from His presence, can come to visit us, to stay with us, and even to dwell in us. Hallelujah, Christ has taken away the curse and has cast down to earth the fire of the Holy Spirit! Now that the curse has been taken away, we are no longer excluded from God as life. Praise the Lord that the excluding flame of Genesis 3 has become the visiting and indwelling flame of Exodus 3! Now the once-cursed thorn can become God's dwelling place.

Those who have been Christians for years may sometimes be tempted to regard themselves as rather good or holy. If you have followed the Lord and have experienced some success in your Christian life, you may secretly consider yourself an outstanding "saint," one who is more spiritual than other believers. However, we should realize that we are still a bush full of thorns. Do not think that you yourself are so marvelous, and do not appreciate too highly those you may admire. We all are still a thorn-bush. I am very much aware of the fact that I am a thorn-bush.

If we are like Moses, the man of God, we shall have a

twofold consciousness. On the one hand, we shall be conscious of the fact that we are thorn-bushes; on the other hand, we shall be conscious of God's glory dwelling within us as a burning flame. Moses became a man of God, but he still considered himself a thorn-bush. In the same principle, God's glory dwelt among the children of Israel and made them His glorious dwelling place, but they were still a thorn-bush, even a corporate thorn-bush.

III. MOSES AS AN INDIVIDUAL THORN-BUSH

As an individual thorn-bush, Moses was redeemed, sanctified, and transformed. Some may wonder what ground we have to say that Moses was transformed. Although the words "transformed" or "transformation" are not found in the writings of Moses, the books written by him nonetheless reveal the fact that Moses was transformed. We have pointed out that, according to Deuteronomy 33:1, Moses was a man of God. This indicates transformation. Apart from the process of transformation, how could Moses, a man so strong and active in his natural life, become a man of God? Only through transformation could he become such a person.

One example of Moses' transformation was his experience with the Lord on the mountaintop. After Moses had been with the Lord on the mountain for forty days, his face was shining because the flame of God's holy fire had been burned into him. Moses was like steel that is thrust into fire and kept there until the steel glows with the fire that has been burned into its very essence. When Moses was on the mountaintop, God's glory was burned into his being. When he came down from the mountain, his face was shining. Thus, "when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone" (34:30). Was that not a sign of transformation? It was a sure indication that Moses was being transformed. According to his training in the palace, Moses could have become an expert in all the Egyptian knowledge. But because he had been redeemed,

called, sanctified, and transformed, instead he eventually became a man of God.

Certain essential elements or themes can be traced throughout the Scriptures. Without a proper understanding of these matters, it will be impossible for us to know the Bible adequately. These crucial elements include redemption, sanctification, and transformation. Moses was redeemed, sanctified, and transformed; we today are redeemed and we are being sanctified and transformed. Moses became a man of God, and we too are becoming men of God. According to the revelation of the New Testament, as believers in Christ, we are even becoming God-men, those who are one with the Triune God and mingled with Him. The day is coming when we all shall be men of God in reality.

In the Lord's recovery we do not care for a large number; we care for the genuine experience of transformation. I am happy that we are under the divine burning, the burning that transforms us and makes us dispositionally different from the worldly people. Because the element of God is being burned into our nature, we are becoming men of God. This is what it means to be a burning thorn-bush in an individual sense. According to our nature, we are still a thorn-bush, but according to God's burning within us, we are transformed people. On the one hand, we are a thorn-bush; on the other hand, we are men of God.

IV. ISRAEL AS THE CORPORATE THORN-BUSH

The children of Israel were a corporate thorn-bush. As such a thorn-bush, they were redeemed (13:14-16), sanctified (13:2), transformed, and built up. Perhaps you find it difficult to believe that the children of Israel were transformed. When I was young, I also found this difficult to believe. But something happened in a prayer meeting in Shanghai in the early 1940s that helped me to see God's people as He sees them. In that meeting an experienced sister co-worker, troubled by the low state of the church, cried out to the Lord on behalf of the church. As she prayed, she sighed and groaned

because of the poor condition of the church. When she finished praying, Brother Nee broke forth in praise to the Lord and gave Him thanks that the church is never weak or low, but always high. The congregation was shocked. Then Brother Nee helped us to understand the significance of Balaam's prophecy regarding the children of Israel. Balaam was hired by Balak to curse the children of Israel. But instead of cursing God's people, Balaam blessed them. Speaking on behalf of God, Balaam said, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel" (Num. 23:21). Furthermore, in Numbers 24:5 Balaam said, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" According to these verses, God did not see iniquity or perverseness in Israel. Instead, He saw only goodness, fairness, and beauty. The same is true regarding the church today.

Do not say that the church is low or dead. The more you say this, the more you put yourself under a curse. However, if you praise the Lord for the church life and speak well concerning it, you will put yourself under God's blessing. During all the years I have been in the church life, I have not seen one person who spoke negatively about the church who was under God's blessing. On the contrary, all who have said that the church was poor, low, or dead have been under a curse. Those who speak positively about the church, declaring that the church is lovely and that it is God's house, receive the blessing. This is not mere doctrine; it is a testimony that can be verified by the experiences of many saints.

Sometimes when I am disappointed over the church and do not think positively about it, the Lord within warns me to be careful. Immediately I ask the Lord to cleanse me, and I begin to declare how wonderful the church is. Even though the church may cause me trouble, I still love the church. The more I speak this positive way, the more I am under God's blessing.

Whose word about the church is right, yours or the

Lord's? In eternity, the Lord's word will prove to be right, for in eternity the church will be marvelous, glorious, and transcendent. All the enemy's accusations regarding the church are lies. To say that the church is poor or dead is to utter a devilish lie. The apparent situation of the church is a lie. It is a lie to say that the church is cold or dead or low. The church is uplifted and very living. I am thankful for Brother Nee's strong word concerning Balaam's prophecy. That word fully changed my concept concerning the present state of the church. From the time I received that word, I have seen the church in a completely different light.

Do not see deeper than the Lord sees. According to Balaam's word in Numbers, the Lord did not see iniquity in Jacob. How, then, can you see it? Are you wiser or more perceptive than God? The Bible declares that the Lord does not behold perverseness in Israel. But you claim to see perverseness in the church. Which do you choose to believe, the Lord's sight or yours? If we stand with the Lord's estimation of the church, we shall be kept from falling from the blessing into the curse. May we all take heed how we deal with the church.

The children of Israel could be a corporate thorn-bush because they had been transformed and built up. God believed this, and we need to agree with Him.

The tabernacle signified the children of Israel as God's dwelling place. Do not regard the tabernacle as something apart from the children of Israel. Actually, it was the children of Israel who were God's dwelling place. The tabernacle was merely a symbol.

Whenever I speak to the leading ones concerning the church in a way that is not positive, I have regrets later. Before I speak such words, I am in the heavenlies, but afterward, I lose my peace. If I try to excuse myself by saying that I was not condemning the church but simply speaking the facts, I am even more troubled within. The more I excuse myself, the more I am under condemnation. Therefore, I can testify from experience that it is not an easy matter to touch

the church. Whenever we touch it, we must do so in a positive way. Then we shall receive the blessing.

The Old Testament reveals that many times God came in to rebuke and to reprove the children of Israel. But when the Gentiles attacked God's people, the Gentiles suffered loss sooner or later. In His eyes, the children of Israel were redeemed, sanctified, transformed, and built up, and God had His dwelling place among them. We all need to see this and to believe it.

In the same principle, we need to believe that the church today is wonderful. Be careful of your natural sight. If God does not see iniquity or perverseness in the church, then how can you see it? When God is merciful, He abounds in mercy. Although the Israelites had many iniquities, God could say that He did not behold iniquity in Israel. The same is true of the church today. Like the children of Israel, the church is a corporate thorn-bush.

According to our human nature, we in the church have many weaknesses, mistakes, failures, and defeats. Nevertheless, we need to thank the Lord that as the church we have been transformed and built up. Not only does God agree with this, but even God's enemy, Satan, must acknowledge it.

As a corporate thorn-bush, the church is transformed, but it is still a thorn-bush; it does not change. How can we say that something is transformed without changing? Consider the burning thorn-bush in Exodus 3. The fire was burning within it and upon it, but the bush was not changed. However, it was transformed through the burning fire.

Some may wonder what ground we have for saying that we are the Lord's recovery. We admit that we have many thorns, more thorns perhaps than other "bushes." But although we are full of thorns, we cannot deny that the divine fire is burning within us. Other "bushes" may have fewer thorns, but they do not have the fire. Thus, the sign of the Lord's recovery is this burning. What makes the

corporate thorn-bush in the Lord's recovery different from all other thorn-bushes is the burning of the flame of fire. Only this thorn-bush is burning.

After the tabernacle was erected, it was filled with the glory of the Lord (40:34-35). At night, the cloud of glory had the appearance of fire (Num. 9:15-16). The fire burning upon the tabernacle signified that the people of Israel were a corporate burning thorn-bush.

It is easy for human eyes to see defects in the church. In particular, these eyes are set upon the elders, the leading ones. As soon as a brother becomes an elder, he becomes subject to the scrutiny of many saints whose eyes are quick to detect any shortcoming. God, however, does not have this kind of eyes. Remember Balaam's word: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." As Balaam was prophesying, it seemed that God was saying, "The children of Israel are very pleasant in My sight. They are My dwelling place." If someone had said that the Israelites were merely a thorn-bush, God would have replied that to Him they were not just a common thorn-bush, but a people transformed and built up to be His dwelling place.

When Moses spoke of God as the One who dwelt in the thorn-bush, it is difficult to tell whether he was referring to the actual thorn-bush he had seen forty years before or to himself and to the children of Israel respectively as an individual and a corporate thorn-bush. I believe that his word includes all this. On the one hand, we are still a thorn-bush; on the other hand, through redemption, sanctification, transformation, and building, we are God's dwelling place. Hallelujah, today God has a dwelling place on earth! Satan might say to God, "Your people are merely a thorn-bush." But God would reply, "Satan, get behind Me. Don't you know that this people has been redeemed, sanctified, and transformed? They have also been built up, and now they are one. Therefore, I am dwelling among them. You say that they are a thorn-bush, but I declare that they are My dwelling place."

The church today is God's dwelling place. You may think that the church is uncomely, but to God it is lovely. You may criticize the church for its shortcomings, but God says that He sees no iniquity in His people. Regarding His people, God says, "I find no fault in them. I am in their midst, and they are My dwelling place on earth." This is the church as the corporate thorn-bush.

V. IN RESURRECTION

The very God in the thorn-bush, the One who called Moses, was the God of resurrection. This is proved by the Lord's word to the Sadducees in Mark 12:18-27. As the Sadducees were arguing with Him concerning resurrection, the Lord said, "But concerning the dead, that they are raised, did you not read in the book of Moses, at the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Here the Lord pointed the unbelieving Sadducees to the section in the Scriptures concerning the thorn-bush. The title, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," implies the God of resurrection. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have all died. If God were the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and there were no resurrection, then God would be the God of the dead. But God is not the God of the dead; He is the God of the living, the God of resurrection.

The fact that the God of resurrection dwelt in the thorn-bush indicates that being a corporate thorn-bush as God's dwelling place today is a matter altogether in resurrection. The holy One can visit us and dwell among us because He is in resurrection. He is the God of resurrection, and we, His people, are in resurrection.

As those who are still in the flesh, it may be difficult for us to believe or to realize that we are in resurrection. If I were to ask you whether you are in the natural life or in the resurrection life, you would probably say that, for the most part, you are in the natural life. However, if you say this, you

do not have faith. We need to be strong in faith and declare that we are in resurrection because our God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. In myself, I am in the flesh and in the natural life, but in my God, I am in resurrection. Today we enjoy God as the God of resurrection. In resurrection He is the great I Am. We all need to say in faith that we are in resurrection. The more we speak this in faith, the more it will become our experience.

What we say is what we experience. If we say that we are in the flesh, then we shall be in the flesh. But if we say that we are in resurrection, then we shall be in resurrection. Because the very God who indwells us is the God of resurrection, we have a basis for declaring that we are in resurrection. Here, in resurrection, the thorn-bush can be blessed to be God's dwelling place.

We realize that, at best, we are just a thorn-bush. Nevertheless, the great I Am, the God of resurrection, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, dwells within us, and we enjoy Him. Individually we are a thorn-bush, and together we are a corporate thorn-bush burning with the God of resurrection. This is a picture of the church life today.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHT

THE THREE SIGNS

We have seen that the record of the call of Moses is the most complete record in the Bible pertaining to God's calling. When Moses came to the back side of the desert and met God there, he beheld the sign of a thorn-bush that burned without being consumed. Although this sign was marvelous, it was somewhat objective. In this message we shall consider the three signs in chapter four, signs which are very subjective.

It is important for us to see why these three subjective signs were given. At the end of chapter three, God's calling of Moses seemed to be complete. Moses had seen the objective sign of the burning thorn-bush, and he had heard God speaking to him. God gave to Moses a full revelation of Himself. Thus, on God's side, the calling of Moses was complete. However, on Moses' side, it was not complete. Exodus 4:1 says, "And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." This word indicates that although Moses had seen a most marvelous sign and had heard the voice of God, he had not been inspired or moved. For this reason, the three signs found in chapter four were given. These signs were to be conclusive evidence that Moses had truly been called by God. The principle is the same with God's called ones today. Whoever claims to be called by God should have the mark of these three subjective signs.

It is significant that the Lord showed Moses three signs, not two, not four, nor any other number. In the Bible the number three is a meaningful number. Because God is triune, the number three is related to God's economy, to

God's dispensation. In Luke 15 there are three parables, related to the Son, the Spirit, and the Father. But in Exodus 4 there are three signs, dealing with the serpent, leprosy, and blood.

As every reader of the Bible knows, the serpent represents Satan. In Genesis 3 we see Satan, the subtle serpent. The serpent in Exodus 4 is the very serpent in Genesis 3, the one who is called "the ancient serpent" in the book of Revelation (12:9; 20:2). It is not adequate for the called one just to know God; every called one must also know the serpent. Not only should we know how to deal with God, how to contact God, how to have fellowship with God, and how to trust in God; we must also be able to deal with the serpent.

The leprosy in the second sign is a matter of the rottenness, corruption, and uncleanness of the flesh of sin. According to the Old Testament, every leprous person had to openly declare that he was unclean. The sin signified by leprosy is not the outward sin, but the subjective sin, the sin in our flesh. It is out from this sin that there is rottenness, corruption, and uncleanness.

The third sign is that of water which turns into blood. Blood here signifies the death brought in by the world with its enjoyment. Therefore, blood in the third sign is related to the world.

The serpent, leprosy, and blood are related respectively to Satan, to sin in the flesh, and to the death brought in by the world. Those who have been called by God must have not only the objective sign of the burning thorn-bush, but the subjective signs of the serpent, leprosy, and the blood. As called ones, we need some subjective experiences, some subjective evidences, to substantiate to others that we have truly been called by God and sent by Him. These evidences are the ability to deal with the Devil, the ability to deal with the sinful flesh, and the ability to deal with the death brought in by the world. Suppose a certain person comes to you claiming that he has been sent by God. If he does not know how to deal with Satan, the flesh, and the world, you

should not believe that he is a sent one. The sign of a burning thorn-bush is not adequate proof that one has been called by God. A sent one must be able to deal with the serpent, with leprosy, and with blood.

We have pointed out that Exodus is a book of pictures. What marvelous pictures are in chapter four! In these pictures we see Satan, the sinful flesh, and the world of death. If we know how to deal with these things, then we are truly God's sent ones. It is crucial that we all know the significance of the three subjective signs in this chapter and have such subjective experiences.

I. A ROD BECOMING A SERPENT

A. The Rod Signifying What We Rely Upon

When God called Moses, Moses had a rod that he relied upon. Perhaps when he was talking to God, Moses, an elderly man, was leaning upon that rod. His rod was his support. Hence, the rod signifies what we rely upon.

B. The Rod Being Cast on the Ground and Being Exposed That It Was the Serpent

Moses was reluctant to accept God's calling; he protested that the children of Israel would reject him and say that the Lord had not appeared to him. Therefore, God said to Moses concerning the rod, "Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it" (v. 3). When the rod was cast to the ground, the serpent hiding there was exposed. Even before the rod was cast down, the serpent was already there, but in a very hidden way. The Bible reveals that the serpent always tries to hide himself in something, behind something, or under something. The rod Moses relied on was actually the serpent, Satan. In the eyes of Moses, the rod was simply a rod that he could lean upon, but in the eyes of God, it was the serpent, whose aim is to usurp man.

Anything we rely upon is a rod. For example, if a brother relies upon his job, that job becomes a rod to him. But to God

the serpent is hidden in that job, because from his hiding place within the job, Satan, the serpent, seeks to usurp the brother. We may rely upon many persons or things: our wife or husband, our parents, our children, our ability, our education, our property, our bank account. The Bible shows us that whatever we rely upon becomes the usurping serpent. Today Satan is usurping all of mankind by concealing himself within the rods that people rely upon.

Anyone who has been called by God must realize that anything we rely upon is a hiding place for the serpent. The usurping enemy of God may be concealed in any matter, any thing, or any person we rely upon. Throughout the years I have been learning to trust in the Lord and not to rely upon any kind of rod.

Please note that God did not tell Moses to throw away his rod. Rather, He commanded Moses to cast it down in order that its true nature might be exposed. The point here is that whatever our rod may be—our husband or wife, our education, our job, our ability, our bank account—it needs to leave our hand temporarily. If the rod stays in our hand with the head on the top, the serpent will not be exposed. But if we cast it down, then we shall see with our own eyes that our rod is actually a serpent. Exodus 4:3 says that when Moses' rod became a serpent, "Moses fled from before it." That rod may have been in Moses' possession for many years, and it may have been precious to him. But when it was cast down, it was no longer lovable to him because the serpent who had been concealed within it all the while was exposed.

C. The Serpent Being Taken by the Tail and Thereby Becoming a Rod of Authority

Verse 4 says, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand." The Lord wants us to cast our rods down, not to throw them away. Do not throw away your education or your

savings—cast them down. After the hidden serpent has been exposed, we need to pick it up by the "tail." This is the best way to deal with the serpent. If you take a serpent by the head, it may bite you. But if you pick it up by the tail, it will lose its power and hang limp.

The picture of Moses taking the serpent by the tail shows that we should deal with things in a way opposite to the practice of the people of the world. What the people of the world do and have is for themselves. But everything we do and everything we have should be for the Lord. For example, when the worldly people get married, their married life is for themselves. But our married life should be for the Lord. In the same principle, when the worldly people attend college, they do so for their own interests. But the young people in the Lord's recovery should attend college and study diligently, not for themselves, but for the Lord. This principle can be applied to our relationship with everyone and everything. All should be for the Lord.

If we have a certain thing or do a particular thing in the common way, that is, by doing it or having it for ourselves, then our rod has the head of the serpent at the top and the tail of the serpent at the bottom. But if we take the serpent by the tail, we handle it in a way opposite to the way of this world. We need to have a proper married life and a good education; however, we should not have these things in the common way, in the way of the world, but in the Lord's way. The Lord's way always causes the serpent to become powerless and limp.

In the 1930s I visited one of the outstanding universities in China, a university noted for its fine medical school. Many brothers in the Lord were medical students there. However, after these brothers were married, almost all of them were distracted from the Lord, mainly by their wives. These brothers did not know how to take their marriage by the "tail."

The Bible by no means requires us to forsake our human living. On the contrary, we need to have a proper living. For example, the Bible does not forbid that young people get a

good education. But the young people must learn to pick up their education by the "tail." The young people also need to get married. However, in doing so they should not take the serpent by the head; instead, they should pick it up by the tail. This means that they should not get married according to the common way, but should get married in a way that is not common, in the way that is for God. This way is opposite to the common practice of the people of the world. All married brothers must love their wives, but they should not love their wives in a common way—that is, by taking the serpent by the head—but by the uncommon way—by picking up the serpent by the tail. In every aspect of our human living, from shopping to getting a haircut, we need to take things by the "tail."

Anything can be a hiding place for the serpent. Even in every detail of our practical daily living, the usurping serpent is lurking, ready to bite the one who takes it by the head instead of by the tail. One who claims to be sent by the Lord must know that the serpent is hiding in every person, in every matter, and in every thing. Furthermore, he must know how to cast that hiding place to the ground and then he must know how to deal with that situation by the "tail."

Eventually, the serpent that is picked up by the tail will become a rod of authority (4:4, 17; Luke 10:19). When Moses took the serpent by the tail, the serpent became the rod by which Moses was able to perform signs (4:17). This indicates that in the hand of Moses the transformed rod became a rod of authority. If we are those who handle every situation by the "tail," we shall have power, authority. The rod we have then is not a natural rod, but a transformed one. Such a rod is now in an upside-down position. It is this kind of rod that is our authority.

Many Christians today are talking about power. But the more they talk about power, the less power they have. They do not have the power to deal with the hidden serpent. We who are ministers of Christ have authority only by handling situations by the "tail." For example, if a brother

knows how to handle the situation with his wife by the "tail," he spontaneously will have authority. However, I have known a number of good brothers who were gifted and qualified, but they had a serious weak point: they gave too much place to their wives and allowed them to become the head. As a result, these brothers became powerless and useless.

To be called by God and sent by Him we must learn how to handle our husbands or wives, our children, and all situations, not in the ordinary way, the common way, the natural way, but in an altogether different way—by the "tail." If we handle a person or a thing in a natural way, that person or thing will become a hiding place of the serpent.

Moses did not use his rod in a common way. If he had used it in an ordinary way, the serpent would still have been hiding within it. But after he cast down the rod, the hidden serpent was exposed. This indicates that often we need to keep our hands off a situation and see what comes out. By keeping our hands off those things we rely upon, their true nature will be exposed. Then we shall say, "This is not dear or lovable—it is a terrible serpent." At that very time God will tell us to take the serpent by the tail. If the rod-become-serpent is our wife, we should take her up again and love her in an entirely new way; we should take the whole situation by the "tail."

Once you get married, you cannot give up married life. Those who do so become useless as far as the Lord is concerned. You must stay married, but not in the common way. Either to be married in the common way or to give up married life is easy. This is the reason that there are so many divorces in this country. Instead of taking either of these courses, we should take our marriage by the "tail" and handle it for the Lord.

The sign of a rod becoming a serpent is a picture of a very subjective experience. Those persons or things we rely upon must eventually be cast down and then taken back again at the word of the Lord. When young saints are

disappointed with a particular situation, they may want to deal with it by throwing it away. We should strongly encourage them not to do this. Instead of throwing it away, they should keep it, not by themselves or for themselves, but by the Lord and for the Lord. Do not handle situations by your natural ability; handle them by grace. To deal with them by grace is to take them by the "tail." May we all learn to deal with things for the Lord and by His grace. If we have learned this lesson, this is a strong sign, strong evidence, that we have been called by God and sent by Him. As His sent ones, we know how to handle every situation as if it were a hiding place for the serpent, and we know how to deal with the serpent by taking it by the "tail." In this way we have authority.

II. THE HAND BECOMING LEPROUS

A. By Being Put into the Bosom

In verse 6 the Lord told Moses to put his hand into his bosom. Moses may have thought that by putting his hand into his bosom, he would find a pearl, a diamond, or some precious treasure. On the contrary, Moses' hand became leprous. The bosom signifies what is within us, and leprosy signifies sin (Rom. 7:17-18). This indicates that in addition to knowing Satan, we must also know the flesh. The rod upon which we rely is a serpent, but the flesh is the embodiment of leprosy. We need to know that in our flesh we are lepers. In our flesh there is nothing good, only leprosy. If we touch the flesh, we shall become leprous.

In verses 2 through 6 the Lord seems to be saying, "Moses, you asked Me for proof that I have sent you. One proof is that you know how to deal with the serpent. Another proof is that you realize that your flesh is nothing but a composition of leprosy. Moses, put your hand into your bosom and see what will come forth from you."

There is a saying that if a person regards himself as good. during the quiet of the night he should place his hand upon

his heart and consider what he really is. If you do this, you will discover how evil you are. Perhaps when you are in the company of others, you may boast of your own goodness. But when you consider what is in your heart during a time of quiet late at night, you will see that within you there is nothing but leprosy, nothing but sin.

One who boasts of his goodness is not one who has been called by God. Every called one realizes that within him there is leprosy. After Moses was shown the sign of the hand that became leprous, he knew that his flesh was the embodiment of leprosy. Moses could have said, "Before the Lord showed me that sign, I thought I was quite good. But when God told me to put my hand into my bosom and to take it out again, my hand was leprous. This showed me that in my flesh there is nothing but leprosy."

Everyone used by the Lord in the church today must have such a consciousness concerning his flesh. To know the flesh in such a subjective way is an evidence that the Lord has called us and sent us. As the called ones and sent ones, we must bear the sign which indicates that nothing good dwells in our flesh. We are all a composition of leprosy, the embodiment of sin, rottenness, corruption, and uncleanness. If you do not believe this about your flesh, I suggest that in the silence of the night, when you are all alone, you touch your conscience and listen to what it says about you. It will reveal that your flesh also is nothing but leprosy.

God's sent ones must know the flesh to this extent. When Isaiah was called by the Lord, he exclaimed, "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). If we have been met by the Lord, that meeting will expose our flesh to ourselves. We shall know that within our flesh there is nothing but leprosy.

In these days we have heard that all the saints can be today's apostles and prophets. But if we would be such gifts to the Body, we must know that our flesh is the incarnation

of rottenness, corruption, uncleanness, and sin. It is the very embodiment of sin. None of our outward accomplishments and none of our natural abilities can qualify us to be a sent one. To be qualified we must see that in our flesh there is nothing good.

B. Cleansed by Keeping the Word of the Lord

In verse 7 the Lord said to Moses, "Put thine hand into thy bosom again." Then Moses "put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh." This indicates that Moses' leprous hand was cleansed by his keeping the word of the Lord. To keep the word of the Lord is to obey the Lord. Disobedience to the Lord is the basic element of sin. When we obey the Lord by keeping His word, His cleansing power will be with us, and we shall be cleansed.

III. THE WATER BECOMING BLOOD

For the third sign, the Lord said to Moses, "Take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land" (v. 9). The river here is the Nile, which irrigated the land of Egypt. The water of the Nile signifies earthly supply and enjoyment. According to the Bible, Egypt is rich in the food and enjoyment produced by the Nile. What is produced by the water of the Nile is apparently supply and enjoyment. But in the eyes of God, it is nothing but death. All the supply, enjoyment, and entertainment of the world are death. But in order to realize this, we need to pour the water of the Nile upon the dry land. According to Genesis 1, the dry land is the source from which life is produced. When the worldly enjoyment and the earthly supply are poured out upon that which produces life, immediately the death, signified by the blood, will be exposed. If you keep the water of the Nile in a well, a vessel, or a pitcher, you will still regard this water as the source of supply and enjoyment. But if you pour it out upon the land,

the death will immediately be exposed. Thus, the third sign reveals that all the earthly supply and worldly enjoyment are nothing but death. All the sports and entertainments people indulge in today are various forms of death. The very supply that the world affords us is also death.

The water of the world is not actually water at all; it is blood. The worldly people do not drink water; they drink blood, that is, death. Whatever they enjoy of the world is death. A called one must know what the world is. To the people of the world, the water of the Nile is wonderful, but to us it is blood. God's called ones must be able to tell His people not to stay in Egypt to drink the water of the Nile, but to go out of Egypt into the wilderness to drink the water from the cleft rock.

In addition to knowing Satan and the flesh, we need to know the world. In the New Testament, Satan, the flesh, and the world are dealt with again and again. Those who have been called by God and sent by Him know the serpent, leprosy, and blood; that is, they know Satan, the flesh, and the world. According to the New Testament, Satan is against Christ (1 John 3:8); the flesh is against the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:17); and the world is against the Father (1 John 2:15). Hence, Satan, the flesh, and the world are opposed to the Triune God in His dispensation. Because of Satan, the flesh, and the world, God's dispensation has not yet been carried out. In God's economy as seen in the three parables of Luke 15, the Son comes to seek the fallen ones, and the Spirit enlightens them in order to bring them back to the Father. But the Devil works against the Son, the flesh strives against the Spirit, and the world frustrates people from coming back to the Father.

Anyone who is sent by the Lord must know how to take the serpent by the tail, how to deal with leprosy, and how to deal with the world with its supply and enjoyment. If we lack these three qualifications, then we have not been called by God and therefore cannot be His sent ones. In one whom God has called, Satan, the flesh, and the world have lost their ground.

The fact that Exodus 4 records these three signs is a proof that the Bible is divinely inspired. No human author would write of such things. In chapter three of Exodus God showed Moses a thorn-bush that burned without being consumed. Following this, in chapter four the Lord showed Moses three subjective signs to give him a realization concerning Satan, the flesh, and the world. This indicates that a called one must firstly have the vision of the burning thorn-bush. Then he needs some subjective experience to know Satan, the flesh, and the world.

Praise the Lord for the signs of one who is called and sent by God! We thank Him for the clear picture of these signs in Exodus 4. In these days so many saints are aspiring to be useful in the hand of the Lord. But, as we have pointed out in this message, if we would be useful to the Lord, we must know the serpent, leprosy, and blood; that is, we need to know how to deal with Satan, the flesh, and the world.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINE

THE MALE HELP AND THE FEMALE HELP TO THE CALLED ONE

The record of God's calling of Moses is the most complete record of such a calling to be found in the Bible. In this message we shall consider how Aaron (4:10-16) and Zipporah (4:24-26) are related to God's calling of Moses. Without the portion concerning Aaron and Zipporah, God's calling of Moses would not be complete. The record of the calling of Moses is found not only in Exodus 3, but also in Exodus 4. Hence, if we would understand the calling of Moses in full, we need to consider even the small portions of chapter four as part of this calling.

Exodus 4:14 says that "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." Even after the signs in chapter four, Moses was still reluctant to go along with the Lord. It seems to me that Moses should have said, "Lord, since You have called me and have given me these signs, I take Your word." Nevertheless, Moses still told the Lord to send someone else. At this point the Lord became angry with him. When I was young, I could see the reason for the Lord's anger on the one hand. But, on the other hand, I thought that the Lord was too great and that this situation was too small for His anger to be kindled against Moses.

I. AARON'S MATCHING

A. In the Principle of Two as a Testimony

I believe that deep in His heart the Lord wanted Aaron to be a match for Moses. When the Lord Jesus sent out His disciples, He sent them out two by two (Luke 10:1), that is, in the principle of two as a testimony. To be alone is to be

individualistic, but to be sent forth with another is to be sent according to the principle of the Body. Thus, to have Aaron as a match for Moses was according to the divine principle.

Although this was according to God's principle, God did not simply tell Moses that he needed Aaron to match him. But if we read this portion carefully, we shall see that this was already in God's heart. The whole of verse 14 says, "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart." The Lord was hoping that Moses would realize his need for someone to match him. Although the Lord was ready to do this, He did not point this out to Moses until he himself became conscious of his need. The Lord is very wise. He may be willing to do a certain thing for us, but He often will not do anything until we realize our need. This principle has an application among us in the church life. Although you may realize that I need a certain thing, it is better for you not to tell me. Instead, you should wait until I realize my need.

If we are clear about what was in the Lord's heart, we can understand why the Lord's anger was kindled against Moses. Apparently this anger was unpleasant; actually it was sweet. Only those who are superficial will say that the Lord's anger here was unkind. Those who have depth with the Lord will realize that it was pleasant. The anger here indicates a sweet, intimate, human fellowship. Some may wonder how it is possible for the Lord to have human fellowship. This was possible because the Lord appeared to Moses as the Angel of Jehovah, who was a type of Christ. Because Christ is God incarnated to be a man, He is mysterious. For this reason, it is rather difficult to understand the appearing of the Angel of Jehovah in the Old Testament. In Exodus 4 the Lord talked to Moses as if He were a man speaking to another man. According to the record, the

conversation was more like that between friends than like that between the almighty God and a human being.

This intimacy between the Lord and Moses can be compared to the intimacy between a man and his wife. Sometimes a man is angry with his wife, but his expression of anger is sweet and pleasant. It is not the kind of anger that he would ever show toward anyone else; for it is an anger that expresses a sweet, intimate feeling. This is very similar to the feeling between the Lord and Moses here. The anger of the Lord toward Moses in this chapter is much different from His wrath toward Sodom. The anger in this instance is a pleasant anger between two intimate parties. After the Lord spoke to Moses in verses 11 and 12, Moses replied, "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send" (v. 13). Moses' word was not a harsh rejection of the Lord. On the contrary, it was an intimate expression of his personal feeling. Nevertheless, Moses' response caused the Lord to be angry with him. His reaction forced the Lord, in His pleasant anger toward Moses, to open His heart regarding Aaron as Moses' match.

In keeping with the divine principle, the Lord would not allow His servant to be individualistic. Moses needed Aaron. Hence, Aaron's presence was not accidental. God had prepared him as a match for Moses.

This principle of matching applies today. If you have been called by the Lord, you need to realize your need for someone to match you. We have pointed out that the Lord Jesus sent out His disciples two by two. When the Apostle Paul came out to serve the Lord, he did not behave individualistically. He always had others to match him. This is proved by the opening verse of 1 Corinthians: "Paul, a called apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Sosthenes the brother." When Paul wrote this Epistle, neither Timothy nor Barnabas was present. Therefore, Paul took Sosthenes as a match; he took a brother whose name we hardly know in order to keep the principle.

To act individualistically in the Lord's service is not

according to the divine principle. Today, in the New Testament economy, to be individualistic is to violate the principle of the Body. We should not behave individualistically; rather, we should move and act according to the principle of corporateness, always having at least one other member to match us. The more members we have to match us, the better it is. The Body cannot be represented by individuals. According to the divine principle, the proper representation of the Body is always by those members who are matched with others.

To be matched, however, is difficult. In the case of Moses and Aaron, the younger brother was the leader, and the elder was the follower. To be matched with anyone is difficult, to be matched to a brother in the flesh is more difficult, and to be matched in such a way that the younger is the leading one is most difficult. My younger brother was a dear brother in the Lord; he loved the Lord very much. When we were in mainland China, we were in the same local church. But I learned from experience that it was difficult to have him match me. Because Aaron was Moses' elder brother in the flesh, it was very difficult for Moses to be matched with him. This might be one reason the Lord did not tell Moses that Aaron was to be his match until Moses had fully expressed himself to the Lord regarding his inability to answer His call. This gave the Lord the ground to tell Moses that Aaron would be his spokesman. The Lord had prepared Aaron for Moses, and, no matter how difficult it was, Moses had no choice except to take him as his match.

In Numbers 12 there is recorded an incident involving Aaron and Miriam which shows how difficult it was for Moses to be matched by Aaron. Verse 1 of this chapter says, "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman." This indicates how difficult it was for Miriam and Aaron, both of whom were older than Moses, to take Moses as the leader. His mistake in marrying the Ethiopian woman gave Miriam and Aaron the opportunity

to speak against him. Their speaking here was not accidental; rather, it was an expression of what was already within them. How hard it was for Moses to take the lead over his sister and brother! The Lord certainly arranged a difficult situation for him.

In principle, it is the same with us today. The Lord will often arrange a difficult match for us. But such a match is actually a great help. Without it, we would have no restriction, no protection, and no safeguard. Most of the time Aaron and Miriam were submissive to Moses. But at least some of the time they were not submissive. This lack of submission on their part was a protection to Moses; it kept him from becoming proud. Numbers 12:3 says that "Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Miriam and Aaron helped Moses to become so humble. Nevertheless, no matter how much of a help Miriam and Aaron were to Moses, God did not tolerate their speaking against him.

The arrangements God makes in matching us with others sometimes are beyond our understanding. Do not think that a match will always be pleasant. Most of the time it may be enjoyable, but at least part of the time it will be unpleasant. But this unpleasantness is our protection.

B. To Carry Out God's Commission

With Christians today we rarely see this kind of matching. There is very little coordination between Christian workers because they lack the vision of the principle of the Body. I am burdened that we all, as God's called ones, see the need of such a match. I have known some very gifted brothers who became useless because they refused to accept a match. A matching one binds us and restricts us. For this reason, it is difficult to be matched with others.

A three-legged race illustrates the principle of matching. In a three-legged race, the runners have one of their legs tied to one of their partner's legs. The Lord's service is not a race run by individuals; it is a race run by those who are

bound to another member of the Body. To dislike such an arrangement is to dislike the Lord's service. If you want to share in His work, you must be willing to be part of a two-some in a three-legged race. If you refuse to be bound to another, you are disqualified from this race. By yourself you may be able to accomplish a great deal, but what you do will not be very profitable for the building of the Body. Some may carry on a great Christian work, but it is not of much benefit to the Body. The work in the Lord's recovery is not an ordinary Christian work; it is the work of building the Body. If we would be used of the Lord to build the Body, we must be willing to run a three-legged race; that is, we must be willing to be bound to another to form one unit.

Regarding this, there are many lessons to be learned, especially by those who are capable. It is very difficult for a capable person to be bound to another. The situation in today's Christianity proves this. Every gifted preacher or minister is individualistic. Such people may have employees those whom they hire and fire, but they do not have any matching co-workers. A hired one is very different from a matching one. Moses did not hire Aaron, and Paul did not hire Timothy. Nevertheless, most of the well-known Christian workers today are individualistic. If they need others to help them, they hire them, but they do not accept them as a match. Whatever is done by such Christian workers is not of much profit for the building up of the Body. In the Lord's recovery there is an urgent need for the true work of building. This building work, however, can be carried out only by co-workers who have been matched. We all need to be matched, not just with one other person, but with several others. It is by means of such matching that God's commission is carried out.

C. Aaron Becoming Moses' Spokesman and Moses Becoming God to Aaron

Many think that if they are matched with others, they will lose their position. For this reason, they do not want

others to do the same work they are doing. But look again at the case of Moses and Aaron. Aaron did not cause Moses to lose his position. Nothing Aaron did could replace Moses in his position as God's called one. In 4:16 God said to Moses concerning Aaron, "And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God." This verse indicates that there was no need for Moses to be concerned about being replaced. The same is true with God's called ones today. Your standing as a called one is of the Lord, and no one can take it from you.

According to the record, Aaron might have been more capable than Moses in the matter of speaking; Aaron might have been more eloquent than Moses. However, Aaron was not to take this as an occasion to be proud. He could only do a certain amount, for God did not give him so much as far as position was concerned. In fact, verse 16 says that Moses was to be as God to Aaron. From the match of Moses and Aaron we all can learn the importance of knowing where we are. The place we occupy in a matching relationship depends entirely on the Lord's arrangement. The Lord called Moses and He prepared Aaron to match him. There was no place for human maneuvering. Everything was according to the divine economy, the divine arrangement.

I have been involved in matching relationships for almost fifty years. I have learned that such a relationship is not easy to bear over a long period of time. For this, we need to receive grace from the Lord. Now seems to be the right time for the release of this word concerning matching. I hope that all those in the local churches will become clear about the need to be properly matched so that there may be among us permanent and constant matches.

II. ZIPPORAH'S CUTTING

A. To Complete Circumcision in Moses' Family

We come now to the record regarding Moses and Zipporah

(4:24-26). Verse 24 says, "And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him." By the time of verse 23, it seemed that the calling of Moses was complete. Therefore, Moses took his wife and his two sons and began to make his way from the land of Midian to Egypt. But as they were staying in an inn, the Lord met Moses and sought to kill him. Moses must have been shocked, and Zipporah must have been terrified. Zipporah may have asked Moses why God, who had called and sent him, was now seeking to kill him. She may have questioned what was wrong. I believe that Moses immediately realized the problem: his younger son had not been circumcised. As a Gentile wife, Zipporah may have been unhappy when Moses circumcised the first son, and this may have caused her to oppose the circumcision of the second son. Due to Moses' weakness and negligence plus Zipporah's opposition, the Lord's requirement had not been fulfilled; therefore, the Lord sought to kill Moses. It was not easy for Zipporah, a Gentile woman, to enforce this requirement. Zipporah was compelled to comply, although she was not happy about it.

B. With a Sharp Stone

Verse 25 says, "Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me." In cutting the foreskin of her son, Zipporah did not use a knife; she used a sharp stone, a flint, an unusual cutting instrument. Perhaps she used such an instrument because the circumcision was performed during a state of emergency. The use of a sharp stone also seems to indicate that the circumcision was carried out in an atmosphere of unpleasantness. This is also indicated by the fact that Zipporah cast the foreskin at Moses' feet and said, "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me." Although the atmosphere was not pleasant, God let Moses go after the circumcision had been completed. Had there been a pleasant atmosphere, no doubt Zipporah would have expressed her repentance and fellowshipped with

Moses. She would have asked Moses to do the circumcising, with a proper knife to do the proper cutting. Then the cutting would not have been so painful. Nevertheless, in our experience it is only the Lord Himself who uses a proper knife to do the cutting work. The cutting is here represented by the female life, because the cutting is subjective. But all of us, old and young, brothers and sisters, are those doing the cutting. In the church life we either cut or are being cut. In almost every case this cutting is done with crude, uncultured instruments.

C. Making Moses a Bloody Husband

For many years I was troubled by this portion of the Word. I began to understand it only after I had a certain amount of experience. Through experience I realized that the called ones need not only the male help, the help from Aaron, but also the female help, the help from Zipporah. The male help is matching, but the female help is cutting. Everyone called of God needs both the male help and the female help, both the matching and the cutting.

As every married brother realizes, wives are very adept at cutting. There are times when even Christian wives are "Gentiles" to their husbands. If the husband does not love the Lord or desire to go on with the Lord, the wife may not be a "Gentile." But as soon as he begins to love the Lord, to go the Lord's way, and to live for the Lord, the wife is exposed as being a "Gentile," a "heathen." This means that a wife who has been a Christian for years may suddenly behave like one who is not separated unto God and who does not live for God. Many of today's Christians are still heathen in their daily living: they do not love the Lord, they are not separated unto the Lord, and they do not take the Lord's way. They are Christians in that they have been regenerated and have received the divine life, but they are not Christians in their daily walk.

When a certain brother is in the world, with no concern for the Lord's interests, his wife may not give him any trouble as far as the Lord is concerned. But as soon as he begins

to live for the Lord, his wife behaves like a heathen Zipporah, a woman not wholly separated unto the Lord. To some extent, his wife will go along with him, just as Zipporah went along with Moses. But in his situation there is something that is not circumcised, something that is common, unholy, and not separated, sanctified, to the Lord. If the Lord does not come into this brother's situation, the wife's Gentile nature may not be exposed. But as soon as the Lord intervenes, perhaps as the brother is about to fulfill God's commission, the wife's attitude toward the circumcision of the flesh is exposed. Forced to agree to the cutting of the foreskin, the wife may actually carry it out, but she does not do so with a positive and pleasant attitude. Because she must accept her husband's separation unto the Lord, she looks upon him as a "bloody husband."

To be a "bloody husband" is to be one under death. In the eyes of Zipporah, circumcision meant that her husband Moses was under the sentence of death. If we brothers are absolute with the Lord, we also shall become a "bloody husband" in the eyes of our wives.

Examine carefully the picture of Moses and Zipporah in Exodus 4. As they were on the way to fulfill God's commission, Zipporah was somewhat agreeable with what Moses was doing. Moses, however, was more for the Lord than Zipporah was. He was willing for his son to be circumcised, but Zipporah was not willing. Although there is no indication that Moses and Zipporah were fighting with each other over the question of circumcision, there was nevertheless something between them that was not smooth. There had to be a circumcision, but Zipporah opposed it. She disagreed with the cutting of the flesh as a sign of separation unto God. But it is against the divine principle for God to use one who is still living in the flesh or in the natural life. The flesh and the natural life must be cut off. God can only use one who has been separated unto Him.

The matter of circumcision involves a crucial principle in God's economy. Without circumcision, it is impossible to

participate in the covenant God made with Abraham regarding the inheritance of the good land. Furthermore, an uncircumcised person can have no part in God's ministry. The meaning of God coming in to kill Moses was that an uncircumcised situation would cause him to be finished in the ministry of God. But the meaning of circumcision is to be ushered into His ministry.

Therefore, as Moses was on the way to carry out God's commission, God could not tolerate Moses' negligence in the matter of circumcision. Thus, He came in to deal with Moses. No doubt Moses had been weak in yielding, at least somewhat, to his wife's opposition to circumcision. Because this weakness was an offense to the Lord, He sought to kill Moses. When the Lord met Moses, the whole situation was brought to the light. Moses knew that he was wrong, and Zipporah realized what her responsibility was. Because the responsibility rested mainly upon her due to her opposition to the circumcision, she was forced to take action. She cut the foreskin with an unusual instrument, a sharp stone. But we need to point out that Zipporah nevertheless did the cutting in love. She loved Moses and wanted to save his life.

As we make the spiritual application of this incident, we see that often wives cut their husbands in an unusual way. If the sisters bring this matter to the Lord in prayer, He will show them the unusual ways in which they cut their husbands. It is not always the wives, however, who do the cutting. The Apostle Paul was never married, but he was surely cut by others.

Aaron's help, the matching, was objective, whereas Zipporah's help, the cutting, was subjective. Sometimes the Lord places us in an environment where we are cut by others, perhaps by our dear brothers in the Lord. At such a time, these brothers do not match us; they cut us. They may not fight against us, but even as they apparently agree with us, they function as cutters. We all need to be ready to receive this cutting.

God has prepared not only an Aaron for us, but, in His sovereignty, He also has prepared a Zipporah. There is no need for us to make any choices. God has the Aarons and the Zipporahs ready and waiting. Especially in the church life today there are both matching ones and cutting ones. To handle the matching ones is difficult, but to manage the cutting ones is more difficult because it makes us a "bloody husband."

After the matching with Aaron and the cutting by Zipporah, the calling of Moses was complete. He was ready to go to Egypt to carry out God's commission. Thank the Lord for the full picture of God's calling of His called ones! If we bring this word to the Lord, He will enlighten us. Then we shall say, "Lord, how I thank You that with me there are some Aarons and some Zipporahs. I praise You, Lord, for the matching and for the cutting."

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TEN

THE COMPLETE VIEW OF GOD'S CALL OF MOSES

In this message we need to see the complete view of God's call of Moses. According to chapters three and four of Exodus, this call covers five points: the burning thorn-bush, the revelation of who God is and of what God is, the purpose of God's calling, the three signs, and Aaron's matching and Zipporah's cutting. We shall consider the purpose of God's calling in the next message; in this message we shall look at the other four aspects of God's calling.

Firstly, Moses saw the vision of a thorn-bush that burned without being consumed. Such a vision was unique. After Moses beheld the burning thorn-bush, God revealed Himself to him. The unveiling of God's name was actually the revelation of God Himself. No other portion of the Word affords us as clear and profound a revelation of the divine name as the third chapter of Exodus. God said to Moses that His name was "I AM THAT I AM." This indicates that God's name here is a form of the verb *to be*. Revelation 1:8 says that the Lord God is "He who is, and who was, and who is coming." Furthermore, God told Moses that He was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. This title reveals that God is not only the God of being, of existence, but that He is also the God of resurrection.

In chapter four Moses was given three signs: the sign of the rod becoming a serpent, the sign of the hand becoming leprous, and the sign of the water becoming blood. Toward the end of this chapter he received the male help and the female help. The male help, afforded by Aaron, was the matching, and the female help, provided by Zipporah, was the cutting. This cutting caused Moses to be a "bloody husband," a man under the

sentence of death. Only after Moses had received these two kinds of help was God's calling of him complete. By then Moses was useful to the Lord and was fully prepared to carry out God's commission. If we see this complete view of God's calling, a view that reaches from the vision of the burning thorn-bush to Zipporah's cutting, we shall be deeply impressed.

I. THE BURNING THORN-BUSH

When Moses was called by God, he saw the great sight of a burning thorn-bush. We have pointed out that the burning thorn-bush refers to God's redeemed people. Once we were thorns under the curse in Genesis 3, but in Exodus 3 we are a redeemed thorn-bush. Now God is burning within us and upon us. This burning thorn-bush is both the children of Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament. In the church today there are still "thorns"; the church is not yet precious stone. Nevertheless, we praise the Lord that we are undergoing the process of transformation.

In Deuteronomy 33:16 Moses spoke of God as the One who dwelt in the thorn-bush. This word was uttered when Moses was one hundred twenty years of age, forty years after he had seen the vision of the burning thorn-bush. Moses never forgot that vision, even after the tabernacle had been built and God had come to dwell in it. In Deuteronomy 33:16 why did not Moses speak of the good will of "Him who dwelt in the tabernacle"? I believe that for Moses to speak of God dwelling in the tabernacle would not have been as sweet as it was for him to speak of God dwelling in the thorn-bush. I believe that even when we are in the New Jerusalem we shall recall how we once were a thorn-bush indwelt by God. How marvelous that a thorn-bush can be God's dwelling place on earth today!

All the way from Exodus 3 through Revelation 21 we can trace the line concerning God's dwelling place. God's ultimate goal is to obtain a dwelling place. This means that God's eternal purpose is to build up His habitation. In Genesis we have the revelation of the house of God at Bethel, but

we do not have the actual building of the house of God. At the beginning of Exodus God dwelt in the thorn-bush, but at the end of the book He dwelt in the tabernacle. The tabernacle with the ark thus became the focal point of the history of the children of Israel. Eventually, the tabernacle was enlarged into the temple.

The Lord Jesus came both as God's tabernacle (John 1:14) and as God's temple (John 2:19). The church today is also the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16). Ultimately, this temple will consummate in the New Jerusalem, which will be God's temple in eternity.

In the beginning God's dwelling place was a redeemed thorn-bush, but gradually this thorn-bush is being sanctified, transformed, conformed, and even glorified. The tabernacle is an illustration of transformation. In the tabernacle there was acacia wood overlaid with gold and also linen embroidered with golden thread. Both the acacia wood and the linen signify humanity, and the gold signifies divinity. Such an overlaid and embroidered humanity is a transformed humanity. In Exodus 3 God's dwelling was a thorn-bush, but in Exodus 40 His dwelling was the tabernacle made of humanity overlaid by and interwoven with divinity.

Both the thorn-bush and the tabernacle are symbols. God's actual dwelling place was neither the physical thorn-bush nor the tabernacle; it was His people. After the children of Israel had been dealt with by God, they became acacia wood overlaid with gold and also linen embroidered with golden thread. The church today is the fulfillment of this type. At present the church may be a redeemed thorn-bush. However, the day is coming when we shall be gold, pearl, and precious stone. Praise the Lord for the marvelous vision of God's dwelling place! This vision covers God's habitation from the initial stage, the stage of the thorn-bush, to the consummate stage, the stage of the New Jerusalem.

When Moses was called by God, he saw the holy fire burning within the thorn-bush. When Paul was called, he saw the same vision, at least in principle. He saw the Triune God

burning within His redeemed ones. Through this divine burning, the holy fire was one with the thorn-bush, and the thorn-bush was one with the fire, which is the Triune God Himself. Today God the Father in the Son and the Son as the Spirit have come down upon us as fire. The Lord Jesus once said that He came to cast fire upon the earth (Luke 12:49). On the day of Pentecost the Spirit came in the form of tongues of fire. Today the Lord is still casting fire upon the earth. This holy fire, this divine burning, has captured us, and now we are part of the thorn-bush that is burning with the Triune God. The Triune God is burning within and upon the church He has chosen and redeemed. Thus, the church is the Triune God burning within a redeemed humanity. This is the divine economy (1 Tim. 1:4, Gk.).

This economy was revealed to Paul (Eph. 3:3-5, 9). It is, in fact, the focus of the divine revelation. Moses saw this in symbol, but Paul saw it in reality. How we praise the Lord that His economy has also been unveiled to us! We boldly proclaim that we have seen the vision of the burning thorn-bush. Every local church is a thorn-bush burning with the Triune God.

I have been asked why I am so persistent and unchanging concerning God's economy and its accomplishment in the local churches today. The answer is that I have seen the heavenly vision. Moses and Paul could not forget the vision they had seen. Paul's Epistles reveal that nothing, including imprisonment and martyrdom, could turn him from the vision. Paul was steadfast unto the end because he had been captured by the heavenly vision. The death of those martyred for the Lord can only cause the thorn-bush to burn more than ever.

Thousands of us today have seen the vision of the burning bush, and no one can change us. We cannot even change ourselves. If we try to turn away from the vision, the vision does not let us go. We have been "wrecked" by the vision we have seen. In these days I have become fully convinced that nothing can shake the saints in the Lord's recovery. Shaking

only makes them more absolute. Many have testified that they cannot turn away from the vision of the church in God's economy. The opposers should realize that it is too late to stand against the Lord's recovery because so many have seen the vision of the burning thorn-bush. Hallelujah for the vision of the Triune God burning within the church!

Every aspect of God's calling of Moses can be found in the writings of Paul. In Paul's Epistles we see the vision of the burning thorn-bush. In Ephesians 1 and 3 we have the divine economy, the dispensing of the Triune God into His redeemed people so that they may become His expression. This dispensation brings into being the church as the burning thorn-bush today. How glad I am to be part of this burning bush! Because we have seen this vision, we could never go back to religion. Rather, the vision causes us to press on. Even many of the young people can bear witness that they have seen the vision of the burning thorn-bush, the vision of God's economy in today's church.

This vision has been revealed into us. Even if we were to go back to the world, we could not eradicate the vision that has been burned into our being. Have you not seen the vision of the church? Have you not seen that the Triune God is dispensing Himself into His redeemed ones? Praise the Lord we have seen it! You may be weak or even backslidden, but this vision will not let you go. Even when you no longer want the vision, the vision will not leave you. You are part of the burning thorn-bush, and there is no way to escape. Hallelujah for the vision of the burning thorn-bush! This vision is the first aspect of God's calling.

II. WHO GOD IS AND WHAT GOD IS

A. I Am That I Am

The second aspect is the matter of who God is and of what God is. God is the unique self-existing One. Everything else comes and goes, but God remains. We are not, but God, and God alone, always is. As we have seen, the name of God as revealed to Moses in Exodus 3 is simply the verb *to be*. This

indicates that before anything else came into existence, God was. After so many things have passed out of existence, God will still be. God was, God is, and God will be.

As the self-existing One, God is the reality of every positive thing. The Gospel of John reveals that He is all we need: life, light, food, drink, pasture, the way.

It is necessary that we know God as the One who is. Heaven and earth may pass away, but God is. Are you discouraged by your weaknesses? One day your weaknesses will cease to exist, but God will still be. Do not believe in anything other than God. Do not believe either in your weakness or in your strength, for both your weakness and your strength will pass away. However, when they are gone, God will continue to be the One who is. According to my experience, I can testify that both riches and poverty pass away, but God abides. Whether we are rich or poor, God is. We should not even put our confidence in the wife or husband the Lord has given us. Even if we suffer the loss of wife or husband, God will yet be. At such a time, we must believe in Him as the ever-existing One. If we know God as the One who is, we shall be greatly encouraged, especially during difficult times.

Many Christians know God in a shallow way, perhaps only as the almighty God. But this aspect of God is not revealed to Moses in Exodus 3. Rather, the revelation here concerns God as the One who is. It is sufficient to say that He is. There are times when it is a hindrance to go further and say that He is able. Likewise, there is no need to say that He is mighty. It is enough to know that He is. In Himself, God is always able and mighty, but to us He may appear to be neither able nor mighty. Consider Paul's experience. In his early ministry Paul healed many people. Even handkerchiefs that had been in touch with him could heal others (Acts 19:11-12). But in his later ministry Paul did not experience so much healing power. When Timothy became ill, Paul exhorted him to take wine for the sake of his stomach and his frequent infirmities (1 Tim. 5:23). Furthermore, when Paul was imprisoned, he did not ask God to break down the walls nor

did he ask Him to miraculously open the gate, as He had done for Peter in Acts 12. There are times when God acts as the almighty One. But when Paul was about to be martyred, he knew God not as the almighty One, but as the One who is. This was a source of comfort and strength to Paul. Paul knew God and believed in Him, not as the One who was able to rescue him from prison, but as the ever-existing One, as the One who is and who always will be. Even when God apparently does nothing for us, we should still believe in Him as the One who is. All Christians today know the almighty God, but we may know Him in a deeper way as the One who is.

B. The God of Resurrection

We also believe in God as the God of resurrection; that is, we believe in Him as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Although God did not release Paul from prison, Paul knew that, after his martyrdom, God would come in to resurrect him. Before his martyrdom, Paul enjoyed Him as the One who is. But afterward, he would enjoy Him as the God of resurrection. Martyrdom simply gave him the opportunity to experience God as the God of resurrection.

We should not seek to know God merely according to His miraculous acts. In fact, we should not expect miracles. In John 2 the Lord Jesus did not commit Himself to those who sought miracles. We need to know God as the One who is and as the God of resurrection; we must know Him as the self-existing One, the ever-existing One, and the resurrecting One. If, as God's called ones, we desire to carry out His commission in His recovery, we should not be those who expect miracles, but we should be those who know God as the One who is and as the God of resurrection. He is the I Am, and He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. In addition to seeing the vision of the burning thorn-bush, we need this revelation of God. Do not simply know God according to what He does, but know Him according to what He is. Whether or not God does something for us means nothing. The environment may change drastically, but God still is. Everything may

fluctuate; but God is, and He is forever. With Him, there is no change. Furthermore, every death situation affords Him an opportunity to be in our experience the God of resurrection.

My experience during the early days in Taiwan confirms this. When I was sent to Taiwan by the work in 1949, Taiwan was very backward and very poor. Although I was sent there, I was not given any financial support. Because I was fully occupied with the work of the Lord, I did not take a job. Nevertheless, with very limited financial resources, I still had the responsibility to support a large family. Discouraged by the situation at first, all I could do was look around at the small living quarters and ask myself what I was doing there. I had experienced a drastic change of environment in the move from the mainland, where the work was thriving and where there were hundreds of churches, to an undeveloped island. But although almost everything outward had changed, my God still was. In the days that followed we experienced what He was to us, and we saw His abundant spiritual blessing and even His material provision.

My experience was the same in principle when I came to this country. I received no financial support from the church in Taipei and very little support from the church in Los Angeles. The brothers in this country thought that the churches in all the other places were taking care of my needs. However, none of the churches sent me anything. From where did I receive the supply for my existence? I received it from the One who is. In those days I lived by the heavenly manna. But I did not look for miracles, for the God in whom I believe is the One who is.

In the midst of the turmoil in the past months I did not do anything, because I believe that the recovery is the Lord's recovery. Since this is the Lord's recovery, no man can damage it. The Lord's word in John 2:19 applies today: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." I simply said, "Lord, You do something to confirm that this is Your recovery. Lord, there is no need for me to do anything. If this were my work, then I would have to do

something to maintain it. But, Lord, this is Your recovery." How we must thank and worship Him that in the past several months He has done so much. This encourages us to trust in God as the One who is and in God as the God of resurrection.

III. THE THREE SIGNS

A. The Rod Becoming the Serpent

After we see the vision of the burning thorn-bush and after we come to know who God is and what God is, we still need the three signs. The first sign is that of the rod becoming the serpent. The subtle serpent who poisoned Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 is exposed in Exodus 4. This sign helps us to know the Devil. It indicates that anything we rely upon apart from God is a hiding place for the serpent. Through the years I have learned that whenever I trust in something, the serpent is hidden in that thing. We have pointed out that the rod which Moses had used for many years was a hiding place for the usurping serpent. However, Moses did not realize this until, at the word of the Lord, he cast the rod to the ground. Then the hidden serpent was exposed.

B. The Hand Becoming Leprous

The second sign is that of the hand that became leprous. This sign is for knowing the flesh of sin. We are not only leprous, but we are leprosy. This means that we are sin, not just sinful. When Christ died on the cross, He not only bore our sins (1 Pet. 2:24), but He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Because we were sin, Christ was made sin for us. Every called one must have the subjective knowledge that his flesh is a flesh of sin and that nothing good dwells in it. Our flesh is a constitution of sin, rottenness, and corruption.

C. The Water Becoming Blood

Furthermore, the called one must realize that the world is filled with death. This is revealed in the third sign, the

sign of the water becoming blood. To the people of the world, enjoyment comes from the supply and entertainment of the world, signified by the Nile that watered the land of Egypt. However, in the eyes of God's called one, the world is not filled with living water, but filled with the blood of death. What the world has to offer is not water to quench our thirst; it is death that poisons us and kills us.

As God's called ones, we must know the Devil, the flesh, and the world. Paul had this threefold knowledge. Regarding Satan, Paul said, "We are not ignorant of his thoughts" (2 Cor. 2:11). Regarding the flesh, he said, "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells" (Rom. 7:18). And regarding the world, he said, "The world has been crucified to me and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). Again we see that what Moses experienced in type, Paul experienced in reality.

IV. THE BROTHER'S MATCHING AND THE WIFE'S CUTTING

A. The Brother's Matching

After all this, Moses still needed the male help and the female help. The male help is that of matching. This kind of help balances us, restricts us, and humbles us.

Through his brother's matching Moses learned to let others do what he was able to do. Do not think that Aaron was more eloquent than Moses. Whatever Aaron did, Moses was able to do also, but he was restricted from doing so. In the church life the Lord will often raise up an environment that forces us to allow others to do what we can do. This should be a principle of our functioning in the church. If a brother is able to do a certain thing, let him do it, even if you can do it better. This will humble you. However, I have seen many, especially sisters, who insisted that they alone be allowed to do a particular thing. According to our natural makeup, we do not want others to interfere with what we are doing. Nevertheless, we all must learn to let others do the very thing we are able to do.

I do not believe that Aaron was more capable than Moses. Nevertheless, God sovereignly arranged a situation that allowed Aaron to do what Moses was able to do. In the church life we should not do everything ourselves. Instead, we should let others do what we can do. This does not mean, however, that we should be idle. On the contrary, it means that in a matching relationship we are restricted, balanced, and humbled.

This restriction is a safeguard and protection. Nothing is a greater protection in our spiritual life than the brothers' matching. The more we are matched with others, the more we are protected.

B. The Wife's Cutting

In 4:24-26 we see that Zipporah was used by God to cause Moses to be a "bloody husband." The matching is objective, but the cutting is very subjective. In the Bible the male represents objective truth, whereas the female represents subjective experience. Thus, Aaron's matching was outward and objective, but Zipporah's cutting was inward and subjective.

If we would be used of the Lord in His recovery, we must bear a sign of having been cut. This does not mean that we should talk about the cutting we have experienced. On the contrary, it means that we should silently bear this sign. Let others say we have been cut. In Exodus 4 it was Zipporah, not Moses, who said that he was a "bloody husband."

Both in the church life and in married life we need to be such a "bloody husband." If a brother is to be truly God's called one, he needs to be cut in a subjective way. We learn a great deal through the cutting. Sometimes my wife cuts me by restricting my eating. This cutting keeps me healthy and prevents me from indulging myself. Because of her helpful cutting, I am not permitted to give in to fleshly indulgence in eating. Thus, the cutting keeps us from living according to the natural life.

Outside the recovery it is difficult for a group of Christians to stay together longer than fifteen years because no

one is willing to be cut. Instead of the cutting, there is the playing of politics. Only those who are willing to be cut can be useful to God. Every useful one is a "bloody husband." Daily and even hourly we need to experience the circumcision of the natural life. It is not sufficient merely to see that we are sinful. Our natural life must also be circumcised, either by those in our family or by the brothers and sisters in the church. I am willing to be cut. I gladly present myself to those who cut me. This cutting is the last aspect of God's calling. Only after we have been cut can we carry out God's commission. After Moses had been cut, he was truly useful in the hand of God.

When we compare the aspects of God's calling in Exodus 3 and 4 to the record in the New Testament, we see that whatever Moses experienced, Paul experienced also. Furthermore, all this must be our experience today. We need to see the vision of the burning thorn-bush: the Triune God burning within and upon His redeemed ones. This is the focal point of the divine revelation in the Scriptures. Then we need to know who God is and what God is. Furthermore, we must know the Devil, the flesh, and the world. Following this, we need the matching and the cutting. If we are willing for the subjective experience of the circumcision of our natural life, then we shall live by the resurrection life, we shall become useful in the hand of the Lord for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose, and we shall be prepared to carry out God's commission. May every aspect of God's calling be our experience in the Lord's recovery today.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ELEVEN

THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S CALLING

Moses is a type of God's called ones today. Do not think, as many do, that Moses is vastly superior to us. Most Christians regard Moses as the highest servant of God in the Old Testament and Paul as the highest in the New Testament. Comparing themselves with Moses and Paul, they have a very low estimate of themselves. This attitude is mistaken. God's calling of us is the same in principle as His calling of Moses and Paul. What Moses experienced in type, Paul experienced in reality. Today both the type and the reality should be our experience also.

In the Life-study of Ephesians we pointed out that all the saints can be perfected to do the work of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. Just as a mathematics teacher perfects his students to do what he can do, so the leading ones perfect the saints to do the very things that they themselves do. Paul was a representative of the members of the Body of Christ. No matter how great Paul was, he was still just one member of the Body. In principle, what he was able to do, all the other members should be able to do also. This indicates that all the members should be called as Paul was called. For this reason, we all must know the purpose of God's calling.

I. TO DELIVER GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE OUT OF THE USURPING HAND OF PHARAOH AND THE TYRANNY OF EGYPT

The purpose of God's calling is firstly to deliver His chosen people out of the usurpation and tyranny of Pharaoh and Egypt (3:8, 17). Pharaoh was a type of Satan, and Egypt was a type of the world. Just as Pharaoh was the ruler of Egypt, so Satan is the ruler of this world (John 12:31). God is still

seeking to deliver His chosen people out of the usurping hand of Satan and out of the tyranny of the world. As God's called ones, we need a clear view of what the world is. The world is not a source of enjoyment; it is a place of tyranny. In the world Satan is keeping God's chosen people, those destined for the fulfillment of God's purpose, under his usurping hand.

Every aspect of the world is a form of tyranny. In Exodus Pharaoh kept the children of Israel under tyranny by forcing them to do hard labor. The same principle operates today. As people work, they suffer under various forms of tyranny. Even making a long drive to work on a crowded freeway is one kind of tyranny. Likewise, the competition for promotion and the insecurity about losing a job are also kinds of tyranny. Nevertheless, anyone who does not labor for Pharaoh in the world will not receive the supply of the Nile. In order to earn a living in the world, God's chosen people must serve under the tyranny of Pharaoh.

Shopping is another form of the world's tyranny. Many young women are held in tyranny in a subtle way through shopping for the latest fashions.

Recently some saints told me that they do not have the time to pray or read the Bible. I pointed out that they have plenty of time to make telephone calls or to read the newspaper. This indicates that even the telephone or the newspaper may be a means of tyranny.

It is easy to preach to people, but it is very difficult to bring them out of the usurpation and tyranny of Satan and the world. As we shall see, Moses did not preach to the children of Israel, but he was able to rescue them from Pharaoh. Today we also need to have the authority to bring God's people out of the usurping hand of Satan. One aspect of God's purpose in His calling is to use us to bring others out of the usurpation and tyranny of Satan and the world.

II. TO BRING GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE INTO THE WILDERNESS BY THREE DAYS' JOURNEY

Another aspect of God's calling is to bring His chosen

people into the wilderness by a journey of three days (3:18). Elsewhere in the Bible the term *wilderness* is not a positive term. But in 3:18 it is used in a positive sense, for here the wilderness is opposed to the world. It is the place of separation from the world. As soon as one is saved, he should be brought out of the world into the wilderness where there is no Egyptian element. When the children of Israel entered into the wilderness, they were set free from Egypt. In the same principle, if we would get out of the world, we must get into the wilderness. However, not many Christians have been brought into the wilderness. This means that some have been saved, but have not been delivered from the world and separated from it.

As a young man who was altogether in the world, I was full of ambition regarding my future. But when I was saved, I was saved not only from the lake of fire, but also saved from the world. On the day I was saved, all the worldly elements fell away from me, and I was brought into the wilderness. We need to pray that the Lord will grant us the ability to bring His children out of the world and into the wilderness.

According to 3:18, Moses and the elders of Israel were to say to the king of Egypt, "The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God." In the Bible three days signifies resurrection. A complete and perfect salvation must involve a three days' journey, that is, a journey in resurrection. In our preaching of the gospel, there must be the power of resurrection. However, our gospel preaching today is short of impact. People can listen to our preaching and even repent and receive the Lord, but still remain in their tombs in Egypt. We need to have the power of resurrection in our preaching so that others are raised out of their tombs and brought into the wilderness by a journey of three days. Such a journey is signified by baptism. Every believer in Christ must be baptized to bear witness to the fact that he is leaving the world and is entering into another realm in resurrection.

We must pray that our ministry of the Word will have

impact. We do not want to give mere knowledge to people. Rather, we desire that something in our preaching will touch their hearts and cause them to leave the world and journey into the wilderness in resurrection.

III. TO BRING GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE TO THE MOUNTAIN TO SERVE GOD AND TO SACRIFICE TO HIM

In 3:12 the Lord told Moses, "When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." This indicates that the purpose of God's calling is also to bring His chosen people to the mountain, where they may serve Him and sacrifice to Him (3:18; 19:1-2, 11; 24:16-18). Many Christians have never entered into the wilderness, much less come to the mountain. They are truly saved, because they believe in the Lord Jesus and they have been washed in His blood. However, they are still in Egypt. Others have come out of Egypt into the wilderness, but they have not come to the mountain. The divine revelation concerning God's purpose was given to Moses on the mountain. The law was given to Moses there. It was also on the mountain that he received the revelation concerning the design of the tabernacle. Although most of the children of Israel did not actually ascend to the top of the mountain, they were nonetheless camped close to the mountain. Moses, Aaron, and more than seventy others went up to the mountain to meet with God (24:1, 9).

The mountain in 3:12 refers to an elevation in the wilderness. Not only do we need to be separated from the world, but in this realm of separation we need to ascend to an elevated place. Only when we are on such a high level can we receive the revelation regarding God's eternal purpose.

Although certain preachers may be eloquent and knowledgeable, their preaching has no impact on us. After listening to their messages, we are still in the same realm and atmosphere as before. The only difference is that we have acquired some new information. However, the preaching of a called one

is different. After hearing such a one preach God's word, we cannot remain the same. His speaking delivers us from Egypt; it rescues us from the usurping hand of Satan and from the tyranny of the world. Furthermore, it brings us into the wilderness and even to the mountain. Here on the mountain, where the sky is clear (Exo. 24:10), we see the vision of God's economy. Here we come to know what is on God's heart, and we see what God desires to have on earth today. We realize that He desires to have a people who walk according to His statutes and who build Him a tabernacle that He may dwell among them.

IV. TO BUILD A TABERNACLE

The purpose of God's calling is also to build a tabernacle to be God's dwelling place on earth (25:8-9, 40). The vision and the building of the tabernacle occupy nearly half of this book. Moses received the vision on the mountain, and there the tabernacle was built. This was for the further journey of the children of Israel toward the final goal, which was to enter the good land and to build the temple there.

V. TO BRING GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE INTO CANAAN, A GOOD LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY

If we could bring people out of the tyranny of the world into the wilderness and take them to the mountain where they see the revelation of God's economy and eventually build a tabernacle for God, we would surely be satisfied. However, with the tabernacle we do not yet have the solid building, which is signified by the temple in the land of Canaan. Hence, if we would reach the ultimate goal of God's calling, we must journey onward and enter into the good land.

When the children of Israel reached Mount Sinai, they were still quite far from Canaan. The distance from Egypt to Mount Sinai is approximately one-fourth of the distance from Egypt to the land of Canaan. Therefore, from Mount Sinai God's chosen people had to journey onward until they

came into Canaan, a good land flowing with milk and honey (3:8, 17).

We have pointed out that in Exodus there are many types of the spiritual realities found in the New Testament. Some of the more familiar types are the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, the manna, and the water from the cleft rock. Many interpret the type of the crossing of the Jordan River in an inaccurate way; they apply it to physical death and going to a heavenly mansion. Crossing the Jordan, however, is not related to physical death. When the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan, they found that it was filled with enemies. If Canaan typified heaven with the heavenly mansions, then this would mean that the heaven where God dwells is filled with enemies. How ridiculous!

The whole history of the children of Israel is a type. This history includes the Passover, the exodus, the journey through the wilderness, the enjoyment of the manna and the living water, the building of the tabernacle, the entering into the good land, the defeating of the enemies, and the enjoyment of the rich produce of the land. By defeating their enemies, the children of Israel gained the ground for the establishment of God's kingdom. Eventually, after the kingdom had been established and had become prevailing, the temple was built. Then God had a solid dwelling place on earth in the center of His kingdom.

Most Christians pay attention to such types as the Passover and the manna, but do not pay attention to such types as entering into the good land, enjoying the rich produce of the land, defeating the enemies in the land, establishing the kingdom, and building God's dwelling place. Many of us have heard messages on the Passover, the manna, and even on the tabernacle, but have not heard any on the good land as a type of the all-inclusive Christ. By the types we see that in order to be on the mountain to receive God's revelation and in order to build the tabernacle as God's temporary dwelling place, all we need to do is enjoy Christ as the lamb, the unleavened bread, the manna, and the living water. But after

the tabernacle was built, the children of Israel had to journey on. For their journey, they needed Christ as typified by manna. But when they entered into the good land, the manna ceased, and they enjoyed the produce of the land (Josh. 5:12). This indicates that the produce of the land was the continuation of the manna, that the enjoyment of Christ had reached another stage. The first stage was that of the Passover lamb in Egypt; the second, that of the manna and the living water in the wilderness; and the third, that of the produce of the good land.

There is hardly any comparison between the land and the lamb. The lamb is small, but the land is spacious and rich. Furthermore, what comparison is there between the land and the manna? No doubt it is difficult to deliver God's chosen people out of the usurping hand of Satan and the tyranny of the world and to bring them into the separation of the wilderness. No doubt it is also difficult to bring them to the mountain to receive the revelation of God's economy. However, it is much more difficult to bring them into the good land to enjoy the riches of the all-inclusive Christ.

In Deuteronomy 8 we have a picture of the riches of the good land. This picture portrays various aspects of these riches: fountains, springs, wheat, barley, vines, figs, pomegranates, olive oil, honey, iron, and brass (vv. 7-9). Iron is for warfare, power, authority, protection, and, ultimately, for the building up of the kingdom and the temple. The riches of Christ as typified by the produce of the land of Canaan are covered in detail in the book *The All-Inclusive Christ*.

Recently, as I was praying, the Lord rebuked me concerning how little I live by Christ. He pointed out that although the churches are on the right track and although the saints are getting into the Word and praying, there is a great lack in the matter of living by Christ. For years I have seen that Christ lives in me, and I have given many messages on this. It is easy to say, "No longer I…but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20) and, "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). But our practice is very short. As the Lord was

rebuking me, I repented and confessed my failure. From that time onward, I have had the sense that the greatest need in the Lord's recovery today is for us all to live by Christ in a practical way.

How much do you live by Christ during the day? It may be that the only time you live by Him is in your time of prayer. When you are praying, you are in the good land. But as soon as your time of prayer is over, you are out of the land.

We regret such failures as losing our temper, but we may have no regrets about our failure to live by Christ. How many times have you repented to the Lord for not living out Christ? Even if our behavior is excellent, we still need to confess to the Lord our shortage in not living by Him. Very few pray to the Lord in this way. We have the concept of good behavior, but we do not have the concept of taking Christ as our life and of living by Him.

In 1970 a number of messages were released about taking Christ as our person. But now, almost nine years later, who among us actually takes Christ as his person? Most of us still have ourselves as our person. Although we have heard messages about this, we must confess that, in a practical way, we do not live out Christ very much. We can sing, "There's a Man in the glory whose life is for me," or maybe change the words to, "There's a Man in my spirit whose life is for me." But after we sing this hymn, whose life do we live by—by the life of Christ or by our natural life? In the meetings we proclaim that Christ's life is for us, but in our daily living His life is not for us. In practice, what we pay attention to is good behavior, not living by Christ.

In John 16:9 the Lord Jesus said that the Spirit would convict the world concerning sin "because they do not believe in Me." This indicates that not believing in the Lord is the unique sin. God commands us to believe in His Son. Any sinner who refuses to do this violates God's commandment. Thus, there is no need to break the Ten Commandments in order to be lost. Simply refusing to obey God's commandment to believe in Christ will cause a person to perish. In addition to this

commandment concerning believing, God commands us, the believers in Christ, to live by Christ. For a sinner not to believe in Christ is to commit sin. For a Christian not to live by Christ is also to commit sin.

In His economy God desires that Christ be our life and our everything so that He may have the church life. But instead of caring for Christ, we may care for other things, such as good behavior. This is disobedience, even rebellion. God wants Christ, but we seek good behavior. For this reason, the church life in the Lord's recovery is still not so rich or practical. In order for the church life to be rich and practical, Christ must be lived out of us.

When some hear about the need to live Christ, they may ask how to live by Him. I admit that it is very difficult to live by Christ. One reason for the difficulty is that instead of seeking Christ Himself, we seek holiness, victory, or spirituality. Thus, even our spiritual seeking is a hindrance to the living out of Christ. We want to be holy or victorious over our besetting sin or over some negative element in our environment. Furthermore, we desire to be spiritual. However, although we desire holiness, victory, and spirituality, we do not desire to live Christ. God's intention is that Christ be constituted into us. But our intention is to develop our own holiness or spirituality. This is rebellion against God's economy. Even if we are successful in being holy or spiritual, such holiness or spirituality is still rebellion.

When I was a young Christian, I sought for ways to be spiritual, victorious, holy, and filled with the Spirit. I read books that told me how to be this way, and I put all the suggestions into practice. However, I was disappointed because none of the suggestions worked. Later I learned that Christ Himself is the way to be holy, victorious, and spiritual. If we have Christ, we have holiness, victory, and true spirituality. If we try in ourselves to deal with our temper, we shall be defeated. But if we live Christ, our temper will not be a problem to us.

Although we have heard so much about living by Christ,

in our daily living we do not practice what we have heard. Instead, we try to improve our behavior. If we are stirred up, we should be stirred up to live by Christ. God's desire is that we enter into the good land. We need to be stirred up so that we may go forward to enter into the land, to labor on the land, and to enjoy the rich produce of the land. God only wants Christ; He does not want our zeal, behavior, or ethics.

We have pointed out that the land of Canaan is a type of Christ. However, this type has not yet been fulfilled in the experience of the saints. The types of the Passover and the manna have been fulfilled in the experience of thousands of Christians. But although many enjoy Christ as manna, very few enjoy Christ as their good land. We need to ask ourselves whether or not we in the local churches are truly enjoying Christ as the good land. Do we know the hills and valleys in Christ? Do we experience the wheat and barley in Christ, and the minerals as well? All these aspects of Christ need to be fulfilled in a practical way. If we consider the good land and all its riches as being a full type of Christ, we shall realize that we are lacking in the experience of Christ.

The difference between the church and a social organization is that the church is an entity constituted of Christ. If we have Christ, then we have the reality of the church. But if we do not have Christ, then we are, in actual practice, a social organization. Because we are short of the experience of Christ, apparently we may be practicing the church life, but actually we are enjoying a natural social life.

I wish to point out once again that the purpose of God's calling is not only to bring His people out of Egypt, into the wilderness, and to the mountain. Neither is it only to have the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness. His purpose is to bring His people into Christ as the good land. As God's called ones, we need to see that the purpose of God's calling is not just to save people out of the world. That is only the negative aspect. Ultimately, the purpose of His calling is to bring His people into the good land so that they may enjoy Christ in His

all-inclusiveness. Then God will be able to establish His kingdom (19:6; 2 Sam. 5:12; 7:12, 16; Rom. 14:17). Furthermore, by bringing His chosen people into the good land, God will be able to have a dwelling place built up on the earth (2 Sam. 7:13; Eph. 2:20-22; 4:12). We need to help others experience Christ in all His unsearchable riches so that God may be able to establish His kingdom and have His dwelling place on earth today.

This very point is covered by Paul in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. These four books unveil Christ not merely as the lamb, but as the all-inclusive One, that is, as the all-inclusive land. Colossians 3:11 even says that "Christ is all and in all." This word no doubt speaks of the all-inclusiveness of Christ. In 1 Corinthians we see the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea, but in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians we see the all-inclusive land.

Ephesians and Colossians mention the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. In these books it is in the heavenly places that we enjoy Christ as the good land. It is also there that the evil principalities and powers, typified by the wicked peoples in the land of Canaan, are to be defeated. Today, these evil powers are in the air. We, the called ones, must deliver people out of the world and bring them into the heavenly places to deal with the principalities and powers. When the children of Israel were eating the Passover lamb, the Egyptians were dealt with. But after the Israelites entered into the good land, they did not fight against the Egyptians, but fought against the nations in the land. In typology, these nations are not the people of the world; they are the evil powers of darkness, the wicked rulers, principalities, and authorities in the air. These powers that occupy the heavenly places seek to frustrate us from the enjoyment of the riches of the all-inclusive Christ. Therefore, in order to enjoy Christ in His all-inclusiveness, we must defeat the principalities, rulers, powers, and authorities in the heavenly places.

God has called us with a purpose. This purpose is to use us to bring people out of the tyranny of today's world into

the wilderness, a place of separation. It is also to bring them to the mountain where they may see the revelation concerning God's economy and the design of the tabernacle, so that the tabernacle may be built. Furthermore, it is to bring them into the rich and all-inclusive good land to defeat God's enemy and to enjoy the riches of Christ. Then God will be able to establish His kingdom in which He will have His dwelling place on earth. All these points are fully developed in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, four books which are the heart of the Bible.

Both Moses and Paul were called for this purpose, and we are called for this purpose also. We need to bring people all the way from the world into the all-inclusive Christ for God's kingdom and God's building. Oh, may our apprehension of God's Word be uplifted in these days! What God desires is not merely the tabernacle with the initial enjoyment of Christ as the lamb, the manna, and the living water, but the temple with the rich enjoyment of Christ as the all-inclusive land. Day by day we need to experience Christ in a practical way as our life and as our person. He should be not only manna to us, but also all the riches of the good land. What we need today for the accomplishment of God's purpose is the genuine experience of Christ as the good land of Canaan.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWELVE

THE THREE STATIONS IN FULFILLING GOD'S PURPOSE

In this message we shall consider the three stations in the fulfilling of God's purpose as they are mentioned in Exodus 3. In God's call the chosen people were directed to three different stations. Verse 18 says that the children of Israel were to take a "three days' journey into the wilderness." In verse 12 the Lord said to Moses, "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." Finally, in verses 8 and 17 the Lord promised Moses that He would bring the children of Israel out of Egypt into a "land flowing with milk and honey." Therefore, the three stations spoken of in this chapter are the wilderness, the mountain, and the land.

I. TO THE WILDERNESS

Many Christian teachers have emphasized the importance of the experience of the children of Israel in the wilderness. However, they interpret the wilderness as a place of test and trial. Although elsewhere in the Bible the wilderness has this significance, this is not the meaning of the wilderness in 3:18. Here the wilderness denotes a place of separation from the world. According to 3:18, the children of Israel were to make a journey of three days into the wilderness so that they might sacrifice to the Lord their God. It was impossible for God's people to sacrifice to Him in Egypt. In order to serve God in this way, they had to be in a place of separation.

The wilderness was separated from Egypt by the Red Sea. The crossing of the Red Sea is a type of baptism. After

we believed in the Lord Jesus and took Him as our Passover, we were baptized. Thus, the water of baptism separates us from the world and brings us into the wilderness where we can serve God. However, many saved ones have not yet been delivered into the wilderness. This means that although they have been saved, they have not been separated from the world.

The wilderness, the place of separation from the world, is the first station in God's deliverance of His chosen people from Egypt. Our experience testifies to this. Before we were saved, we were very much occupied with the things of the world. But God's salvation has delivered us from this preoccupation and has brought us into the wilderness. Everyone who is properly saved must have this kind of experience.

This is seen both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. The only difference is that the Old Testament presents the type, the picture, whereas the New Testament presents the spiritual reality in words. Because it is often difficult for us to grasp the spiritual things in the New Testament, God in His wisdom uses the pictures in the Old Testament to help us understand them. The history of the children of Israel is a portrait of a believer's full salvation. For example, the Passover is a type of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul says, "Our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed." Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 10:1 and 2 Paul indicates that the crossing of the Red Sea is a type of baptism. In addition, the manna and the water from the cleft rock are also types of Christ (1 Cor. 10:3-4). It is not difficult to see the significance of these types; however, hardly any Christians realize that the good land is also a type of Christ. Hence, many regard only the beginning stage of the history of the children of Israel as a type. How we thank the Lord for showing us that the whole history of the Israelites is a portrait of our salvation.

The children of Israel came out of Egypt and into the wilderness by the enjoyment of the Passover (12:11, 31-41) and through the baptism in the Red Sea (14:21-30). To them, the Passover was an enjoyment; they enjoyed the lamb, the

unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs. The supply they received through this enjoyment strengthened them to walk out of Egypt. Furthermore, the baptism in the Red Sea delivered them from the Egyptians. This indicates that by Christ as the Passover Lamb and by His death we are separated from the world and brought into the wilderness, the first station in fulfilling God's purpose.

II. TO THE MOUNTAIN

The second station is the mountain (3:12; 19:1-2, 11; 24:16-18), where the children of Israel received revelation concerning God and concerning the tabernacle. For hundreds of years they had been under darkness in Egypt where there was no light, no word, and no speaking of God. But now, under the enlightenment, they were to live according to the revelation concerning God, and they were to build the tabernacle according to the pattern revealed by God.

The children of Israel were brought to the mountain by the tree which made the bitter water sweet (15:23-25), by the twelve springs of water at Elim (15:27), by the manna from heaven (16:14-15, 31-32, 35), by the living water from the cleft rock (17:6), and by the victory over Amalek (17:8-16). When the Israelites came to Marah, "they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter" (15:23). Because the people murmured against him, Moses cried to the Lord, "and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet" (15:25). This tree signifies Christ with His cross. The children of Israel went on to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water (15:27), and they camped there by the waters. When they journeyed onward from Elim, they murmured again; this time it was because they had no food. God met their need by sending down manna, the heavenly food, to support them. Likewise, when the children of Israel murmured because there was no water, God brought forth living water from the cleft rock (17:1-6). All these items signify various aspects of Christ as our life supply, the very

supply God uses to bring us to the mountain. We in the local churches can testify that we have been supplied by the sweet water, by the twelve springs at Elim, by the heavenly manna, and by the living water flowing from the cleft rock.

God's chosen people were not to stay at the mountain in the wilderness. God's intention was that they journey onward into the good land. Likewise, today we should remain neither in the wilderness nor on the mountain. Rather, we should regard both as temporary stopping places. Our ultimate destination is the good land.

In their experience not many Christians have come to the mountain. Many of us can testify that before we came into the church life, we were not at the mountain, the place of revelation. Most of the saints in the Lord's recovery, however, have come to the mountain in the wilderness. On the one hand, it is a wonderful experience to be at the mountain; on the other hand, it is a cause of suffering if we remain there a long time. Some who have been in Christ for many years have not gone further than the station of the mountain. On the fourteenth day of the first month, the children of Israel celebrated the Passover in Egypt, and during the third month they arrived at the mountain (19:1). They stayed there for approximately nine months. By the first day of the next year, the tabernacle had been built and was filled with glory (40:17, 34). This indicates that it is not normal to remain at the mountain for too long a time. Many of us in the Lord's recovery have seen the revelation on the mountain and have shared with others in the building of the tabernacle. Although this is wonderful, it is wonderful only in a temporary way.

If we consider the picture of the children of Israel in the wilderness, we see that only two of those who came out of Egypt—Joshua and Caleb—entered into the good land. All the others, including Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, died in the wilderness. To them, the wilderness was not only a place of separation, but also a place of test and trial. Before the children of Israel came to the mountain, the wilderness was positive, for it was just a place of separation. But after the

mountain, the wilderness became a place of test and trial because of their unbelief.

When they were at the mountain, the Israelites received the revelation concerning what God is. Do not regard the law simply as some commandments. The law was a testimony, definition, description, and explanation of what God is. By the law we can know God Himself. God required His chosen people to live according to this revelation of Himself. Thus, on the mountain, Moses received a revelation both of what God is and of the kind of life the people of God should live. Because God is holy, righteous, and loving, His people should live a life characterized by holiness, righteousness, and love. Chapters twenty through twenty-four of Exodus reveal that God is detailed in His holiness, righteousness, and other divine attributes. His people must live a life that corresponds to the detailed attributes of God. Such a revelation can be seen only on the mountaintop.

It is on the mountain that God's people can also see the revelation of the desire of God's heart. Here we see that God wants us to live according to what He is because the desire of His heart is to have a dwelling place on earth. The tabernacle was erected as the temporary fulfillment of this desire. Before the tabernacle was built, a detailed revelation regarding every aspect of it was given to Moses in chapters twenty-five to thirty-one. The remaining chapters cover the experience of the children of Israel at the mountain and tell of the building of the tabernacle.

At the mountain we have the church life signified by the tabernacle. The church life we have today is not the temple church life; rather, it is the movable church life, the tabernacle. The tabernacle had no floor or foundation, but was erected on the earth. The temple built in the good land, on the contrary, had a solid foundation. No verse in the New Testament says that the church is built with wood. Rather, both Paul and Peter say that it is built with stones (1 Cor. 3:12; 1 Pet. 2:5). This indicates that the tabernacle, a type of the church, was God's temporary dwelling place. His

permanent dwelling place was to be the temple built in the land of Canaan. Many Christians, however, have not yet reached the stage of the tabernacle, the temporary church life, much less that of the solid building.

III. TO THE GOOD LAND

Because the tabernacle is merely the temporary dwelling place of God, we should not be satisfied with the church life in this stage. We need to press on to the stage represented by the temple in the good land. In the Old Testament the temple replaced the tabernacle. Eventually, the articles that were in the tabernacle were placed in the temple. Thus, the tabernacle in the wilderness was the temporary building, but the temple in the good land was the consummate building. Therefore, the children of Israel had to go on from the wilderness to the good land.

If I had been among the children of Israel in Exodus 40, I would have been fully content with the building of the tabernacle. However, God's final goal was still a long way off. About three-fourths of the way remained. For this reason, the children of Israel had to journey onward to the third station and enter into the good land.

A. By the Ark with the Tabernacle

We have seen the factors that brought the children of Israel into the wilderness and that brought them in the wilderness to the mountain. Now we must consider the factor that brought them into the good land. This factor is the ark with the tabernacle (Josh. 3:3, 6, 8, 13-17; 4:10-19). When the children of Israel entered into the good land, the ark went down into the Jordan, and the waters stopped. Prior to that time, they had the ark as the factor, but they did not have the faith to apply it. But at the end of their years of wandering in the wilderness, they did apply the ark in this way. This indicates that in the church life today Christ as the ark must be the factor by which we enter into Christ as the good land.

What kind of Christ do you enjoy? Do you enjoy Christ just

as the Passover Lamb, as the unleavened bread, as the manna, and as the rock flowing out the living water, or do you enjoy Him as the good land? Colossians 2:6 says, "As therefore you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him." If our Christ is only the Passover Lamb, the manna, and the rock with the living water, how can we walk in Him? If we would walk in Christ, we must experience Him as the spacious land. The experience of Christ among most Christians is elementary; few experience Him as the good land.

We have seen that the children of Israel enjoyed the Passover lamb, the unleavened bread, the manna, and the rock with the living water. However, God did not promise Abraham that He would give such things to his descendants. God promised to give them the good land. According to Galatians 3, the blessing of the land promised to Abraham is the Spirit. The blessing of the land, this Spirit, is the Triune God who has been processed through incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection to become the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. This Spirit is the blessing promised to Abraham's descendants by faith.

Abraham has two kinds of descendants: the descendants in the flesh and the descendants by faith. The descendant sin the flesh are the nation of Israel, and the descendants by faith are those who believe in Christ. To the descendants in the flesh the good land is a literal place; but to the descendants by faith the good land is a spiritual reality, Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit.

I am grateful to the Lord that in all the churches in the Lord's recovery there is the ark with the tabernacle. The ark and the tabernacle typify Christ with the temporary, movable church life. Christ with such a church life is the factor by which we enter into the all-inclusive Christ typified by the land of Canaan.

Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians show us Christ and the church in the good land. In 1 Corinthians, however, we have the church at the mountain. This book speaks of the Passover and the baptism in the Red Sea, by which we are

brought out of Egypt and into the wilderness. It also speaks of drinking of the spiritual rock, one of the factors that brings us to the mountain. This indicates that Christ and the church as revealed in 1 Corinthians are related to the mountain in the wilderness. Many of us have passed through this station.

My burden in this message is to point out that there is no need for us to wander through the wilderness with the ark and the tabernacle. Years ago, some of us were separated from the world, and we entered into the wilderness. Then we ascended the mountain where we saw the vision concerning God, concerning the life of God's people, and concerning God's dwelling place. We also erected the tabernacle at the foot of the mountain. Thus, we are Christians with the church life, at least in the temporary and movable form, the tabernacle. However, we need to press on, cross the Jordan River, and enter into the land of Canaan.

B. Through Burial in the Jordan River

God's chosen people had to cross two bodies of water: the Red Sea, which deals with the world, and the Jordan River, which deals with the self. The worldly forces typified by Pharaoh and his army were buried in the Red Sea. But twelve stones representing the old self of the children of Israel were buried in the Jordan (Josh. 4:1-9, 20). What frustrates us from entering into the all-inclusive Christ is not the world—it is the self. This self must be buried in the Jordan. The factor that enables the self to be buried is the ark. The twelve stones were not buried in the river before the ark went in. Rather, the ark went down into the river first. This indicates that Christ with the movable church life is the factor by which we enter into the all-inclusive Christ. The church life we have today is not the temple, but the tabernacle, the church life that is still portable. But even such a church life is a factor for entering into the good land. I can testify that Christ in such a movable church life has greatly helped me to enter into the all-inclusive Christ.

C. By Circumcision

After the children of Israel entered into the good land by crossing the Jordan, they were circumcised; that is, their flesh was cut off (Josh. 5:2-4). Thus, the self was buried in the river, and the flesh was cut off by circumcision. The church life with Christ helps us both to bury the self and to cut off the flesh.

D. To Enjoy the Riches of the Good Land

After burial and circumcision, the children of Israel began to enjoy the riches of the good land (Deut. 8:7-10; Josh. 5:10-12). At that time, the manna ceased and was replaced by the produce of the land. Through the rich enjoyment of the all-inclusive land, God's people were strengthened to fight against God's enemy and to establish God's kingdom. In that kingdom the temple was built.

The Old Testament reveals two stages of the church life, the stage of the tabernacle and the stage of the temple. Our church life today may not yet be in the stage of the temple, but may still be in the stage of the tabernacle. The reason for this is that most of us are not yet walking in Christ as the good land. We can testify that Christ is our Lamb, our unleavened bread, our manna, or our rock with the living water. But we must go on to experience Christ as our spacious land. We should not only eat of Him, but we should also walk in Him.

The main hindrances to entering into the all-inclusive Christ are not worldliness and sin; they are the self and the flesh. Worldliness and sin are dealt with at the first two stations. But we still need a burial to deal with the self and a circumcision to deal with the flesh. If we are absolute to go on with the Lord, we shall eventually become willing to have our self and flesh dealt with. However, such dealings do not come easily. It is especially difficult for young people to bury the self and to cut off the flesh. In the meeting we may declare, "To me to live is Christ." But after the meeting, we live in the self and in the flesh. We may proclaim, "No more I,

but Christ liveth in me." However, this may merely be a teaching, for in our daily living we are full of self. The self and the flesh keep us from the experience of the good land.

Look at the picture in the Old Testament again and notice that the children of Israel did not enjoy the produce of Canaan until the self had been buried and the flesh had been cut off. But as soon as these things were dealt with, the children of Israel began to enjoy the rich produce of the land. It was the riches of the land, not the manna in the wilderness, that enabled them to fight against the enemies in the good land.

E. The Warfare in the Land

After the children of Israel entered into the good land, they had to defeat the Canaanites, the enemies that were occupying the land. These enemies typify the principalities and powers in the air that seek to keep us from enjoying the all-inclusive Christ. Within us we are troubled by the self and the flesh, and above us, in the air, there are the evil powers of darkness. When we bury the self and circumcise the flesh, the powers of darkness in the air will be exposed. The self and the flesh help the evil powers. Actually, if we are still in the self and in the flesh, the principalities and powers need not do anything to hinder us, for we are already frustrated by the self and the flesh. However, as soon as we deal with the self and the flesh, the powers of darkness will come forth to war against us. Then we must learn how to fight the spiritual warfare. The spiritual warfare is fought in the good land with the support of the rich produce of Christ.

We have pointed out that the good land for us today is the Triune God processed to become the all-inclusive Spirit. The Triune God is not only our Creator, Redeemer, Savior, Master, and Lord; He is the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. Through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, has been processed to become the life-giving Spirit to indwell His chosen people. Thus, the Triune God reaches us today as the life-giving Spirit.

This wonderful Spirit is now in our spirit (Rom. 8:16). First Corinthians 6:17 says that he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Therefore, in the New Testament we are commanded to walk in spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:4). This is the consummate commandment. Not to walk in Christ is the greatest sin a believer can commit against God. If you do not walk in Christ, you are rebellious, even though you may be very virtuous. Because God's desire is that Christ be lived out of us, even our natural virtue is a form of rebellion against God and His economy.

We all have confessed our sins, failures, and shortcomings to the Lord. But have you ever asked the Lord to forgive you for not living by Christ? Not many Christians have prayed in this way: "Lord, forgive me for not taking You as my life today. My behavior was very good, but I did not live by You or take You as my person. Lord, forgive me for being in rebellion against You. You wanted to be lived out of me, but instead I lived according to something other than Yourself. I lived by my opinion, not by Your revelation. According to this revelation, I should walk in You. But during the whole day, Lord, I didn't walk in You at all." I can testify that, especially recently, I have made this kind of confession to the Lord almost every day.

It is easy to be centered on so many things other than Christ Himself. We may be centered on religion, ethics, morality, or virtue, but we are not centered on Christ. If our behavior is poor, we feel regretful and repent. But if we are short in living by Christ, we may have no feeling about it and sense no need to confess. According to John 16, the unique sin of an unbeliever is not to believe in Christ. But the primary sin of a believer is not to walk in Christ. The New Testament does not command us to walk according to a particular teaching or doctrine. But it does charge us to walk in Christ or to walk in spirit. In Galatians 5:25 Paul says, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." In Romans 8:4 Paul says that the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled by those who walk according to spirit. The spirit here in Romans 8 is the mingled spirit, the all-inclusive Spirit mingled with our spirit.

Do not think that the land of Canaan is far away and that you must wander for years before you can enter into it. On the contrary, the good land is within us, for it is the processed God who is the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit indwelling our spirit. Like Caleb in Numbers 13:30, we must believe and declare that through the church life with Christ we are well able to possess this good land.

Remember that the ark with the tabernacle is the factor by which we may enter into the good land. Praise the Lord that we have enjoyed the Passover, the sweet water, the manna, and the living water from the cleft rock. We also praise Him that at the mountain we have seen the vision concerning God and His economy and that we have built the tabernacle, the temporary church life. Thus, we all have the ark with the tabernacle, Christ with the movable church life, as the factor by which to enter into the land. Because of this factor, we may have the boldness to enter into our spirit to enjoy the all-inclusive Spirit as the good land.

Let us forget religion, philosophy, ethics, and even spiritual seeking, and let us care for Christ and for having direct contact with Him in our spirit. We must learn to not do anything or say anything apart from Christ. In John 15:4 the Lord said, "Abide in Me and I in you." In the next verse He said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." We need to have our living and our being in Christ as the good land. He is both the center and the circumference, both the centrality and the universality. As the good land, He is everything to us. Our final goal must be to pass through the wilderness and the mountain into the good land. Let us enter into this land to possess the all-inclusive Christ and to enjoy His unsearchable riches that God's kingdom may be established and that the temple may be built.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THIRTEEN

GOD'S DEMAND AND PHARAOH'S RESISTANCE

(1)

With this message we shall begin to consider the matter of God's demand and Pharaoh's resistance. God's demand and Pharaoh's resistance issued in a number of conflicts, which are recorded in chapters five through fourteen of Exodus. In this message we come to the first of these conflicts.

I. THE FIRST CONFLICT

A. The Demand of Jehovah, the God of Israel, the God of the Hebrews, on Pharaoh

Exodus 5:1 says, "And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith Jehovah, God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness" (Heb.). In this verse we have an important title of God: Jehovah, God of Israel. In verse 3 God is entitled the God of the Hebrews. Hence, the demand on Pharaoh was made by Jehovah, the God of Israel, the God of the Hebrews.

We have pointed out that in Hebrew the title Jehovah is a form of the verb *to be*. This indicates that Jehovah is the unique self-existing One. He is the One who was, who is, and who will be. Only to Him can the verb "to be" be applied in an absolute sense. Only God is; we and all other things are not. In 6:3 God says, "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God All-sufficient; but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them" (Heb.). God revealed Himself as Jehovah for the first time in Exodus 3.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not receive this revelation of Him.

In 5:1 God is also called the God of Israel. This title is different from the title the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, a title which signifies God as the God of resurrection. The title the God of Israel indicates that God is the God of a transformed people. Jacob was the name of a natural man, but Israel was the name of a transformed man. At birth, Jacob was not given the name Israel. Rather, he was called Jacob, which means a heel-holder, a supplanter. But throughout the course of his life, Jacob was transformed, and eventually God changed his name to Israel. This name implies victory and kingship. On the one hand, the transformed people are victors; on the other hand, they are kings. Even when the children of Israel were in a dreadful situation in Egypt, God still regarded them not as Jacob, but as Israel. In the eyes of God, His chosen people had already been transformed into victors and kings.

The same principle applies to the way God sees the church today. In the eyes of God, the church is already glorious. However, if our eyes are set on our spiritual condition, we may regard ourselves as being very pitiful. We may see ourselves as Jacob, not as Israel. Nevertheless, as God sees us, we are Israel. In His dealings with Satan, the persecutor and usurper, God told him that He is the God of a transformed, victorious, and kingly people.

We all need to see and believe that we are an Israel. You may not believe this today, but you will certainly believe it in the future, either in the next age or in eternity. In eternity all God's chosen people will be an Israel. Do not be shortsighted, limited in your vision by your present situation. God does not regard you as one still in bondage under Pharaoh; rather, He sees you as one who has been delivered and brought into the all-inclusive Christ typified by the good land.

Do you dare believe that you are such an Israel, such a victor and king? We all must be bold enough to believe this

and to declare it. Do not hold to your feeling regarding yourself, but believe in the word of God. If God says that you are an Israel, then you are an Israel, whether you feel this way about yourself or not.

Yes, in chapter five of Exodus the children of Israel were still under bondage in Egypt. However, God knew that they soon would be delivered from this bondage and brought into the wilderness, to the mountain, and eventually into the land of Canaan. In the good land they would be Israel, and God would be their God. Therefore, as God came to Pharaoh to negotiate with him, He was not disappointed by the condition of His people. He did not have Moses and Aaron tell Pharaoh that He was the God of Jacob. Instead, He let Pharaoh know that He was Jehovah, the God of Israel. It seemed as if God were saying, "Pharaoh, you must realize that I Am. I am He who was, who is, and who will be. You cannot change Me. Furthermore, in My sight, My people have been transformed into an Israel. They also are Hebrews, river-crossers. Because they are Hebrews, don't try to keep them on this side of the Red Sea. I am Jehovah, and whatever I say must come to pass. I say that My people are Hebrews; therefore, they are Hebrews. You cannot keep them in Egypt. You must let them go."

The titles of God mentioned in chapter five are extremely important. Even in diplomatic relations among the nations of the world, titles are of great significance. If a representative of a certain nation is to negotiate with the government of the United States, he must have a proper title. If he were simply a consul or minister, his position would not be high enough. He would need to bear the title of ambassador. Then he could engage in diplomatic negotiations. In the same principle, as God was negotiating with Pharaoh, He presented Himself according to the proper title: Jehovah, the God of Israel, the God of the Hebrews. He let Pharaoh know that He was the great I Am. As the I Am, He was everything, and Pharaoh was nothing. Moreover, He revealed Himself to Pharaoh as the God of Israel, the God

of a people transformed to be victors and kings. As the One with such a marvelous title, God made His demand of Pharaoh.

1. To Let His People Go That They May Hold a Feast unto Him in the Wilderness

God's demand of Pharaoh is seen in 5:1. Speaking on behalf of the Lord, Moses and Aaron said to Pharaoh, "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." The feast is in contrast with slavery, with rigorous labor. Jehovah was telling Pharaoh to release His people from slavery so that they could hold a feast unto Him. The words "unto me" in this verse indicate that when God's people are feasting, He is happy. Their feasting is unto Him. It seems that Jehovah was telling Pharaoh, "I am not happy to see My people under slavery in Egypt. Let them go so that they may feast to make Me happy. I like to see My people feasting and rejoicing. I am glad when they do nothing but eat and rejoice. That is a feast unto Me."

This feasting unto the Lord is dispensational worship; that is, it is worshipping God according to what has been dispensed into us. As we eat, drink, praise, sing, and rejoice in the presence of God, we hold a feast unto Him. As we shall see, such a feast is also a sacrifice unto the Lord. To sacrifice is to worship. Dispensational worship is worship in which God is dispensed into us for our enjoyment so that we may feast in His presence with Him and unto Him. This is the worship God desires. This is not only revealed in the New Testament, but also implied in the Old Testament.

We may consider the feast here a festival, a holiday, or a holy day, a time for God's people to rest with God and to enjoy God's provision with God. Three times a year God ordained special periods of feasting for the Israelites. The three main festivals were the Passover, including the feast of unleavened bread; the feast of weeks (Pentecost);

and the feast of tabernacles. At those times the people were not allowed to do any work; anyone who worked on those festival days would be cut off from God's people (Lev. 23:30). This feasting pleased the Lord because it was worship to Him. According to the human concept, people should always be working; but according to the divine concept, God's people should put aside their working for the times of festivals to rest from their busyness and to feast with God in worship to Him.

To hold a feast unto the Lord is to worship Him. According to the natural concept, to worship is to bow down, to kneel down, to prostrate ourselves before God. But according to God, real worship is our enjoyment of God as our provision and then our rest in what we enjoy of Him. As John 4 discloses, the worship the Father seeks is the drinking of the living water. The more we drink of His Son as the Spirit, the more worship God the Father receives. Real worship is to drink of God's provision, which is God Himself prepared for our enjoyment.

The feast spoken of in 5:1 was to be held in the wilderness. The wilderness here has a positive meaning. It was the first destination God wanted His people to reach. On the day I was saved, I was immediately brought by God into the wilderness. The wilderness stands in contrast to Egypt. In Egypt, which was filled with the culture of the world, there were the treasure cities. God wanted to rescue His people from the treasure cities and from human culture and to bring them into a place of separation in the wilderness. Before we were saved, we were in one of the cities on the bank of the Nile. But, in God's salvation, we have been brought out of such cities into the desert, where there is no human culture and no worldly building.

2. To Let Them Go Three Days' Journey into the Wilderness

In verse 3 Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh, "Let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness." It is

significant that this verse speaks of three days, not of two, four, or any other number. In the Bible the number three, especially three days, signifies resurrection. The Lord Jesus was resurrected on the third day. After the three days' journey, the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea, in which the Egyptian forces were buried. After passing through the sea, God's people were in resurrection. They had passed through death on the night of the Passover, and they were buried in the Red Sea. Therefore, after a journey of three days' duration, God's chosen and rescued people were in resurrection.

Some may wonder how the children of Israel could have been buried both in the Red Sea and in the Jordan River. This is not hard to understand if we view it in the light of our Christian experience. On the day we were saved, we were saved into the death of Christ. Since that time, we have been subject to the effectiveness of Christ's death. This means that in our experience we are crucified and buried again and again. I cannot tell you how many times I have undergone this crucifixion and burial. This indicates that our initial, basic Christian experience is the same in nature as our more advanced experience. Whatever we experience in the maturity of our spiritual life will be the same in principle as our experience in the beginning, on the very day of our salvation. When we were saved, we were placed into the death of Christ, we were buried, and we were resurrected. We cannot exhaust the experience of this death, burial, and resurrection. I experienced all this on the day I was saved, although at the time I had no knowledge of it. After I came out of the gospel meeting in which I was saved, I had the sense as I walked on the street that I was in the wilderness. To be in the wilderness is to be on the other side of the Red Sea in resurrection. To be in such a position is to be a Hebrew, a resurrected and transformed river-crosser. This is the normal experience of salvation. Everyone who has been saved in a normal way has taken a three days' journey into the wilderness and has experienced death, burial, and resurrection.

3. To Sacrifice unto Jehovah Their God

Jehovah also demanded that Pharaoh allow the children of Israel to sacrifice to Jehovah their God (v. 3). Sacrifice is a word parallel to feasting. To the children of Israel, the feast was a feast, but to God it was a sacrifice. Without the sacrifice, there was nothing to feast on. What the children of Israel were to feast on was the very sacrifice they were to offer to God. The Passover illustrates this. The lamb sacrificed to God was food for the children of Israel. This reveals that the feast and the sacrifice are two aspects of one thing. Whatever we sacrifice to God spontaneously becomes our feast. This also is dispensational worship. This kind of worship does not require that we prostrate ourselves before the Lord. God did not say, "Let My people go into the wilderness so that there they may prostrate themselves before Me." God does not want His people to do this. He wants them to sacrifice to Him and to hold a feast unto Him.

In God's demand placed on Pharaoh we see a perfect, complete salvation for His people. This salvation includes God's rescuing His people from the usurping hand of Satan and bringing them into the wilderness in resurrection so that they can hold a feast unto Him and sacrifice to Him. What a wonderful salvation!

B. Pharaoh, Symbolizing the Usurping Satan and Our Satan-possessed and Usurped Self

Now we come to Pharaoh's resistance (5:2, 4-9). Pharaoh symbolizes the usurping Satan and our Satan-possessed and usurped self. Because the self is Pharaoh in a very practical way, we may be a Pharaoh both to ourselves and to others. A husband and wife may be a Pharaoh to each other, and parents may be a Pharaoh to their children.

A Pharaoh is one who keeps God's people from feasting unto the Lord. For example, five brothers may live together

in a brothers' house. Three of them may desire to attend the church meeting as they usually do, but the others may restrain them and encourage them to stay home. In doing this, these two brothers become Pharaohs. Any time we keep others from feasting unto the Lord or from sacrificing to Him, we are a Pharaoh. Parents, for example, may be so concerned about their children's education that they forbid them to attend the meetings of the church and require them to devote an unreasonable amount of time to study. When parents behave in such a way, they are Pharaohs to their children.

Sometimes we blame Satan too much. Yes, the usurping Satan is Pharaoh in an objective way. But we are Pharaohs in a practical, subjective way. We may be a Pharaoh to ourselves, not allowing ourselves to go into the wilderness to feast unto the Lord. If you check with your experience, you will see that many times you have frustrated yourself from feasting unto the Lord. You have kept yourself away from the meetings of the church, perhaps with tiredness as your excuse for not attending the church feast. Although you may have claimed to be too tired to attend the meetings, you were full of energy to talk on the telephone. Do not think that today only Satan himself is Pharaoh. Everyone can be a Pharaoh. Whenever the self is possessed by Satan and usurped by him, the self becomes a subjective Pharaoh.

1. Denying Jehovah God, Ignoring His Demand, and Not Letting Israel Go

Verse 2 records Pharaoh's resistance in a detailed way: "And Pharaoh said, Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go" (Heb.). Here we see that Pharaoh denied Jehovah God, ignored His demand, and refused to let Israel go. Pharaoh refused even to acknowledge Jehovah, virtually denying Jehovah's existence. Often when we frustrate others from

feasting unto the Lord, we deny the Lord and ignore His demand. The same is true when we hinder ourselves from sacrificing to the Lord. In a very practical way, this means that if we keep ourselves from the church meetings, we are like Pharaoh who denied the Lord.

For us Christians to come together is a matter of great significance. Whenever we gather together according to the Lord's ordination, we hold a feast unto the Lord and we sacrifice to our God. Suppose we Christians did not have a proper gathering. What would the Lord be able to do on earth? The Lord would not be able to do anything, and He would not receive any real worship. By this we see that the proper gathering together of Christians is of tremendous importance.

Some of the children of Israel may have thought that as long as they were delivered from the hand of Pharaoh and released from Egypt, everything would be all right. But that would not have been true. God's chosen people were not only to make their exodus out of Egypt, but they were also to hold a feast unto the Lord in the wilderness and to sacrifice to Him. By its very nature a feast is a corporate matter. No one can hold a feast alone. To have a feast we must be together with many others. The more people there are, the better it is. Suppose a dinner of many courses is prepared and set on your dining table at home and you sit - down to eat it by yourself. Is this a feast? Certainly not! In order for it to be a feast, you must invite a large number of people to eat with you. If you have just a few others to dine with you, this meal is still not a feast. You need a great company. In the same principle, no Christian can hold a feast unto the Lord alone or with just a few other believers. He must attend a proper gathering of Christians.

To miss a meeting of the church is to miss a feast and to lose out on the enjoyment. The loss we suffer in this way is not as serious as the loss God suffers. If we do not attend the feast, God has no feast and does not receive the sacrifice. May we all be deeply impressed with the importance of this.

2. Increasing Their Labor with Rigor

a. Giving Them No More Straw

In verse 7 Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and the officers, saying, "Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves." Instead of letting Israel go, Pharaoh actually increased their labor with rigor. He even commanded that they be given no more straw. It is the same in our experience. When God is about to rescue a certain person from today's world, Satan takes away that person's "straw"; that is, he deprives him of the supply from the world. This forces that one to work with more rigor in order to make a living.

b. Requiring of Them the Same Number of Bricks

In verse 8 Pharaoh said, "And the number of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not reduce any of it" (Heb.). Here we see that although Pharaoh cut off the supply of straw, he still required the same number of bricks. This indicates that it was much harder for God's people to do the daily work. Many Christians have experienced something like this. After they were called by God, it was harder for them to earn a living than it was before they were called. Simply because they had been touched by Christ, Satan took away their "straw" without lessening his demands. Hence, it became more difficult for them to make a living.

c. Condemning Them as Being Idle

Furthermore, Pharaoh said of the children of Israel, "For they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God" (v. 8). According to Pharaoh, it was because of idleness that the Israelites wanted to go into the wilderness to sacrifice to their God. In the eyes of today's Pharaohs, especially in the eyes of the opposers and the unbelievers, we in the

Lord's recovery are idle. They accuse us of idleness in coming to the meeting hall so often to attend the meetings of the church or the meetings for the ministry of the Word. They condemn us, saying that we do not want to work, study, or care for our homes and families. According to their understanding, we use the meetings as an excuse for idleness.

d. Causing Them Not to Regard "Vain Words"

In verse 9 Pharaoh said, "Let the labor be heavier on the men, that they may labor therein; and let them not regard vain words" (Heb.). Pharaoh did not want God's people to regard what he thought were "vain words." These "vain words," however, were actually the word of God. The same is true today. Today's Pharaohs regard the word of God as nothing more than vain words. As far as they are concerned, we who hearken to the word of God as it is sounded forth in the church meetings and in the meetings of the ministry are listening to vain words.

What we are doing in the church life may be idle in the eyes of the worldly people, but what they are doing is vanity in the eyes of God. Egypt is filled with busyness. Everyone still under bondage in Egypt is very busy. But as soon as someone is rescued from Egypt and is brought into the wilderness, he will become idle. Which do you prefer, busyness or idleness? I prefer this kind of idleness. Although I certainly am not a lazy person, I desire to be in what Pharaoh calls idleness. For example, I enjoy cleaning in my home and I am fond of working in the garden. But after spending a certain amount of time cleaning or working in this way, I may need to say, "Satan, this is enough. I will not do any more work now. Instead, I shall be idle before the Lord." How good it is to be idle in this way!

There is a time when we all should say, "Satan, that is enough. It is now time for me to be idle." To be idle in this sense means to feast unto the Lord and to sacrifice to Him. In the eyes of the worldly people, the church life is a life of idleness. Actually, we are neither idle nor busy—we are

feasting and sacrificing. Before the Lord, this is the proper kind of human life.

God's salvation is to rescue us out of busyness and to bring us into idleness. People today are too busy caring for the things of this life. Some are so industrious that they have no time to feast unto the Lord. We need to be delivered from this busyness in order to have more time for idleness. A lazy person should be trained to be busy. However, someone who is too busy must be trained to be idle, that is, to spend some time with the saints in the meetings of the church. The Christian life is not a life of worldly busyness; it is a life of proper idleness. We are not to be so busy with the things of this life that we disregard the word of God. How we enjoy being idle and regarding God's "vain words" in the church meetings!

For us to live for Christ, we need to exist. Without our human existence we cannot live Christ. But today those in the fallen world care for nothing but their existence; they do not care for the purpose of their existence. To exist is one thing, but to exist for the divine purpose is another thing. The purpose ordained by God for our existence is to live Christ, to live God out, and to have God's testimony. But the people of this world have only their existence; they have no purpose. Eventually they make their existence itself the purpose of their existence. They know nothing but existence. Satan picks up the existence of human beings or of human living and uses this existence to usurp people so that today the whole world cares only for existence, not for God's purpose in existence.

All things necessary for our human existence need to be under a divine limitation. Anything that exceeds our need becomes worldly, "Egyptian," something of Pharaoh, and it frustrates us from the economy of God's purpose. In everything God's economy must be the deciding factor. Our living should not be like that of the "Egyptians," the worldly people. We need a place to live, and we need to keep our house clean. But if we continue with our cleaning when it is time to go to

the meeting, our cleaning becomes "Egyptian," something apart from the economy of God's purpose. We are on earth not for cleaning but for a feast unto the Lord. Even how much time we spend with our children should be decided by God's economy. Other Christians may act like the people of the world, but we have to be a holy people, a separated people.

Our living and our existence depend on the provision from the heavenly source, not on the supply from the world. For this we need the vision, and we need the exercise of our faith. Moses was a man of great faith to lead two million people out of Egypt into the wilderness, where there was no earthly supply for their human existence.

C. The Issue of the Conflict

1. Israel Suffering More Cruelty

Now we come to the issue of the conflict caused by God's demand and Pharaoh's resistance. The first aspect of the issue was that Israel suffered more cruelty (5:10-21). The greater the conflict, the more God's chosen people suffered. This is the enemy's strategy. Do not think, however, that increased suffering is a negative sign. Actually, it is a positive sign, for it indicates that God's negotiation with the enemy is taking place and that we are affected by it. Our suffering is a sign that God is in the process of delivering us.

2. Moses Being Bothered and Discouraged

Verses 22 and 23 indicate that Moses was bothered and discouraged. Moses even asked the Lord why He had sent him. Furthermore, Moses said to Him, "Neither hast thou delivered thy people at all." Many of us have had similar experiences. The more we ministered Christ to others, the more they suffered. This caused us to become troubled and discouraged. Our concept is that if we minister in a proper way, others will be blessed. We expect the dead to be resurrected, the sick to be healed, the weak to be strengthened,

and the poor to be enriched. However, the situation is often the opposite of what we anticipate.

I can testify of this strongly from my experience. Many times I have been disappointed, just as Moses was. Sometimes I went to the Lord and said, "Lord, what happened? You told me to minister this matter to Your people. It seems to me that You should bless them and put Your seal upon my ministry. But the more I minister to the people, the more difficulty they have. Lord, am I wrong in some way? I don't understand what is happening."

3. Jehovah God Reconfirming His Name and His Covenant

After Moses expressed his discouragement and bewilderment to the Lord, Jehovah God came in to reconfirm His name and His covenant (6:1-8). God said to Moses, "I am Jehovah: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God All-sufficient; but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers" (6:2-4, Heb.). What is more precious than the reconfirmation of God's name and His covenant? By God's reconfirmation, Moses was strengthened and encouraged both to go back to Pharaoh and to speak again to the children of Israel.

In brief, the Lord's name is what He Himself is, and His covenant is His word spoken with a promise and confirmed with an oath. A word spoken in an ordinary way is not a covenant, but a word spoken with a promise and confirmed with an oath becomes a covenant. (See Life-study of Hebrews, Message Thirty-six.) God spoke to Abraham; then He spoke with a promise concerning the good land, a promise that was confirmed again and again. Finally, there was an oath, so that there was an agreement, a contract, made by God between God Himself and Abraham; the promising word of God became a covenant (Gen. 15). Circumcision was a token of this covenant (Gen. 17).

Today we may experience God's reconfirming His name and His covenant. Sometimes after I have complained to the Lord, He has confirmed His name to me with the reminder that He is the I Am, the unique self-existing One. At such times of reconfirmation, the Lord seems to say, "I can never fail. I mean whatever I say. I am, but the sufferings are not. Do not believe in your situation—believe in what I am." In such times God also reconfirms His covenant to us.

4. Israel Not Hearkening unto Moses

In 6:6-8 the Lord gave Moses some very encouraging words to speak to the children of Israel. He wanted Moses to tell them that He would bring them out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, redeem them with an outstretched arm, take them to Him for a people, and bring them into the land which He promised to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Nevertheless, verse 9 says, "And Moses spoke so unto the children of Israel; but they hearkened not unto Moses from shortness of spirit, and from cruel bondage" (Heb.). Their spirit had been exhausted by their sufferings. Hence, they would not regard God's word to Moses. In their shortness of spirit, God's people were like a car without gasoline. When we are short of spirit, we cannot bear any kind of bondage or suffering. Therefore, we need to pray that our spirit will be preserved and supplied. We need to ask the Lord to keep us from ever being short of spirit.

In this message we have seen the conflict between God and God's enemy, Pharaoh, who symbolizes Satan objectively and the Satan-possessed and usurped self subjectively. God wants us to take a three days' journey into the wilderness so that we may hold a feast unto Him and sacrifice to Him. But Satan and the self rise up to deny God and to refuse to let us go. Nevertheless, because of the Lord's full salvation, many of us have been delivered from bondage in Egypt and are now in the wilderness enjoying the feast and offering sacrifice to our God.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FOURTEEN

JEHOVAH GOD'S NAME AND HIS COVENANT

After the first conflict between God and Pharaoh, Moses, who was God's representative, was troubled and discouraged (5:22-23). In 6:1-8 God gave Moses a strong word concerning His name and His covenant. Because we are still short of the experience of God's name and of the true realization of God's covenant, we need to consider these matters in this message.

I. JEHOVAH GOD'S NAME

A. His Name Denoting His Person

Let us first see the name of Jehovah God. His name denotes His person. It is not an empty title, but rather it is the definition of what He is.

B. El Shaddai

In 6:3 God said to Moses, "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God All-sufficient; but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them" (Heb.). For years I was puzzled by this verse. I knew that according to certain verses in Genesis, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all familiar with the name Jehovah (Gen. 12:4; 26:25; 32:9). How can we reconcile these verses with the Lord's word in 6:3? The answer rests in the fact that it is one thing to know a particular name and it is another thing to know God by that very name. For example, people all over the world know the name of Jesus. However, not all those who know this name also know the Lord by this name. To know the name of Jesus is one thing, but to know the Lord Jesus in an experiential way by His name is

another. Jesus means Jehovah the Savior. People may be familiar with the name of Jesus, but they may have no experience of Jehovah the Savior.

This was my situation before I was saved. I was born into Christianity, and my mother taught me the story of Jesus. I even spoke of Jesus to others, and I defended Christianity against attack. However, I myself had no experience of Jesus as Jehovah the Savior. I knew the name, but I did not yet know the Lord by that name. In the same principle, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew the name Jehovah, but they did not know God by this name.

However, they did know the Lord as God All-sufficient, that is, as El Shaddai. *El* means the mighty One, and *Shaddai* implies the meaning of breast or udder. Hence, this divine title indicates that God is strong and all-sufficient. As such a One, He is the supplying God (Gen. 17:1; 28:3) and the promising God (Gen. 35:11).

C. Jehovah

Just as El Shaddai is God's name for supply and promise, so Jehovah is His name for existence and fulfillment. As Jehovah, God is the existing God (Exo. 3:14; John 8:24, 28, 58) and the fulfilling God (Exo. 6:6-8). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died without enjoying the fulfillment of the promise (Heb. 11:13). In their experience God was the all-sufficient One, but He was not Jehovah. To them, He was the promising God, but He was not the fulfilling God. When God spoke to Moses in 6:1-8, He did not speak as El Shaddai, the promising God, but as Jehovah, the fulfilling God. Here God did not make a promise to Moses regarding the good land; rather, He came to fulfill the promise He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When God was making a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15, He indicated in verses 13 and 14 that it would be four hundred years before the promise concerning the good land would be fulfilled. These years were completed when Moses was eighty years of age. This indicates that what was a promise to Abraham was to be a fulfillment to Moses and to

the children of Israel. Therefore, in chapter six God came to Moses and to the children of Israel, not as God All-sufficient, but as Jehovah.

In order for God to be the fulfilling God, He must be the existing God; that is, He must be the self-existing One. In a unique sense, the verb *to be* is applied only to Him. This verb is a basic component of the name Jehovah. In this universe He alone is the self-existing One. As the One who promised, He is El Shaddai; but as the One who fulfills what He has promised, He is Jehovah, the One who is. God's existence is not dependent on anything apart from Himself. He exists eternally, having neither beginning nor ending. As Jehovah, God simply is.

Approximately four thousand years ago, God made a promise to Abraham concerning the good land. God's promise has not yet been fulfilled to Abraham himself, because Abraham has not been resurrected. If God were not the self-existing One and the ever-existing One, the promise made thousands of years ago could not be fulfilled. However, because God is and always will be, He cannot fail to fulfill His promise. In this universe there is One who is, and this One is the fulfilling God. Whatever He says will come to pass. Jehovah will fulfill His word.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob experienced God as the supplying God and as the promising God. They knew Him by the name El Shaddai. But because they did not receive the fulfillment of the promise, they did not know Him by the name Jehovah, although, as we have pointed out, they did know this name. They died in faith without having received the fulfillment of what was promised. But in Exodus 6 God came in to fulfill His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For this reason, God said to Moses, "I am Jehovah" (6:2, Heb.). This means that God spoke to Moses and, through him, to the children of Israel as Jehovah, as the One who is.

For years I had difficulty understanding John 8. Three times in this chapter the Lord refers to Himself as "I am" (vv. 24, 28, 58). In verse 58 the Lord Jesus declared, "Truly,

truly, I say to you, before Abraham came into being, I am." As the great I Am, the Lord is the eternal, ever-existing God. Hence, He is before Abraham. Spiritually speaking, John 8 can be compared to Exodus 3, where the Lord reveals Himself to Moses as the I Am (v. 14).

We have pointed out that the name of Jesus means Jehovah the Savior. It does not mean El Shaddai the Savior. The One who came to be our Savior is the ever-existing One, the One who is. He came to fulfill all the promises made by God to His people. Therefore, Jesus came not to promise, but to fulfill. This means that He came not as El Shaddai, but as Jehovah.

In the same principle, God came to Moses as Jehovah, not as El Shaddai. It seems as if the Lord were saying, "Moses, your forefathers knew Me by the name El Shaddai. But now I want you to know Me and to experience Me by another name—by the name Jehovah, the name of the One who is. Whatever I have promised, I shall fulfill."

The Lord spoke this way to Moses because Moses had complained to Him about the result of his negotiation with Pharaoh. Moses had told Him that Pharaoh had done evil to the people. Furthermore, Moses said, "Neither hast thou delivered thy people at all" (5:23). Therefore, God told Moses that He was Jehovah. He desired that Moses and all the children of Israel know Him by this name and that they experience Him as the existing God and as the fulfilling God. As the Lord was encouraging Moses, it seems as if He were saying, "Moses, don't be troubled or discouraged. You need to realize that I am here not only as El Shaddai, but as Jehovah. It is time for you to experience Me as the I Am. As Jehovah, the ever-existing One, I shall fulfill My covenant." When God came to Moses, He came not as El Shaddai, but as Jehovah. He came not to promise, but to fulfill what had already been promised. Therefore, there was no need for Moses to be disappointed or discouraged. God had come into his situation as the existing and fulfilling One.

This should not merely be doctrine to us; it should become our experience in a practical way. In the Lord's recovery today we are not in the stage of promise; we are in the stage of fulfillment. The stage of fulfillment includes the fulfillment of the promises made both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. One New Testament promise is the Lord's word, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18). This word is being fulfilled among us today. This indicates that we are experiencing the Lord not only as El Shaddai, but also as Jehovah.

We must confess, however, that in our daily living we are short of the experience of the Lord as the great I Am. Although we enjoy singing the hymn about the riches of Christ (*Hymns* #542), day by day we may still be in poverty. How much do you experience God as Jehovah? It is rather easy to know Him by the name El Shaddai and to declare that He is rich, almighty, and all-sufficient. However, it is quite another thing to have the real experience of the I Am. If we would know God by the name Jehovah, we must have experience. Otherwise, we shall be like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who knew this name without having any experience of it.

More than forty years ago, the church was raised up in my home town. I was very busy with my job in a large corporation. Also, the church affairs required a great deal of my time. It was necessary for me to speak in the church meetings at least four times a week. The Lord's blessing was upon us, and the number of saints was increasing. I became more and more burdened to give up my job to serve the Lord full time. Over a period of months, I went to the Lord about this matter again and again, but I was not able to settle it. Because the Lord would not let me go, I could neither eat well nor sleep well. Eventually I reached the point where I could not go on until this issue was resolved. One night as I was dealing with the Lord, He reminded me that I had promised to serve Him full time. I told Him that I had made that promise before I had a wife and children. Now I was very concerned how I could

support my family if I were to leave my job to serve the Lord. Prior to that time, I had come to know God's promises concerning His provision. I knew that if we seek God's kingdom and His righteousness, whatever we need will be added to us. However, I did not know God as the fulfilling God. That night not only did the Lord unveil His word to me, but He also unveiled Himself as the One who fulfills His promises. Then the Lord gave me an ultimatum—either take Him or not take Him. As I rose up from my knees, I said with tears, "Lord, I take You." When I rose to my feet, I knew within that the matter had been settled. From that time until this present hour, the Lord has been real to me as the fulfilling God. I have experienced Him again and again as the I Am. Because He is the I Am, Jehovah never fails. He never ceases to exist; He is and He always will be. From my years of experience I can testify that God is. Hallelujah, we can know Him not only as the all-sufficient God, but also as the One who is!

Young people, my burden in this message is especially for you. I am grateful to the Lord for your faithfulness to His recovery. But I realize that there is a long journey ahead of you and that many trials and tests await you. I want to testify to you that the very God whom you are serving is not only El Shaddai, but also Jehovah. He is not only the sufficient One and the promising One, but also the existing One and the fulfilling One. Because He is the One who is, He will fulfill all that He has promised. I may not be able to keep my word because I may cease to be. But because Jehovah exists eternally and because He is the reality of the verb *to be,* He will fulfill whatever He has spoken. When you encounter tests, trials, and difficulties, you should say, "Lord, You are. My problems will end, but You, Lord, will be forever."

Pharaoh was much more powerful than the children of Israel. Nevertheless, after a little while, Pharaoh became nothing. He could withstand the Lord only for a short period of time. After Pharaoh had ceased to be, Jehovah still was.

In chapter six the Lord encouraged Moses by causing him to know Him as Jehovah. It seems as if the Lord were saying, "Moses, you need to know Me by the name Jehovah. You must know Me according to My being, according to My existence. Since I am the great I Am, what reason do you have to be discouraged?" Here the Lord was training Moses to experience Him and to know Him by the name Jehovah.

Do you experience the Lord only as El Shaddai, or do you also experience Him as Jehovah? When you have a need or are in difficulty, do not merely praise the Lord for His richness and sufficiency. You should also praise Him that He is the One who is. Do not simply thank Him that He is able and mighty, but declare boldly, "Lord, You are." When they are in need, many Christians pray to the Lord as the sufficient One. But have you ever heard of Christians praising the Lord for His eternal existence? The Lord is longing for some to proclaim, "Lord, You are!" We need to be those who praise the Lord in this way.

We should not simply thank the Lord for His richness, sufficiency, and ability. If we have received the revelation of the Lord as the I Am, we shall pray in a new way. When trouble comes, we shall go to the Lord and say, "Lord, here is a problem, but You are. You are the I Am, and I believe in You."

II. JEHOVAH GOD'S COVENANT

We proceed now to Jehovah God's covenant. In Genesis 12 God made a promise to Abraham. In Genesis 15 that promise became a covenant, and in Genesis 17 circumcision was enacted as a token of that covenant. Thus, what God gave Abraham eventually was not only a promise, but also a covenant with a token.

God's promise is His word (Rom. 9:9). Whenever God says that He will do a particular thing for us, that word is a promise. But when an oath is added to the promise, the promise becomes a covenant which assures God's word. Such a covenant is like a contract.

In 6:8 the Lord said to Moses, "I will bring you into the land, concerning the which I did lift up my hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am Jehovah" (Heb.). The promise the Lord gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was a covenant made by the lifting up of His hand. To lift up the hand in such a way was to make an oath, to swear. In Genesis 14 Abraham told the king of Sodom that he had lifted up his hand unto the most high God not to take anything from him (vv. 22-23). This means that Abraham had made an oath concerning that particular matter. In the Old Testament the hand was lifted up when a covenant was made. But in the New Testament the whole Person of the Lord Jesus was lifted up. In John 8:28 the Lord Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am." By the lifting up of the Lord Jesus, God made a great oath that caused His promises to become the new covenant. In the four Gospels the Lord made many promises. When He was lifted up on the cross, these promises became the new covenant. Now the whole New Testament is a covenant, a contract signed and endorsed by the uplifted Christ.

The Lord was uplifted not only to the cross but, ultimately, to the throne of God in the third heaven. The Lord is now sitting on the throne as the symbol of the greatest oath in the universe. This oath was made by two steps: by the Lord being uplifted first to the cross and then to the throne. Hallelujah, this One whose whole being has been uplifted is now on the throne! Therefore, what we have in our hand today is not a promise, but a covenant.

In speaking to Moses about the covenant, God seems to have said, "Moses, don't you realize that I have made a covenant with your forefathers? I have lifted up My hand to bring My people into the good land. Do you think that Pharaoh can stop Me from bringing My people into the promised land? Moses, don't be discouraged. I am, but Pharaoh is not. I am Jehovah to fulfill My covenant. I shall bring My people into the good land and give it to them for a heritage. Moses,

be encouraged with My covenant and with My present-day name."

Today we also have the Lord's name and His covenant. What we are doing in the Lord's recovery is not according to our imagination. It is according to God's covenant. In the past we have told the Lord that what we are practicing is according to His word. From now on we need to tell Him that what we are doing is according to His covenant, the very covenant which He has sworn to fulfill. In fighting the battle for the Lord's interests, not only do we stand with God's pure Word, but we also stand with His covenant. This covenant was endorsed when the Lord Jesus was uplifted to the cross and to the throne.

Some say that it is impossible to practice the church life today. They also claim that it is impossible for the Lord to have His recovery. They do not seem to realize that the Lord's recovery is promised in His covenant. I wish to emphasize the fact that the recovery is not according to our thought, foresight, or imagination. It is not even according to our vision. The Lord's recovery is wholly according to His covenant. In this covenant the Lord Jesus has said, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18). Throughout the years, the enemy has tried to destroy the recovery. But because the recovery is according to God's covenant, it cannot be destroyed.

We admit that the way of the Lord's recovery is not easy. It was the same with the children of Israel in the book of Exodus. Before they were released from bondage, there were many conflicts between God and Pharaoh. Pharaoh was not easily dealt with. In the same principle, today's Pharaoh—Satan and the Satan-possessed and usurped self—is not easily dealt with either. Sometimes we may be discouraged, just as Moses and the children of Israel were. At such times we need to remember Jehovah and His covenant.

How strange it was that God did not annihilate Pharaoh with one blow! Instead, He purposely engaged in conflict with him. He even deliberately caused Pharaoh's heart to be

hardened. If I had been Moses, I would have said, "Lord, since You are hardening Pharaoh's heart, why do You send me to him?" By dealing with Pharaoh in this way, the Lord was training Moses and the children of Israel to know Him by the name Jehovah and to know His covenant. No matter how intense the conflict was to become, eventually Jehovah would fulfill His covenant.

Do not be troubled by any opposition to the Lord's recovery, and do not be discouraged when religion rises up against us. Today's Pharaoh may struggle, resist, and cause delay, but ultimately he cannot prevail against the Lord and His recovery, for we have the Lord's name and His covenant.

We are not engaged in an ordinary Christian work. The goal of the Lord's recovery is to build up the church according to God's name and His covenant. Remember, the Lord has been uplifted to the cross and to the throne. He is now on the throne as the sure sign that His covenant has been endorsed. As Jehovah the Savior, the great I Am, He will fulfill His covenant and bring us into the good land.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIFTEEN

GOD'S FURTHER TRAINING OF MOSES

In this message we shall consider God's further training of Moses (6:1—7:7). After the first conflict with Pharaoh, Moses felt that he had failed. God had sent him to speak His word to Pharaoh. However, instead of hearkening to this word, Pharaoh became even more evil in his treatment of the children of Israel, and the people complained to Moses. Moses, feeling defeated, complained to the Lord, saying, "Wherefore hast thou so badly treated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all" (5:22-23, Heb.). Moses' reaction indicated that he needed further training. God would not send him to Pharaoh again until he had received more training from Him.

We have pointed out that God's calling of Moses in chapters three and four of this book is the most complete call in the Bible. At the time He called Moses, God spent much time with him, and Moses received both revelation and instruction. He took God's word and did all that God had charged him to do. However, things did not turn out as Moses expected. To his surprise, he was defeated, Pharaoh was victorious, and the children of Israel suffered all the more. This was the reason he complained to the Lord about the situation.

In His further training of Moses, the Lord sought to impress him with His name and His covenant. He reminded Moses that He is Jehovah, the One who was, who is, and who will be. He also reminded him of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob regarding the good land. He told Moses that He had lifted up His hand to give the land to

their seed. In speaking to Moses about these two matters, God was training him to know His person and His faithful word in His covenant.

In addition to speaking to Moses regarding His name and His covenant, the Lord gave Moses further training concerning six other matters. The first of these matters was God's word of assurance. We must pay attention to God's word of assurance, the word that He speaks to us again and again. If we would follow the Lord today to carry on His testimony in His recovery, we must learn to regard God's repeated word of assurance. But not many servants of God recognize such a word when it comes.

The second matter was the unbelief of the children of Israel. According to our natural concept, those to whom we are sent should be like the household of Cornelius, properly prepared and ready to receive our word. We think that if God sends us to speak to people in a certain place, their hearts will be open to receive whatever we may say. Nevertheless, due to their unbelief, the children of Israel did not hearken to Moses. Instead of being encouraged by the children of Israel, he was distracted, discouraged, and disappointed by them.

There is a lesson for us here. If we are appointed by God to lead certain people, we should not expect them to be positive toward us. Suppose God establishes you as an elder in a particular church. Do not think that those in that church will be positive toward you or will believe everything you say. On the contrary, be prepared to face the unbelief of those to whom you are sent.

Thirdly, Moses had to be trained in relation to Pharaoh's stubbornness. Pharaoh was not easily subdued. If we had been Moses in that situation and had had to confront the stubbornness of Pharaoh, we would no doubt have been very discouraged.

In the fourth place, Moses had to be trained regarding his natural concept. This is seen in his cleaving to his uncircumcised lips and neglecting God's assured word. In 6:12 Moses asked the Lord, "Behold, the children of Israel have not

hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?" This question caused the Lord to give Moses a lengthy word of assurance. But, even after that word was given, Moses still said, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?" (v. 30). This indicates that Moses was cleaving to his natural faculty and neglecting God's word of assurance. We have seen that neither the children of Israel nor Pharaoh hearkened to the Lord. Here we see that not even Moses hearkened to Him.

In His further training of Moses, God also spoke to him strongly concerning His ordination of him. Moses had been chosen by God and commissioned by Him to be His representative.

Finally, God trained Moses concerning His strong hand and His great judgments (7:4). Thus, the last item of God's training is God's hand, which backs His name, His covenant, and His word of assurance. It is this strong hand that defeats Pharaoh and the Egyptians and that convinces everyone, including the children of Israel, that God is Jehovah.

On the positive side, God's further training of Moses covered five things: God's name, God's covenant, God's word of assurance, God's ordination, and God's strong hand. On the negative side, this training covered three matters: the unbelief of the children of Israel, the stubbornness of Pharaoh, and Moses' natural concept. As sent ones, we all must know these five positive things and three negative things. We need to learn that God's chosen people are full of unbelief, that the enemy is stubborn, and that we are natural. Nevertheless, we have God's name, God's covenant, God's word of assurance, God's ordination, and God's strong hand.

After the further training given to Moses in chapters six and seven, Moses did not receive any additional training. It seems that Moses had graduated from God's training at the end of chapter four. However, he did not have any experience. Due to this lack of experience, he had to undergo

further training. In chapter seven Moses truly graduated from God's training school. In order that we all may learn from the further training given to Moses, let us now consider one by one six aspects of this training covered in 6:1—7:7.

I. GOD'S WORD OF ASSURANCE

In the last message we covered two of the positive aspects of God's further training: God's name and God's covenant. Hence, in this message we begin with God's word of assurance.

A. To Deliver the Children of Israel out of the Egyptian Bondage

God assured Moses that the children of Israel would be delivered out of the Egyptian bondage (6:1, 6-7; 7:5). This was a word of assurance, which is different from a word of promise. As God was assuring Moses, it seems He was saying, "Moses, forget the people's unbelief, forget Pharaoh, and forget the condition of your lips. But be impressed with My word of assurance. I am Jehovah, and I remember the covenant which I have established. According to My covenant, I will surely deliver the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. Moses, believe this word of assurance and care for it. I assure you My chosen people will be delivered."

B. To Take the Children of Israel to Him for a People

In 6:7 the Lord said, "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God." Here God assured Moses that He would take the children of Israel to Him for a people and that He would be a God to them. The Lord did not want Moses to tell Him how bad the people were or how they refused to hearken to his word. Instead, He wanted Moses to believe and to declare that the children of Israel were the best people on earth. The Lord loved them; they were His special treasure.

If we had been Moses, we probably would have argued with the Lord about His people. We might have said, "Lord, don't take them to You for a people. I can testify from my experience that they are not good at all. Probably I am the only one who is obedient to You." No matter how the people seemed in the eyes of Moses, God was assuring Moses that they were His chosen people. In His eyes, they were excellent.

C. To Make Them Know That He Is Jehovah, Their God

In verse 7 the Lord also said, "And ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Heb.). The Lord would do whatever was necessary to cause the children of Israel to know that He was Jehovah, their God. To assure Moses of this, He repeated again and again the words, "I am Jehovah."

D. To Make the Children of Israel His Armies

Furthermore, the Lord assured Moses that He would make the children of Israel His armies (6:26; 7:4). This means that He would use them to fight the battle for Him. What a word of assurance this was!

E. To Bring the Children of Israel into the Promised Land

Finally, in 6:8 the Lord said, "I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did lift up my hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for a possession: I am Jehovah" (Heb.). The Lord did not want to hear any complaint concerning His chosen people. He would take them to Him for a people. He would make them His armies, and He would bring them into the good land as He had promised. This was God's word of assurance to Moses.

Naturally speaking, what Moses said to the Lord regarding the children of Israel and regarding Pharaoh was true. But God did not believe the situation. Instead, He believed in Himself, in His covenant, and in His word of assurance. He also believed in what His mighty hand was able to accomplish. Eventually, God did make the children of Israel His armies. Look at what happened at the conquest of Jericho. As the children of Israel were marching around that city, the angels in heaven must have been rejoicing to see the army God had gained for the defeat of His enemy. Because God believed in what He was able to do, He paid no attention to the outward situation concerning the unbelief of His people and the stubbornness of Pharaoh.

The Lord's word of assurance to Moses should be an encouragement to us in the Lord's recovery. Some say that it is impossible to have the recovery of the church life today. However, if the recovery of the church life is not possible, then the Lord Jesus has no way to come back. For the sake of His coming back, He needs the church to be built up. Only the church built up according to the Lord's desire can be the stepping stone into the age of the kingdom. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord said, "I will build My church." Therefore, we believe that it is altogether possible to have the recovery of the proper church life today. We have the Lord's promise and His word of assurance.

We need to be reminded that the Lord's recovery did not originate with us. What we are doing in the recovery today is not according to our plan; it is according to the Lord's covenant and His word of assurance. The Lord Jesus said that He would build His church. This is taking place today, not according to our plan, but according to the Lord's word. Do not believe the environment or the circumstances—believe God's word of assurance. If you are sent by the Lord to a particular place for the church life, do not believe the negative things in the environment. Instead, hearken to the Lord and pay attention to His word of assurance. We all need training in these matters.

II. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF

Moses was also trained in relation to the children of Israel's unbelief (6:9, 12). When I studied the history of Israel many years ago, I did not have much appreciation of the children of Israel. I told myself that I would never be like them. However, after being with the Lord's people for more than forty-five years, I now have a high regard for the children of Israel. In some respects, I think that they are much better than the church people today. Elders in the churches may actually prefer the children of Israel to the saints in the church in their locality. It seems that wherever we are, the people are more difficult than those in other places. Nevertheless, no matter what the environment may be, we should not believe it. Environment fluctuates, but God's word is unchanging.

On the one hand, the environment is altogether a lie because it will change; it is only temporary. On the other hand, because everything in our environment speaks something to us for God, the unbelief of the children of Israel should have spoken something to Moses. Through the unbelief and through the stubbornness of Pharaoh, Moses should have had his own shortage fully exposed, and he should have gone to God to trust Him more. Instead, Moses went to God with a complaining spirit. Without the unbelief and stubbornness, Moses would have thought that everything was fine. Actually, Moses had some problem inwardly that needed to be exposed, and he needed some further training.

III. PHARAOH'S STUBBORNNESS

Now we come to Pharaoh's stubbornness. We have pointed out that Pharaoh signifies Satan. Satan is always stubborn; he never changes, except to become more stubborn. Therefore, we need to learn not to be distracted by the stubbornness of the enemy.

IV. MOSES' NATURAL CONCEPT

A. Cleaving to His Uncircumcised Lips

Twice in chapter six Moses told the Lord that he was of uncircumcised lips (vv. 12, 30). At first, I thought he was simply making a confession like that made by Isaiah (Isa. 6:5). But after more consideration, I have arrived at a different understanding of this matter. In 4:10 Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou has spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." This was Moses' response to God's original call. Nevertheless, the Lord insisted on sending Moses to Pharaoh. Because the Lord insisted on sending him to Pharaoh, Moses may have believed that his tongue would become a powerful instrument and that whatever he said to Pharaoh would be filled with authority. He may have thought that his speech would become so powerful that everyone, including Pharaoh, would obey his word. The result of the first conflict with Pharaoh was altogether different. Pharaoh did not listen to him, and the children of Israel did not hearken to him. Therefore, Moses complained to the Lord, but the Lord told him, "Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land" (6:11). It was at this point that Moses remarked to the Lord, "Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?" (6:12). This word implies a complaint. Moses was complaining that the Lord had done nothing to make his mouth powerful. He was unhappy that his lips were still the same.

Those who are called by the Lord today may pray and expect that He will endue their speaking with miraculous power. But we eventually discover that our lips remain the same. Our lips are still uncircumcised; that is, they are still natural.

In telling the Lord that he was of uncircumcised lips, Moses was saying, "Lord, You tell me to go and speak

to Pharaoh. I have done this already, but it didn't work. Neither Pharaoh nor the children of Israel would listen to me. I thought that my lips would be changed, but I have found that they are still uncircumcised. You haven't done anything to change my lips. Unless You do this, I will not speak to Pharaoh again. By my natural lips I can't do anything. No one listens to me. Lord, You must make my lips powerful. Only then will I be able to speak in a way that people will listen to me."

No doubt Moses expected God to use his lips to speak a mighty word to Pharaoh in a miraculous way. Instead, the word out of Moses' mouth was common, not at all extraordinary. But what eventually comes out of such a common speaking is the Lord's doing, not man's. The outcome depends on the fact that we are sent by the Lord and commissioned by Him and that we represent Him—not on our effort, our skill, or how good a job we do. The earthen vessel is still earthen, but it contains a treasure. The thorn-bush is still a thorn-bush, but the holy fire is burning upon it. The thorn-bush should not expect to be changed, nor should it expect the glory to come to it. The glory must always go to God.

Suppose you are sent by the Lord to a certain place. You may pray and exercise yourself to believe that the Lord will make your lips powerful. However, when you speak, you find that your lips are not changed. If anything, your speaking is worse than ever. I have experienced this many times. After giving a message I went to the Lord and said, "Lord, I prayed that You would give me utterance, but You didn't help me at all. Lord, don't You realize how poor my speaking was? I want to give up speaking for You. I am still of uncircumcised lips."

To have this attitude indicates that we depend on what we are and on what we can do, not on what the Lord is and on what He can do. The Lord does not intend to change our lips. On the contrary, He will let them remain the same. Although the Lord told Moses that He had made him God to

Pharaoh (7:1), He would not do anything about the condition of Moses' lips. In fact, there was no need for Moses to speak to Pharaoh at all, for Aaron would be his prophet.

The first time Moses met with Pharaoh, he did not speak in a miraculous way, but in an ordinary way. He also spoke to the children of Israel in an ordinary way. Because nothing happened, he complained to the Lord. God then gave him further training and charged him to go to Pharaoh again. But Moses did not want to do so unless the Lord did something miraculous to his lips. God's answer implies that He would not do anything to change Moses' lips. Instead, He would make Moses God to Pharaoh and provide Aaron to be Moses' prophet. It seems as if the Lord were saying, "Moses, I will not do things according to your way. Rather, you must follow what I say. Whether you feel your lips are circumcised or uncircumcised does not make any difference. Actually, there is no need for you to speak to Pharaoh, because Aaron will be your spokesman. Moses, forget about your lips."

There is a very important lesson for us here. We want God to miraculously change our lips. But God does not intend to do this. Success in carrying out God's calling does not depend on our wisdom or on our proposals. God always has His own way of doing things. Moses thought that everything depended upon the condition of his lips. But God's way was to leave Moses' lips the same and to provide Aaron to be Moses' prophet. In the church life today we need to drop our proposals and our concepts and say, "Lord, what I say means nothing, but what You say means everything. Lord, I am willing to forget myself and to no longer cleave to my natural being." Let us forget our uncircumcised lips; that is, let us forget about what we are by nature.

B. Neglecting God's Assuring Word

Because Moses was cleaving to his natural condition, he neglected God's word of assurance. Although God had spoken marvelous words of assurance, Moses did not pay

attention to them due to his natural concept. We are the same today. Because we cling to our natural insistence, natural tendency, and natural understanding, we may read the Bible without receiving any light. Holding to our natural concept is a hindrance to enlightenment through the Word. We need to learn, as Moses did, that God does not do things according to our natural concept or insistence. Moses was strictly dealt with by God in this matter, and we need the same kind of dealing today.

V. GOD'S ORDINATION

A. Chosen by God

In 6:26-29 we see God's ordination. This ordination is related to the genealogy in 6:16-25. For a long time, I could not understand why this genealogy is included here. Although Israel had twelve sons, this genealogy mentions only Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, the first three. This indicates that there is no intention in the record here of giving us a full genealogy. Rather, its purpose is to show the ones from Jacob to Moses who were chosen by God. These chosen ones include Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Moses. Therefore, this is actually a record, not of genealogy, but of God's selection, of God's choosing. Amram, one of the chosen ones, was the father of Moses and Aaron. Verse 26 says, "These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom Jehovah said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies" (Heb.). This proves that Moses and Aaron were not presumptuous but that they had been chosen by God. They had been selected and ordained by God long before they were born. This should have given Moses the assurance and the confidence that whatever God told him to do would be accomplished.

We need the same assurance today. If we are engaging in a work that has not been initiated by God, we should stop whatever we are doing. The Lord's recovery has been ordained by God; it has not been initiated by us. In the Lord's recovery there is no place for presumption. As we

carry on the testimony of the Lord's recovery, we should never be presumptuous. Rather, we should simply do what God has chosen and ordained us to do.

B. Commissioned by God

Verses 28 and 29 reveal that Moses was commissioned by God: "And it came to pass on the day when Jehovah spake unto Moses in the land of Egypt, that Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, I am Jehovah: speak thou unto Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say unto thee" (Heb.). Verse 27 also indicates that Moses and Aaron had been commissioned by God to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt: "These are they which spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt: these are that Moses and Aaron."

Just as Moses and Aaron were commissioned, we in the Lord's recovery have also been commissioned. I have the full assurance that we are a commissioned people. God has entrusted to us the commission of carrying out His recovery today.

C. Representing God

Moses also represented God (7:1). Whenever we are commissioned by someone, we also represent that one. Because Moses was commissioned by God, he also represented God. In the same principle, because we in the Lord's recovery have been commissioned by God, we represent Him.

Be very careful how you touch those who represent God. It is possible to touch the Lord's recovery in a way that is not profitable. I can testify from years of experience that no one who has touched the church in the Lord's recovery in a negative way has gone on to receive blessing. Because those who have received God's commission are His representatives, it is a serious matter to touch them in an improper way. Of those who contacted the church and later became negative, I do not know one whose spiritual condition has remained the same. Without exception, there has been the loss of

spiritual blessing. In every case there has been spiritual decline. This indicates that it is a serious matter to become involved in a negative way with those who have been commissioned by God and who therefore represent Him.

D. Represented by Aaron

On the one hand, Moses represented God; on the other hand, Moses was represented by Aaron (7:1-2). Representation is different from presentation. The difference is that representation involves authority, whereas presentation does not. With God's commission there is always the matter of authority. This authority is related both to representing God and to being represented by others.

None of us should assume authority. We should simply let authority be present with the Lord's ordination and commission. If we would be today's sent ones, we must be certain that we have been chosen, ordained, and commissioned. Then we shall know that we are God's representatives.

VI. GOD'S STRONG HAND OF GREAT JUDGMENT

The last point in God's further training of Moses concerns God's strong hand of great judgment. In 7:4 the Lord said to Moses, "But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments." In 6:1 the Lord had already told Moses that he would see what the Lord would do to Pharaoh: "For by a strong hand shall he let them go, and by a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land" (Heb.).

Without a strong hand, talk is vain. This is seen in diplomatic negotiations between nations today. Such negotiations depend upon the backing of military power. In his negotiations with Pharaoh, Moses' word was to be backed by the strong hand and mighty judgments of the Lord. The Lord's strong hand would be proof to Pharaoh that God was not speaking vain words. By the Lord's hand, the Egyptians

would know that He is Jehovah. As 7:5 says, "And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt" (Heb.).

Because Moses had complained to the Lord, it was necessary for the Lord to speak to Moses concerning His hand. It seems as if the Lord were saying, "Moses, I have not only a mouth, but also a strong hand. Go and speak to Pharaoh. I will harden him so that My hand may be manifested. Speak My word to Pharaoh. My hand will back up My word. I shall stretch forth My hand to perform whatever you say to Pharaoh on My behalf." Thus, the Lord's hand was a strong confirmation that Moses had been sent by God.

Throughout the years, we have seen the Lord's hand back up His word. When there was opposition to God's word, eventually His hand was manifested. God never speaks in vain. His word is always backed up by His strong hand.

Pharaoh could resist the Lord's word, but he could not resist the Lord's hand. In the following messages, we shall see that the conflicts between God and Pharaoh became more and more intense until they reached the point that Pharaoh drove the children of Israel away. Because the Lord's strong hand of great judgment backed up His word, Pharaoh was eventually compelled to drive the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. May we all learn the lesson concerning God's hand and all the lessons in God's further training of Moses.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIXTEEN

GOD'S DEMAND AND PHARAOH'S RESISTANCE

(2)

The book of Exodus is a book of pictures, not a book of philosophy. The pictures in the first part of Exodus present a portrait of life in the world under Satan's usurpation. By means of these pictures the nature of such a life is exposed. The pictures in this book also unveil the desire of God's heart with respect to His chosen people. God said to Pharaoh, "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness" (5:1). God's people had fallen into a worldly life under Satan's usurpation. As the book of Exodus reveals, God delivered them from this and brought them into the wilderness and to the mountain, where they received a heavenly vision of the pattern of God's dwelling place on earth. God wanted the tabernacle to be His dwelling place. This was the desire of His heart.

In order to expose the real situation of life in the world under Pharaoh's usurpation, the book of Exodus describes twelve conflicts between Jehovah and Pharaoh. In the first conflict there were no miracles, plagues, or judgments. Instead, there was simply the negotiation between Jehovah and Pharaoh. God demanded that Pharaoh let His people go into the wilderness a three days' journey to hold a feast unto Him. But Pharaoh refused to acknowledge Jehovah or to hearken to His demand.

In the second conflict there was a miracle, but no plague; there was exposure, but no judgment. In 7:9 the Lord said, "When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy

rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent." The purpose of this miracle was to expose the actual situation of life in the world. For this reason, the second conflict involved exposure, but not judgment.

After the first two conflicts, the plagues began to come upon Pharaoh and his people. In Exodus there are two groups of ten items: the ten plagues that came upon the Egyptians and the Ten Commandments that were given to God's people. The ten plagues can be grouped into four categories. The first group includes the plagues of blood, frogs, and lice; the second group, the plagues of flies, murrain, and boils; the third group, the plagues of hail, locusts, and darkness; and finally, the plague of the killing of the firstborn. Each plague was more severe than the one before. The plagues in the first group were troublesome, but they were not injurious. The plagues in the second group caused harm both to beasts and to men. The plagues in the third group destroyed the environment, and the last plague terminated the worldly life. In the last plague, all the firstborn in the land of Egypt died, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the maidservants (11:5).

In Revelation 16 we see the seven ultimate plagues that God will send upon the earth, plagues that will come toward the end of the great tribulation. These seven plagues will be "the seven bowls of the fury of God" (Rev. 16:1). In many respects, the seven plagues in Revelation are similar to the ten plagues in Exodus. By means of the ten plagues God was able to accomplish the exodus of His chosen people from Egypt. During the great tribulation, the seven plagues will enable God's people to make their final exodus from the world. At the end of this age, most of God's people will still be in Egypt, that is, in the world. In their time, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had no need of an exodus. In like manner, the overcomers at the end time will have no need of an exodus. Therefore, they will be raptured before the tribulation. The majority of Christians, however, will need an exodus. By the seven last plagues, God will bring His people out of the world.

II. THE SECOND CONFLICT

A. On God's Side

Let us now consider the second conflict between Jehovah and Pharaoh (7:8-14). Exodus 7:10 says, "And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as Jehovah had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent" (Heb.). I doubt that Pharaoh and his servants realized that the significance of this miracle was to expose the fact that their life was a life under Satan's usurping hand, that their living in Egypt was under the Devil's usurpation and possession. Pharaoh and his people relied on the natural resources of Egypt, especially on the rich supply of the Nile. This supply was their "rod," a rod which was actually a serpent, the Devil. In God's eyes Pharaoh and the Egyptians were relying on Satan and were living under Satan's usurping hand.

This exposure was not a punishment, but an expression of God's mercy. In His mercy God exposed the true nature of Egyptian living. He wanted the Egyptians to know that everything they relied on was of the Devil. God's intention in this exposure was to cause them to forsake that kind of living. The principle is the same today. When God comes to us, He does not firstly punish the self, the flesh, or the old man. In His mercy He firstly exposes the satanic nature of our fallen life.

B. On Pharaoh's Side

Pharaoh called upon the magicians to do the same thing with their rods as Aaron had done with his (7:11). Verse 12 says, "For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." Years ago, I wondered why the Egyptian magicians were able to do the same thing Aaron had done. I asked the Lord concerning this and told Him that I did not see how such a thing could happen. We may encounter a similar situation in

the preaching of the gospel. We may compare the philosophers of the world today to those magicians. These philosophers may teach things similar to what we preach in the gospel. We may expose the nature of the fallen human life, and they may do the same. We may speak about the preoccupations of life in the world, and they may do this also. Nevertheless, just as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the Egyptian magicians, so the preaching of the gospel swallows up today's philosophical teachings.

We experienced this many times in our gospel preaching in China, where there were many "magicians," or philosophical teachers. Certain teachings of these philosophers were nearly the same as some of the teachings in the Bible. For example, the Bible teaches that we should not love the world. Some Chinese philosophers taught the same thing. However, in our preaching of the gospel Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the "magicians." Philosophers from colleges and universities sometimes attended our gospel meetings. Instead of being threatened by their presence, we called on the Lord and asked Him to deal with these people. He showed forth His wisdom, and we saw the gospel swallow up the teaching of the philosophers.

The gospel swallows up all the philosophies of the world. Do not be threatened or discouraged in your preaching of the gospel. Rather, believe that your rod will swallow up the philosophical rods. Nothing can overcome the gospel. Although the gospel is not philosophy, nothing is more philosophical than the gospel. For this reason the gospel is able to swallow up the rods of the world's philosophers.

C. The Issue

In verses 13 and 14 we see the issue of the second conflict. Verse 13 says, "And Pharaoh's heart was hard, that he hearkened not unto them" (Heb.). Most versions of the Bible say that Pharaoh's heart was hardened. This, however, is not the meaning here. Such a rendering implies that Pharaoh's heart may have been soft but that it became hard. But

Pharaoh's heart was hard from the very beginning. Darby says that the Hebrew word for hard in this verse means stubborn. Because Pharaoh's heart was stubborn, it could not be changed. The second conflict exposed the hardness of Pharaoh's heart.

A further issue of this conflict was Pharaoh's refusal to let the children of Israel go (v. 14). The first time God came in, Pharaoh refused to hearken to His word. This time Pharaoh refused to hearken to God's demand, even after God had exposed the nature of life in the world under Satan. This forced God to deal with Pharaoh more severely in the third conflict.

III. THE THIRD CONFLICT

A. The Time and the Place

This conflict took place in the morning by the brink of the river Nile (7:15). Two other conflicts also took place early in the morning (8:20; 9:13). Pharaoh may have gone down to the river to relax and to enjoy a time of pleasantness and ease. But his relaxation was disturbed by the presence of Moses and Aaron. God had charged them to confront Pharaoh again with His demand. God's intention was to let Pharaoh know that this was no time to relax. Rather, it was time for the nature of life in Egypt to be exposed. Pharaoh had to see that life in Egypt was not a life of rest and enjoyment, but a life of blood. There are times today also that we need to go to the place where the worldly people have their pleasure to expose to them the fact that all their worldly entertainments and pleasures issue in death.

B. On God's Side

1. Demanding That Pharaoh Let His People Go

Moses and Aaron repeated the same demand they had made before: "Let my people go, that they may serve me in

the wilderness" (7:16). This time God's demand was backed up by the first plague.

2. Making Pharaoh to Know That He Is Jehovah

On behalf of Jehovah, Moses and Aaron were to say to Pharaoh, "In this thou shalt know that I am Jehovah: Behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood" (7:17, Heb.). Because God is Jehovah, whatever He says comes to pass. Jehovah had said, "Let My people go." Although Pharaoh may resist this word, he will eventually be subdued and know that God is Jehovah.

3. Smiting the Waters

According to verse 19, Aaron was to take the rod and stretch out his hand "upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt." Aaron did so, and throughout the whole land of Egypt the water was turned into blood, even the water in vessels of wood and of stone. Because the waters of the Nile were turned to blood, the fish in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river (v. 21). The Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink. It may have been that the water became blood as soon as they found it.

The first plague gives a thorough indication that the life of Egypt, that is, the life of the world, issues in nothing but death. It does not matter where the water of the world is, in a river, pond, or vessel, the issue is death. This plague was the beginning of the punishment and destruction of Egyptian life. In this way God began to destroy the life of worldly enjoyment. If we realize the significance of this plague, we shall know that under the wrath of God's judgment the life of the world issues in death.

Many of us have experienced this. While we were indulging in some form of worldly pleasure, the water suddenly

became blood. This was both a punishment and an exposure. Through that exposure we saw that worldly entertainments and amusements are not the real pleasures, but are pleasures that issue in death. In the eyes of God, the waters of Egypt are not waters at all; they are blood. By causing the water of the world to turn into blood, God exposes the true nature of worldly pleasure. He unveils the fact that the people in the world are drinking blood. According to Revelation 16, near the end of the great tribulation God will once again change the water of the world into blood. This blood represents death, the issue of a life of sin.

We have pointed out that the first plague, which lasted seven days (7:25), exposed Egyptian life. If the Egyptians had repented, this exposure would not have been a punishment to them. But because they did not repent, it became a form of punishment. The principle is the same in the preaching of the gospel today. If sinners receive the word of the gospel, this word will simply expose them. But if they will not receive it, it will be to them a word of judgment. The Lord Jesus Himself indicated that those who do not receive His word will be judged by the very word they reject (John 12:48).

The first plague reveals that God is merciful and wise. In this plague He did not kill the Egyptians. He simply turned the water into blood in order to warn them and expose them. He did nothing here to hurt them directly. If Pharaoh had accepted this exposure, it would have been a mercy to him. But because he rejected it, it became judgment instead. God is not unkind in His dealings with people. On the contrary, He is wise and very merciful. Therefore, in the punishment of the first plague there was a merciful warning.

4. To Make the Egyptians Know That Their Worldly Supply and Enjoyment Issue in Death

The purpose of the first plague was to make the Egyptians know that their worldly supply and enjoyment issued

in death. The death signified by the blood unveiled the nature and significance of life in the world.

C. On Pharaoh's Side

Once again, the magicians of Egypt were able to do the same thing with their enchantments as Moses and Aaron had done with the rod. However, although they could bring the blood in, they were not able to get rid of it. Today the philosophers of the world can expose that life in the world is actually death, but they do not have the means to take away the death. Only the gospel can do this.

D. The Issue

The issue of the third conflict was that for the second time the hardness of Pharaoh's heart was exposed. Once again he did not hearken to Moses and Aaron. Verse 23 says, "And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also." Because Pharaoh was stubborn, he had no heart for God's demand. This made it necessary for the second plague to come upon the Egyptians.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVENTEEN

GOD'S DEMAND AND PHARAOH'S RESISTANCE

(3)

The book of Exodus reveals that God desires to rescue His people from everything other than Himself, that He wants to deliver them from everything that is not God. After the exodus from Egypt, God's people saw a heavenly vision by which they came to know God Himself and, in addition, to know the kind of living that is in accordance with God. Then they could be built up as God's dwelling place on earth. This is the basic concept of the book of Exodus.

God longs to rescue His chosen people from every form of usurpation and preoccupation so that they may have nothing besides God Himself. After the children of Israel had been delivered from Egypt and had passed through the Red Sea, they came to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. At one time, God's people were in Egypt, living an Egyptian life and performing Egyptian labor under the tyranny of Pharaoh. Although many of them may have had no thought of God, they were nevertheless God's chosen people, for they had been predestinated by God to be separated unto Him. The first chapters of Exodus reveal that God's people had been usurped by Satan and were held in bondage under Satan's hand. At that time, everything related to them was Egyptian. There was nothing about them that was for God. Therefore, God came in to deliver them, to separate them, to release them from Satan's usurpation and Egypt's preoccupation, and to bring them to the mountain of God, where there was nothing at all Egyptian. There at the mountain of God the people God had chosen could be alone with Him.

When the children of Israel came to Mount Horeb, God was their center, their purpose, their business, and their very life. He was even their home. God was everything to them. In the wilderness, especially at the mountain of God, Mount Horeb, the children of Israel had nothing but God. Many Christians today talk about being saved. But very few realize that to be saved is to be brought to a place where there is nothing but God.

More than any other book in the Bible, the book of Exodus exposes the world. Although the New Testament speaks a great deal about the world, even telling us that the whole world lies in the evil one (1 John 5:19), it does not present a clear picture of what the world is. For this, we must come to the book of Exodus, which is a book of pictures. If we read chapters five through twelve in a proper way, we shall see a series of vivid pictures portraying the nature and meaning of the life of the world.

God wants His people to see the world for what it is. If the element of the world remains in us, we shall be damaged in relation to the fulfilling of God's purpose. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they remembered the enjoyment they had in Egypt. They recalled the taste of the leeks, the onions, and the garlic (Num. 11:5). Due to this remembrance they had a problem with God's dwelling place. The same is true of Christians today. Because many Christians are still in Egypt, they can have nothing to do with God's dwelling place. Even those who have been separated from Egypt may still remember the pleasure of Egypt. Hence, we all need to see a clear picture of the life and living in Egypt.

Not only were the ten plagues a warning and a punishment to the Egyptians, but they were also a revelation, an unveiling, to God's people. By means of these plagues, the children of Israel must have come to see the actual situation of Egyptian living. As a result of these plagues, they must have come to loathe their living in Egypt. God wanted the life in Egypt to be exposed so that His people would hate it

and want to flee from it. Therefore, God's purpose in sending the ten plagues was not only to warn the Egyptians and to punish them. It was also to show His own people what the world was.

The world also needs to be unveiled to God's people today. God wants His people to be His dwelling place on earth. However, this desire can be fulfilled only if we have been delivered from the world and have nothing besides God Himself. In these days we have been emphasizing the need for the building up of the churches. But if we want to see the churches built up in a practical way, we must come fully out of the world.

On the negative side, the book of Exodus unveils the world. On the positive side, it reveals God's dwelling place. Firstly, the true nature, meaning, and issue of life in Egypt are exposed to God's people. God's intention in giving this revelation is to cause His people to become disgusted with Egypt, to leave Egypt behind, and to be separated to God for His dwelling place. The principle is the same today. If we have not been separated from the world, we cannot become God's dwelling place. For the building up of His dwelling place, we must see the world as it really is. Furthermore, we must loathe the world's way of living and be willing to forsake it.

If we see God's purpose as it is disclosed in the book of Exodus, it will be easier for us to understand the significance of the plagues. God's intention in sending the plagues was not only to punish the Egyptians; it was also to expose the Egyptian living. Like the Egyptians in the book of Exodus, the people in the world today have no understanding of the actual situation of life in the world. The worldly people have all been drugged. Under the influence of Satan's drugging, they are happy with their life in the world. They have no realization of what it is to live without God in the world. In their experience, the water of the world needs to be turned into blood. Then they will know the nature of life in the world and the result of living in the world. The nature of life in the world is death, and the result of living in the world is also death.

IV. THE FOURTH CONFLICT

A. On God's Side

In the fourth conflict with Pharaoh, the Lord smote all the borders of Egypt with frogs (8:2). Frogs came up from the waters of the rivers, the streams, and the ponds. By coming upon Pharaoh, all his servants, and all the Egyptians, the frogs destroyed the enjoyment of the comfortable Egyptian living. How troublesome these frogs were! By sending the plague of the frogs upon the Egyptians, the Lord wanted the Egyptians to realize that their life in Egypt was not really a life of enjoyment, but a life of trouble. The Egyptians did not realize that, in the eyes of God, all their enjoyments were "frogs." Everything they gathered from the Nile, the source of the world's supply, was a frog. The waters in Egypt that once produced fish now brought forth frogs.

In principle, we may experience the same thing today. Throughout the course of my life, I have gathered many things that turned out to be "frogs." At first, I enjoyed these things. But one by one, they became "frogs." What I thought was a "fish" was actually a "frog." Sooner or later, everything you gain in this world will become a "frog." This means that everything you gather up from the "Nile," the source of supply for the world, will be a cause of trouble to you. Material possessions and even people dear to you can be "frogs." When the things we treasure turn into "frogs," then we realize that the enjoyment of the world is not the true enjoyment. On the contrary, it is very troublesome.

The frogs in Egypt did not kill anyone, but they were a nuisance to everyone. They were everywhere—in their houses, in their bedrooms, upon their beds, in their ovens, and in their kneading troughs. What a nuisance!

Whether the plague of the frogs was a form of punishment or a revelation depended upon the attitude of the people who were subject to the plague. If they had received the Lord's mercy, it would have been a revelation to them,

an exposure of the fact that Egypt with its enjoyment is a land of frogs. This is the meaning of the living of the world. Every aspect of the world's enjoyment is a "frog." Those who refused the Lord's mercy, however, had to endure the plague of the frogs as a punishment.

B. On Pharaoh's Side

The Egyptian magicians were able to do three of the things that Aaron did with his rod: change the water into blood, change the rod to a serpent, and bring forth frogs. With their enchantments Pharaoh's magicians brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt (8:7). However, they could not take the frogs away.

A preacher of the gospel must be able to bring forth "frogs." This means that he must cause people to realize that all the enjoyments and preoccupations of the world are "frogs." However, certain philosophical teachers also are able to make people realize that the things of the world usurp them and damage them. Evangelists expose the real situation of living in the world, but some "magicians" or philosophers can do the same thing. As we preached the gospel in China, we frequently encountered such "magicians," the philosophers of the world. We told the people that life in the world usurps them. Some of the philosophers taught the same thing. For example, Taoism teaches simplicity and selflessness. We also told people that the enjoyment of this world is actually a form of death. Some philosophers taught this also.

However, just as the Egyptian magicians were not able to take away the frogs, so today's "magicians" cannot take away the "frogs" that trouble people in our time. Those philosophers in China could bring forth the "frogs," but they could not make them disappear. When Moses cried unto the Lord concerning the frogs, the Lord did according to Moses' word (8:12-13), and the frogs died out. In the same principle, a proper evangelist not only brings forth "frogs," but also causes them to be driven away.

Sometimes as we preached to certain of the wealthy

people in China, we caused "frogs" to appear to them. This convinced them that the enjoyment of the world is really a nuisance, a cause of unending trouble. At their request, we prayed for them, and the "frogs" were taken away. But this only served to show us that their condition was the same as Pharaoh's after the frogs were taken away. When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart and did not hearken to Moses and Aaron (8:15). In the same principle, when these rich people saw that the "frogs" were removed and that there was relief from their situation, they refused to repent and believe in the Lord.

V. THE FIFTH CONFLICT

A. On God's Side

In the fifth conflict, the Lord said to Moses, "Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt" (8:16). When Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and smote the dust of the earth, "it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt" (v. 17). Formerly, the dust of Egypt produced grain that could be used for food. But in this plague the dust became lice that caused great discomfort to the Egyptians. The lice were extremely irritating. However, the plague of the lice was not only a punishment, but also a revelation that, ultimately, the dust of Egypt produces lice, not grain for food.

In these plagues God was both wise and merciful. He did not use a powerful weapon to teach the Egyptians a lesson once for all. Instead, He used something very small. If God had suddenly destroyed all the Egyptians, there would have been no warning, no reminder, and no revelation. In His wisdom and mercy, God used lice to expose the situation of the living in Egypt and to encourage His people to get out of Egypt.

God does the same thing in principle today. Again and again He shows us that Egypt is not lovable, and He reminds

us not to remain in Egypt. He causes us to see that life in Egypt is disgusting. The water brings forth frogs, and the dust produces lice. He knows that if His people are clear about the situation in Egypt, they will desire to be separated from it. By means of plagues God's people come to realize that their living should not be the living of the world, but the living unto God in the wilderness.

The plague of the frogs unveils the nature of the water in Egypt, whereas the plague of the lice unveils the nature of the dust in Egypt. The dust becoming lice indicates that the source of the supply of our living in the world eventually becomes a cause of irritation. Today people throughout the world depend upon water and dust for their living. Without these, it is impossible to have the life supply. Although water and dust were created for us by God, they have been taken over by Satan and used for his own evil purpose. Therefore, in His judgment, God exposed the actual nature of the water and dust in their fallen condition. He changed the water into blood and the dust into lice.

The first three plagues—the plagues of the blood, the frogs, and the lice—unveil to us the nature, meaning, and result of living in the world. Those who keep on living in the world will encounter death, trouble, and irritation. We all need to receive such a revelation of the living in the world today. May this vision make such a deep impression upon us that we never forget it.

B. On Pharaoh's Side

Pharaoh's magicians tried to bring forth lice, but they were unable to do so. They admitted to Pharaoh that it was the finger of God that caused the dust of Egypt to become lice. They did not say that it was the hand of God, but the finger of God. This indicates that Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, was almighty. To their understanding, God had only to use His finger to do something that they were not able to do. However, Pharaoh's heart remained hard, stubborn, and he hearkened not to Moses and Aaron, as Jehovah had said.

My burden in this message is not to teach the saints that they should not love the world. My burden is to point out the picture portrayed in the book of Exodus. Consider how the plagues of the blood, the frogs, and the lice expose today's world. Do you still want to settle down in the world? Do you still regard it as the best place for you to dwell? If we are impressed with the picture given in the book of Exodus, we shall desire to get out of today's Egypt. In His mercy, God has shown us a vivid picture that unveils the nature, meaning, and consequence of living in the world. He desires to rescue us from the world and to bring us to Himself at Mount Horeb, the mount of God. At this mountain, we have no plagues of blood, frogs, and lice. Instead, we have light, revelation, purpose, the presence of God, and a future filled with God's supply. What a contrast between life in Egypt and life at Mount Horeb! Do you want to be in Egypt with the blood, the frogs, and lice, or do you want to be with God at Mount Horeb? No one needs to advise us to leave the world. If we see the picture portrayed in Exodus, we shall spontaneously loathe the world, flee from it, and be gathered to the Lord at the mountain of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHTEEN

GOD'S DEMAND AND PHARAOH'S RESISTANCE

(4)

If we would grasp the revelation in the book of Exodus, we need to see that God desires His people to build a dwelling place for Him on earth. But God's enemy has usurped His people and holds them in bondage in the world. Therefore, in the first fourteen chapters of Exodus, there was a struggle between God and Pharaoh, the representative of Satan. In this struggle God's judgment upon the Egyptian world was made manifest through the ten plagues. However, the plagues were not only a punishment, but also God's way of exposing the nature, the meaning, and the issue of the life of the world, the life which occupied the people of God. Hence, the plagues that came upon the Egyptians were not only punishments, but also merciful warnings. If the Egyptians had received mercy, they would have seen the nature, meaning, and result of the life in the world.

It is quite meaningful that God sent ten plagues, not nine or eleven. In the Bible the number ten signifies perfection or completeness in human living. For example, our ten fingers and ten toes signify such completeness. The Bible reveals that at the end of this age there will be ten kingdoms under the rule of Antichrist. Those ten kingdoms will be the ultimate expression of fallen human life. In order to expose human life in the world, God used ten plagues. As we have pointed out, these ten plagues are divided into four groups. The first three groups consist of three plagues each, with the last plague standing in a category of its own.

We have covered the first group of plagues, the plagues of

blood, frogs, and lice. The plagues of blood and frogs are related to water, whereas the plague of lice is related to the dust of the earth. Hence, in the first group of plagues the water and the earth were exposed and judged. We are all dependent on the water and the earth for our livelihood. The supply necessary to sustain human life comes from these two sources. In the first three plagues God exposed the nature of the fallen life of mankind. As He did so, He showed that the resources of man's livelihood issue in death, trouble, and irritation.

The second group of three plagues deals mainly with the air. Today there is much concern about air pollution. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth plagues, the air in Egypt became polluted. Flies swarmed in the air, pestilence was carried through the air, and ashes that caused boils were sprinkled into the air. Therefore, in the second group of plagues, the air, another necessity for man's life, was dealt with.

I wish to emphasize the fact that these plagues were not only a form of punishment, but also an exposure of the world and of the life in the world. If God's intention had been to use the plagues only as punishment, there would have been no need for Him to send Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh again and again. Furthermore, there would have been no need for Him to send the plagues over a period of so many days. Instead, God could have punished the Egyptians and destroyed them with one blow. However, God dealt with them in a fine, detailed way. Firstly, God changed the water into blood. Then He brought forth the troublesome frogs and, following that, the irritating lice. God's purpose in doing so was not only to punish the Egyptians, but to teach both them and His own people that the resources of man's life supply have actually become blood, frogs, and lice.

God created the heavens for the earth and the earth for man's living. Thus, both the heavens and the earth are for man's existence. Man, however, has fallen. According to His righteousness, God should have judged both the heavens and the earth immediately after the fall of Adam. But God's

intention is to accomplish His eternal purpose through man. Instead of judging everything, God put the universe under the redemption of Christ.

The redemption of Christ is a very weighty matter, much more significant than we realize. God established Adam as the head of the whole creation in Genesis 1. In principle, when the head rebelled, all creation came under the curse and should have been judged immediately according to God's righteousness. The whole creation should have collapsed. God cannot tolerate anything that touches His righteousness, holiness, and glory; but neither will He change His heart concerning His purpose to have an eternal dwelling among man. Therefore, God chose to view the whole creation under the redemption of Christ, which in His eyes had been accomplished before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8). Because God views the old creation under the redemption of Christ, He has the freedom either to preserve the universe or to judge it and destroy it. Because of the redemption of Christ, God is wholly just and righteous whether He keeps the universe or destroys it.

When God could no longer tolerate the sinfulness of Sodom and Gomorrah because they rebelled against Him and rejected the redemption He had ordained, that part of the earth came under His righteous judgment. In principle, the same thing happened in Moses' time. Pharaoh and the Egyptians rejected the redemption ordained by God and thus made themselves naked and exposed to God's judgment. Because the children of Israel were still under the redemption, God's judgment did not touch them. Exodus 8:23 is a crucial verse: "I will put a redemption between my people and thy people" (Heb.). Here the Lord was telling Pharaoh that He would put a redemption between His people and Pharaoh's people. God covered His people with the redemption of Christ, but Pharaoh and his people rejected God's redemption. Therefore, when God sent the plagues upon the Egyptians, they were not under God's redemption, but were exposed to His judgment.

In the fall, man had sinned against God's righteousness and had come short of God's glory. Nevertheless, God did not come in with judgment. How then could God's righteousness be maintained? According to Genesis 3:21, the answer rests in God's redemption. The skins of the animal God used to cover Adam and Eve point to the redemption of Christ. Because of the redemption of Christ, God is able righteously to maintain the existence of the universe.

In Exodus Pharaoh and the Egyptians did not care for the redemption of Christ. They deserved to be judged for the way they were treating God's people. Therefore, God exercised His judgment upon the Egyptians through the ten plagues. At the time of the plagues, the Egyptians were exposed to God's righteous dealings. The children of Israel, however, remained under the redemption of Christ, for God had put a redemption between them and Pharaoh's people.

Today the whole earth is still under the redemption of Christ. If it were not for Christ's redemption, the sun, the moon, and the planets would disintegrate. God upholds the heavens and the earth for the sake of man's existence. You may wonder how the righteous God can tolerate the sinfulness of people in the world today. He can tolerate it only because He views the world through the redemption of Christ.

All the people of the world are actually enjoying the benefit of Christ's redemption, although they have no realization of it. Colossians tells us that God has reconciled all things to Himself through the death of Christ (1:20). Only under the redemption of Christ is this earth a suitable place for man to live. If the creation were not under the redemption of Christ, it would collapse. But God extends His mercy to view the unbelievers under the redemption of Christ that they might have the opportunity to repent and receive this redemption.

All the food we eat and all the life supply we enjoy are under the redemption of Christ. Otherwise, the water would become blood, the fish would become frogs, the earth would produce either thorns or lice instead of grain, and from the

air would come flies. The ten plagues came upon Egypt because they rejected God's redemption.

At the time of Pharaoh's resistance to God, Pharaoh and the Egyptians exposed themselves to God's righteous judgment. But He was merciful even in the exercise of His judgment. Instead of annihilating the Egyptians with one act of judgment, He sent a series of plagues upon them. His intention in doing this was not only to punish or to judge, but also to expose and to warn the Egyptians that they might have opportunity to turn to Him.

Each plague is significant. In the first plague, the water was changed into blood. Do you have the assurance that the water of the world which you are enjoying today is not actually blood? If this water is under the redemption of Christ, it is water. But if it is not under Christ's redemption, it is really blood. In like manner, in your experience does the water that is the source of the necessary life supply produce fish or frogs? It all depends on whether or not the water is under the redemption of Christ. I can testify from a pure conscience that the water I enjoy produces fish and not frogs. Furthermore, for me the earth produces corn, wheat, and vegetables; it does not produce lice. However, if in your experience the earth is not under Christ's redemption, the dust of the earth will become lice.

VI. THE SIXTH CONFLICT

In the sixth conflict between the Lord and Pharaoh, the Lord sent upon Pharaoh and all the Egyptians swarms of flies (8:20-32). It is difficult to determine what kind of flies these were. The dictionary in *Strong's Concordance* says that there were diverse kinds of flies. In his translation Darby uses the word dog flies, whereas the Amplified Bible says blood-sucking gadflies, flies that bit the cattle and sucked the blood of the cattle. Whatever kind of flies these were, swarms of them came upon Pharaoh, his servants, and his people. All the houses of the Egyptians were filled with swarms of flies.

These swarms of flies signify the pollution in the atmosphere of the world today, pollution caused by immorality that pervades the atmosphere. Consider, for example, how polluted is the moral atmosphere in a city such as Las Vegas. Whenever I visited that city to contact some seeking saints who were there, I had the sense that the atmosphere over the city was foul. The atmosphere of today's world is teeming with "flies." Spiritually speaking, there is no fresh air in the worldly places. Because of the fall of man, the moral atmosphere of the world has been polluted; it is full of noisome swarms of insects. Thus, the fourth plague indicates that the air is not filled with clean things or positive things, but filled with all manner of unclean and evil things.

By means of the exposure in the first four plagues, we see the blood, the frogs, the lice, and the flies. What a detailed picture of the living of fallen man in the world! However, the people in the world today do not realize the actual situation of their life in the world. In order for them to realize this, God must come in to expose it to them thoroughly, just as He did to the Egyptians through the plagues.

VII. THE SEVENTH CONFLICT

The next plague was a pestilence that came upon all the cattle of the Egyptians (9:1-7). I believe that this pestilence was caused by germs spread by the swarms of flies.

Exodus 9:3 says, "Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous pestilence" (Heb.). According to Leviticus 11, horses, asses, and camels were unclean. They could be used for transportation, but not for food. However, the oxen and the sheep were regarded as clean and were fit for the children of Israel to eat. Hence, the animals that were subject to the plague were of two categories: those used for transportation and those used for food. God judged both the transportation and the food in Egypt. This indicates that

the means of transportation and the way of eating in the world today will also be judged by God.

Once again we see that God judged the Egyptians in a very fine way, destroying their livelihood item by item. The Egyptians depended upon the Nile, but the Nile was judged. They depended upon the earth and the air, but the earth and the air were also judged. Furthermore, the Egyptians depended upon their cattle for transportation and food, but in the fifth plague even the cattle were judged.

Since the cattle were not sinful, you may wonder why they were judged by God. According to Genesis 3, the earth was involved with Adam's sin, even though the earth itself was not sinful. After Adam sinned, the earth came under the curse (Gen. 3:17-18). Thus, Adam's fall implicated the whole earth. In the same principle, the cattle of the Egyptians were judged, not because they themselves were sinful, but because they were implicated by the sin of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Because these cattle belonged to the Egyptians, they were involved in the sin of the Egyptians. Here we see that God's righteous judgment also deals with the implications of a sinful situation. Because the cattle in Egypt were related to Pharaoh and served Pharaoh, they were subject to the righteous judgment of God upon Pharaoh.

The principle of implication applies today. If we love the Lord and serve Him under His blessing, everything related to us will be blessed also. Even such things as animals or material possessions will be blessed. If we love the Lord, even our environment will be blessed. Our relatives, friends, and neighbors will be positively implicated in the blessing that is upon us. Under God's righteousness, we who love the Lord become a factor of blessing to others, even to society as a whole. Those who do not know the Lord may enjoy the benefits of such a positive implication.

My experience of traveling in the interior of China during World War II illustrates this. Often those who were traveling with me, even though they did not believe in the Lord

Jesus, told me that they received benefit because of me. During wartime it was difficult to travel. But when trouble came, I prayed, and the Lord preserved me. This caused my traveling companions to realize that they were blessed because God had blessed me.

In the case of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, we see that the cattle were implicated negatively. Because of Pharaoh's stubbornness and hardness of heart, the cattle were subject to the plague of pestilence. This should teach us not to become involved with those who are sinful, but to stay away from them. Otherwise, we may become negatively implicated in their situation.

For the sake of His people, God may withhold His judgment from the world. Even when He comes in to judge the world according to His righteousness, He still takes care of His people in order to fulfill His desire to have a dwelling place on earth. We have seen that in the plague of the flies, God put a redemption between His people and Pharaoh's people. Likewise, in the plague of the grievous pestilence upon the cattle, 9:4 says, "And Jehovah shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel" (Heb.). According to verse 6, none of the cattle belonging to the children of Israel died. The messengers sent by Pharaoh saw that none of their cattle had died (v. 7).

Because the people of the world were hindering God's people from fulfilling His purpose, God came in to judge the way of living in Egypt. Not even the children of Israel understood the true nature of Egyptian life. They also needed a revelation of the nature, the living, and the result of life in Egypt. The more the Egyptians were judged, the more the children of Israel were enlightened regarding the living of Egypt. Therefore, God used plagues to accomplish two things: to punish the Egyptians so that they might release His people and to open the eyes of the children of Israel to the nature of the life of usurpation in Egypt. The enlightenment they received through the plagues made them willing to flee out of

Egypt and to go into the wilderness where, at the mountain of God, they could receive God's revelation concerning His dwelling place.

VIII. THE EIGHTH CONFLICT

In the sixth plague, which took place during the eighth conflict (9:8-12), boils broke forth upon man and beast. The Lord told Moses and Aaron to take handfuls of ashes from the furnace and to sprinkle them toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. The ashes became fine dust which caused boils to break forth upon man and beast throughout the land of Egypt (9:8-9).

Ashes are what remains after something has been burned. At the end of the fifth plague, all the resources of Egypt had been judged. The water, the earth, the air, and the cattle had all been judged by God. Nevertheless, the ashes, the remainder of things burned, still had to be dealt with. This indicates that anything remaining of our fallen human life must be dealt with by God. You may think that a certain thing has been dealt with thoroughly. Yes, it has been dealt with, but there are still some ashes, some remainder. In a sense, the remainder is worse than the thing itself, for the remainder can cause boils. The remainder of something you once did or had can cause serious damage. Therefore, God deals not only with the things themselves, but also with the remains of those things. By sprinkling the ashes from the furnace into the air, the ashes were exposed.

After God had judged the water, the earth with the dust, and the air, it seems that nothing was left of the resources for the Egyptian livelihood. Even the animals used for transportation were killed. But there were still ashes left from the things that had been dealt with and burned out. Even the ashes, the remainder, God would not tolerate. This indicates how fine, how thorough, both God's exposing and His judgment were, and it also shows that God did a fine work to educate His people to know the real nature of the life in this world that is against His economy. The

educational aspect of God's judgment upon Egypt was very fine indeed.

Ashes usually contain no germs, for all the germs have been burned away. But the ashes scattered into the air by Moses and Aaron must have been filled with germs because they became dust that caused boils. You may think that your past sinful practices have been thoroughly dealt with and that the only remainder is clean ashes, ashes that contain no germs. But God is not satisfied even with such remains. Therefore, He comes in to judge the remainder of the sinful things. Do not think that in your personal life nothing remains to be dealt with after your sins have been judged. On the contrary, there is still a remainder within you, the remains of what has been judged and dealt with. This indicates that, in the eyes of God, everything of the Egyptian life—the water, the earth, the air, and the ashes—must be judged and exposed. Nothing of the life of the world should remain.

Do not boast of how you have dealt with your past sins or worldly practices. Deep within, you may still have some ashes. For example, a brother may have been an outstanding athlete before he became a Christian. He may think that his love for sports has been dealt with. It may have been dealt with, but the ashes may not have been. Young sisters may have boxes of ashes, the remains of certain things which they dearly treasure. Praise the Lord for all the dealings you have experienced under His leading! But what about the ashes? God requires that they also be exposed and judged.

The plague of the boils affected the Egyptians, but it did not come upon the children of Israel. Yet some of the saints may feel that they have had the experience of scattering ashes of their past experiences and causing damage to other believers. The saints must be careful not to walk as Gentiles. In giving testimony of how we have dealt with sinful things, it is possible to spread ashes in the air. We need to pray that the Lord will cover us with His prevailing blood. Such a

prayer will put us under the redemption of Christ, and the anointing will restrict us from spreading ashes. The real significance of this plague is that it indicates how fine and how thorough God's judgment was, even dealing with the remainder of things burned out, and also how extensive was God's education for His people.

We need to be deeply impressed with the fact that even the remains of sinful things must be judged. In the eyes of God nothing of Egypt is good. Everything related to Egyptian living, to the living of the world, must be exposed and judged thoroughly. May God expose to us every aspect of the living of the world.

In the second group of plagues two matters are very striking. The first is that these plagues did not affect the land of Goshen, because the children of Israel were under the Lord's redemption. The second is that in these plagues the Egyptian magicians were not able to do anything. We have pointed out that certain of the philosophers of the world may teach things similar to what we teach in the preaching of the gospel. Eventually, however, these present-day "magicians" are not able to do anything. The philosophers of the world cannot save people from flies, pestilence, or boils. They cannot rescue anyone from moral and spiritual pollution. Only the salvation of God can deliver people from this. Sooner or later, even the "magicians" will become powerless before the hand of God.

Through all these pictures with all the plagues we can see the real situation of our fallen human life. No other portion in the Bible shows us such a detailed picture of the worldly life as it opposes God's building. The world is against God's building, and God's building is opposed to the world. God's chosen people are the crucial factor between these two opposing forces. If God's people remain in the world, God cannot do anything. But if they are willing to be rescued from the world unto God, God can work out His purpose on the earth to have His dwelling place. Therefore, God must come in to deal with the usurping world and to educate

His people to realize what the world is, so that they may give up the world and remain there no longer. The ten plagues taught the children of Israel what the real nature of Egypt is and what it is that usurped them, occupied them, and possessed them.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINETEEN

GOD'S DEMAND AND PHARAOH'S RESISTANCE

(5)

In 9:13—10:29 we come to the third group of plagues. Like the first two groups, this group also is composed of three plagues. We have seen that God used the first six plagues to expose the actual condition of the water, the earth, and the air, all of which are necessary for man's livelihood. As we shall now see, in the third group of plagues God altered some of the principles that govern the functions of the universe.

In Genesis 1 and 2 God restored the universe which had been judged because of Satan's rebellion. As a result of God's judgment, darkness was upon the surface of the deep (Gen. 1:2). Everything had become void and desolate. In His work of restoration and further creation, God caused the light to appear, and then He gathered the waters together so that the dry land could come forth. On this land various kinds of life—grass, herbs, and trees—came into being. Then God created the sun, the moon, and the stars, which are necessary for the development of higher life on earth. Through this procedure, God prepared everything necessary for man's living on earth. Therefore, the Bible reveals that the heavens are for the earth, the earth is for man, and man with his human spirit is for God.

Because the heavens are for the earth, they provide sunshine, wind, and rain to sustain life on earth. Without these three things, nothing can grow. Man must have such a provision if he is to live on earth for the fulfillment of God's purpose.

IX. THE NINTH CONFLICT

Genesis 2:5 indicates that in order for things to grow,

there is the need of two things: rain to water the earth and a man to till the ground. Rain is a basic factor in the growth of living things on earth. Rain is primarily for life, to enable living things to grow. The function of rain is both to cause plants and trees to grow and to quench the thirst of man.

During the ninth conflict between the Lord and Pharaoh, the Lord changed the function of the rain (9:13-35). Instead of water, there was hail that damaged the produce of the earth. In this plague God changed one of the functions of the universe; that is, He changed one of the natural principles governing the universe.

The universe was not only created by God, but also arranged and ordained by Him to meet the need of man. Therefore, God has ordained certain principles or laws to govern the function of the universe. In the seventh plague God changed the principle related to the functions of rain. The rain no longer watered the earth for the production of life, but became hail to damage the life on earth. Instead of quenching people's thirst, it killed them. Exodus 9:23 says that as the hail was coming down, fire ran along above the ground. Furthermore, the fire was even mingled with the hail (v. 24). Hence, two extremes were mingled together as an indication that God had changed the function of the universe.

It is possible to apply this plague to our own spiritual experience. If our relationship with God is proper, He sends the spiritual rain upon us to water the garden in our spirit and to quench our thirst. But if we are stubborn or rebellious against the Lord, our relationship with Him is destroyed, and He alters the spiritual function of the rain by sending hail upon our spirit and fire with the hail. This change of spiritual function causes severe damage.

X. THE TENTH CONFLICT

In the eighth plague, which took place during the tenth conflict (10:1-20), we see a change in another function of the universe. This time God changed the function of the wind. When the wind functions normally, it sends a supply of fresh

air. If there were no wind at all, we all would suffocate. We thank the Lord for the function of wind to sustain our life on earth. Spiritually speaking, the Lord is also the wind to us. The line of a hymn says, "I cannot breathe enough of Thee, O gentle breeze of love" (*Hymns,* #172). For a proper spiritual life, we need to experience Christ as a gentle breeze.

In the eighth plague God altered the function of the wind so that it no longer supplied fresh air to support life, but caused locusts to appear which devoured what remained from the plague of the hail. The hail destroyed herbs and trees in a rough way, but the locusts did a finer work to devour the plant life. As 10:15 says, the locusts "covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt." What a thorough work was done by the locusts! In judging the Egyptians and in educating both them and the children of Israel, God did a fine, detailed work. After the hail, the locusts came to consume the life supply. This was caused by a change in one of the functions of the universe.

After the first eight plagues, it seems that there was no need for further judgment or education. Look how much damage had been done to the land of Egypt. The water had become blood, the dust had become lice, the water had brought forth frogs, flies had polluted the air, pestilence had destroyed the cattle, boils had broken forth upon man and beast, the rain had been changed into hail, and the wind had brought in locusts. What thorough destruction! If I had been there, I would have told the Lord that these plagues were sufficient, for everything had been destroyed.

XI. THE ELEVENTH CONFLICT

God, however, was not finished. In the ninth plague He went on to change the function of the sun (10:21-29). In the eleventh conflict between the Lord and Pharaoh, "there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days" (10:22).

This darkness was so thick that it could be felt. It was not a vague, abstract darkness, but a solid, substantial darkness. Exodus 10:23 says of the Egyptians, "They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days." Because of this thick darkness, all movement in Egypt ceased. For a period of three days, everything was terminated. Here we see God's wisdom. In order to deal with the Egyptians, He did not use weapons that men regard as powerful. Instead, He used things such as frogs, lice, and flies. Exercising His control over the universe to change the principles and the natural laws, He sent upon the Egyptians a darkness so thick that it was impossible for anyone to move.

The third group of plagues was even more meaningful than the first two groups because in these plagues God dealt with the rain, the wind, and the sunshine. This made it impossible for the Egyptians to live. No wonder that Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve Jehovah their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" (10:7, Heb.). Nevertheless, Pharaoh remained stubborn.

Pharaoh possessed an unusual ability to stand against God. He could endure all manner of suffering without being subdued. If I had been Pharaoh, I would have given in to the Lord's demand at the time of the first plague. As soon as I saw the water turn into blood, I would have told the children of Israel to get out of my territory. But although the land of Egypt was smitten with plague after plague, Pharaoh remained stubborn, even when the functions of the universe related to Egypt were changed.

A number of times Pharaoh bargained with Moses and Aaron. In 10:8 Pharaoh said to them, "Go, serve Jehovah your God: but who are they that shall go?" (Heb.). Recognizing Pharaoh's strategy, Moses replied, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto Jehovah" (v. 9, Heb.). When Pharaoh heard this, he told them that evil was before them, meaning

that the young ones were in danger of being accidently hurt or killed. Then Pharaoh required that the little ones remain with him and that the men go out to serve the Lord. Here we see Pharaoh's subtlety. All parents know that it is extremely difficult for them to leave their children behind, because their heart is set on their children. Pharaoh realized this. Wanting to keep the little ones, he tried to bargain with Moses and Aaron. But they did not agree to Pharaoh's request. Instead, Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the eighth plague, the plague of the locusts, came upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

During the plague of the thick darkness, Pharaoh again bargained with Moses and Aaron. This time he said, "Go ye, serve Jehovah; only let your flocks and your herds remain: let your little ones also go with you" (10:24, Heb.). Although he had been so grievously smitten by God, Pharaoh still would not hearken to His demand. Instead, he continued to bargain. To this bargain Moses responded, "Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto Jehovah our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind" (10:25-26, Heb.).

According to 9:15 and 16, the Lord said to Pharaoh, "For if I had stretched out my hand, that I had smitten thee and thy people with pestilence, thou shouldest have been cut off from the earth. But for this cause I made thee stand, in order to show thee my power; and in order to declare my name throughout all the earth" (Heb.). Verse 16 indicates that it was God who made Pharaoh stand. In a sense, God supported him. God needed such a stubborn one to stand firmly. In himself, Pharaoh could not stand in this way; hence, God made him stand. In order to show His power and to declare His name throughout the earth, the Lord needed the stubborn Pharaoh.

We have pointed out that the plagues which came upon Egypt were not only for judgment, but also for the education of the Egyptians and the children of Israel. If we did not have the first fourteen chapters of Exodus, I do not believe we could

know the world thoroughly or clearly see God's attitude toward the world. Pharaoh was unique in that he was not subdued. He was not even subdued when the firstborn were slain. This is proved by the fact that he later pursued the children of Israel. God used Pharaoh to educate the Egyptians, the children of Israel, and His people throughout the generations. The church people today need to learn from these chapters in Exodus the nature, significance, and result of the life of the world and God's attitude toward such a life. Only by receiving such a revelation can we truly hate the worldly life.

Many Christians today hate sin, but not very many hate the world. Nevertheless, James 4:4 says, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." We may be very careful about losing our temper, but we may be extremely careless in guarding our hearts from loving the world. To lose our temper is sinful, but to love the world is to be an enemy of God. To God, worldliness is worse than sinfulness. Sinfulness is against God's righteousness, whereas worldliness is against God's holiness, which is higher than His righteousness. How we need the education afforded us by the book of Exodus! It is through the early chapters in this book that we come to see how God hates worldliness. If we have been educated by these chapters, we shall hate not only sin but worldliness also.

Some modernistic teachers have argued that God was not righteous in interfering with the situation in Pharaoh's territory. According to their teaching, Pharaoh was not wrong in exercising his authority within his own jurisdiction. They failed to see that God used Pharaoh to educate His chosen people. For the fulfillment of His own purpose, God made Pharaoh to stand. God needed him and used him to teach His people many lessons.

I appreciate the plagues for the lessons they have taught me, especially concerning the world. I have been a Christian for more than fifty years, but I have never known the world in such a thorough way as I know it now through my most

recent study of these chapters regarding the ten plagues. These plagues have taught me a number of lessons about the nature, significance, and consequence of a worldly life.

If we have seen the blood, the frogs, the lice, the pestilence, the boils, the hail, the locusts, and the darkness, we shall not need anyone to exhort us not to love the world. Spontaneously we shall see that the things of the world are not lovable, and we shall automatically stop loving the world. Do you love things such as frogs, lice, flies, pestilence, locusts, and darkness? Certainly not! However, you may love them unknowingly because you do not see them for what they really are. For example, you may think that the blood is water or that the lice are dust. Only when you see into the true nature of the things of the world will you stop loving them.

We thank the Lord for Pharaoh and his stubbornness. In Romans 9 Paul presents the case of Pharaoh as an example. Because Pharaoh would not be subdued, God sent one plague after another upon the Egyptians. In each plague there is a lesson for us. If we are deeply impressed with the significance of the plagues, we shall become detached from the world and come to hate the life of the world.

In the first plague there was blood, and in the ninth, darkness. Both blood and darkness signify death. Hence, the plagues went from death to death. The life of the world is altogether a matter of death. But according to Genesis 1 and 2, God's ordination in His creation is from life to life. Because fallen man loves the world, God through the plagues exposed that the world is not from life to life, but from blood to darkness, from death to death. Between the blood and the darkness are the frogs, the lice, the flies, the pestilence, the boils, the hail, and the locusts. In the seventh, eighth, and ninth plagues, the functions of the universe related to Egypt were changed to indicate that the very atmosphere over Egypt was no longer suitable for human life. Instead, it issued only in death.

We have pointed out that Egypt is a type of the world. If

we have a detailed vision of the world, we shall know God's attitude toward it, and we shall spontaneously cease to love it. If we would be God's dwelling place on earth, we must know the world in a thorough way, and the element of the world must be purged out of our being. Only through being separated from the world can we become God's dwelling place. In God's redemption we are not only saved from sin and from God's judgment, but also separated from the world. According to Galatians 1:4, Christ gave Himself for our sins in order to deliver us from this present evil age. Full redemption thus includes both the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea. After the children of Israel had been redeemed out of Egypt, God brought them to Mount Horeb, where they received the revelation concerning God's dwelling place. The book of Exodus, therefore, gives us a clear view both of the world and of God's dwelling place.

I am burdened especially for the young people. They have a promising future ahead of them. However, they still need to realize that everything related to the life of the world goes from death to death, with various plagues in between. If we love the world, every function in our universe will be changed, and all the resources of life will be destroyed. This is God's judgment on the world as unfolded in the book of Exodus.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWENTY

PHARAOH'S SUBTLE BARGAINING

Before we go on to consider the final conflict between God and Pharaoh, we need to consider Pharaoh's subtle bargaining. Pharaoh signifies not only Satan, but also the self and the natural man. In addition, our relatives or friends can also be a Pharaoh to us today. Furthermore, our natural mind, will, or emotion may be a Pharaoh who rebels against God or who bargains subtly with Him.

I. GOD'S DEMAND

A. To Let His People Go a Three Days' Journey into the Wilderness

God's demand of Pharaoh is stated in 5:1. According to this verse, the Lord spoke to Pharaoh through Moses and Aaron, "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." Furthermore, the Lord required His people to take a three days' journey into the wilderness and to sacrifice unto Him (5:3). Not only does this journey of three days signify a long distance; it also signifies burial and resurrection. In the Bible the third day signifies resurrection. The Lord Jesus was resurrected on the third day, and, according to Genesis 1, the dry land, a type of Christ in resurrection, appeared on the third day. Therefore, the three days' journey here signifies burial and resurrection. The natural man had to be buried so that God's people could be raised up from death into resurrection. The crossing of the Red Sea signified the process of burial and resurrection. In the eyes of both God and Satan, the children of Israel passed through the burial of the Red Sea and entered into resurrection. As God's called and chosen people, we also

must pass through such a process of burial and resurrection. This means that we must travel a three days' journey in order to be buried and resurrected. By means of such a journey, God's people not only come out of Egypt, but they also enter, in resurrection, into a new environment.

Negatively the wilderness signifies a place of wandering, but positively it signifies a realm of separation. When the children of Israel entered into the wilderness, they were separated from everything Egyptian, from everything worldly. This separation is related to burial and resurrection. Once we were in Egypt, that is, in the world. But through burial and resurrection we have passed out of the world into the wilderness, where we are separated to the Lord. In His dealing with Pharaoh, God demanded such a separation for His people.

B. That His People May Hold a Feast to Him and Sacrifice to Him

Separation, however, is not the goal. God's goal was that the children of Israel would hold a feast to Him. He wanted them to be happy with Him in His presence. To hold a feast unto God is to enjoy God with God. Everyone who has truly been saved has experienced times of overflowing with joy in the Lord's presence. Such times are real holidays. If you have not enjoyed such a feast with the Lord but have only been happy when participating in worldly amusements, then perhaps you have not yet been saved. Being saved does not depend upon having such an enjoyment. Nevertheless, everyone who is saved will have the experience, at least once in his Christian life, of holding a feast to the Lord, of enjoying the Lord in His presence. Sometimes I have been so beside myself with joy in the Lord that it seemed as if I were dancing before Him. This is not doctrine or theory, but a marvelous enjoyment of our salvation.

Furthermore, the children of Israel were to sacrifice unto the Lord. According to our experience, when we hold a feast unto the Lord, enjoying Him in His presence, our heart is

deeply touched by the Lord Jesus. He becomes so dear and precious to us, and we have a fresh love for Him. We simply have no words to utter how sweet He is to us. He touches the depths of our being, and we respond by thanking the Father for His dear Son. This is to offer sacrifice unto God, to present the precious Christ to God as a sacrifice. As we offer Christ to the Father, the Father is pleased, happy, and satisfied by us through our sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, God's demand of Pharaoh was to let His people go a three days' journey into the wilderness so that they could hold a feast to Him and sacrifice unto Him. This is the enjoyment of God's salvation.

II. PHARAOH'S SUBTLE BARGAINING

A. Rejecting God's Demand

At first Pharaoh rejected God's demand and said, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go" (5:2, Heb.). Satan is subtle. The self and natural man, whether of ourselves or of others, are also subtle. Moreover, our natural mind, will, and emotion are subtle. In fact, anything natural is subtle. By this we see that Pharaoh is to be found everywhere. Pharaoh denies God and ignores His demand to let the children of Israel go.

I do not believe that Pharaoh actually did not know that there was such a God as Jehovah. On the contrary, Pharaoh must have known of Jehovah's existence, but he purposely denied Him. He insolently asked why he had to listen to God's word. The natural man does the same thing today. For example, a brother's wife may know that there is a God, but she may reject His demand. The brother may tell his wife that he has received a call from the Lord. The wife may react and say, "Who is God? Why should I heed His call to you?" At such a time, she is a Pharaoh rejecting God and His demand.

Actually, it was Satan in Pharaoh who denied God. Satan knew very well that there was a God, for at one time he was

in God's presence. Nevertheless, Satan worked in Pharaoh to deny God and to refuse to listen to Him. This was the first stage of Pharaoh's subtle bargaining.

Many saved ones bargained with the Lord in this way when they first heard the gospel. Deep within, they said, "Who is God? Why must I listen to Him? Why doesn't He listen to me? Why do I need Him? He is the one who needs me. As far as I'm concerned, the heavens and the earth should be mine." Many have reasoned with God in this way.

God's response to this subtle bargaining is to send a plague. I have seen this many times. For example, an intelligent medical student may reason with God when he hears the word of the gospel. He may argue with God and tell Him that he has no intention of listening to Him. Instead of arguing in return, God sends some type of plague, perhaps an illness that no physician can diagnose, in order to bring this young man to repentance and to faith in Christ. In sending such a plague, God exercises His finger. The Egyptian magicians recognized that one of the plagues was brought about by the finger of God (8:19). Pharaoh reasoned with God until the plagues began to come. However, as soon as each plague was over, Pharaoh began once again to reason with the Lord. Therefore, God sent one plague after another.

Very few receive the gospel without hesitation or consideration. In order to deal with this kind of bargaining, God sends plagues again and again.

B. Offering to Let Israel Sacrifice to Their God in Egypt

The second stage of Pharaoh's bargaining is seen in his telling Moses and Aaron, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land" (8:25). Here Pharaoh was telling them that they could sacrifice to their God provided that they stay in the land of Egypt. There was no need for them to make a journey into the wilderness. Pharaoh admitted that there was a

God and that His people were required to serve Him and sacrifice to Him. But he was not willing for them to leave his country. They could sacrifice to God, provided that they remained in Egypt.

To this subtle proposal Moses replied, "It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to Jehovah our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?" (8:26). Moses knew that what God's people would sacrifice to the Lord would be an abomination to the Egyptians. What God accepted, the Egyptians would reject. Therefore, they could not sacrifice to God in Egypt.

Hardening his heart, Pharaoh refused to hearken to Moses. Then God sent another plague. Surely Satan and the natural man should see the futility of arguing with God! He is great, and He has a way to deal with us. When we have finished reasoning with Him, He simply exercises His finger to deal with us by means of another plague.

C. Offering to Let Israel Go a Short Distance to Sacrifice to Their God in the Wilderness

In the third stage of his subtle bargaining, Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to Jehovah your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away" (8:28, Heb.). If the children of Israel had agreed not to go very far away, Pharaoh could have reached them whenever he wanted them. Sometimes today's Pharaohs will allow us to believe in the Lord Jesus, just as long as we do not go to what they regard as an extreme. They encourage us to be balanced and not to go too far. For example, parents may say to their children, "When I was young, I also believed in Jesus. But you are too extreme in following the Lord. You don't need to go to meetings several times a week. Isn't an hour on Sunday morning enough? It's all right to believe in Jesus, but don't be fanatical about it."

After Pharaoh reasoned with God in this way, the Lord sent still another plague. He does the same with today's

Pharaohs. When the natural man strives against God, God sends a plague upon him.

D. Offering to Let Only the Men Go to Serve Their God

Unable to bear the plagues, Pharaoh became willing to let the men of Israel go to serve their God, but not with the young and the old (10:8-11). When Pharaoh asked who would go to serve the Lord, Moses said, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go" (10:9). Then Pharaoh began to reason once more, saying that evil was before them (v. 10). Pharaoh went on to say, "Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve Jehovah" (v. 11, Heb.). Pharaoh was claiming that he loved them, cared for them, and wanted no evil to befall them. How subtle!

Many are like this today. The parents of a young person may say to him, "As an older one, I know the trials of human life. You don't know what evil lies before you in the future. Therefore, I counsel you to believe in the Lord Jesus and to follow Him, but not in a full way. If you follow wholeheartedly, you don't know what will happen to you." Here Pharaoh used love to keep people from the Lord. As long as Pharaoh could still hold the wives, the young ones, and the elderly, the men would not truly leave Egypt, for their hearts would still be in Egypt. Because Pharaoh refused to let the children of Israel go in a full way, a more severe plague, the plague of the locusts, came upon the Egyptians.

E. Offering to Let Israel Go to Serve Their God, but Not with Their Flocks and Herds

The plague of the locusts forced Pharaoh to bargain with the Lord once more. This time he said, "Go ye, serve Jehovah; only let your flocks and your herds remain: let your little ones also go with you" (10:24, Heb.). This suggestion was also subtle. Moses answered Pharaoh in an excellent

way: "Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto Jehovah our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve Jehovah our God" (10:25-26, Heb.). Moses did not say that the people needed cattle for their living; the cattle were needed to provide something to sacrifice to the Lord. This indicates that Moses was concerned not for the people's living, but for having something to offer to God. They cared for God's need, not for their own need. Therefore, they would not agree that their flocks and herds remain in Egypt. Angered by Moses' reply, Pharaoh forbade them to come again.

Many of us have gone through these five steps of bargaining with the Lord. Firstly we denied the Lord, and then we believed but wanted to remain in Egypt. Then we were willing to leave Egypt, but not to go too far. After that followed the negotiation concerning what would be left in Egypt. Pharaoh knows that where one's riches are, there his heart is also (Matt. 6:21). If Pharaoh can keep our wealth, our hearts will be in his hand.

Many Christians today believe in the Lord Jesus, but they do so without changing their position. They remain in Egypt, in the world. However, if we remain in Egypt after believing in the Lord, our sins may be forgiven, but we shall not be rescued from the tyranny of Satan. To remain in Egypt is to remain under Satan's tyranny.

Other Christians are willing to move a short distance away from Egypt. In doing this, they may boast of their cleverness, thinking that they are wise and balanced. They are pleased to point out that they are not extremists.

Other Christians are in the third, fourth, or fifth stages of bargaining with God. Satan is willing to let them go, but not their young ones. A great many Christians still have their wealth and possessions in the world. This indicates that they have not yet made an exodus. Their baptism should have been the crossing of the Red Sea, but it was merely a ritual for them to become part of religion. We

thank the Lord that the vast majority of those in the Lord's recovery have made an exodus out of Egypt.

These five stages of bargaining are repeated whenever the gospel is preached. It is rare that someone is saved thoroughly the first time he hears the gospel. Most people struggle, hesitate, and bargain. Eventually the finger of God is exercised on their behalf. We may use our mind to bargain with the Lord and to reason with Him. But God pays no attention to our reasoning. When our bargaining is over, He once again exercises His power over our situation.

III. GOD'S INSISTENCE

A. On His Absolute Demand

No matter how much Pharaoh may bargain with God, God is insistent. Nothing can change Him. Once He has made a demand of us, He will not give in. On the contrary, He will insist that His demand be fulfilled. It is useless to argue with Him. He is patient, sometimes waiting for years until we are willing to submit to His requirements. We may think that after a long period of time the Lord will change His mind, only to discover that the Lord is more insistent than ever. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His will remains. Pharaoh must recognize the fact that God is insistent and will not withdraw His absolute demand.

B. Using the Last Plague to Force Pharaoh to Drive Israel out of Egypt

In His insistence that His demand be carried out, the Lord used the last plague, the slaughter of the firstborn, to force Pharaoh to drive Israel altogether out of Egypt (12:29-33). No matter how stubborn Pharaoh was, he could not stand against this plague. Pharaoh said to Moses and Aaron, "Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve Jehovah, as ye have said" (12:31, Heb.). Furthermore, Pharaoh said to them, "Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone" (v. 32).

C. Making the Egyptians Willing to Give Israel Jewels and Raiment

Exodus 12:35 and 36 say, "And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and Jehovah gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they gave to them what they asked. And they plundered the Egyptians" (Heb.). God made the Egyptians willing to give to Israel these jewels and raiment. In this way, the children of Israel plundered the Egyptians. Therefore, when it was time to build the tabernacle, they had the necessary materials.

Some may think that God was not just in allowing Israel to plunder the Egyptians in this way. Remember, Pharaoh had forced the Israelites to build treasure cities for him. For this labor he did not pay them anything. Hence, the plundering of the Egyptians was actually a clearing of the account. In His justice and righteousness, God had a way to clear the account. How marvelous that the last plague not only forced Pharaoh and the Egyptians to drive out the children of Israel, but also made them willing to give the Israelites whatever they requested!

Even the matter of plundering the Egyptians has an application today. I know of many who first bargained with the Lord and then were truly saved by Him. Having been saved, they thoroughly plundered the world and brought a good number of things with them out of the world for the Lord. Many can testify that after they were called and saved, they left nothing in the world. Instead, everything they had they took out of the world for God's purpose.

We have pointed out that the materials given to the Israelites by the Egyptians were used in building the tabernacle. The silver was used to make sockets, and the gold was used to overlay the boards and other furnishings in the tabernacle. In the eyes of the Egyptians, such a use of their gold and silver would have been a waste. In the eyes of God, however, this was not a waste. The wealth of Egypt had been plundered for God's purpose.

Throughout the centuries, many who have been called by the Lord and rescued by Him from the world have brought a great many things to Him to become a waste for His sake and for the sake of His purpose. For example, when Mary anointed the Lord Jesus with costly ointment of spikenard, Judas regarded this as a waste. He said that it could have been sold and the money given to the poor (John 12:3-5). He wondered why so much had been wasted on the Lord Jesus. But all that is plundered from the world should be brought to the Lord Jesus and wasted upon Him. To do this is to be saved to the uttermost. This is a sign of our deep love for the Lord, a sign that we have been thoroughly saved. Eventually, what we plunder from the world is brought together to be used for God's dwelling place.

This is our experience today. Not only have we ourselves left Egypt, but we will not allow anything related to us to remain in the world. Instead, we plunder the wealth of the world and waste it upon the Lord as a token of our love for Him. This plundered wealth then is used in God's dwelling place on earth.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWENTY-ONE

THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART

In this message we come to a very difficult matter: the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. The argument concerning this is related to whether God hardened Pharaoh's heart or Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Regarding the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, Moses uses various expressions. In 4:21 God says, "I will harden his heart." However, in 8:15 Moses says that Pharaoh "hardened his heart." Furthermore, in 9:7 we are told that "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened," and in 9:35 that "the heart of Pharaoh was hard." On the one hand, 10:1 says that the Lord "hardened his heart," but, on the other hand, in 10:20 we see that the Lord "made Pharaoh's heart hard" (Heb.). According to the meaning of the Hebrew words used, Pharaoh's heart became not only hard, but also stubborn and obstinate. The fact that Moses uses different words to describe the hardening of Pharaoh's heart indicates the seriousness of this matter.

I. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

The Bible says clearly both that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and that Pharaoh hardened his heart himself. Some of those who do not believe the Bible argue that God was wrong in hardening Pharaoh's heart. At the time Paul wrote the book of Romans, such arguments had already begun. Therefore, Paul appealed to God's sovereignty and asked, "But, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why did you make me thus?" (Rom. 9:20). In the next verse Paul goes on to say, "Has not the potter authority over the clay, out of the same lump to make one vessel to honor and

another to dishonor?" Here Paul says that as the Creator, God has the sovereign authority to do whatever He likes. Who are we to argue with Him? We need to recognize that we are clay and that God is the potter. He has the authority out of the same lump to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor. He has the right to make vessels of wrath (v. 22) as well as vessels of mercy (v. 23).

Do you consider yourself a vessel of wrath or a vessel of mercy? On the one hand, the kind of vessel we are is absolutely a matter of God's sovereignty. But, on the other hand, it depends on what we say of ourselves. Like so many other things in the universe, there are two sides here, God's side and man's side. If we say that we are vessels of wrath, that is what we are. But if we say that we are vessels of mercy and of honor unto glory, then we are such vessels.

In Romans 9:16 Paul says, "So then, it is not of the one who wills, nor of the one who runs, but of God, the One who shows mercy." To be a vessel of mercy and of honor unto glory does not depend on our willing or our running, but on God's mercy to us. It is of God's sovereign mercy that we are vessels of mercy. We were not the ones who decided to become vessels of mercy. God made this decision before we were born. Only because of God's sovereignty are we able to say that we are vessels of mercy. In ourselves and of ourselves we have no right to say this. As the One with authority over the clay, the Potter has chosen to make us vessels of mercy. However, our confession that we are vessels of mercy is a proof that God has made us so.

II. GOD'S MERCY

A. According to His Own Will

God's mercy is according to His will. In Romans 9:18 Paul concludes, "He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills." We cannot explain why God has willed to show mercy to us. The only thing we can say is that, according to God's will, the mercy of God has been extended to us. Regarding this, the Bible is emphatic.

According to Romans 9:18, God may will either to show mercy or to harden. This is illustrated by the cases of Moses and Pharaoh. Moses was one to whom God willed to show His mercy, whereas Pharaoh was one whom God willed to harden. In Romans 9:15 Paul quotes God's word to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." This indicates that the mercy shown to us is altogether according to God's own will.

B. In His Sovereignty

Furthermore, God's mercy is in His sovereignty (Rom. 9:20-23). The only thing we can say to explain God's mercy to us is that in His sovereignty He has chosen to be merciful to us. Consider the case of Esau and Jacob. Who can say why God willed to choose Jacob and not Esau? All we can say is that in His sovereignty God chose the one and not the other. God's selection is absolutely according to His sovereignty.

As those favored by God, we should not only thank Him for His mercy, but also worship Him for His sovereignty. There are hymns on God's mercy, but it is very difficult to find a hymn on God's sovereignty. When it comes to writing hymns on God's sovereignty, we have little to say. Along with Paul, we need to be brought to God's sovereignty. Instead of reasoning with Him, we should say, "O Father God, I worship You for Your sovereignty. Although I am not worthy, in Your sovereignty You have willed to show me Your mercy." Never presume to touch the sovereignty of God. Heed Paul's warning when he asks, "Who are you that replies against God?" (Rom. 9:20). If we realize that we are nothing more than clay, we shall not argue with God. Rather, we shall simply worship Him for His sovereignty.

III. MAN'S FREE WILL

In the universe there are three things that cannot be denied: God's sovereignty, God's mercy, and man's free will.

God's sovereignty and mercy are both divine and eternal, without beginning or ending. Man's free will, on the contrary, is something created by God. In creating man with a free will, God displayed His greatness. Because He is great, He does not force us to choose Him. Rather, He leaves us free to make our own choice.

The fact that God granted man a free choice also reveals His wisdom and love. No one who is great, wise, and loving compels others to do things. Instead, such a person will always respect the free will of others and say, "The choice is yours. If you want to do this, you may choose to do so. You must make the decision." Whether we take God or reject Him is a matter of our choice. Genesis 2 proves that man has a free will. According to this chapter, God placed the man created by Him in front of two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and man was free to choose between them. When I was young, I thought God was mistaken in allowing the second tree to be in the garden. It seemed to me that if there had been only one tree, the tree of life, there could have been no problem. But in His greatness, wisdom, and love, God gave man the opportunity to choose Him by placing him in front of two trees.

According to Genesis 3, Eve deliberately chose to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. In making this decision, she exercised her discernment and free will. In the same principle, we must decide whether or not to believe in the Lord Jesus. Furthermore, after receiving Him, we must choose whether or not we shall seek Him. Some may think that the situation in the universe would be wonderful if Satan did not exist. Nevertheless, it is a fact that both God and Satan, both life and death, are present and we must choose between them.

IV. PHARAOH'S HARDENING OF HIS HEART

With this as the background, we come to the problem of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Did God firstly harden Pharaoh's heart, or did Pharaoh take the first step to

harden his own heart? As a help in answering this question, consider your experience in believing in the Lord Jesus. Was this initiated by you or by God? Surely it was initiated by God. However, you did the believing. Before I was saved, I had no thought of God. My believing in Christ was neither planned nor initiated by me. I have the full assurance that the source of this was God Himself. He planned it, initiated it, and scheduled it. Before I was saved, I was not willing to believe in Christ. However, one day I spontaneously became willing. According to my experience and yours as well, God took the first step to cause us to believe in Christ.

In the same principle, God took the first step in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Before Moses had his first confrontation with Pharaoh, God told him that He would harden Pharaoh's heart (4:21). However, in the case of our salvation, God initiated our believing in the Lord Jesus, but He did not execute it by believing for us. God planned that we should believe, but we ourselves had to believe. Likewise, God firstly hardened Pharaoh's heart, then Pharaoh carried out this hardening through his own free will.

Here we see God's sovereignty and man's free will. Instead of being contradictory, these two correspond. Pharaoh could not escape responsibility in this matter and place it all on God. He had his own free will.

On the one hand, we must worship God for His sovereignty, but, on the other hand, we must fulfill our responsibility. God's sovereignty does not contradict our free will, and our free will does not contradict His sovereignty. If we see this, we shall humble ourselves under God's sovereignty and spontaneously take up our responsibility. We shall say, "Lord, everything is according to Your sovereignty. Nevertheless, I must carry out my responsibility." The more we are willing to bear our responsibility, the stronger is the sign that we have been predestinated by God.

The Bible firstly says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. But the Bible also says that Pharaoh hardened his heart. This shows both God's sovereignty and man's free

will. We must always humble ourselves and say, "Lord, You are sovereign. But I must still carry out my responsibility." This attitude indicates that we are favored by God. Suppose, however, that we have the attitude that because everything is according to God's sovereignty, we are not responsible to do anything. This is a sign that we have denied God. Pharaoh could not absolve himself of responsibility, and Moses could not boast of his deeds. In this way, God shut every mouth. Moses had no room to boast. Neither did Pharaoh have an excuse not to bear responsibility.

God's sovereignty and our responsibility are both involved in our spiritual seeking. All proper spiritual seeking is planned and scheduled by God. But we are still responsible to seek the Lord. When we seek Him, we should not be proud. Rather, we should humble ourselves and confess that our seeking of the Lord is according to His sovereignty. At the same time, we fulfill our responsibility. If we are indifferent toward the Lord, we are in danger of not fulfilling our responsibility. But if we are zealous in pursuing the Lord, we must be careful not to boast of our spiritual seeking. Once again we see that we need to humble ourselves under God's sovereignty and, at the same time, carry out our responsibility. If we are conscious of God's sovereignty and our responsibility, we are truly favored by God.

We have pointed out that some verses say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, whereas other verses say that God made Pharaoh's heart hard. In the same principle, in some places we are told that Pharaoh hardened his heart (8:15, 19) but elsewhere, that Pharaoh's heart was hard (7:13, Heb.). There is a difference between hardening the heart and the heart becoming hard. In Exodus we are told both that Pharaoh hardened his heart and that his heart became hard. This indicates that Pharaoh firstly hardened his heart. The result was that his heart became hard. Hence, the heart being hard was the consequence of the hardening of the heart. Before Pharaoh hardened his heart, it was still possible for his heart to be softened. But instead of softening his heart, Pharaoh

hardened it. The same is true today. Before a person hardens his heart, his heart is not hard. To some extent at least, it is soft. But once he decides to harden his heart, his heart becomes hard.

We can learn an important lesson from this: Never allow anything negative to develop toward the Lord. Before this negative thing arises, you still have two choices—to be for God or to be against Him. But once something negative comes forth and your heart is hardened, you will have only one choice, and that is to reject God.

From the way Pharaoh dealt with his heart we can see how God dealt with Pharaoh's heart. Firstly, God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and then He made his heart hard. After God had hardened Pharaoh's heart, He could have softened it. However, He did not do so. Instead, He kept Pharaoh's heart in a hardened condition. This means that God made Pharaoh's heart hard. In the beginning, God hardened Pharaoh's heart; then He made Pharaoh's heart hard. In other words, God did not intervene to change what He had done to Pharaoh's heart.

If we allow something negative to develop toward the Lord, there will be a serious issue. God may not change this result. Rather, He may allow it to continue, just as He did not show mercy to Pharaoh, but let him stand by himself in order to show forth His power in him (Rom. 9:17). Once you harden your heart, your heart will become hard and remain hard. This is on your side. On God's side, He firstly hardens your heart and then He may refuse to change what He has done. Firstly, He hardens the heart and then He keeps it hard. This warns us to take heed lest any negative thing arise within us. Once this negative thing produces a particular result, that result will remain. It may be that not even God Himself will change it. He may allow it to remain as it is.

I believe Moses used various expressions to describe the hardening of Pharaoh's heart so that we might learn to humble ourselves before God's sovereignty, to take up our responsibility, and to guard ourselves from allowing negative things to develop toward God. Once these things develop,

it is very difficult to change the result they cause. Instead, the condition remains and may even worsen. Let us learn from the example of Pharaoh. He allowed something evil to begin, and the result remained permanently. What a serious warning this is!

Throughout the years, I have seen many cases of those who allowed negative things to develop. At first, there were two choices in front of them, and it was still possible for them to change their direction. But once they made the negative choice, there was no turning back. From that time onward, there was no change of the condition or the consequence resulting from their choice.

Be careful of any negative thing rising up. Never regard such a thing as insignificant. Do not say to yourself that you will do a certain thing and change later. You may desire to change, but the result of your choice may not allow you to change. Furthermore, God may not have the intention to change such a negative situation.

We need to worship God for His sovereignty, thank Him for His mercy, carry out our responsibility, and keep negative things from arising between us and the Lord. Then we shall be in God's favor, a Moses, not a Pharaoh. We need to look to the Lord that we may be not vessels of wrath like Pharaoh, but, like Moses, vessels of mercy and honor unto glory.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWENTY-TWO

GOD'S DEMAND AND PHARAOH'S RESISTANCE

(6)

In this message we come to the last conflict between God and Pharaoh. This conflict issued in the tenth plague, the slaughter of the firstborn (11:1-10; 12:29-36).

XII. THE TWELFTH CONFLICT

A. On God's Side

In His dealings with Pharaoh God was patient. He sent Moses to negotiate with Pharaoh twelve times. Recently, as I was considering this, I was surprised that the almighty God, the Creator, could be so patient with Pharaoh. Time after time God had sent a plague upon the Egyptians, but Pharaoh still continued to resist His demand.

Exodus 9:16 says, "But for this cause have I made thee stand, in order to show thee my power; and in order to declare my name throughout all the earth" (Heb.). This verse, God's word to Pharaoh, indicates that it was God who made Pharaoh to stand. Now we can understand why Pharaoh was so strong to reject God's demand. Here we see two aspects of God's sovereignty. On the one hand, God hardened Pharaoh's heart (11:10). On the other hand, God made him to stand. Because God had hardened Pharaoh's heart, Pharaoh would not submit to the Lord's dealings. Furthermore, realizing that Pharaoh, in himself, was not strong enough to stand against Him, God made him to stand. Otherwise, God would have lost the opportunity to make His power known and to declare His name throughout the earth.

I believe that in history Pharaoh is unique in refusing to

submit to God's demands. Not even Nebuchadnezzar stood against God the way Pharaoh did. Although Moses, God's representative, came to Pharaoh again and again, Pharaoh was not subdued.

In Romans 9 Paul was involved in an argument related to God's selection. In the course of this argument, he appealed to God's sovereignty. Using Pharaoh as an example, Paul pointed out that the Lord "has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills" (v. 18). It is all according to God's sovereign will. Paul also quoted the Lord's word to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (v. 15). Here Paul spoke very boldly. According to His sovereign will, God willed to have mercy on Moses, and He willed to harden Pharaoh.

Twelve times Moses, an elderly man, came to negotiate with Pharaoh on the Lord's behalf. Pharaoh, the troubled one, could do nothing with Moses, the troubling one, because Moses was backed by the sovereign Lord. The One in the heavens was standing with Moses. Moses, therefore, is an example of one who had received mercy from God, whereas Pharaoh is an example of one who was wholly set aside by God. Although God set Pharaoh aside, He still used him. Not only was Moses useful to the Lord, but Pharaoh was useful also. Can you believe that Pharaoh also was useful to the Lord? In your heart you probably believe that only Moses was useful to Him. Actually, they were both needed and they were both used.

If Pharaoh had suddenly died after the first or second conflict, Moses' job would have been cut short, and God would have lost His opportunity to show forth His power and to declare His name. Hence, God needed Pharaoh, and He needed him to stand throughout the twelve conflicts. God made Pharaoh strong to stand throughout these conflicts in order that His purpose might be fulfilled.

If we did not have the book of Exodus with its twelve conflicts between God and Pharaoh, we would not know God adequately with respect to His sovereignty. It is easy to know

God's love, but difficult to know His sovereignty. Through the twelve conflicts and the ten plagues that transpired over a period of time, God's sovereignty was made known. Throughout the course of Moses' negotiations with Pharaoh, God came in to manifest His sovereignty.

Sovereignty denotes absolute right, authority, and power. As the sovereign One, God has the right to do anything and to make any decision. Sovereignty is one of God's attributes.

In His sovereignty God used Pharaoh in addition to using Moses. Without Moses, Pharaoh would not have been useful in this aspect. Likewise, without Pharaoh, Moses would not have been useful. Pharaoh and Moses were a match. One made the demands, the other resisted them, and neither budged even an inch. Each time Moses met with Pharaoh, Moses was more demanding and Pharaoh was more obstinate. Pharaoh was never subdued; he refused to give in. In the confrontation between these two we see a portrait of God's sovereignty.

God's sovereignty is also manifested in the plagues, which caused damage to human living conditions in Egypt. The blood ruined the water, and the frogs disturbed the Egyptians' peace and comfort. In the plagues of the lice and the flies, the soil and the air were damaged. After the flies came the pestilence, and then the plague of the boils that broke forth with blisters. The plague of hail damaged the environment, and the locusts devoured all that remained after the severe damage caused by the hail. Finally, the plague of darkness made it impossible for anyone to move. But even after these nine plagues had passed, Pharaoh still was not subdued, although the entire environment related to human living in Egypt had been damaged. God continued to harden Pharaoh's heart and to strengthen him that he might stand.

All this is not a question of God's love, but of God's sovereignty. In Romans 9 Paul does not deal with the love of God, but with the sovereignty of God. God's sovereignty is especially seen in Pharaoh, and His mercy is seen in particular with Moses. Therefore, in the confrontation between Moses

and Pharaoh, we see a display of God's sovereignty on the one hand and of His mercy on the other.

While the angels were killing the firstborn of the Egyptians, God preserved the children of Israel and their beasts in peace and calm, even stilling the barking of the dogs. After Pharaoh was subdued by the slaughter of the firstborn, God still caused Israel to plunder the Egyptians of their gold, silver, and raiment. This was all under God's sovereignty.

B. On Pharaoh's Side

Pharaoh's stubbornness forced God to slaughter the firstborn. Especially in ancient times, the firstborn represented the strong one and the most lovable one. Even today parents may lavish special care upon their firstborn child. In the tenth and last plague, the firstborn of the Egyptians and even the firstborn of their beasts were killed.

When I was young, I disagreed with God regarding the slaughter of the firstborn. Now I can see that God did this according to His sovereignty. There was no need for Him to gain man's approval before taking this action. He simply gave commandment to the angels, and they carried it out. Do not reason that in doing this God was not loving. Remember, according to the Bible, God is not only loving, but also sovereign. Elsewhere in the Scriptures we see that God is full of mercy and rich in kindness and forgiveness. The New Testament clearly declares that God is love. But the very God who is love came in, according to His sovereignty, to slaughter the firstborn.

In 12:30 we are told that among the Egyptians there was "not a house where there was not one dead." This slaughter took place at midnight (12:29), the time when people usually enjoy the best sleep. That was the time the angels came to slay the firstborn, the strongest and most lovable ones in all the families in Egypt. By this last plague Pharaoh was subdued (11:1; 12:21-30, 33). He and his servants rose up in the night and called for Moses and Aaron, telling them that they

and the children of Israel should go forth out of Egypt and serve the Lord. Pharaoh was subdued to such an extent he was willing to let all Israel go, not only with their little ones, but also with their flocks and herds (12:31-32). He even asked Moses and Aaron to bless him. He and all the Egyptians actually drove the children of Israel out of Egypt (v. 33). The Egyptians were even willing to give the children of Israel whatever they asked. They were willing for the whole nation to be plundered by Israel (v. 36).

When the slaughter of the firstborn of the Egyptians was taking place, the children of Israel were preserved from any kind of bothering and were at rest, enjoying God's salvation. Exodus 11:7 says, "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know that Jehovah doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel" (Heb.). Where God's people were, there was no disturbance at all. Under God's sovereignty, the dogs were not even allowed to bark. While the Egyptians were weeping and crying out, the children of Israel were enjoying a pleasant time. This also manifests God's sovereignty.

Although Pharaoh was subdued by the last plague, he was only subdued temporarily. After the children of Israel had left Egypt, Pharaoh regretted what he had done and pursued them with chariots. Once again, Pharaoh's heart became hard. This also was according to God's sovereignty so that the Egyptians might know that He is the Lord (14:4). Only after the Egyptian forces had been buried in the Red Sea was the Lord finished with Pharaoh. God had no further use for him. Do not say that in His dealings with Pharaoh God was not loving. Once again I must point out that here the question is not love, but sovereignty.

Praise the Lord that in these chapters in Exodus we see the sovereignty of God! We need to worship God for His sovereignty. We should say, "Lord, I worship You for Your sovereignty because Your sovereignty reflects Your mercy. Lord, I am weak and sinful. Sometimes I am even rebellious. But I thank You, Lord, that my heart has been softened and is

always willing to repent. Lord, I thank You for giving me such a soft heart." If you do not know that you should worship God for His sovereignty, you may not realize His mercy to you. But if you know God's sovereignty, you will thank Him for His mercy. You will realize, even as you come to the meetings of the church, that you are under the Lord's sovereign mercy. Consider how many people are involved with sinful things or with worldly things. But we desire to come together in the Lord's presence, to listen to His word, to seek what is on His heart, and to practice being one with Him. This is according to God's sovereign mercy. Praise Him that we are under His sovereign mercy!

It is of the Lord's mercy that we can attend the church meetings. Many of us can testify that the happiest nights of the week are the meeting nights. If there were no meetings to attend, what would we do with all our time? In our free time we would be miserable. Praise the Lord that, according to His sovereign mercy, we can come together in the meetings!

The more we recognize God's sovereignty, the more grateful we shall be for His mercy. Hallelujah, God's mercy has been sovereignly bestowed upon us! By His mercy, we are not stubborn like Pharaoh. Sometimes we may be stubborn, but in the Lord's sovereign grace, we can be stubborn only for a short while. Then we repent, either to the Lord or to one we have wronged. This desire to repent is the Lord's mercy to us.

The morning is an excellent time for us to repent and make confession to the Lord. I thank the Lord that every morning we can have a new beginning. As we spend time with Him, we may realize that we have made mistakes. Then we repent, confess, and experience a genuine spiritual cleansing. What a mercy that we are willing to repent, to confess, and to be cleansed by the Lord! This shows that we are destined not to be Pharaohs, but to be sons of God, sons of mercy.

We should not read these chapters in Exodus as a mere story. These chapters are a valuable portrait revealing the

sovereignty of God. Thank the Lord that in the Bible there is a section dedicated to showing forth God's sovereignty. We need to ponder these chapters again and again, until we see God's sovereignty and worship Him for it. For years we may have worshipped God for His love, but not for His sovereignty. Now we must worship Him as the sovereign One. We should say, "Lord, You are the sovereign God. Because of Your sovereign mercy, I am one of Your children. Hallelujah, You have predestinated me to be one of Your sons, not to be a Pharaoh." In a time when so many are given to worldly entertainments, we have the desire to seek the Lord and to meet together in His presence. In God's sovereign mercy, our hearts have been inclined to Him. Because of His mercy to us, we seek Him day by day. Praise Him that we are not today's Pharaoh, but today's Moses!

In the conflicts between God and Pharaoh we also can learn the proper way to work for God. The proper way is not to labor or to endeavor, but to represent Him. Just as Moses was sent by God, so we also must be sent by Him.

Exodus 11:3 says, "The man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people." Moses did not fight or even work hard. As God's representative, he simply came to see Pharaoh again and again. Moses did not come on his own. Every time he came, he came as one sent by God. Furthermore, he did not speak to Pharaoh on his own. He always spoke what the Lord had told him to say, letting Pharaoh know what God required of him. Therefore, Pharaoh was actually not listening to Moses and dealing with him; he was listening to God and dealing with God. Moses was God's ambassador, God's sent one. The way to work for God is to be such a representative of God.

I would remind the co-workers that there is no need for us to endeavor so much. This does not mean that we should be idle or lazy. It means that we should spend more time to contact the Lord. In our prayer, we should not pray so much for our work. Instead, we should pray to touch the Lord, to know His heart, and to sense His feeling. We need to stay in

His presence until He saturates our being. Then we shall represent Him, and He will send us forth. Remember, it is not up to him who runs nor to him who wills, but to God, the One who shows mercy (Rom. 9:16). There is no need for us to run or to will. Our need is to represent God and to be His sent ones.

An apostle is a sent one. He is sent by the person he represents. As God's sent ones, we need to have the assurance that wherever we may be, we are there as God's representatives. We are insignificant and very weak. Actually, we are nothing. But we represent God. As God's representatives, we do not speak our own words or carry out our own work. We are the bush, and the Lord is the fire burning in the midst of the bush. The fire and the bush are one. When we are in this reality, it is difficult to distinguish the bush from the fire. This reminds us of Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 6:17: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The proper way to work for God is to have the assurance that we represent the One whom we love and serve. Wherever we go, we go not by ourselves, but with Him and in Him.

In these chapters in Exodus we see both the stubborn Pharaoh and Moses, God's representative. By Pharaoh God made Himself manifest as the sovereign God, but in Moses God had one to represent Him and to execute His will. Praise the Lord that none of us are Pharaoh but we all are Moses, those who are one with the Lord! In His sovereignty and mercy, wherever we go, we go with the Lord, we represent Him, and we execute His will. May we all worship the Lord for His sovereignty and thank Him for His mercy!

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWENTY-THREE

THE PASSOVER

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 12:1-10, 13, 23, 46b; 13:4; Luke 22:7-8, 14-15; John 19:33, 36; 1 Cor. 5:7

God's revelation in the Bible is presented in a practical way, not in the way of doctrinal understanding. Because the divine revelation comes in a practical way, it is always living. However, if it were given in a way of doctrine, the result would be death. In particular, the Passover is presented not as a doctrine, but in relation to a practical need. The Passover portrayed in Exodus 12 is a clear, adequate, and even all-inclusive type of the redemption of Christ. Nowhere else in the Scriptures is the redemption of Christ presented in such a full way.

I. A TYPE OF CHRIST

All Christians know that Christ is the Lamb of God who accomplished redemption for us (John 1:29). However, not many have seen a clear picture of Christ as the redeeming Lamb of God. This picture is presented in Exodus 12.

You may not understand the significance of certain details in this picture. For example, why was the blood put on the lintel and the doorposts (12:22) rather than on the roof? Why did God tell the children of Israel to use a bunch of hyssop to sprinkle the blood on the lintel and doorposts? What was the reason for eating bitter herbs along with the flesh of the lamb? We could ask question upon question. Few Christians are able to answer questions such as these.

We all need to see a clear picture of Christ's redemption. Although the New Testament reveals the various aspects of redemption, these aspects are not systematized in a doctrinal way. John 1:29 says that Christ is the Lamb of God, and in 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul speaks of Christ as the Passover. Here and there in the New Testament we see aspects of Christ's redemption. In Exodus 12, however, we have a complete picture. We need to consider this picture carefully; then to interpret it properly, we need to turn to other portions of the Word, especially to the New Testament.

The Passover is a type of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul says that "Our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed." Here Paul does not say that Christ is our lamb; he says that Christ is our Passover. But how could the Passover be sacrificed? The answer is that Christ is not only the Passover lamb, but also every aspect of the Passover. The lamb, the bread, and the bitter herbs are all related to Christ. In principle, therefore, Christ is not only the lamb of the Passover, but the very Passover itself.

The word Passover means that the judgment of God passes over us. In Exodus 12:13 the Lord says, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Eventually, the Passover became a proper noun in English. The proper noun Passover has its source in the words "pass over" in 12:13.

But why is Christ called our Passover? According to Exodus 12, God passed over the children of Israel because the blood of the Passover lamb had been sprinkled on the lintel and the doorposts of their houses. The children of Israel had been commanded to eat the flesh of the lamb in their houses. This indicates that the house was to be their covering under which and in which they could eat the flesh of the Passover lamb. The house that covered them was to have blood sprinkled on the lintel and the doorposts. When God saw the blood, He passed over the children of Israel. Hence, this passing over was due to the sprinkled blood.

With Paul, however, we see that the Passover is related not only to the blood, but to Christ Himself. Are we today

under the blood, or are we in Christ? Strictly speaking, to say that we are under the blood is not scriptural. This phrase is not found in the New Testament. But the New Testament says repeatedly that we are in Christ. According to 1 Corinthians 1:30, it is of God that we are in Christ. Because we are in Christ, He Himself becomes our Passover. This means that before Christ can be our Passover, He must first be our covering. Our covering today is not the blood; it is Christ. In Exodus 12 the Passover was based on the blood. But today our Passover is based on Christ. This is the reason Paul could say that Christ is our Passover.

If you were asked to list the items of the Passover in Exodus 12, you would probably mention the lamb, the flesh, the blood, the unleavened bread, and the herbs. But probably you would not include the house. The house in Exodus 12 is a type of Christ. At the end of Genesis 3, we see that God used skins to cover Adam and Eve (v. 21). In Genesis 4 Abel "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof" and presented them to the Lord (v. 4). Through this offering, Abel was accepted by God. Later we read that Noah was charged to build an ark, which may be regarded as a floating house. This ark was a type of Christ into whom we have been placed by God. Noah and his family entered into the ark and in it they were saved from the flood. These instances indicate that the revelation in the Bible is progressive. In Genesis 3:21 we have the coats of skins; in Genesis 4:4, the offering of the firstlings of the flock; and in Genesis 6 and 7, the ark made by Noah.

In the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob we do not have a clear record of redemption. For this, we must go to the experience of the children of Israel recorded in Exodus 12. Here is the full development of God's redemption that is first indicated in Genesis 3. In Genesis 3 we have the skins, in Genesis 4 we have the offering, and in Genesis 6 and 7 we have the ark. Now in Exodus 12 we have set before us the full development of God's redemption. Here the ark becomes the house, a type of Christ, in which and by which

the children of Israel were covered. This is the reason that no verse in the New Testament says that we are under the covering of the blood of Christ. However, a number of verses, especially in the Epistles, indicate that we are in Christ. According to Galatians 3, God has put us into Christ, and we are now in Christ. Because Christ is the house that covers us, He is our Passover. He is not only the lamb, the unleavened bread, and the herbs; He is also the house whose lintel and doorposts have been sprinkled with the redeeming blood.

II. THE TIME OF THE PASSOVER

The time of the Passover is related to a certain month and a certain date. The Hebrew people had two calendars, a sacred calendar and a civil calendar. The civil calendar was common, whereas the sacred calendar was related to the experience of God's salvation. We who believe in Christ also have two calendars, a civil calendar and a sacred calendar. Anyone who does not have a sacred age as well as a civil age is not a genuine believer in Christ and cannot share in Christ as the Passover. As God's redeemed ones, we have had two births, two beginnings: a physical birth with a physical beginning and a spiritual birth with a spiritual beginning. I can testify that I have had a second beginning, the beginning in the divine life. On the day we believed in the Lord Jesus, our age according to the sacred calendar began. On that day we had a new birth and a new beginning.

A. The Month

Exodus 12:2 speaks of the month of the Passover: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." This verse indicates that the Passover was held during the first month of the sacred year. Originally, this month was the seventh month of the civil year. According to Genesis 8:4, Noah's ark landed on the mountains of Ararat on the seventeenth day of the seventh month. Many Bible teachers believe that this seventh month

was the first month of Exodus 12. The Passover was on the fourteenth day of this month. This means it was held three days before the day that marked the landing of the ark on the mountains of Ararat. This landing of the ark was a type of the resurrection of Christ. Christ was killed on the fourteenth day, and He was resurrected on the seventeenth day.

Exodus 13:4 says, "This day came ye out in the month Abib." The word Abib means sprouting, budding, tender, and green, and it refers to green ears of wheat. After the Babylonian captivity, this month was called Nisan (Neh. 2:1; Esth. 3:7). Sprouting and budding signify the beginning of life's energy. Our experience confirms this. On the day we first called on the name of the Lord, believed in Him, and were saved, life began to bud and sprout from within us. Anyone who has not experienced this is not a genuine believer. We all can testify that after we believed in the Lord Jesus, something began to bud and sprout from within us. Eventually, this sprouting produced tender green ears of grain, the issue of the inner life. This indicates that the divine life within us is productive. It is a budding, sprouting, producing life. This began the day we were saved, and it is still going on today.

B. The Date

According to 12:3, in the tenth day of the month the children of Israel were to take "to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers," and prepare it for a period of four days. Then on the fourteenth day of the month, the actual date of the Passover, the lamb was killed (v. 6). The Lord Jesus was killed on the same day of the month (Luke 22:7-8, 14-15; John 18:28).

Fourteen days make up two weeks. In the Bible a week means a life, and the end of a week denotes the end of life. The Seventh-Day Adventists observe the seventh day, the end of the week. However, we enjoy the eighth day, the first day of the week, the beginning of a new week, a new beginning in resurrection (John 20:1). The fact that the Passover

was held on the fourteenth day of the month means that it was held at the end of two complete weeks. This indicates that the Passover ends the course of the old life. This means that Christ's death terminates the entire history of our old life.

We have pointed out that the children of Israel took the lamb on the tenth day of the month. After a lamb had been selected, it was examined for four days to test it, to find out whether or not it had blemishes. If you read the Gospels carefully, you will see that the Lord Jesus also was tested for four days. Like the lamb in Exodus 12, He had to be without blemish. During those four days, the Lord Jesus was examined by the congregation of Israel, as represented by the priests, elders, scribes, and Pharisees. Praise the Lord that He passed the test and was found to be without blemish! Therefore, at the end of those days, when the Passover had come, He was put to death.

The Lord Jesus was arrested on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. This day was also the day of the Passover. The feast of Passover takes place on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, which lasts a total of seven days. This means that when the Passover began, the feast of unleavened bread began also. However, the Passover lasted for one day, whereas the feast of unleavened bread continued for another six days. This is the reason that the feast of Passover could also be called the feast of unleavened bread. Hence, Luke 22:7 says, "And the day of Unleavened Bread came, on which the Passover must be sacrificed." The Lord Jesus was arrested during the night that preceded the day of the Passover feast. (The Jewish calendar counts from night to day rather than from day to night, just as Genesis 1 does.) Then Christ was crucified on the very day of the Passover. Therefore, His death was the exact fulfillment of the type. Furthermore, as we have pointed out, He was resurrected on the seventeenth day of the month, in fulfillment of the type of the ark resting on the mountains of Ararat on the seventeenth day of the same month.

III. THE LAMB OF THE PASSOVER

A. For the Unit of a House

In 12:3 the children of Israel were commanded to "take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house." The crucial point here is that the Passover lamb was not for every individual, but for every house. The unit of God's salvation is not the individual; it is the house, the family. For example, in Joshua 2 and 6 Rahab was saved with all her father's household. In Luke 19, the Lord Jesus said to Zaccheus the publican, "Today salvation has come to this house" (v. 9). According to Acts 11:14, the promise was made to Cornelius that he and all his house would be saved (v. 14). Furthermore, when the jailer asked what he must do to be saved, Paul and Silas told him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:30-31). These cases indicate that the unit of God's salvation is the house, not the individual.

Exodus 12:4 is a verse that is difficult to understand. "And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take one according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb" (Heb.). The households differed in size. If a man's house was too small for the lamb, he and his neighbor were to come together to take one lamb according to the number of the souls. Verse 4 indicates that the lamb was both according to the number of the souls and according to every man's eating. The lamb remained the same, but the houses differed in size. The lamb could not be too small for a house, but the house could be too small for the lamb.

It may seem that Moses' composition in verse 4 is awkward. Actually, he wrote in a very meaningful way. If we would understand this verse, we must pay attention to three things: that a household could be too small for the lamb and would need to come together with another household; that the lamb was taken according to the number of the souls;

and that the count for the lamb was made according to the eating of every man. If we put these three points together, we shall see that Christ is always sufficient. With Him there is no scarcity. The extent to which He can be enjoyed is both according to the number of people and according to our capacity to eat Him. If our capacity is large, Christ is adequate to supply us. If our capacity is limited, He can still meet our need. As the Passover lamb, Christ is all-sufficient. The very Christ typified by the Passover lamb has no scarcity. In every situation He can fully meet our need. It does not matter whether our family is large or small or whether it is joined together with another family. It does not matter how many souls there are or how large our appetite may be. Christ is sufficient to meet all our need.

B. Without Blemish

Exodus 12:5 says, "Your lamb shall be without blemish." To be without blemish is to be perfect. This signifies that Christ is perfect, without fault (John 8:46).

C. A Male of the First Year

Exodus 12:5 goes on to say that the lamb had to be "a male of the first year," taken either "out from the sheep, or from the goats." What does it mean that the lamb was to be a male of the first year? To be of the first year is to be fresh and not to be used for any other purpose. In the eyes of God, when the Lord Jesus was put on the cross, He was of the first year. He was fresh, never having been used for another purpose.

By the time we were saved, we had all been used for some other purpose. Some of us had been used for several different purposes. We were not at all fresh. I was saved at the age of nineteen and a half. However, in the eyes of God, I was much older, for I had already been used for other purposes. The Lord Jesus, on the contrary, was fresh and not used for another purpose.

Exodus 12:5 indicates that the lamb could be either of the sheep or of the goats. According to Matthew 25, sheep signify those who are good, and goats those who are bad. When Christ was on the cross, was He good or bad? In a very real sense He was both. At the time of His crucifixion, He was both a sheep and a goat, depending from what angle His crucifixion is considered. In Himself Christ was altogether good. However, as our substitute, He was sinful. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, He who knew no sin was made sin on our behalf.

D. Examined for Four Days

Just as the Passover lamb was examined for four days (12:3, 6), so Christ was examined for the same period of time. After He was arrested, the Lord was subject to six examinations, three at the hands of the priests who examined Him according to the law of God, and three under the Roman rulers, who tested Him according to Roman law. Eventually, Pilate had to declare that he could not find fault in Him. In fact, Pilate declared three times that he found no fault whatever in Him (John 18:38; 19:4, 6). Christ as the Passover lamb was faultless, without blemish.

E. Killed by the Whole Assembly of the Congregation of Israel

Speaking of the Passover lamb, 12:6 says, "The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." Do you know who killed the Lord Jesus? He was killed by the congregation of God's people. This means that we all had a part in killing Him.

Years ago, I read an article describing how the children of Israel slew the lamb during the Passover. According to this article, the lamb was put on a cross. The children of Israel took two wooden bars and formed a cross. They tied two legs of the lamb at the foot of the cross and fastened the other outstretched legs to the crossbar. Then they slew the lamb so that all its blood was shed, for they needed all of

the blood to sprinkle on their door frames. We all know that the Roman Empire used the death penalty of the cross to crucify criminals, but the children of Israel used this method long before the time of the Roman Empire to slay the lamb at their Passover. The way the lamb was killed affords a picture of Christ's crucifixion. Therefore, the type of the Passover foreshadowed both the date and the way Christ would be put to death for our redemption.

F. The Blood Put on the Side Posts and on the Upper Doorposts of the Houses for Redemption

Exodus 12:7 says, "And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses, wherein they shall eat it" (Heb.). The blood put on the lintel and the doorposts was for redemption. This blood typifies the redeeming blood of Christ (Matt. 26:28; John 19:34; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). As the children of Israel applied the Passover lamb, they were in houses that had been sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. This indicates that redemption is based on union. The blood of Christ cannot redeem us unless we are in union with Christ. Only by being in Christ can we be redeemed with the blood of Christ. If we are outside of Christ, His blood cannot redeem us. But once we are in Christ as the house, we are redeemed by the blood that has been sprinkled upon the lintel and doorposts of the house. Because redemption is based on union, we must be in union with Christ, identified with Christ. Then, because we are one with Him, we can be redeemed by His blood.

The ark built by Noah also illustrates this matter of union. Noah and his family entered into the ark. In this way they were in union with the ark, identified with the ark. Through this union, this identification, they were saved and redeemed by the ark. In the same principle, in order to be redeemed by the blood of the Passover lamb, the children of Israel had to be in the house that had been sprinkled

with the blood. Furthermore, any who would apply the redemption of Christ must be in union with Him.

G. Its Flesh to Be Eaten for Life Supply

The flesh of the Passover lamb was to be eaten for life supply (12:8-10). The same is true of the Lord Jesus as the fulfillment of the type. Each of the Gospels speaks of the blood of Christ. The Gospel of John, however, goes on to say that the flesh of Christ is edible. In John 6:53 the Lord Jesus says that we must eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and in verse 55 He declares, "My flesh is true food." Flesh here signifies the life of Christ. The life of Christ is edible; it is our life supply. This is mentioned in the Gospel of John because this Gospel, in contrast to the others, is focused on life. Therefore, this Gospel reveals that the blood of Christ redeems and that the life of Christ supplies. Hallelujah, we have the blood of the Lamb for redemption and the flesh of the Lamb for the supply of life!

1. Roasted with Fire

In 12:8 the children of Israel were given the proper way to eat the flesh of the Passover lamb: roasted with fire. Fire here signifies God's holy wrath exercised in judgment. When Christ was on the cross, the holy fire of God judged Him and consumed Him. Psalm 22:14 and 15 say, "My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws." Then He cried, "I thirst" (John 19:28), because He was being burned by the holy fire of God's judgment.

2. Not Raw

In 12:9 the children of Israel were charged not to eat of the lamb raw. Today those who do not believe in Christ's redemption attempt to eat Him "raw." This means that they regard Christ as a model or example of human living for

them to imitate. In effect, to do this is to eat the Passover lamb raw.

3. Not Boiled with Water

Furthermore, the children of Israel were not to eat the lamb boiled with water (12:9). To eat of Christ as if He were "boiled with water" is to regard His death on the cross not as death for redemption, but as martyrdom. Many today do not believe that Christ died as the Redeemer. According to their concept, He was persecuted by man and died as a martyr, having sacrificed Himself for His teachings. To apply Christ's death in this way is to eat the lamb boiled with water. To be boiled in water is to undergo suffering, but not the suffering of holy fire. Rather, this suffering is simply the suffering of persecution.

Today people try to use three ways to take Christ. As fundamental Christians, we believe that on the cross Christ suffered for us under God's judgment. He was burned and "roasted" by the holy fire of God's wrath. As our Redeemer, He was judged for us. This is to take Christ roasted with fire. This is the proper way ordained by God. A second way, advocated by modernists, is to take Christ "raw." This is to take Christ as an example and to imitate the way He behaved. The third way is to take Christ "boiled." This is to regard Christ's death on the cross as persecution and martyrdom, not as death for our redemption. How do you take Christ—roasted, raw, or boiled? If you believe that Christ died on the cross as a martyr because of man's persecution, then you eat the Passover lamb by boiling it in water. However, if you believe that He died as our Redeemer, being roasted by the holy fire of God, then you eat Him as the Passover lamb roasted in fire.

4. With Its Head, Legs, and Inwards

The children of Israel were to eat the lamb with its head, legs, and inwards (12:9, Heb.). The head signifies wisdom, the legs signify activity and move, and the inwards signify the

various inward parts of Christ's being. To eat the Passover lamb with the head, legs, and inwards is to take Christ as a whole, in His entirety. As we eat Him, we take His wisdom, activities, move, and inward parts.

5. With Unleavened Bread and Bitter Herbs

According to 12:8, the children of Israel were to eat the flesh of the lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. To eat with unleavened bread means to eliminate all sinful things. When we enjoy Christ as our Passover, we must purge away everything sinful. At the same time, we need to eat bitter herbs. This means that we need to regret and repent, to experience a bitter taste regarding sinful things. When we believed in the Lord Jesus, many of us received Him as our life supply and also gave up everything sinful. At the same time, we experienced regret and repentance. This indicates that we ate Christ with bitter herbs.

We should not take the lamb without the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs. Whenever you receive Christ as your supply, you receive a life without sin, without leaven, that gives you a bitter feeling when you sin, that repents when you make a mistake. This life is sensitive to sin, to any kind of wrongdoing, to anything of the self. To keep yourself unleavened, you have to repent.

6. With Nothing Left until Morning

Exodus 12:10 says, "And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire." Nothing of the Passover lamb was to be left until morning. This indicates that we are to receive Christ in a full way, not partially. Do not allow anything of Christ to be left over. Rather, take Him in full.

H. Its Bones Not Broken

Exodus 12:46 says that the children of Israel were not to break any of the bones of the Passover lamb. When Christ was crucified as our Passover lamb, His legs were not

broken (John 19:33, 36). The fact that Christ's legs were not broken signifies that in Christ, the Passover lamb, there is something unbreakable and indestructible. This unbreakable and indestructible element is His eternal life. The Roman soldiers and Jewish people could come together to put Christ on the cross, but they could not break His eternal life.

We can prove from the Scriptures that the bone signifies life. According to Genesis 2:21, the Lord took a bone, a rib, out of Adam and built it into a woman. The woman, Eve, was produced from a bone taken out of Adam. Hence, a bone signifies life that imparts life. The bone taken out of Adam imparted Adam's life into Eve. In the same principle, Christ's unbroken bone signifies His unbreakable and indestructible eternal life that imparts His life into us. In Christ as our Passover lamb there is such an unbreakable and indestructible life that can impart life into us.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FOUR

THE PASSOVER

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 12:11-28, 43-51; 13:2-11; 1 Cor. 5:7-8; 1 Cor. 15:45a, 47a

The record of the Passover given in Exodus is very detailed. Nowhere else in the Scriptures do we find such a detailed account of Christ's redemption. The reason for all the detail is that God wants us to know the redemption of Christ in such a thorough way that we could never forget it. Twice the word memorial is used (12:14; 13:9). This indicates that it is God's intention that we neither neglect the redemption of Christ nor forget it. Rather, we are to remember Christ's redemption, not in a general way, but in a specific and detailed way.

One of the details in the account of the Passover concerns the eating of the flesh of the lamb. The flesh of the Passover lamb signifies Christ's crucified and resurrected life that is our supply. In John 6:53 the Lord Jesus said that if we would have life, we must eat the flesh of the Son of Man. In verse 55 He went on to say, "My flesh is true food." Through incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection Christ's flesh has become our food.

Another detail is related to the bones of the Passover lamb. The children of Israel were told in 12:46 that none of the bones of the lamb used in the Passover were to be broken. This is of great significance. When the Lord Jesus was crucified, His bones were not broken (John 19:33, 36). This indicates that within Christ there is something unbreakable and indestructible. Christ's unbroken bone signifies the life that imparts life. This is typified by Eve being

produced from Adam's rib. Just as Adam's bone could impart life into Eve to make her Adam's counterpart, so Christ's indestructible life has imparted life into us to make us His counterpart. Adam's rib typifies Christ's life that imparts life. In Christ there is a life signified by the unbroken bone of the Passover lamb. This life is Christ's eternal, divine life that imparts life into us.

We need to be deeply impressed with all the details of the Passover. As we consider these details, we realize that the account of the Passover is not simple or easy to understand.

IV. THE WAY TO APPLY THE PASSOVER LAMB

In this message we shall consider the way to apply the Passover lamb. The Passover lamb is wonderful, but if we do not know how to apply it, the lamb will have little meaning in our daily subjective experience. Therefore, our concern in this message is with the subjective experience of Christ as the Passover.

A. To Eat with Loins Girded, with Shoes on the Feet, with Staff in the Hand, and in Haste

Exodus 12:11 says, "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is Jehovah's passover" (Heb.). As the children of Israel were eating the Passover lamb, they were like an army. Exodus 12:51 says that the Lord brought the children of Israel "out of the land of Egypt by their armies." Not many Christians today realize that they should be an army. On the contrary, the prevailing concept seems to be that anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus should be placed in a palanquin and carried away to heaven. However, according to the picture in the book of Exodus, the redeemed ones applied the Passover in such a way that they could become God's army.

According to 12:11, the children of Israel ate with their loins girded. Before we were saved, we were somewhat loose;

our being had not been girded up. To be girded is part of the preparation to be a soldier in the army. By girding ourselves we make ourselves ready to fight.

The gospel preached by many Christians today is not complete. When you heard the gospel, were you told to repent, believe in the Lord Jesus, receive Him, and then gird yourself up? Few of us were told that we needed to gird ourselves. However, the matter of being girded is here in Exodus 12. This record is complete. Only when we have girded our loins are we qualified to apply the Passover. If we are still loose, we cannot take the Passover in a proper way.

The children of Israel were also told to have shoes on their feet. This indicates that they were to make themselves ready for a journey. In an army all soldiers need proper shoes. Before we were saved, our feet were not shod. If we would fight the battle for the Lord, we need the right kind of shoes on our feet. I am sorry that the preaching of the gospel in today's Christianity rarely includes a word about the need to have shoes on our feet in order to apply the Passover lamb. I hope that the Holy Spirit will speak to many concerning this.

Furthermore, in 12:11 the children of Israel were told to eat the Passover with their staff in hand. The staff was also to be used for the journey. In ancient times, when people went on a long journey, they often took a staff. The girdle, the shoes, and the staff were all for the journey that the children of Israel were about to make. This journey was not to be a journey of peace, but a journey of war, for, in a sense, they had to fight their way out of Egypt.

We thank the Lord that although we may not have heard about these things when the gospel was preached to us, many of us had some experience of them at the time we were saved. When we decided to take Christ as our Savior, inwardly we had the sense that we had been made ready for a long journey. This was my experience. It seemed to me that I had given up my former journey and was ready to start on a new journey, to have a new life with a new beginning. Did you not have such

an experience when you believed in the Lord? Were you not made ready for a new journey, a new walk? Perhaps you did not have words for it, but the Holy Spirit did equip you in such a way and did lead you into a journey of fighting. You realized that a new life, a new journey, had just begun.

Finally, 12:11 says that God's redeemed people were to eat the Passover in haste. Because they had to flee from the land of Egypt that night, they were required to eat the Passover lamb hastily. Soldiers are often required to eat their meals quickly. Those who have been in the army realize that soldiers are trained to eat in this way. Because a battle lies ahead of us, we must eat the Passover lamb in haste. Do not excuse yourself by saying that you were born with a slow disposition. Those who are slow may be the first to be attacked by the enemy from the rear. Those who eat fast are probably those who are at the front of the army.

B. To Touch the Lintel and the Two Side Posts with the Blood Applied by a Bunch of Hyssop

Exodus 12:22 says, "And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin" (Heb.). Notice that the blood was put on the entrance of the house, not on the roof. The function of the entrance is to allow the proper persons and things to come into the house. Anyone or anything that is not proper is shut out by the entrance. The fact that the blood of the Passover lamb was put on the lintel and the two side posts of the door implies that the blood opens the way for us to get into Christ, who is typified by the house. The redeemed ones come into the house, not through the roof or through a window, but through the door that has been sprinkled with the redeeming blood. Hallelujah, our entry into Christ has been guaranteed by His redeeming blood! Coming into Christ through the door sprinkled with the blood, we receive a warm welcome.

Furthermore, the blood on the door protected the

redeemed ones from God's judgment. As 12:13 says, the blood was to be "a token upon the houses" where the children of Israel were. Verse 23 goes on to say, "For Jehovah will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, Jehovah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you" (Heb.). The same blood opened the way for the redeemed ones to get into the house and closed the gates to the destroyer, thereby guarding God's redeemed ones from judgment. Praise the Lord that we have a gate that has been sprinkled with the redeeming blood! This gate opens to us God's grace with all that He is to us and all that He has for us. Furthermore, this gate shuts out every negative thing. Hallelujah, we are in the house whose gate has been sprinkled with the blood!

In the foregoing message we pointed out that both the lamb and the house typify Christ. This means that the lamb is the house and that the house is the lamb. The lamb is the means of redemption, and the house is the means of preservation. Whoever is redeemed by the lamb is preserved and kept by the house. This indicates that whatever Christ redeems, He keeps. As the redeeming One, He is the lamb, and as the keeping One, He is the house. Eventually, the blood of the lamb was on the door, and the meat of the lamb was in the house. The lamb, the house, and those who enjoyed the Passover thus became one. This is a picture of the identification of the redeemed ones with Christ.

A bunch of hyssop was used to put the blood of the lamb on the lintel and the doorposts. First Kings 4:33 says that, in his wisdom, Solomon "spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall." Hyssop was among the smallest of the plants. According to the revelation in the New Testament, the thing that is the smallest in quantity is our faith (Matt. 17:20). Hence, hyssop signifies faith. God does not require that our faith be as the cedar tree, for none of us could meet such a requirement. God requires that we have just a little faith.

Even if our faith is very small, we still can apply the Passover lamb. If a sinner prays, "Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me," he will be saved. Even such a small amount of faith will save him. Actually, one can be saved just by saying, "Lord, thank You." This is faith that is like hyssop that springs out of the wall. It is by such little faith that the blood of Christ is applied.

According to 12:22, the blood of the Passover lamb was in a basin, not in a large vessel. Many can testify that in their experience of conversion the redeeming blood of Christ was made available to them in a way that was small and easy to apply. It was not necessary to have great faith. Even a very small amount of faith was sufficient for them to be saved. This is the significance of using a bunch of hyssop to apply the blood of the Passover lamb. Both the basin and the hyssop were small and could be handled easily by anyone. How easy it is to apply Christ!

Any unsaved person who is reading this message does not need to wait for something great to happen. As he is reading, he can say, "Lord, I thank You." Even by the exercise of such a small amount of hyssop, the blood will be applied to him, and the entire Passover will be his. The blood of the Passover lamb is applied not by great faith, but by a small amount of faith. Praise the Lord that even a little faith is sufficient! By applying the blood in faith, we have an entrance into Christ, and we are immediately ushered into Him as the house, where the whole Passover becomes ours.

C. To Remain in the House Whose Door Has Been Touched with the Blood

The children of Israel were required to stay in the house whose door had been touched with the blood; they were not to go out of it until the morning (12:22). To understand the significance of this we need to see that the basic concept in the Bible with respect to redemption is identification or union. Without identification there can be no substitution, which is necessary for redemption. On the cross Christ died as our

substitute. However, His being our substitute requires us to be identified with Him.

In the Old Testament, the ark of Noah as a type illustrates this matter of identification. In order to be saved from the waters of judgment, Noah and his family had to be in the ark. To be in the ark was to be identified with the ark, to be one with the ark. The destiny of the ark was automatically the destiny of everyone in the ark. Whatever happened to the ark became the experience of the people who were one with the ark. After the door of the ark was closed, others may have held onto the ark in desperation. But they were not one with the ark or identified with it. The only way to be one with Christ is to enter into Him. In the words of 1 Corinthians 1:30, it is of God that we are in Christ Jesus. God has put us into Christ. As the eight persons were in the ark of Noah, so we, the redeemed ones, are in Christ Jesus.

Our entrance into Christ is through the door to which the blood has been applied. When we use hyssop to put the blood on the door, we are able to enter into Christ. After getting into Christ, we need to remain in Him. In John 15 the Lord Jesus says, "Abide in Me." To abide in Christ is to remain in Him, that is, to maintain our identification, our union, with Him.

The effect of many of the teachings in Christianity is to cause believers to be separate from Christ and to lose their identification with Him. No teaching that causes us to lose our union with Christ can avail anything. Anything apart from Christ is human effort or strife. There is no need for us to struggle or strive. We simply need to enter into the house through the blood-sprinkled gate. Once we are in the house, we are one with the house and identified with it.

Many who believe in Christ were in the house at the time of their conversion. But shortly thereafter, as far as their practical daily experience is concerned, they came out of the house. In their experience, not many Christians stay in the house after their conversion. This means that when they believed into Christ and were saved, they entered into the

house. But then they began to do many things apart from the house and outside of the house. This means that they did things outside of Christ. This has been the experience of many of us. We entered into Christ when we were saved. But in our effort to please God by ourselves, we came out of Christ. We did not remain in Him.

After we came to the church, we were brought back into the house through the ministry of the Word. Those who came into the church life still may not be in Christ in a practical way. This is a source of trouble in the church. Everyone in the church should be in Christ. However, there may arise an abnormal condition wherein many who are in the church life are not abiding in Christ. Before coming into the church life you may have struggled in your own energy to please the Lord. Now that you have come into the church, which is part of the house, you need also to come back to the house. This means that you need to come back to Christ and remain in Him.

We were all saved in Christ. But, like the Galatians, we may try to go on apart from Christ. Thus, we must be brought back to Christ. There is no need for us to do so many things. We should simply maintain our identification with Christ, with a constant realization that we are nothing and that He is everything. We need to see that we are in Him and that He is in us. As long as we abide in Him, He will abide in us. As the Lord Himself said in John 15, "Abide in Me and I in you."

Some may have heard this teaching before they came into the church life. The crucial matter, however, is not whether or not you know the teaching about abiding in Christ; it is whether or not you are actually abiding in Him. Where are you at this very moment? Are you in Christ, or are you apart from Christ? The Lord Jesus said that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). To remain in the house is to abide in Christ and to be identified with Him. In other words, it is to remain in oneness with the Lord.

The greatest problem among believers today is that, in

their experience, they are outside of Christ, apart from the oneness with Christ. Moses charged the children of Israel to eat the lamb in the house and then to stay in the house. If they had come out of the house, they would have lost everything. In the house they had the full enjoyment of the Passover. Only in the house could the Passover become their experience.

We need to be clear concerning what the house is and where the house is today. We have emphasized the fact that the house is Christ. But where is the house? The house is where there is the sprinkling of the blood. The unique sign of the house is not what we are, have, or do. It is the sprinkled blood of Christ. Where redemption is, there Christ is also. Apart from redemption, we have no standing. Our unique standing is the redeeming blood of Christ.

If you read the book of Galatians, you will see that the Galatians had been distracted from the standing of redemption. They had come out of the house and were thus deprived of the benefit, the profit, of being in Christ. If the children of Israel had not remained in the house, they would have been deprived of the benefit, profit, enjoyment, and experience of the Passover. To participate in the Passover there was the need to remain in the house.

The reason we do not agree with so many of the teachings of today's Christianity is that these teachings cause Christians to get out of the house, to no longer remain in the standing of redemption. Once we are saved, we need to remain in the very place where we have been redeemed, in the place where the blood has been sprinkled. Here in this place we have the house.

The redeeming blood keeps us in Christ. Whenever we try in our own energy to do something for God, we violate the principle of redemption. The principle of redemption is that there is no need for us to do anything other than to exercise our hyssop, our faith, to apply the blood. Whenever our hyssop applies the blood to the gate, the way is open for us to be in Christ. Let us remain in the place of redemption,

in the house with the blood-sprinkled entrance. We should not practice those things which cause us to come out of the house. Rather, we should stay in the house where we participate in the Passover.

The longer we remain in the house, the more light we receive; and the more light we receive, the more we see that everything we need is in the house. If you stay in the house, you will be filled, qualified, equipped, and formed into an army. Our only need is to remain in Christ as the house.

When I was young, I heard a number of messages on the Passover. All these messages emphasized the one point that when God sees the blood, He passes over us. A well-known gospel song even uses the word from Exodus 12:13, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." But in all these messages I heard on the Passover, not a word was spoken about remaining in the house. Only twice are we told that when God sees the blood, He will pass over us. But time after time Moses spoke of the house.

If you are enlightened of the Lord, you may realize that even now you may be outside of the house, outside of Christ. The only way to get into the house is through the redeeming blood spread on the gate. It is impossible to separate the redeeming blood from the house, for the blood and the house are one. Whenever we maintain the standing of the redeeming blood, we are in Christ. However, whenever we endeavor in our natural energy to please God, we leave the standing of the redeeming blood and are outside of Christ.

Do you know what the children of Israel were doing inside the house? They were eating the flesh of the Passover lamb. Exodus 12:14 indicates that they were feasting. This verse says, "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it as a feast to Jehovah throughout your generations" (Heb.). What does it mean to have a feast to the Lord? It means that we remain in the house and enjoy a full participation in the lamb. In this way we feast on the lamb. However, the Lord enjoys this feast more than we do. To have a feast unto Him means that we feast for Him and with Him. We eat,

but He enjoys. We feast, and He is happy. The more we feast, the more enjoyment He has and the happier He is. However, the more we endeavor to do things, the more displeased He becomes, for our endeavors do not give Him any enjoyment.

What a poor situation there is in today's Christianity! Most Christians are outside of the house trying to do things for the Lord; they are not in the house feasting unto the Lord. Praise Him that we in the local churches are in the house feasting unto the Lord!

This principle of staying in the house by keeping the standing of redemption must govern our whole Christian life. All day long we, the redeemed ones, should remain in the house. When some hear this, they may point out that the children of Israel left the house in order to make their exodus out of Egypt. However, the time they spent in the house signifies the full course of redemption.

As we remain in the house feasting on the Passover lamb, we are equipped. Actually, the feasting is the equipping. When the children of Israel were filled with the Passover lamb, they were ready to march out of Egypt. Hence, they were equipped by being filled with the lamb. This is the reason we say that remaining in the house involves the full course of redemption.

Do not think that the blood sprinkled on the lintel and the door posts is sufficient for everything. It is sufficient to usher us into the house and to keep us from the judgment of God, but it is not sufficient to equip us. It cannot enable us to make the journey. For this, we need to roast the lamb, eat its flesh in the house hastily, and be filled with the lamb. Every part of the Passover lamb must be eaten, including the head, the legs, and the inward parts. Nothing should be left over. Perhaps the children of Israel had to encourage one another to eat certain parts of the lamb. Some may not have cared for the inward parts or the head, but nevertheless they had to eat the whole lamb in order to be fully equipped for the battle.

As we feast on Christ as the Passover lamb, God is happy

and full of enjoyment. Then He can say, "Satan, look at My people. They are being equipped by feasting on the Passover lamb. Because they are being equipped in this way, they will be able to defeat you."

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FIVE

THE PASSOVER

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 12:11-28, 43-51; 13:2-11; 1 Cor. 5:7-8

The redemption of Christ is mysterious, beyond our understanding. I believe that this is the reason the Passover in the Old Testament portrays all the elements, factors, and aspects of the redemption of Christ revealed in the New Testament. If we had the plain words of the New Testament without the picture in the Old Testament, it would be difficult for us to see all the details of the wonderful and mysterious redemption of Christ. How we thank the Lord for the portrait of redemption presented in the book of Exodus!

In the foregoing messages, we have covered a number of details regarding the Passover. We have seen that Christ is not only the Passover lamb, but also the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, and the house. The blood of the lamb was put on the lintel and the doorposts of the houses; and all the lamb, including the head, legs, and inwards, was eaten. As the children of Israel ate the lamb, it was necessary for them to have their loins girded, to have their feet shod, and to have a staff in their hands. Furthermore, they had to eat the lamb in haste. The lamb was not to be eaten either raw or boiled; it had to be roasted in fire. Moreover, hyssop, signifying faith, was used to put the blood of the Passover lamb on the lintel and on the doorposts. All these details had to be observed by the children of Israel as they were sharing in the Passover. In this message we shall go on to consider some further details concerning the way to apply the Passover lamb.

The Passover itself lasted just one day. It was held on the fourteenth day of the first month, the month Abib. Continuing from the feast of the Passover, there was another feast, the feast of unleavened bread, which lasted seven days. In the Bible seven days indicate a complete course of time, a whole period of time. Hence these seven days signify the course of our life on earth. In the eyes of God, the full course of our life is just seven days.

The feast of unleavened bread began and ended with days of feasting. Both on the first day and on the last day, no work was permitted. The children of Israel were only allowed to eat.

The details we shall cover in this message are especially crucial. What we have covered thus far is related to the feast of the Passover, which lasted for one day. But what we shall cover in this message is related to a feast that lasted for seven days, a period of time that signifies the course of human life.

D. Not to Eat Leaven or to Have Any Leaven

Concerning the Passover, the emphasis in the Bible is mainly on the eating of the Passover, not on the keeping of the Passover. For example, Luke 22 speaks of the Lord eating the Passover with His disciples (vv. 11, 15). There, the Passover is a feast for us to eat. Exodus 12 speaks of eating the flesh, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. The significance of eating rests in the fact that we live by what we eat. In human life nothing is more important than eating.

The children of Israel were not to eat leavened bread for a period of seven days. Exodus 12:15 says, "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses." According to 12:19, no leaven was to be found in the houses, and according to 13:7, no leaven was to be seen with the children of Israel. During the days of the feast of unleavened bread, the children of Israel were not to eat leavened bread, leaven was not to be

found in their houses, and leavened bread was not to be seen with them.

Eating unleavened bread indicates that God's people should not live in sin, that is, should not live a sinful life. In the Bible leaven signifies what is sinful, evil, corrupt, and unclean in the eyes of God. In 1 Corinthians 5:8 Paul speaks of the "leaven of malice and evil."

The function of leaven is to make something easier to eat. Suppose bread is made without yeast or any other type of leaven. This kind of bread would be heavy and hard to chew. But if leaven is put into bread dough, the bread will be soft and easy to eat. The function of sin is similar to the function of yeast; it softens things that are hard and makes them easier for us to take in. The principle of leaven, therefore, is to add an element that causes something hard to become soft. For example, joking may be a kind of leaven that makes a difficult situation easier to take.

E. To Observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a Continuation of the Feast of Passover

1. For Seven Days

The children of Israel were to observe the feast of unleavened bread as a continuation of the feast of Passover (12:15-20; 13:6-7). Exodus 12:18 says, "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even." We have pointed out that when the children of Israel ate the Passover lamb, they were also required to eat unleavened bread. We have seen that the feast of the Passover lasted one day, whereas the feast of unleavened bread continued for seven days. Therefore, the feast of unleavened bread was a continuation of the feast of Passover.

The flesh of the Passover lamb signifies the sinless life of Christ. We received Christ not only in His death and

resurrection, but also in His sinlessness, for His life is not only a crucified and resurrected life, but also a sinless life. Therefore, we must eat the flesh of the lamb and also the unleavened bread. This means that from the time we received Christ and were saved and had a new beginning in life, we began to live a life without leaven, a life without sin.

Exodus 13:7 says that no leaven was to be seen with the children of Israel. In our Christian life no leaven should be seen. It is impossible for us to have no leaven at all, but it is possible for the leaven not to be seen. Although it is not possible for us to be without sin, we must deal with any sin that is manifested, with any sin that is seen. This means that we are responsible to deal with the sin of which we are conscious. Whenever we discover something sinful in our lives, we must eliminate it. This, however, does not mean that we shall have no sin. There may be much sin in our lives or in our environment, but we may not be conscious of it. However, as soon as we become conscious of it, we must deal with it. We must forsake the sin of which we are conscious. We should not tolerate any manifestation of sin.

In 12:19 the children of Israel were given a strong word: "Whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land." To be cut off from the congregation of Israel was to be cut off from the fellowship of God's chosen people. This serious word corresponds to Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 5:13: "Remove the evil man from among yourselves." To put away such a one is to cut him off from the fellowship of the church.

If we tolerate sin once it has been exposed, our fellowship will be cut off. This indicates that as Christians we should live a sinless life, not tolerating any sin that has been exposed. To deal with manifested sin is to observe the feast of unleavened bread.

Exodus 12:14 says, "This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to Jehovah throughout

your generations: ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever" (Heb.). This verse indicates that the Passover was to be kept as a feast. The same was true regarding the feast of unleavened bread (12:17). A feast involves both eating and enjoyment. Whenever we eat without having enjoyment as the purpose of our eating, that eating is common. But when we eat for enjoyment, our eating becomes a feast. For example, we may daily eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner without any special enjoyment. But sometimes we come together to hold a feast. At such times, our eating is for the purpose of enjoyment. The eating of the Passover was called the feast of Passover because it was an eating for enjoyment.

When we were saved, we enjoyed the feast of Passover. But this feast should immediately be continued by the feast of unleavened bread. This indicates that a Christian's enjoyment should not cease. However, in the experience of many Christians, the feast of Passover is not followed by the feast of unleavened bread. At the time of their conversion, they were joyful. But this enjoyment did not last, because they did not observe the feast of unleavened bread. This means that they did not deal with their sinful living. Rather, they allowed the leaven that was exposed to remain. They did not deal with sin that had been exposed. For this reason, many Christians do not observe the feast of unleavened bread.

After we receive the Lord and are saved, we should continue our enjoyment by dealing with sin. This should last not just for one day, but for seven days. This means that it should last throughout the course of our life. Our whole life after we are saved should be a feast of unleavened bread.

This was Paul's concept in 1 Corinthians 5. In verse 7 Paul says, "Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened. For indeed our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed." Then in verse 8 he goes on to tell us to "keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and evil, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Day by day we need to keep the feast of

unleavened bread. We should keep this feast throughout the course of our Christian life until we see the Lord.

As soon as we refuse to deal with any sin that has been exposed, we no longer keep the feast of unleavened bread. This means that we lose the enjoyment of this feast. Tolerating sin causes loss of enjoyment. On the contrary, the more we deal with sin that has been manifested or exposed, the more enjoyment we have. This is to keep the feast of unleavened bread.

I appreciate the way Paul allegorized the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread. He says that Christ our Passover has been sacrificed, that we should purge out the old leaven, and that we should keep the feast of unleavened bread. We keep this feast by dealing with sin and by living a sinless life. Whenever something sinful is exposed, we immediately deal with it. In this way no leaven shall be seen in our houses. Christ is the unleavened bread. The more we eat Him, the more we shall become unleavened. The only way to eliminate sin is to eat Christ's crucified, resurrected, and sinless life.

2. Not to Work on the First Day and the Seventh Day but to Eat

Exodus 12:16 says, "And in the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you." This verse says that on the first and last days of the feast of unleavened bread no manner of work was to be done. This signifies that in the enjoyment of God's salvation, there is no place for our work. We must learn to stop our doing. We must cease from every kind of work. Do not resolve to be a loving husband, a submissive wife, or a child who honors his parents. All this is human work. The only thing we are permitted to do is eat. This indicates that as we partake of God's salvation, there is room only for enjoyment,

not for working. Do not try to do anything—just eat and enjoy.

The situation of today's Christianity is just the opposite. Instead of eating, there is working. Sermon upon sermon is given charging people to engage in certain kinds of work. This contradicts the principle of God's salvation. God's salvation does not allow us to do any work.

Due to our serpentine nature, immediately after we were saved or revived, we made up our mind to do certain things. Some resolved not to lose their temper; others decided to be humble. But the Lord makes no allowance for this kind of work. In God's salvation we are only allowed to eat.

In contrast to the writings of the religions of man, the Bible charges God's people concerning the first and last days of the feast to do nothing except eat. If the children of Israel worked on these days, they would have broken the principle of God's salvation. Salvation is for our enjoyment; it does not require our work or our doing. Nevertheless, even many zealous Christians are cut off from spiritual fellowship simply because they are engaged in so much work. To add human labor to God's salvation is to insult God and to cut ourselves off from fellowship.

We find it difficult to stop working and to keep eating. Instead of eating without working, our habit is to work without eating. Some may complain of too much spiritual eating. They may even say that they are bored with such eating. Talk like this circulated among us some time ago. This kind of word comes from the Devil, the enemy of God. As soon as a word is spoken against eating the Lord, it is followed by a suggestion that we work or engage in a certain activity. What a devilish contradiction of the principle of God's salvation! I repeat, God's salvation requires that we stop our working and do nothing except eat.

It is even possible for prayer to become a work that God forbids. Some of the saints may decide to spend more time in prayer. In such a case, their prayer may become a work that breaks the principle of God's salvation. To one who resolves

to pray in this way, I would say, "Do not allow prayer to become a work. Instead of praying in a natural way, you must eat the unleavened bread."

When I was young, I engaged in much work for the Lord. I read books about how to be holy, how to pray, and how to overcome sin. These books encouraged me to work and to do certain things. Then one day I saw the light that God does not want us to work—He wants us to eat. If we would feast unto Him, we must stop our doing.

Suppose a brother invites you to his home for a feast. After you arrive, however, you spend a great deal of time working for him. You mow the lawn, trim the trees, and wash the windows. But all your work is offensive to this brother. What he desires is that you sit down at the table and feast with him. The more you feast, the happier he will be.

We all must learn to drop our natural doing. However, this is not easy for us to do. As we drop our doing, we need to maintain our eating. But if we do not eat, we should not stop working. Most Christians work without eating, but we must learn to eat without doing. Let us drop our doing, but continue with our eating.

F. Not to Be Eaten by Strangers or Hired Servants

Exodus 12:43 says, "This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof." Verse 45 goes on to say, "A foreigner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof." These verses indicate that strangers and hired servants were not permitted to eat the Passover. In the Old Testament strangers represent two categories of people: the unbelievers and the natural man. We may readily agree that the unbelievers are strangers, but we may not agree that our natural man is also a stranger who is not allowed to partake of the Passover. Actually, our natural man is no different from an unbeliever, for our natural life is always quick to go along

with the way of an unbeliever. Hence, the natural man and the unbelievers are of the same family.

Notice that in Exodus 12 the natural man is the stranger linked to the hired servants. A hired servant is one who serves for wages, for compensation. The natural man always works for God in order to receive compensation. This is commonplace in today's Christianity. For the most part, Christianity has become a religion in which strangers are hired to work for wages. Although a hired servant may receive wages, with him there is no grace, faith, or enjoyment. If we try to enjoy the Passover according to the principle of a hired servant, we shall find that we have no position to partake of the Passover.

Those who work as hired servants have the attitude that they labor and God pays them their wages. But in Romans Paul indicates that we are not to work for our salvation. Romans 4:4 and 5 say, "Now to the one who works, the reward is not reckoned according to grace, but according to debt. But to the one who works not, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness." Speaking of the selection of grace, Paul declares in Romans 11:6, "But if by grace, it is no longer out of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace."

In the words of Galatians 4:7, we who believe in Christ are no longer servants; we are sons. Children simply enjoy the family life. They do not labor as hired servants in order to share in this enjoyment. Our enjoyment of God's salvation is according to the principle of free grace, not according to the principle of a hired servant who works for recompense. As far as salvation is concerned, our labor means nothing. God allows us to enjoy the Passover not as wages, but only as a free gift of grace.

It is clear that the natural man cannot enjoy Christ as the Passover. If a person is still in the natural man, he has not come to the month Abib, which means sprouting or budding. This means that he has not experienced a new beginning in Christ. With such a one there is no sprouting of the divine life through regeneration. To have a new

beginning is to no longer be a stranger, to no longer be a natural man. On the contrary, it is to be regenerated and to become a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

Do not partake of the Passover as a natural man or as a hired servant, and do not have the attitude that you work for God and that He pays you. We do not receive God's salvation because of our labor. If we remain in the natural man or regard ourselves as hired servants who work for recompense, we have no right to partake of the Passover.

G. The Purchased and Circumcised Servants Qualified to Eat

Although strangers and hired servants could not partake of the Passover, the purchased and circumcised servants were qualified to eat of it (12:44, 48). To be purchased is to be redeemed. We are not hired servants, but we have been purchased by the Lord to be His slaves. We were lost, but the Lord paid the price to buy us back. This means that we have been redeemed, purchased, bought back. Thus, we are no longer strangers—we are redeemed ones. We are no longer the natural man—we are purchased ones.

Christ's redemption does not include the natural life. Rather His redemption deals with the natural man by putting him on the cross. Christ redeems only those who have been dealt with by His cross. Such a dealing is signified by circumcision.

Do you regard yourself as a hired one or as a purchased one? Few like to think of themselves as those who have been purchased. A purchased one is actually a slave. This is the reason that in ourselves we all prefer to be hired ones. If we are hired by a certain person to work for him, we are willing to work as long as we are happy with our employer. But if we are not happy, we can resign and work for someone else. But a purchased one, a slave, has no right to resign.

Once again we see that the way of the natural man contradicts God's principle. In God's redemption we are not hired

ones; we are purchased ones. Anyone who thinks of himself as a hired one has no share in God's redemption. If we want to enjoy God's redemption, we must take our standing as those who have been purchased by Him.

It is easy to say in a doctrinal way that we are purchased ones. But in our actual daily practice we may live as if we were hired ones. The Apostle Paul knew that he was a slave of Christ Jesus (Rom. 1:1). He did not regard himself as one who had been hired to work for the Lord. In contrast to many pastors or ministers, Paul knew he had no right to resign from serving the Lord.

To be a hired one is, spiritually speaking, to work in our natural life for the purpose of receiving recompense. But according to the spiritual principle, to be a purchased one is to serve the Lord in redemption. A purchased one is a person who has been lost, who has been bought back, and who has been dealt with by the cross. This is the kind of person who has been redeemed by God. Such a one is qualified to partake of the Passover.

Exodus 12:44 says, "But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then he shall eat thereof." Verse 48 also speaks of circumcision: "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to Jehovah, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof" (Heb.). All the redeemed ones must be circumcised. Spiritually speaking, to be circumcised is to have the natural life dealt with by the cross. Apart from circumcision, there is no redemption. For this reason, the redeemed ones are related to circumcision. Those who have been redeemed have been dealt with by the cross. In Paul's words, they are the true circumcision (Phil. 3:3). The strangers are the hired ones, whereas the purchased ones are the circumcised ones. Those who are circumcised do not exercise the natural life to work for God. God does not want us to work for Him; He wants us to be circumcised. The work according to our

natural life can only produce Ishmael. Our strength to produce Ishmael must be cut off through circumcision.

If we would receive God's salvation in a proper way, we need to be purchased and circumcised. At the time of conversion, a sinner should repent, confess, and believe in the Lord Jesus. Simultaneously, he should begin to hate his natural life and to realize that this life needs to be buried. This is the reason that as soon as someone believes in the Lord Jesus, he should be baptized. To be baptized is to realize that the natural life is good for nothing except burial. When a new believer has this realization, he is conscious of the fact that he has been purchased and circumcised. However, many of today's Christians have received God's salvation blindly, not realizing that they need to be purchased and circumcised.

All these details related to the Passover show the proper and adequate way to apply the Passover. If these details were not necessary, the Bible would not include them. Although these details are also in the New Testament, it is rather difficult for us to find them. However, they are vividly portrayed in the picture of the Passover in the book of Exodus. Thank the Lord that we are the purchased and circumcised ones and that we eat the Passover according to God's principles.

H. To Continue the Enjoyment of the Passover Lamb by the Exodus from Egypt as God's Army

Exodus 12:51 concludes, "And it came to pass the selfsame day, that Jehovah did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies" (Heb.). This verse indicates that God's complete redemption produces an army. After applying the Passover according to all the principles given by God, we need to continue our enjoyment of the Passover by making an exodus from Egypt to become God's army to fight for His interests on earth. We need to continue our enjoyment of salvation by getting out of the world and

becoming part of the army of the Lord. This is the meaning of the term exodus. What a complete picture of God's salvation is given in the book of Exodus! When we apply Christ as our Passover today, we need all the principles given in the account of the Passover in Exodus.

V. GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON ALL THE FIRSTBORN

Exodus 12:12 says, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast." Some may wonder why God killed only the firstborn. When I was young, I was troubled by this. I wondered if it meant that the firstborn were evil and that the others were good. At the time, I was not familiar with spiritual principles. Later I learned that the firstborn includes everyone in Adam. Adam, the first man, was actually the firstborn (1 Cor. 15:45a). Since Adam was the first man, the firstborn includes all those in Adam. The second born, on the contrary, are all those who are in Christ, for Christ is the second man (1 Cor. 15:47b). In a very real sense, we who believe in Christ are the second born ones. Nevertheless, within us we still have the element of the firstborn. Although we are under the blood of Christ, the blood does not redeem anything of the firstborn. For this reason we must condemn everything within us that is related to the firstborn, that is, to Adam. This means that, once again, we must condemn the natural life.

The terms firstborn and stranger actually describe the same thing. They are synonymous terms that describe the old man and the natural life. We may say that the old man is the firstborn and that our natural man with the natural life is the stranger. But these two are actually one. When we apply Christ as the Passover, we must condemn both the old man and the natural man. We must reject both the firstborn and the stranger. In God's Passover feast, there is no place for the old man or the natural life.

We need to take this not in a mere doctrinal way, but in the way of practice and experience. If we apply this in an

experiential and practical way, we shall realize that we still have a certain amount of the old man and the natural life within us. This keeps us from applying the Passover in a complete and adequate way. We still hold on to the old man and the natural life. This means that the firstborn and the stranger are still within us. Therefore, we cannot apply the Passover in a full way, because God does not allow the old man or the natural life to participate in His Passover. This is the principle with respect to God's judgment of all the firstborn.

VI. GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON ALL THE GODS OF EGYPT

In 12:12 the Lord also said, "And against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment." This word is very significant. Without this part of 12:12, we would not realize that on the night of the Passover, Satan and all the demons were also judged. The firstborn were the constituents of Egypt, whereas the gods were components of the kingdom of Satan. During the Passover, both were judged.

It is possible to make a list of items that are excluded from participation in the Passover. There could be no leaven, no work, no strangers, no hired servants, no firstborn, and no Egyptian gods. This means that there is to be no place for sin, human doing, the natural life, the old man, the world, or Satan. These items are not only portrayed in the picture of the Passover in Exodus, but they also are clearly revealed in the New Testament. When we keep the Passover according to the detailed principles ordained by God, then we apply the Passover in a proper way. Praise the Lord for this full picture of the Passover, God's complete redemption!

In addition to this list of negative things, we can make a list of positive things that are included in the Passover: the lamb, the house, the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, the hyssop, the girdle, the shoes, and the staff. All these are components of the Passover. The issue of these positive things is God's army. We who enjoy Christ as the Passover eventually

become an army fighting for the kingdom of God on earth. As we have pointed out, the Passover ultimately produces an army to fight for God's interests.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SIX

ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 12:29-42, 51; 13:1-22

In the foregoing messages, we considered the Passover. Now we come to Israel's exodus from Egypt, an event which followed the Passover. As we all know, the word exodus means a going out.

The points we shall cover in this message concerning the exodus from Egypt are all to be found in the New Testament. However, if we read the words of the New Testament without considering the picture of the exodus presented in the Old Testament, we shall not be impressed very deeply. Hence, we need to consider both the words in the New Testament and the picture in the Old Testament.

Often we are able to grasp spiritual things more adequately through pictures than through words. In New Testament terms, to have an exodus is to get out of the world. However, without the picture in the book of Exodus, it is difficult to say just how we are able to get out of the world. To talk about this matter without consulting the picture may lead only to confusion. Therefore, we thank the Lord both for the picture in the Old Testament and for the plain words in the New Testament.

I. PHARAOH AND THE EGYPTIANS HAVING BEEN SUBDUED BY GOD

The children of Israel did not make their exodus from Egypt of their own accord or by their own power. If they had been left to themselves, they never could have come out of

Egypt. The exodus was accomplished by the saving God. Firstly, God subdued Pharaoh, the one who had usurped the children of Israel, and then He subdued all the Egyptians (12:29-33). As we apply this principle to our experience, we see that God comes in to subdue Satan, everything and everyone that stands with Satan, and also our environment. When the children of Israel made their exodus from Egypt, the whole environment was subdued by God. Everything was set for the children of Israel to leave Egypt. Even if they had wanted to remain in Egypt, the environment would not have allowed them to remain. They had no choice except to leave.

According to the picture in the book of Exodus, God's salvation includes the aspect of the Passover and the aspect of the exodus. It was easy for God's people to observe the Passover, but it was not easy for them to have an exodus. The difficulty lay in the fact that the exodus required a suitable environment. Suppose the situation in Egypt did not allow God's people to leave. How then could they have made their exodus? It would have been impossible. The exodus required a thorough subduing of the environment. Israel's exodus was the result of a long struggle between Moses and Pharaoh. It was preceded by twelve negotiations with ten plagues. This indicates that it is not easy for God to deliver His chosen people from the usurping hand of Satan and from the world. All genuine Christians have experienced the Passover, but only a small minority of believers have experienced the exodus. The reason for this is that certain aspects of their environment have not yet been subdued.

If our environment has not been subdued, we may have the Passover, but not the exodus. Perhaps your wife, husband, or relatives need to be subdued. When some hear that their environment must be subdued, they may be discouraged and want to give up. However, not even the matter of giving up depends on us; it depends wholly on the Lord. Instead of giving up, we should cooperate with Him. To be

rescued from the usurping hand of Satan and from the world, we need God's hand to subdue our environment.

In this record we are told twice that "by strength of hand" the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt (13:3, 14). God's people were saved not only by the blood of the Passover lamb, but also by the hand of God. The blood saved them from God's righteous judgment, but the hand saved them from Pharoah's usurpation. It is the same with us today. Through Christ as our Passover we are saved from God's judgment, but by God's subduing hand we are saved from Satan and the world.

II. PHARAOH AND THE EGYPTIANS DRIVING THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT

Pharaoh and the Egyptians were subdued to such an extent that they actually drove the children of Israel out of Egypt (12:33, 39; 11:1). The Egyptians could not tolerate the presence of God's people in their country any longer. When Moses and Aaron first asked Pharaoh to let God's people go, Pharaoh refused. But by the time of 12:33, "the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste."

This is not only a story in the Bible, but a principle that applies to our Christian experience. Sooner or later, our environment will encourage us, even compel us, to make our exodus from the world. Our wife, husband, or relatives may charge us to go out; they may tell us that it is better for us to leave the world than to remain in it. This means that the world will cast us out. If we are not willing to go, the world will drive us away. As long as we remain in the world, those in the world have no peace. Eventually they realize that only when we leave the world will they have peace and will we have joy. I can testify that this has been my experience. If I were to try to go back to the world, the world would beg me not to return. As far as the world is concerned, the farther away I am, the better it is. It is the result of the Lord's strong hand that the world wants us to leave.

III. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAVING NO TIME TO LEAVEN THEIR BREAD

Because the children of Israel were driven out of Egypt, they had no time to bring leavened food (12:34, 39). We have pointed out that leaven signifies sinfulness and corruption. The fact that the children of Israel did not have the time to prepare leavened bread indicates that the Lord will deal with our environment to such an extent that it will give us no time for sinful things. If we still have time to prepare leavened bread, it will be difficult for us to get out of Egypt. This means that if we still have time for sinful things, it will be hard for us to make our exodus from the world. After God subdues our environment and causes us to be driven out of the world, we shall discover that no time remains for sinful things. Exodus 12:39 says, "And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were driven out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any food" (Heb.). This verse indicates clearly that the Egyptians did not give the children of Israel time to leaven their bread.

When I was a child in northern China, we ate a great deal of leavened bread. I learned that it takes much less time to bake unleavened bread than to bake leavened bread. Often before going to bed at night my mother would prepare dough with leaven and let it stand until morning. When my sister prepared the dough, sometimes she would forget to add leaven. In the morning, when my mother saw the situation, she would be displeased. She knew there was no time to make leavened bread, and she had to prepare something else for us to eat. This illustration shows that it takes time to prepare leavened bread. Just as it takes time to bake leavened bread, it also takes time to commit sin.

Thirty years ago, many of us moved in haste from the mainland of China to Taiwan. The environment was such that we did not have any time to spare. If we had tarried,

we would have found ourselves without any means of transportation. Also, we were forced to leave many things behind. Before that time, we who ministered the Word tried to help certain people get rid of the "leaven" in their lives. But they were not willing to listen. Instead they held on to the sinful things, to the things that are "leaven" in the eyes of God. However, being forced to leave the mainland, they had no choice but to forsake all the "leaven." When we arrived on the island of Taiwan, I was happy that so much "leaven" had been left behind.

Sometimes God may even use physical weakness or illness to separate us from our "leaven." You may still want to practice certain sinful things, but because of physical infirmity you are no longer able to do so. God works in your environment to force you to leave your "leaven."

The children of Israel left Egypt in a pure way, that is, without leaven. Many of us can testify that we also have left the world in a pure way. Because God dealt with our environment, it was not possible for us to take leavened bread out of the world with us. Rather, the environment compelled us to make our exodus in a pure way. Praise Him for purging out the leaven!

IV. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAVING PLUNDERED THE EGYPTIANS OF THEIR SILVER, GOLD, AND RAIMENT

Exodus 12:35 and 36 say, "And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they gave to them what they asked. And they plundered the Egyptians" (Heb.). Although the children of Israel had no time to prepare leavened bread, they did have time to plunder the Egyptians of their silver, gold, and raiment (3:21-22; 11:2-3). This indicates that in God's salvation He desires that we plunder the world of its wealth.

God's economy is different from man's religion. For example, Buddhism teaches that we should take nothing out of the world. God, on the contrary, commanded His chosen people to ask the Egyptians for silver, gold, and raiment. In this way, His people plundered the Egyptians. This was not robbery; it was a belated payment for a long period of slave labor. God in His righteousness arranged for the Egyptians to pay the children of Israel for their labor in Egypt.

Many saved ones can testify that God's strong hand has worked in their environment to give them the opportunity to plunder the world of its wealth. God's goal in doing this is not the enrichment of His people; it is the building of the tabernacle, His dwelling place on earth. The children of Israel needed the gold, silver, and raiment for the building of the tabernacle. For the sake of God's dwelling place, we should not leave the world as the Buddhists do; we should plunder Egypt of wealth to be used in building the tabernacle.

On the one hand, when Peter and John were asked for money by the beggar, they had no silver or gold to give him (Acts 3:6). But on the other hand, they were among those who had plundered the world of its wealth. When we, the chosen people of God, come out of the world under God's sovereign hand, we have no time to leaven anything. However, we do have the opportunity to plunder the Egyptians. All those who are raised up by the Lord are those who plunder the world. For the Lord's purpose, they bring certain riches out of the world and present them to the Lord. For instance, Paul could say, "As poor yet enriching many, as having nothing and possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:10). This matter of plundering the wealth of the Egyptians can be illustrated and confirmed by the experiences of many Christians.

Apparently, it was unjust for the children of Israel to plunder the Egyptians of their gold, silver, and raiment. As we have pointed out, by plundering the wealth of Egypt, they were actually receiving righteous payment for their forced

labor. In a sense, the pay they deserved for their labor had been deposited over the years in the "bank" in Egypt and then was withdrawn at the time of the exodus. Furthermore, God's people did not take the gold, silver, and raiment for their own use or purpose. On the contrary, the riches of Egypt were used through God's chosen people for the building of the tabernacle.

The tabernacle was the testimony of God, which typifies Christ with the church. The church today is God's tabernacle constituted of Christ and the saints. Such a testimony is built with the offerings of God's people. Therefore, the riches of the Egyptians came through the labor of God's people and were spent for God's testimony. This is what it means to plunder the world of its wealth.

The saints in the Lord's recovery should not be lazy. They should get a good education and then work diligently at a proper job to earn an adequate living. However, the money they earn should not be used only for themselves or for their enjoyment; it should be used for the Lord's testimony. On the one hand, we must labor in the world and receive just payment for our work. But on the other hand, what we earn should be used for the testimony of God.

Although we work in the world, we do not work for the world. Instead, we work in the world for something that is not of the world, just as the children of Israel labored in Egypt for something that was not of Egypt. Pharaoh forced God's people to work as slaves. Eventually, they received for their labor the riches of Egypt that were used for the building of the tabernacle, God's testimony, not for Egypt.

Some may think that because we labor diligently in the world we labor for the world. However, our labor is for God's testimony. What we receive for our labor in the world is given to the Lord. According to the promise in the New Testament, the more we give to the Lord, the more He will give to us (Luke 6:38). The Lord intends to plunder the world of its wealth through our labor so that we may give this wealth to Him for the building up of His dwelling place.

The experience of a certain brother in England illustrates this. Early in his Christian life, he gave ten percent of his income to the Lord. Because he was faithful in this matter, the Lord caused him to prosper financially. The brother then increased the percentage of his giving from ten percent to fifteen percent. The Lord caused him to prosper even more. As the years went by, this brother gradually increased the percentage of his giving. But no matter how much he gave to the Lord, the Lord always gave even more to him. This brother surely was one who plundered the riches of the world and presented them to the Lord for His testimony.

Another illustration is found in the experience of some brothers in the Lord who opened a tailor shop with the intention of helping the Lord's people and the Lord's work. Eventually their business expanded so that they had a hundred chain stores. All the profit they earned from this business went to support the Lord's testimony. They also plundered the world for the Lord. All those who realize what it means to come out of the world will work diligently not for their own welfare, but for the Lord's interests.

The building of the meeting hall in Anaheim also illustrates this principle. A great deal of volunteer labor went into the construction of this facility. This labor saved a very large amount of money. Those who worked on the hall plundered the world through their labors. I believe that the Lord has made a record of their faithfulness.

Throughout the years, many of the saints who have been faithful to the Lord have been enriched by Him. However, the crucial matter is what use the saints make of this material increase. If this financial gain is used for the world, this will be a great failure in the eyes of the Lord. But if it is used for God's testimony, it will be another case of plundering the wealth of the world under the sovereignty of God. To plunder the world is not to take anything from the world unrighteously: it is to labor in the world and to use the gain from our labor for God's testimony.

V. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAVING GONE FORTH FROM EGYPT WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR FLOCKS AND HERDS

The children of Israel went forth from Egypt with all their children and their flocks and herds (12:37-38, 31-32). According to 12:38, a "mixed multitude went up also with them." If there had been only a small number of people making their exodus out of Egypt, there would not have been a mixed multitude. But because the number of God's people was so large, approximately two million, a mixed multitude went with them. God's people were very prevailing, and some who were not Israelites wanted to go out of Egypt with them. Hence, the presence of the mixed multitude here was a good sign. According to the book of Numbers, however, this mixed multitude later was a cause of trouble. But even this trouble taught God's people some valuable lessons. We in the Lord's recovery today have also learned a great deal through the mixed multitude that has been with us.

The children of Israel made an absolute exodus from Egypt. Everything they had was brought out with them. This is the kind of exodus, the kind of departure from the world, that is ordained of God. Our exodus must be so absolute that it makes others willing to follow us and join us.

VI. THE TIME OF ISRAEL'S DWELLING IN THE GENTILE LAND HAVING BEEN COMPLETED

Exodus 12:40 and 41 say, "Now the time of dwelling of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the armies of Jehovah went out from the land of Egypt" (Heb.). These four hundred thirty years began in Genesis 12 when God made the promise to Abraham that He would give the good land to Abraham's seed. From that day until the night of the exodus was exactly four hundred thirty years. Thus, the exodus marked the termination

of this period of time. For all these years the people God had chosen and to whom He had promised the good land had not been dwelling in the land of promise. Instead, they had been sojourning in a Gentile land represented by Egypt.

According to Genesis 15:13-14 and Acts 7:6, the children of Israel were under persecution for four hundred years. These four hundred years began with Ishmael's mocking of Isaac in Genesis 21. This means that from Genesis 12 to Genesis 21 there was a period of thirty years, and from Genesis 21 to Exodus 12 there was a period of four hundred years. Therefore, for four hundred thirty years God's people were in a strange land, and for four hundred years they suffered persecution.

You may wonder what this has to do with us today. If we have not had an exodus from the world, then we are still sojourning in a strange land. We are not dwelling in Christ who is our good land. According to God's promise and ordination, we should live in Christ as the good land and enjoy Him as the land. This, however, requires an absolute exodus. As God's chosen people, we should dwell in Christ. Our exodus from the world marks the end, the termination, of our sojourning in a strange land.

Although God has chosen and ordained us to live and dwell in Christ, many of His people are not dwelling in Christ. Instead, they are still living in Egypt. This indicates that even after we have been saved, we may still sojourn in the world. Only when we leave the world in an absolute way do we terminate the time of our sojourning in a strange land. Hence, our exodus is the termination of our four hundred thirty years.

Many Christians have not experienced such a termination because they have not yet had an exodus. They have been chosen by God and ordained of God to dwell in Christ. Nevertheless, from the time of their second birth, they have been sojourning in the world. Only when they have an absolute exodus will they terminate their period of sojourning in Egypt.

Without this picture in the book of Exodus, we cannot understand thoroughly the words in the New Testament about being separated from the world. The account of the book of Exodus makes it clear that our exodus must be the termination of our period of sojourning. Apart from such an exodus, it is not possible to dwell in Christ as the good land. Furthermore, as long as we are in the time of sojourning, we are under a kind of persecution that allows us to have no rest, satisfaction, or proper enjoyment. Because they are still in Egypt, many Christians do not have rest, satisfaction, or fullness of joy in Christ. But when they come out of Egypt in an absolute way, they will terminate not only their time of sojourning in the world, but also their years of dissatisfaction and restlessness. Although only a minority of genuine Christians have made their exodus from Egypt, many of the saints in the Lord's recovery have made such an exodus.

To have the Passover is one thing, but to experience the exodus is another. As we shall see, the crossing of the Red Sea is still another crucial event. It marks the completion of the first stage of God's salvation. This stage of God's salvation includes the Passover, the exodus, and the crossing of the Red Sea. Only after the children of Israel had crossed the Red Sea were they fully delivered from Egypt and released to praise the Lord. However, God's salvation includes more than this. Even the building of the temple is part of the full salvation of God.

VII. A NIGHT OF OBSERVATION UNTO JEHOVAH

Exodus 12:42 says, "It is a night of observation unto Jehovah for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night unto Jehovah, an observation for all the children of Israel in their generations" (Heb.). During the night of the Passover, the children of Israel had satisfaction, rest, and joy, but they did not sleep. As this verse indicates, it was a night of observation, a night of watching. This implies that God was observing, watching, the situation. Actually, as the Berkeley

Version makes clear, both God and the children of Israel were watching. As God was observing and watching, His people were observing and watching also. Hence, that night was a night of observation.

Exodus 12:42 says that this night was a night of observation unto the Lord. The children of Israel were watching unto the Lord. This means that they were cooperating with Him. God was doing everything necessary to rescue them from Egypt. He was watching, and His people were watching unto Him.

As we apply this to our experience, we see that our exodus was also a night of watching. This is the reason that in the New Testament we are warned not to sleep. Romans 13:11 says that "now is the hour for you to be raised out of sleep." Furthermore, in 1 Thessalonians 5:6 and 7 Paul says, "So then, let us not sleep as the rest, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep in the night." As Paul says in the same chapter, we are "sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness" (v. 5). If we are not alert spiritually, we turn the day into night, but if we are watchful and observant, even our night will be turned into day.

To make an exodus from the world is not a simple matter. Such an exodus takes place during a night of watching. God watches over us, and we must watch with God and unto God. The night of our exodus must be a vigil, and we must be on the alert. Without such a vigil, no one can get out of the world. Christians who are slothful and sleeping cannot make an exodus. Only those who are watchful, vigilant, and observant can come out of the world. God watchfully exercises His sovereignty over our situation, and He commands us to be watchful unto Him. Then our night will turn into day, and we shall be rescued from Egypt.

In the New Testament we are charged not to love the world (1 John 2:15). However, it is possible for us to take this word in a very superficial way. The picture in the Old Testament indicates that the exodus from Egypt should not be

regarded superficially. During the night of the exodus, even God was watching and observing. The King James Version of 12:42 says that it was "a night to be much observed unto the Lord." This does not mean that it was a night for the observation of rituals. On the contrary, it was a night of observing, of watching. God was watching and observing in order to bring His people out of the world. His people had to cooperate with Him by watching unto Him. They had to be watchful because they did not know at what time they would march out of Egypt. By this we see that no sleepy ones or loose ones can have an adequate exodus. If you want to make an exodus from the world, you need to be watchful, observant, and vigilant. Then you will know the right time to go out of the world.

VIII. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BECOMING THE ARMIES OF JEHOVAH

In 12:41 we are told that "all the armies of Jehovah went out from the land of Egypt" (Heb.), and in 12:51, that "Jehovah did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies" (Heb.). Furthermore, 13:18 says, "The children of Israel went up in martial array out of the land of Egypt" (Heb.). The Hebrew in 13:18 indicates that the children of Israel went out arrayed in ranks of five. They did not go out of Egypt in a loose way; they marched out as an army.

After the surrender of the Japanese army in 1945, I watched American soldiers march in rows of four through the streets of the Chinese city of Tsingtao. How excited I was to see those young Americans in martial array! By contrast, I have been very disappointed to see the looseness of certain young people in the United States today. If we would make our exodus out of the world, we cannot be loose. Spiritually speaking, we must march out of the world in martial array. Everything concerning us must be strict, straight, and orderly. Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against Satan and the world. For such a battle, we need to be in martial array, ready to fight against the enemy.

Day by day the Christians in the church life need to be in martial array. In everything we do we should be strict, straight, and corporate. Only by being in the army corporately can we be in martial array. The fact that we are to march out of the world as God's army indicates that it is not an easy matter to make our exodus out of Egypt. Praise the Lord for this vivid portrait in the book of Exodus! May this portrait make a deep impression upon us all.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SEVEN

ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 12:14, 37; 13:1-22; Gen. 50:24-25; Heb. 11:22; Josh. 24:32; Ezek. 37:1, 10

In this message we shall continue to consider the exodus of God's people from Egypt. In the previous message we saw that Pharaoh and the Egyptians were subdued by God; then they drove the children of Israel out of Egypt (12:29-33; 11:1). The children of Israel had no time to leaven their bread (12:34, 39), but, according to God's commandment, they plundered the Egyptians of their silver, gold, and raiment (12:35-36; 3:21-22; 11:2-3). Furthermore, we saw that the children of Israel came forth from Egypt with their children and their flocks and herds (12:37-38, 31-32). Their dwelling in the Gentile land had lasted for a period of four hundred thirty years (12:40-41). The night of their exodus was a night of observation (12:42). Finally, when they made their exodus from Egypt, the children of Israel had become the armies of the Lord (12:41, 51). Hence, in the words of 13:18, they came out of Egypt in martial array.

In this message we shall cover four additional points, all found in chapter thirteen. In contrast to the material covered in the foregoing message, these points are related to spiritual matters.

It may seem that chapter thirteen is an insertion between chapters twelve and fourteen and that chapter fourteen should be the direct continuation of chapter twelve. In a sense, this may be correct. However, from the standpoint of spiritual experience, chapter thirteen is not an insertion; it is a definite continuation of chapter twelve.

All the points in chapter thirteen relate to spiritual experience on the positive side. For example, 13:2 speaks of the sanctification of the firstborn. Certainly this signifies a particular aspect of the spiritual experience of God's people in coming out of Egypt. It indicates that the purpose of our exodus from the world is to be sanctified to the Lord.

In 13:3-10 we read of a day of memorial held in the month of Abib. At the time of this memorial, the children of Israel were not to eat leavened bread. The day the children of Israel came out from Egypt was to be a day of unleavened bread and a day of memorial. According to 13:3, it was the eating of unleavened bread that was the memorial, the remembrance. The way to remember the exodus was to purge out all leaven. Hence, there are three things that go together: the day of remembrance, the unleavened bread, and the month of Abib.

In 13:19 we read that "Moses took the bones of Joseph with him," for Joseph had charged the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you." It is significant that this detail is not mentioned either in chapter twelve or in chapter fourteen, but immediately after a verse that tells us how God led the people through the way of the wilderness (v. 18). As we shall see, God led them in a way contrary to what we would expect according to the natural concept. We would expect Him to take the short way, but instead He took a roundabout way. Furthermore, in the verses immediately following the record concerning Joseph's bones, we are told that the Lord went before the children of Israel by day in a pillar of cloud and by night in a pillar of fire. Therefore, as we consider this chapter in the light of spiritual experience, we need to put together the matter of Joseph's bones with the way of God's leading.

Viewing this chapter as a whole, we see that it begins with sanctification and ends with the Lord's presence as the guide for His people. How marvelous! Let us now look at this wonderful chapter in detail.

IX. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAVING BEEN SANCTIFIED UNTO JEHOVAH

Sanctification is based on redemption. Exodus 13:2 says, "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." The Lord required only the firstborn to be sanctified because they were the redeemed ones. This indicates that whatever or whoever is redeemed must also be sanctified. This principle applies to us as believers in Christ. Because we have been redeemed, we must also be sanctified. Otherwise, we shall remain in Egypt, in the world. If we desire to experience a genuine exodus from Egypt, we must be both redeemed and sanctified. No one can come out of Egypt without being sanctified unto the Lord. According to the divine requirement, all those who are redeemed must also be sanctified.

Redemption is for our security, whereas sanctification is for God's purpose. If we are shortsighted, we may see only redemption, which is for our benefit. But if we have the proper discernment, we shall see that redemption must be followed by sanctification (Rom. 6:22), which is for the fulfillment of God's purpose.

Because the firstborn had been redeemed by the Passover lamb, all the firstborn both of man and of beast had to be sanctified to the Lord. For the sanctification of the firstborn, the oxen and the sheep did not need another kind of animal to be substituted for them. They were clean animals, acceptable to the Lord as a sacrifice. However, verse 13 says, "And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb." Because donkeys are unclean in the eyes of God, they cannot be accepted by Him and they cannot satisfy Him. Therefore, the firstborn of a donkey had to be redeemed by a lamb.

At this point, we need to raise a rather puzzling question. Since the firstborn of a donkey had already been redeemed by the Passover lamb, why did it need to be redeemed again in sanctification? The answer is that even though a donkey had been redeemed, it was still an unclean animal. In order

to be sanctified, to be offered on the altar to the Lord for His satisfaction, the donkey still had to be redeemed with a lamb. It was not qualified to be sacrificed to the Lord for His satisfaction.

We may apply this principle to our spiritual experience. As far as sanctification is concerned, we are not sheep or oxen; we are donkeys. Even though we have been redeemed, our natural man is still unclean in the eyes of God. Hence, in order to be sanctified to the Lord, we need Christ to be our substitute. In verse 13 we are told that not only the firstling of the ass, but all the firstborn of man among the children of Israel had to be redeemed. This indicates that they had to be redeemed in sanctification. They needed redemption not only at the time of the Passover, but also for their sanctification. This means that a substitute was necessary both for redemption and for sanctification.

The Passover lamb typifies Christ as our Redeemer. Through Him as our substitute, we have been redeemed. However, because we are still unclean and natural, we cannot be a living sacrifice for God's satisfaction; we need Christ to be our substitute in sanctification. This picture indicates that both for our salvation and for our sanctification we need Christ to be our substitute.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." We need Christ not only for our redemption, but also for our living as a sacrifice to God. Although we have been redeemed, our nature has not yet been changed. As far as our nature is concerned, we all are "donkeys," unclean in the eyes of God and therefore not acceptable to Him for His satisfaction. For this reason, we need Christ for our sanctification. Only by having Christ as our substitute can we be a living sacrifice to God that is acceptable and satisfying to Him.

Most Christians realize only that they need Christ as their substitute for redemption. Not many realize that in order to be a living sacrifice to satisfy God, they also need Christ as their substitute in sanctification. According to 13:13, if a donkey

was not redeemed, its neck was to be broken. This means that any firstling of a donkey that was not redeemed had to be put to death. Because many Christians do not take Christ as their substitute for sanctification, it is as if their "necks" have been broken; that is, spiritually speaking, they are dead. They do not practice taking Christ as their substitute for their living unto God. Instead, they offer themselves on the altar as if they could be a sacrifice acceptable to God. This is a serious mistake. God will never accept the natural man as a sacrifice. On the contrary, the "neck" of the natural man must be broken.

We all need to be impressed with the fact that for redemption we need Christ as our security and that for sanctification we need Christ as our substitute in order to be acceptable to God and pleasing to Him. In ourselves, we are not qualified to be acceptable to God or pleasing to Him. In ourselves, we are not qualified to be redeemed and saved. In like manner, in ourselves we are not qualified to be sanctified to God for His satisfaction. Therefore, just as Christ was our substitute for redemption, He must also become our substitute for sanctification. Then in our living we shall be a sacrifice acceptable to God and pleasing to Him.

As we consider the picture in the book of Exodus, we see that for our security, safety, and salvation, we need Christ as our substitute so that we may be redeemed. We also see that in order to make our exodus from Egypt, to serve God, and to be a living sacrifice pleasing to God, we need Christ to be our substitute. To take Christ as our substitute for sanctification is a part of our redemption.

X. A DAY OF MEMORIAL IN THE MONTH OF ABIB IN WHICH NO LEAVENED BREAD WAS TO BE EATEN

If we would be sanctified to God by taking Christ as our substitute, we need to experience the month of Abib (13:4), a period of time that signifies our whole Christian life, a time during which we enjoy new life. We have pointed out that the word Abib means sprouting, budding. Hence, it denotes a new beginning of life. In order to be sanctified to the Lord

for His satisfaction, we need such a new beginning of life. We need to be a green ear of wheat sprouting with new life.

In this new beginning of life there must be no leaven. We have pointed out that in the Bible leaven signifies sinfulness or corruption. We need to deal with all sin that is exposed. We must not tolerate any sin after it has been exposed. To eat unleavened bread in this way is to have a true memorial to the Lord, a genuine remembrance. Those who are sanctified by having Christ as their substitute and who have a new beginning of life without sin will have a daily living that is worthy of being a memorial. If we have a proper experience of God's salvation, we shall have a marvelous spiritual history. After our Passover, we shall be sanctified to the Lord by taking Christ as our substitute to live in us. Then we shall have a new beginning of life, and all exposed sin will be dealt with. Such a living will be a memorial, a remembrance. Every day we live this kind of life will be a day of memorial. In our Christian life every day should be such a memorial day. Any day that is not a memorial is a day of defeat.

I am concerned that many Christians will have very little to remember when they are in the New Jerusalem. But if we live with Christ as our substitute, have a new beginning of life, and deal with all exposed sin, we shall have a great deal to remember in eternity. Every day we live in this way is a day worth remembering. It is possible for every day of our Christian life to be a memorial. May the Lord save us from having to repent over wasted days, days in which there is no new beginning of life and no thorough dealing with leaven. After we have been saved through Christ as our Passover lamb, we need to take Him as our substitute for the beginning of a new, sinless life. Then we shall have many days of memorial.

XI. THE BONES OF JOSEPH BROUGHT OUT OF EGYPT WITH THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

Exodus 13:19 indicates that Joseph's bones were brought

out of Egypt with the children of Israel. It may seem strange that these bones are mentioned in the same chapter that speaks of the month of Abib. Apparently, there is no relationship between these two things. Green ears of wheat, signified by Abib, are full of life. But dead bones have no life. We should remember, however, that in the Bible bone signifies an unbreakable life, a life in resurrection (John 19:36). Therefore, the bones in 13:19 have something to do with resurrection life.

Hebrews 11:22 says, "By faith Joseph, when near his end, remembered concerning the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones." Joseph believed that one day God would visit His people and bring them out of the land of Egypt into the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Furthermore, Joseph "took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence" (Gen. 50:24-25). The bringing of Joseph's bones out of the land of Egypt into the good land signifies resurrection. The only way dead, dry bones could enter into the land of Canaan was by resurrection. According to the picture, the bones that were taken out of the grave and brought into the good land signify resurrection life.

In 1 Corinthians 15:50 Paul says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." According to the Bible, flesh and blood denote the natural man (Matt. 16:17; Gal. 1:16). In resurrection, Christ has flesh and bones, but no blood (Luke 24:39). The fact that Joseph's bones were brought into the good land indicates that the saints who have died will enter the kingdom in resurrection. (The living saints will be raptured and then enter the kingdom.) Those who share in the kingdom will no longer be in the natural life signified by flesh and blood, but in the resurrection life signified by Joseph's bones. As God's people today, we need to be in resurrection; we need to be bones that move in resurrection life.

In the eyes of God all the children of Israel had been dead and buried in graves in Egypt. That was their

situation before the Passover. The land of Egypt was a huge cemetery in which God's people had been buried. Hence, from God's point of view, His people in Egypt were dry bones. The picture of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 illustrates the condition of the children of Israel in Egypt: they were dry bones that needed to be resurrected and formed into an army (Ezek. 37:1, 10). The exodus from Egypt, therefore, was actually a resurrection. This is seen in particular in the crossing of the Red Sea.

The principle of resurrection applies to the matter of substitution for sanctification. According to Galatians 2:20, we have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives within us. For Christ to be our substitute for sanctification is to be in resurrection.

Without resurrection, it is impossible for God's people to come out of the world. Both Joseph's bones and the crossing of the Red Sea point to resurrection. In our natural life we cannot make an exodus from the world. To make such an exodus, we must be a resurrected people. Although we are dry bones, we are bones that move. Like the bones in Ezekiel 37, we shall be made alive and become an army.

Just as the children of Israel were dry bones in Ezekiel 37, so at the time of Moses they were also dry bones. However, they were resurrected to become the army of God. This should also be our experience today.

The reason Joseph's bones are mentioned in 13:19 is to show us that the exodus is accomplished only in resurrection. We are sanctified to the Lord and made acceptable and satisfying to Him in resurrection. Only in resurrection can we have a new beginning of a sinless life and thus have a day of remembrance. Every aspect of the exodus from Egypt is related to resurrection.

According to our experience we can testify that without resurrection life there can be no exodus from the world. The exodus is accomplished only in resurrection. Many sermons are given exhorting Christians not to love the world and to

make their exodus from the world. Such sermons are filled with empty words. No one can leave the world unless he is enlivened by resurrection life. If we would come out of Egypt, we must be dry bones that have been buried in the world. But although we have been buried, we have been chosen by God and we shall come forth in resurrection.

We may be dead bones, but these bones signify a life that is unbreakable and divine. Only when this life comes forth in resurrection are we able to have an exodus from the world. Therefore, we come out of Egypt, not by our own energy or by our natural life, but by the resurrection life. Although Joseph had been chosen by God, he was buried in Egypt. However, in resurrection his bones were moved out of Egypt. The principle is the same with us today. Although we have been chosen by God, we have been buried in the world. But in resurrection the dead bones can move out of the world. This is life out of death! Hallelujah for the resurrection life that brings us out of the world!

XII. THE WAY OF GOD'S LEADING

A. In Resurrection

Immediately after the word about Joseph's bones, we have a record regarding the leading and guidance of the Lord (13:20-21; see also 13:17-18; 12:37). This marvelous sequence indicates that God cannot guide people apart from resurrection life. His guidance is available only to bones that move in resurrection. When the dry bones become living and begin to walk out of Egypt, God's guidance comes to them.

For many years I wondered why Joseph's bones are mentioned in relation to the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire (13:19-22), both of which signify God Himself. The fact that the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire are mentioned in relation to Joseph's bones indicates that God's living leading and guidance are related to resurrection life. When the dead bones move, God's leading comes. When we move in resurrection life, we spontaneously have God's guidance.

Many Christians today are seeking the Lord's will; they earnestly desire His leading and guidance. However, the more they seek these things, the less they have them. The reason for this lack is that these believers are not bones that have been buried and resurrected; they are not bones that move in the power of resurrection life. In order to have the Lord's leading and guidance, the buried bones must be raised out of the tomb and begin to move.

B. Following the Lord's Command

Chapter twelve speaks of the exodus of the children of Israel, but nothing is said about the Lord's leading. This is found in chapter thirteen. If the children of Israel had gone out of Egypt by themselves, they would have made a serious mistake. In order to make a proper exodus, they had to have the Lord's guidance and leading.

In Exodus 12 we have the Lord's command, and in Exodus 13 we have the Lord's leading. In spiritual matters, it is not sufficient to have only the Lord's command and not His leading. To have His command but not His leading would be tragic. His command must always be followed by His leading.

It was right for the children of Israel to observe the Passover. Their environment had been subdued by the Lord, and they were ready to march out of Egypt. However, as the concluding verses of chapter thirteen make clear, God's people could have then taken one of two ways: the short way or the roundabout way. According to the natural understanding, they certainly would have chosen the short way, not the roundabout way that involved a long detour. However, the way the children of Israel were to take did not depend on them. It did not even depend on Moses or Aaron. It depended absolutely on the Lord's leading through the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. Apart from the Lord's leading, God's people had no right to move. If the children of Israel had moved without the Lord's leading in the pillar of fire or in the pillar of cloud, they would have been moving on their

own and in themselves. It is never right to do this in spiritual things. Along with God's command, we must have His leading and His guidance. If He asks us to do something, we should not do it on our own. Instead, we should pray, "Lord, since You ask me to do this, You must guide me. Lead me by the pillar of fire or by the pillar of cloud."

Although chapter thirteen may appear to be an insertion between chapters twelve and fourteen, actually it is not an insertion at all. On the contrary, this chapter is necessary. It reveals that we need the Lord's guidance as well as His command.

C. According to Certain Conditions

Furthermore, this chapter reveals that the Lord's guidance and leading come only when certain conditions are met. His leading and guidance are not unconditional. The first condition is sanctification. If we are not sanctified, we cannot have the Lord's leading. We also need to experience the new beginning of an unleavened life. To be sanctified and to have the new beginning of a sinless life are the first two requirements to be able to receive the Lord's guidance.

Another condition is resurrection. To be led of the Lord, we must not be in the natural man. Our bones must be resurrected and moving. Then, when we are no longer in the natural man, we shall have the Lord's leading and guidance.

We have pointed out that the Bible refers to the natural man as flesh and blood. When Peter received the revelation that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lord answered, "You are blessed, Simon Bar-jona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in the heavens" (Matt. 16:17). Furthermore, after Christ had been revealed to Paul, Paul did not confer with flesh and blood; that is, he did not confer with the natural man (Gal. 1:16). As we have pointed out, the moving of Joseph's bones signifies resurrection. Although these bones were dry, they were still able to move. This is a picture of a man in

resurrection. Such a person can be guided by the Lord and led by Him. When we are in resurrection, we are qualified to receive the Lord's guidance and leading.

Actually, the Lord's leading and guidance are simply the Lord Himself in the pillar of fire by night and in the pillar of cloud by day. As the children of Israel marched out of Egypt in martial array, they were led by the pillar of fire or the pillar of cloud. The Egyptians must have been terrified by such a sight.

The portrait of the children of Israel marching out of Egypt according to the Lord's guidance reveals that the Lord's leading is given only when we have fulfilled His conditions. We need to be sanctified, we need to have the new beginning of a sinless life, and we need to be in resurrection. Then we shall be guided by the Lord and led by Him.

D. Not through the Short Way, but through the Roundabout Way

As the Lord guided the children of Israel, He did not lead them to take the short way. Instead, He led them to take a roundabout way, a way that may have seemed like a detour. We would expect the children of Israel to go straight through the land of the Philistines to the good land. However, 13:17 says, "God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt." Because of the possibility of war with the Philistines, God did not lead the children of Israel along that way. As 13:20 indicates, "they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness."

According to the human mentality, the Lord's leading of His people was strange and even foolish. If we had been God, we certainly would have led the people by another way, in order to avoid the possibility of pursuit by Pharaoh. God, however, led His people by the long way. As we shall see in a

forthcoming message, this tempted Pharaoh to pursue them. God seemed to be mistaken in the way He led His people. Actually, the Lord's leading is never mistaken. Whatever way God leads is right. He is never wrong.

Exodus 13:18 says, "But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea." The Hebrew language here indicates that God turned the people around. By the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud He led them in a roundabout way.

A number of times in my Christian life, God has led me in ways that I thought were mistaken. But I have come to worship the Lord for His leading. His leading is always right. From our human point of view, we may think that He should lead us a certain way. But if He had taken us that way, there would have been no lessons for us to learn. On the contrary, we may be in danger of returning to Egypt. Therefore, God leads us to take an indirect way, even a long detour. Because the children of Israel were led this way, eventually they had to wander in the wilderness for thirty-eight years. Much of this time they went around and around in circles. This is also the experience of many Christians today. They go around in circles, with no apparent progress. However, through this kind of traveling we learn important lessons, as the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy make clear. We may expect to be led in a straight way, but God instead leads us to take a roundabout way, a detour. He even causes us to cross the Red Sea and then to travel through a great and terrible wilderness.

In the past I read a book entitled *Straight Paths for the Children of God*. However, often there are no straight paths for God's people. When we most expect God to take a straight way, He causes us to take a detour. Within the course of several years we may have a number of detours. However, by these detours we are helped, equipped, educated, trained, and disciplined. This is the reason God does not lead us along straight paths.

When I was young, I appreciated that book on straight

paths for the children of God. But I no longer value it because, in my Christian experience, I have learned that the Lord often leads us through detours. Consider the journeying of the children of Israel in the wilderness. Did they take a straight path? No, their way was full of detours. However, they themselves did not choose to make these detours. They were led by the Lord's presence in the cloud and in the fire.

E. By Himself in the Pillar of Cloud by Day and in the Pillar of Fire by Night

Exodus 13:21 and 22 say, "And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (Heb.). The two pillars actually are one. When night comes, the cloud becomes the fire. But when day dawns, the fire becomes the cloud. Nevertheless, the fire and the cloud are one.

In typology, the cloud signifies the Spirit. As He reaches us, the Spirit of God is like a cloud. The fire here signifies the Word of God, which is a light to us. Hence, the instant, living guidance that God gives us comes either through the Spirit or the Word. When the sky is clear, He is the cloud. But when the sky is dark, He is the fire. When the Lord leads as a pillar of fire by night, the light from this pillar causes the night to become day. In this way the children of Israel could journey day and night.

In the Christian life there should be no difference between day and night. Actually, we Christians should not have any night in our life with the Lord. Instead, our night should turn into day. If we have a night that does not turn into day, we are defeated. Whenever we are in darkness and are sleeping, we experience a night in our life as Christians. But when we call on the name of the Lord, we are enlightened, and our night becomes day.

Both the cloud and the fire are symbols of God, for He

is both the Spirit and the Word. Furthermore, the Word is also the Spirit (John 6:63; Eph. 6:17). The Lord, the Spirit, and the Word are one to lead us and guide us continually. When we are clear, God guides us through the Spirit. But when we are not clear, He guides us through the Word. As the Word is made clear to us, it becomes the Spirit in our experience.

Whether as the cloud or the fire, God's guidance is always a pillar. In the Bible a pillar denotes strength. Hence, God's guidance is strong; it stands upright and supports weight. By means of such definite guidance God led the children of Israel.

We need to thank the Lord for all the details presented in Exodus 13. Here we see substitution for sanctification, the day of memorial, and the beginning of a new life without sin. Here we also see the resurrection life in which we enjoy the Lord's presence for guidance as the pillar of cloud and as the pillar of fire. Let us worship the Lord for His leading, even when He leads us, not in a straight way, but in a roundabout way. Praise Him for all the detours!

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWENTY-EIGHT

PHARAOH'S LAST STRUGGLE

Scripture Reading: Exo. 14:1-31

God's complete salvation for His chosen people includes the Passover, the exodus from Egypt, and the crossing of the Red Sea. The Passover signifies redemption; the exodus signifies the going out from the world; and the crossing of the Red Sea signifies baptism. A full salvation with all these aspects is exactly what we need and what we enjoy today.

It was necessary for God to have such a person as Pharaoh for the accomplishing of these three aspects of salvation. Without him there would not have been the necessary environment, circumstances, and situations. If we see this matter, we shall praise the Lord for His sovereignty. Pharaoh's opposition created an environment that made the Passover possible. We cannot say that Pharaoh was the source of the Passover. However, we can say that without him there would not have been the necessary environment for the institution of the Passover.

The Passover included provision for redemption, which the children of Israel needed because of their sins. The Passover, however, includes much more than redemption. Christians recognize the need for redemption, but they may not see the need for the Passover. During the night of the Passover, not only were the children of Israel saved, but the Egyptians and the evil power of darkness were judged. In a normal experience of salvation, we are redeemed, and the power of darkness within us and around us is judged. However, many Christians are not saved in a normal way. They experience redemption, but they do not experience God's judgment of the power of darkness.

We have seen that time after time Pharaoh struggled against the Lord, resisting His demand to let the children of Israel go. But the more Pharaoh struggled, the more he helped to bring about the environment that was needed for the accomplishment of God's salvation.

Although Pharaoh continually resisted God's demands, Moses continued to negotiate with him. None of us would have exercised the patience required of Moses. We would probably have given up after the first few conflicts. This is often what we do as we deal with people today. For example, perhaps we are burdened for the salvation of a particular person. We may expect that anyone who has been chosen by God will turn to the Lord after we have contacted him a few times. But if he continues to resist the Lord, we may give up, thinking that it is a waste of time to pursue the matter further. Moses, on the contrary, was patient and persevering in his dealings with Pharaoh.

As a result of Moses' contact with Pharaoh and of Pharaoh's struggle against the Lord, the situation in Egypt became very tense. Eventually, the Passover became a necessity. When Pharaoh and the Egyptians had proved that they were wholly against the Lord, the time had come for the Lord to exercise His judgment upon the rebellious Egyptians and to deliver His people. As the children of Israel were enjoying the Passover, the Egyptians were suffering under the judgment of God. The Egyptians, however, had no right to blame God for this. They had brought the judgment of God upon themselves. They were responsible for producing the environment that required the institution of the Passover, with its redemption and its judgment.

In a similar way, it was with the help of Pharaoh that God's people made their exodus from Egypt. Otherwise, the children of Israel probably would never have left the land of Egypt. If Pharaoh and the Egyptians had been kind to them, they would have had no desire to leave Egypt. But Pharaoh's oppression of the children of Israel created the

environment for their exodus from Egypt and then made it necessary for them to go. Eventually, Pharaoh drove God's people out of Egypt. Hence, Pharaoh was used by God to accomplish the exodus of His people.

According to God's ordination and His economy, in His salvation there is the need for baptism, which is signified by the crossing of the Red Sea. In order to accomplish this aspect of salvation, God did not lead His people directly into the land of Canaan, through the territory of the Philistines. Rather, as we pointed out in the foregoing message, He led them to take a roundabout way. He caused them to go southward and turn toward the Red Sea, seemingly toward a dead end. The Lord, however, knew what He was planning to do. His intention was to use the Red Sea to baptize His people and to bury Pharaoh and his army. If the children of Israel had gone directly into the land of Canaan through the territory of the Philistines, they would not have crossed the Red Sea, and the Egyptian army would not have been buried. Therefore, in the crossing of the Red Sea, God used Pharaoh once again, this time to create a situation to bring about the baptism of His people. By means of the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, God led them to take a detour. As they marched behind the pillar that guided them, they were led to camp by the sea (14:2).

According to 14:3, the Lord knew that Pharaoh would say of the children of Israel, "They are wandering aimlessly in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in" (Heb.). In the eyes of the Egyptians, the Israelites were very foolish for taking such an indirect route. Thus, the situation of the children of Israel in the wilderness tempted Pharaoh to pursue them. Therefore, the encampment of the children of Israel by the sea and the pursuit by Pharaoh and his chariots produced an ideal environment for the baptism of God's people and the burial of Pharaoh and his army.

According to the concept of the worldly people, many of us were wandering aimlessly during the period of time between our conversion and our baptism. Before we were

saved, we had a definite goal, an aim in life. But after we were saved, we apparently had no goal and had begun to wander aimlessly. We, of course, had a spiritual goal. But in the eyes of the worldly people we had no aim in life and were no longer clear about our future. This kind of aimless wandering often stirs up persecution. Others may accuse us of no longer knowing what we are doing or where we are going. Some may even think that we have lost our sanity. Many of us have undergone this kind of persecution.

However, such persecution helps us to have a proper and thorough baptism. If we are not persecuted for apparently wandering aimlessly, our baptism may be a mere procedure with little significance. But if we are persecuted for having lost our goal, our baptism will be very meaningful. Hence, we must thank the Lord for this kind of persecution. I can testify that the best baptisms I have witnessed were of those who had been persecuted by relatives and friends. In these cases, the new converts had a great deal to bury when they were immersed. However, when there is no persecution, baptism may not be as meaningful, for when the new converts are buried, nothing else is buried with them.

When the children of Israel were baptized in the Red Sea, they brought the Egyptian army into the water with them. In principle, the same thing should take place whenever a new convert is baptized. The army of the world should be brought into the baptistry and buried in the waters of baptism.

We have seen that Pharaoh was a help to the children of Israel in three aspects of God's salvation. He helped them to have the Passover, to make their exodus from Egypt, and to have a thorough baptism. According to typology, this picture is comprehensive. If we consider the type and apply it to our situation today, we shall be able to help new believers to be baptized in a proper way.

A number of years ago I was very active in preaching the gospel, and many were saved through my gospel preaching. I always expected the newly saved ones to be baptized shortly

after their conversion to Christ. I thought they would take a straight path from conversion to baptism. But according to the type in the book of Exodus, this expectation is wrong. God did not lead His people directly into the promised land. As we have pointed out, He led them to take a roundabout way. In the same principle, God may not lead the ones saved through our gospel preaching to take a straight path to baptism. On the contrary, He may lead them to take a detour. In the eyes of the world, it is ridiculous to follow such a way, for seemingly it leads to a dead end. Nevertheless, this is God's leading, and it results in a proper baptism with a termination of the army of the world.

If we study the type in Exodus, we shall no longer expect new converts to take a straight path from conversion to baptism. We shall realize that the way God leads them may have many problems. However, this is God's way to bring the converts into a situation where they are forced to have a proper and thorough baptism.

Let us now look into some of the details of Pharaoh's last struggle, a struggle that was used by God in a definite way for the full salvation of His people.

I. A TYPE OF THE STRUGGLE OF SATAN AND HIS WORLD OVER THE BELIEVERS WHO ARE TO BE BAPTIZED

Pharaoh's last struggle was a type of the struggle of Satan and his world over the believers who are to be baptized. When Satan and the world struggle over a new convert, we should not be disappointed. Rather, we should realize that this struggle will prepare the environment for the converts to have a thorough baptism.

II. PHARAOH TEMPTED BY ISRAEL'S TURN IN THE WILDERNESS

We have pointed out that Pharaoh was tempted by Israel's wandering in the wilderness (14:1-3). Thinking that Israel was wandering aimlessly, Pharaoh was tempted to pursue them.

III. PHARAOH'S HEART HARDENED BY JEHOVAH FOR HIS GLORY, AND THE HEART OF PHARAOH AND OF HIS SERVANTS TURNING AGAINST ISRAEL

Pharaoh was tempted to pursue the children of Israel, and God hardened his heart. Because his heart had been hardened by God, Pharaoh made the decision to pursue the people of God. Exodus 14:4 says, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will glorify myself through Pharaoh, and through all his army; that the Egyptians may know that I am Jehovah" (Heb.).

Some may think that God would never do such a thing as harden Pharaoh's heart. This is altogether contrary to their concept. But when we are in eternity, we may be surprised to learn that God has done a great many things that are not in keeping with our concept. In particular this is true of the way God uses Satan. Although we hate Satan, God continues to use him. This is proved by the fact that the doors of heaven are still open to Satan. We see from such portions of the Word as Revelation 12 and the book of Job that Satan has access to God's presence in heaven. If we were God, we would use our power to immediately cast Satan into the lake of fire. At the very least, we would force him to stay out of heaven. God's way, however, is higher than ours. According to His way, He uses Satan for the accomplishment of His own purpose. In the same principle, God used Pharaoh for His glory, hardening his heart and the hearts of the Egyptians (14:8, 17).

Regarding Pharaoh, 9:16 says, "But for this cause have I made thee stand in order to show thee my power; and in order to declare my name throughout all the earth" (Heb.). Paul refers to this verse in Romans 9:17. God used Pharaoh not only at the time of the plagues, but also during the exodus of His people from Egypt.

As 14:5 says, "The heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people." According to 14:1 and 2, God commanded the children of Israel to "turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against

Baalzephon." They were to encamp there by the sea, at a place that was virtually a dead end. In the eyes of Pharaoh, the children of Israel were trapped in the wilderness, and they had no way of escape. According to Pharaoh's concept, this was an excellent opportunity to get the children of Israel back under his control. Hence, he pursued them.

IV. PHARAOH AND HIS ARMY PURSUING THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL TO THE SHORE OF THE RED SEA

Exodus 14:6-9 reveals that Pharaoh and his army pursued the children of Israel to the shore of the Red Sea. When the children of Israel looked backward, they saw the army of Pharaoh, and when they looked forward, they saw the Red Sea. Immediately, they cried out to the Lord and said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (vv. 11-12). In their complaint, the faithless children of Israel were very eloquent. They expressed their feeling with excellent utterance. We should not laugh at them, though. If we had been there, we probably would have acted in the same way.

Moses did not argue with the people or fight against them. Instead, he told them, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. Jehovah shall fight for you, while ye keep silent" (vv. 13-14, Heb.). As soon as Moses spoke these words, the Lord came in and told him not to cry unto Him, but to tell the children of Israel to go forward. Then the Lord said to Moses, "But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst

of the sea" (v. 16). At that juncture, Pharaoh and his army must have been very close to the camp of the children of Israel. If we had been there, we would have been terrified, just as the children of Israel were. The Egyptians had six hundred chariots; all Moses had was a staff in his hand.

V. THE ANGEL OF GOD PROTECTING THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FROM THE ARMY OF THE EGYPTIANS BY THE PILLAR OF THE CLOUD

Verse 19 says, "And the Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them." The Angel of God in this verse is the very Angel of Jehovah who called Moses in chapter three (vv. 2, 4, Heb.). God called Moses in the person of the Angel of Jehovah. The Angel of Jehovah was simply Jehovah God Himself. In the words of 3:6, the Angel of Jehovah identified Himself, saying, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This indicates that He was the Triune God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. The Angel of Jehovah, who is the very Triune God, is Christ as God's sent One. The fact that God's sent One went before the camp of Israel indicates that Christ was the One who was leading the people. However, according to 14:19, the Angel of God moved from the front of the people to the rear. This verse goes on to say, "And the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them." When the Angel of God moved, the pillar moved also. This shows that He and the pillar were one.

Verse 20 continues, "And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night." The pillar was a wall separating these two camps. On the Egyptian side of the wall there was darkness, but on the side facing God's people there was light. This pillar of light protected God's people from the Egyptians.

We can apply this to our experience in the Lord today.

When we began to follow the Lord, the Lord's guidance became a pillar of light to us. From the time we first believed in the Lord Jesus, we have had the light within us. This light is the guiding light. But when opposition rises up against us, the guiding light spontaneously becomes the protecting light. The light that was once in front of us moves behind us to protect us from opposition and attack. However, to the opposers the protecting light becomes darkness.

I can testify from my experience that whenever I have been opposed, the guiding light has moved behind me to become the protecting light. Otherwise, due to the opposition, I may have been tempted to go backward. I may have doubted the truth of what I had seen. But because the guiding light becomes the protecting light, I have no way to return. The light behind me is so bright that it is impossible to go backward. Furthermore, this protecting light becomes darkness to the opposers. On the one hand, I am protected by the light; on the other hand, the opposers are wholly in darkness. This is the principle seen in 14:19 and 20.

If we are faithful to the Lord, His guiding light will become our protecting light whenever we face opposition. This light will also spontaneously become darkness to those who oppose us. Because the opposers are in darkness and we are in the light, we are protected. The fact that this light is Christ as the Angel of Jehovah indicates that the very Christ who is light to us may cause darkness to come upon the opposers. For those who follow the will of God, the guiding light becomes the protecting light. But to those who oppose God's people, the light becomes darkness. Be assured that whenever you are attacked by such opposers, the opposing ones will be full of darkness. In such a way the Lord protects His people.

The pillar of cloud stood between the children of Israel and the Egyptians as a separating wall. On the side of God's people, there was light. But on the side of the Egyptians, there was darkness. Whether we are in light or in darkness

depends on whether we follow the Lord or attack His people. If we are among the opposers, the pillar will be darkness to us. But if we follow the Lord, the pillar will give us light.

We have pointed out that the light we receive from the Lord firstly guides us. Then when opposition comes, it protects us. If we do not have the guiding light, we cannot have the protecting light. Many of us can testify that after we have received light, we are protected by this light, no matter how intense the opposition may be. When we are attacked, we may be tempted by the enemy to doubt our way or our standing. But during such times of doubt, the light we have received is our confirmation. This is the protecting light.

Often the light grows brighter in times of opposition and persecution. As the light becomes brighter for us, the opposers sink further and further into darkness. Eventually, the opposers may be in such great darkness that they themselves no longer understand what they are talking about. Because they attack these who are following the Lord, they are fully in darkness. As a result, they may suffer death in some form. I have seen this take place many times. Firstly the opposers were in darkness, but eventually they suffered death.

The more the opposers attack God's people, the more they themselves are in darkness. Not only may they be in ignorance or blindness; they may also become illogical and unreasonable. They may be in such thick darkness that they lose their reason. Suppose a friend or relative opposes you because you follow the Lord. The more this one opposes you, the more he is in darkness. Eventually, he may lose his senses and begin to act unreasonably. His words and behavior may be not only against the light and truth of God; they may also be against reason. Nevertheless, while the attackers are in such thick darkness, you enjoy the shining of the protecting light.

Consider the situation among the religionists when the Lord Jesus was on earth. To the disciples, the Lord was light.

But to the religionists, He was a cause of darkness. Because the religionists were in darkness, they spread evil rumors about the Lord and even twisted His words. For example, they twisted His word about destroying the temple and raising it up in three days (Matt. 26:61). On the side of the religionists, there was darkness. But on the side of the Lord and His disciples, there was light. For this reason, the Lord Jesus told the religionists that they were blind (Matt. 23:16).

Furthermore, when Saul of Tarsus was converted, the Lord charged him to turn others from darkness to light (Acts 26:18). The darkness the Lord was talking about here was particularly the darkness of Judaism. At the time of Paul, Judaism was altogether in darkness. The same is true of Catholicism, Protestantism, and the independent religious groups today. The more those in these groups oppose the truth, the more they are in darkness. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He Himself was the testing stone. Then in the book of Acts the apostles and later the churches became the testing stone. Today we in the Lord's recovery have become the testing stone.

We have pointed out that the children of Israel were led by the Angel of God. He was the One who took the lead to bring them out of Egypt and to guide them through the wilderness into the good land. Before chapter fourteen, He was present among the people, but His name was not mentioned. As we shall see, in 23:20 the Lord said, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared." Furthermore, in the book of Zechariah we once again see the Angel of God (3:5). This Angel, the sent One of God, the very One who led the children of Israel and protected them from the Egyptians, was still taking care of God's people. When the Angel of God moved from the front of the people to the rear, the pillar moved also, for the Angel and the pillar were one. It is the same in our experience today. In our experience we cannot separate the Lord from the guiding Spirit.

After Pharaoh served the purpose God had for him, he became a sacrifice. I have often issued a warning not to become a sacrifice by opposing the church. Nevertheless, some have not taken heed to this warning and have become sacrifices. The more they opposed the church, the more illogical and unreasonable they became. Their unreasonable behavior was a sign that they were in darkness.

The more we are attacked and opposed as we follow the Lord, the brighter the guiding and protecting light becomes. Nevertheless, the opposers may continue their attack in spite of the darkness that envelopes them. Surely Pharaoh must have seen the pillar that separated the children of Israel from the Egyptians. But still he did not call back his chariots. Instead, having lost his reason, he continued his pursuit of God's people and became a sacrifice.

VI. PHARAOH AND HIS ARMY PURSUING THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL TO THE MIDST OF THE RED SEA

When Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, the waters were divided (14:21). Then "the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left" (v. 22). Instead of a dead end, there was now a way through the sea. Therefore, with the Angel behind them, the children of Israel crossed over the sea on dry ground. Then, because they had been hardened by God to pursue His people, "the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen" (v. 23). Pharaoh and his army pursued the children of Israel to the midst of the Red Sea because the Lord had hardened the hearts of the Egyptians. God did this for the purpose of glorifying Himself through Pharaoh and through his army, his chariots, and his horsemen (vv. 17-18, Heb.).

VII. JEHOVAH DEFEATING PHARAOH AND HIS ARMY

Verse 24 says that the Lord looked to the camp of the

Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud and "confused the army of the Egyptians" (Heb.). According to verse 25, the Lord "took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily." Some versions say that the Lord bound the wheels so that they could not move. Confused and unable to move their chariots, the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for Jehovah fighteth for them against the Egyptians" (v. 25, Heb.). However, it was too late to flee. At the word of the Lord, Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and "the sea returned to his strength" (v. 27). The water returned to its usual current, and the Egyptians perished.

VIII. PHARAOH AND HIS ARMY DROWNED AND BURIED IN THE SEA

Although the Egyptians tried to flee, the Lord shook them off in the midst of the sea (v. 27, Heb.). Verse 28 goes on to say, "And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them" (Heb.). Pharaoh and his army were drowned and buried in the sea. This signifies that Satan and the world have been buried in baptism (vv. 26-28; 15:4-5, 10, 19).

After he was buried in the sea, Pharaoh was terminated. Never would he struggle again, for his usefulness in the hand of God was finished. Having been released from the usurping hand of Pharaoh by crossing the Red Sea, the children of Israel entered into another realm. But Pharaoh, because he was no longer useful to God, was terminated and buried.

According to our experience, we can testify that certain things may rise up against us. Although we are not happy with attack and opposition, all the attackers and opposers are useful in the hand of God. God uses them for our good, for the purpose of perfecting us. Once this goal has been achieved and the opposers are of no further use, the opposition will be terminated. Pharaoh not only drove the children

of Israel out of Egypt; he also accompanied them to the Red Sea. Then after God's people crossed the Red Sea and Pharaoh was buried in the sea, they were separated from him forever. If some opposition or attack is allowed to remain, it must be that God still has a need for it. It must be necessary for our good. But one day this opposition will be terminated and buried.

In this message we have seen that Pharaoh was used by God to accomplish a thorough, complete, and perfect salvation of His chosen people. He was used to provide the environment for the Passover, the exodus, and the baptism. There was nothing left for God's people to do but to praise Him. Pharaoh's last struggle was over. Now that he had been laid to rest, there was no further struggle concerning him. Praise the Lord that even Pharaoh's last struggle helped to accomplish the full salvation of God's chosen people!

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE TWENTY-NINE

ISRAEL'S CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

Scripture Reading: Exo. 14:10-12, 16, 29-31; 15:1-21; Heb. 11:29; 1 Cor. 10:1-2; 1 Pet. 3:20-21

God's full salvation includes the Passover, the exodus, and the crossing of the Red Sea. Through the Passover the children of Israel were saved from God's judgment. When they were in Egypt, they were like the Egyptians; they were sinful and even worshipped idols (Ezek. 20:7-8). Along with the Egyptians, they were under the righteous judgment of God. According to God's righteous judgment, they were under the sentence of death. Therefore, the children of Israel needed the Passover lamb to be their substitute. Because the blood of the lamb had been applied to the doorposts of their houses, God in His righteous judgment could pass over them.

However, not only were the children of Israel under God's judgment; they were also under the tyranny of Pharaoh. They had been usurped by Pharaoh to serve as slaves to carry out the purpose of the Egyptians. Hence, the children of Israel had two serious problems: God's judgment and Pharaoh's tyranny. Although the Passover was adequate to save them from God's judgment, it was not effective to rescue them from the usurpation of the Egyptians. In order to be saved from Egyptian tyranny, the children of Israel needed the exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea.

If the children of Israel had had only the exodus but not the crossing of the Red Sea, their salvation would not have been secure. It would have been possible for them to return to Egypt. God was greatly concerned that the people might attempt to do this. Without the crossing of the Red Sea, there

would have been no separating line. In 13:17 the Lord expressed a concern lest the "people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt." Later, at the time of Numbers 14:4, some of the rebellious ones said, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." Therefore, in order to have a thorough and absolute deliverance from Egypt, the children of Israel had to make their exodus and also cross over the separating line by passing through the Red Sea.

In His creation God prepared the Red Sea to serve as a baptistry for His chosen people. Then during the exodus He led the people to this baptistry. This was no accident; it was according to the plan of God. God wanted to bring His people into a situation where it was impossible for them to go back to Egypt. In this message we need to consider the significance of Israel's crossing of the Red Sea.

I. A TYPE OF BAPTISM

In 1 Corinthians 10:1 and 2 Paul says that "our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." This indicates that the crossing of the Red Sea was a type of baptism. The cloud here refers to the pillar, which was the Lord Himself as the One leading the people.

First Peter 3:20 and 21 indicate that the passing of Noah's ark through the flood was also a type of baptism. By the ark and through the water Noah and the members of his family were saved from God's judgment and from the evil, corrupt, and condemned world. The same flood which judged the world also separated those in the ark from the world. After the flood waters had abated, Noah and his family found themselves in a new realm, in a new world, where they could serve God. The flood had separated them from the old realm and had brought them into a new realm. Immediately after coming out of the ark, Noah built an altar and offered sacrifice to the Lord (Gen. 8:20).

The principle is the same with the crossing of the Red Sea. In Egypt the children of Israel were involved with the

evil, corrupt, and condemned world and were under God's judgment. The Passover, which typified Christ, saved them from God's judgment, just as the ark, also a type of Christ, saved Noah and his family from God's judgment. Furthermore, just as Noah's family needed to be saved from the world through water, so the children of Israel also needed to be saved from Egypt through water. With the children of Israel we see both the blood and the water. The blood of the Passover lamb saved them from God's judgment, and the water saved them from the tyranny of the Egyptians.

In contrast to the children of Israel, the vast majority of today's Christians have been saved only by the blood and not also through the water. Many have been baptized in a ritualistic way, but such a baptism is not an experience of the saving, separating water. In the case of Noah's family and that of the children of Israel, the water was a means both of salvation and of separation. If we had only the teaching of the New Testament without the pictures in Genesis and Exodus, we would not have a thorough understanding of baptism. It was through baptism that God's people were saved from the slavery of Egypt and the tyranny of Pharaoh. In the same principle, it is through baptism that believers today are saved from the world and from the satanic power of darkness. (Later on we shall see that the baptism typified by the crossing of the river Jordan signifies the deliverance from the old man. In this message we are concerned only with the aspect of baptism typified by the crossing of the Red Sea.)

Baptism makes our salvation secure. If we have only the Passover and the exodus without the crossing of the Red Sea, our salvation will not be secure. The crossing of the Red Sea of baptism seals our salvation. When we baptize new believers, we should help them understand the significance of baptism. We should tell them that after they have been saved through Christ as the Passover, they need to pass through the water which separates them from the world and from the power of darkness.

A. Baptized unto Moses

In 1 Corinthians 10:2 Paul says that the children of Israel were all "baptized unto Moses." Moses was a type of Christ and a representative of Christ. Hence, by being baptized unto Moses, the children of Israel actually were baptized unto Christ. Christ, not Moses, is the real leader. Moses was simply a figure of Christ. Today we who believe in Christ have been baptized unto Christ. For this reason, Galatians 3:27 speaks of being "baptized into Christ." Having been baptized into Christ, we are now under the leadership of Christ. Before the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, they took Moses as their leader, but not to a very great extent. However, after they crossed the Red Sea, "the people feared Jehovah, and believed Jehovah, and his servant Moses" (Exo. 14:31, Heb.), for they had been baptized unto Moses. Likewise, we have been baptized not unto a denomination, practice, belief, or doctrine, but unto Christ, our Leader and our Head.

B. In the Cloud

In 1 Corinthians 10:2 Paul says that they also were baptized "in the cloud and in the sea." The cloud signifies the Spirit. When we were baptized, we were baptized into the Spirit. In one Spirit we were baptized into one Body.

C. In the Sea

Furthermore, God's people were baptized in the sea, which signifies the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3). In the death of Christ, signified by the water of baptism, we are terminated and buried. When a new believer is baptized, he should realize that he is being baptized both into the Spirit and into the death of Christ. The Spirit should not be separated from Christ's death. Just as the cloud and the sea were one, so the Spirit and the death of Christ are one.

The death of Christ deals with matters on the negative side, whereas the Spirit takes care of matters on the positive side. On the one hand, a number of negative things must be dealt with. On the other hand, the believers need to be

encouraged positively to go on with the Lord. Negatively, the water terminated Pharaoh and his army. Positively, the cloud was the means by which the children of Israel were led on their journey. Praise the Lord for both the negative and positive sides of baptism! When a new believer is baptized, all negative things are terminated and buried. Then the Spirit as a pillar of cloud leads him on in his journey with the Lord.

D. By Faith

Baptism requires faith. Hebrews 11:29 says, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as through dry land, which the Egyptians attempting to do were swallowed up." In Colossians 2:12 baptism is also related to faith. The children of Israel needed faith in order to cross the Red Sea. At first, however, they had no faith at all. Seeing a mass of water in front of them and the Egyptian army behind them, they cried out to the Lord and complained to Moses: "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?" (14:11). Although the people had no faith, faith came when God came in to speak a word. The Lord was not angry with the people for their lack of faith, even though they had just witnessed His mighty and miraculous acts in Egypt. To Moses, who as a human was no doubt troubled by the situation, the Lord said, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea" (14:15-16). When Moses received this word from the Lord, the children of Israel spontaneously had the faith to cross the Red Sea.

According to 14:21 and 22, the "waters were divided" and were a "wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left." Furthermore, 15:8 says that "the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea." On the one

hand, the waters were heaped up; on the other hand, they were congealed. For the waters to be heaped up means that they were piled up like stones. But for the waters to be congealed means that they were changed from a liquid to a solid state. Although the waters had been divided, heaped up, and congealed, it still required faith for the children of Israel to pass through them. Without the necessary faith, the people certainly would have complained to Moses about entering a watery tomb. If we had been there, we probably would have been afraid to step into the midst of the divided waters. The children of Israel, however, became people of faith. Following Moses, they walked into the sea and crossed it.

By crossing the Red Sea, the children of Israel were saved from Egypt and also brought into a realm of freedom. What a salvation! In principle, baptism is the same for us today. It saves us from bondage and brings us into absolute freedom in Christ. As Colossians 2:12 makes clear, this is accomplished "through the faith of the operation of God." Therefore, as we baptize people, we must encourage them to exercise faith in God as the One who operates. There is no doubt that the crossing of the Red Sea was accomplished through God's operation. As we baptize new believers, we ourselves need faith, and we need to help those who are being baptized to have faith as well. The new converts need to realize what is happening to them at the time of baptism. They need faith to enter into the water of baptism and to pass through it. What a difference it makes when everyone participating in a baptism is full of faith!

E. Pharaoh and the Egyptian Army Buried in the Sea

The Egyptians presumed to follow the children of Israel into the sea. Exodus 14:23 says, "And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen." However, the Lord confused the army of the Egyptians, and took off

their chariot wheels (vv. 24-25, Heb.). Then God commanded Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea so that the waters would "come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen" (v. 26). When Moses did so, "the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them" (v. 28, Heb.). Pharaoh and the Egyptian army were buried in the sea. This is a clear picture that in baptism Satan and the power of the world are buried. It is a fact that the Egyptians were terminated in the Red Sea. But the significance of this fact is that when we were baptized, Satan and the world with its tyranny were terminated. When we baptize others, we must tell them that as they are buried in baptism, Satan and the world will be buried also. How impressive is the crossing of the Red Sea as a picture of baptism! When we consider this picture in the light of the New Testament, we have a clear view of the significance of baptism.

II. SAVED THROUGH WATER

Referring to the water of baptism typified by the flood in Genesis, 1 Peter 3:20 speaks of being "saved through water" (Gk.). We have pointed out that both Noah's family and the children of Israel were saved through water. Through water God's people were saved from Egypt and its slavery, that is, from the world and its usurpation (13:3, 14). Furthermore, they were saved to the wilderness of separation, that is, to a realm which is for the accomplishment of God's purpose (3:18). In the wilderness the people built the tabernacle as God's dwelling place. This was for the fulfillment of God's purpose. The water through which they were saved and separated from Egypt brought them into a realm where there was no bondage or slavery. In this realm there was the freedom to fulfill God's purpose by building the tabernacle as God's dwelling place on earth. This indicates that

through water we are saved from the world to a realm where we can accomplish God's purpose.

III. THE PRAISING OF THE SAVED

A. The Song of Moses

Immediately after crossing the Red Sea, Moses and the children of Israel sang a song to the Lord (15:1-18). This song must have been composed by Moses. In Revelation 15:2-4 it is referred to as the song of Moses. In Exodus 15 the children of Israel sang this song on the shore of the Red Sea; they praised God for victory over the forces of Pharaoh by His triumphant deliverance through the judging waters of the Red Sea. In Revelation 15 a number of overcomers sing this song again on the glassy sea as an indication that they are victorious over the power of Antichrist, who is judged by God with the fire of the glassy sea (Rev. 19:20). In both cases the principle is the same: God's people are saved through the sea, and now they can sing praises to God.

1. Praising God's Salvation and Victory

In 15:1-12 the children of Israel praised God's salvation and victory. Salvation is related to God's people, and victory is related to God's enemy. At the same time God defeated the enemy, He also saved His people. How beautiful is the poetic expression of praise concerning this!

2. Leading to God's Habitation and God's Kingdom

Using the perfect tense, verse 13 says, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation." Notice that this verse speaks of God's habitation, even though the temple as God's dwelling place was not built until centuries later.

Verses 14 and 15 say that the peoples will be afraid, that the inhabitants of Philistia will be sorrowful, that the princes of Edom will be amazed, that trembling will take hold of the

mighty men of Moab, and that the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. In poetic form, this is a prophecy that the children of Israel would defeat the Philistines, the descendants of Esau and Moab, and all the Canaanites, and would take possession of the good land.

In verse 17 we are told that the Lord would plant His people in the mountain of His inheritance, in the place which He has made to dwell in. This place is the sanctuary which His hands have established. Pay attention to the phrase "the mountain of thine inheritance." Although we regard the good land as the inheritance of the children of Israel, here Moses speaks of it as the inheritance of God. The children of Israel were to be planted as a living organism on the mountain of God's inheritance. I believe that the mountain here refers to Mount Zion. With respect to God's sanctuary, this verse also uses the perfect tense: "The sanctuary, Jehovah, which thy hands have established" (Heb.).

Verse 18 refers to the kingdom: "Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever" (Heb.). God's habitation, God's house, brings in God's kingdom. When God has a habitation, a house, on the earth, His kingdom will be established through His house. Today the church is firstly God's house and then His kingdom. The church will bring in His kingdom to the earth (Eph. 2:19-20; Rom. 14:17; Matt. 16:18-19).

As we read 15:1-18, we realize that the goal of God's salvation is the building of His dwelling place for the establishment of His kingdom. Even though Moses did not enter into the good land, much less see the building of the temple, he could still praise the Lord for His sanctuary, His dwelling place.

The mention of God's habitation here indicates that baptism leads to the church life. Baptism saves people out of the world into a realm that is for God's purpose. The purpose God desires to fulfill in this realm is the building up of His dwelling place, which is typified firstly by the tabernacle and then by the temple. The tabernacle was built near

Mount Sinai. Centuries later, the temple was built on Mount Zion. However, as God's dwelling place, the tabernacle and the temple are one. The tabernacle was constructed within a year after the exodus from Egypt, and it remained with the people until the temple was built. The contents of the tabernacle were then placed in the temple. This points to a blending of the tabernacle with the temple, both of which typify the church.

God's goal in bringing the children of Israel through the Red Sea was to have a dwelling place. Before the tabernacle was erected, God did not have a dwelling place on earth. He could have such a dwelling place only after He had secured a people who had been redeemed, who had passed through the Red Sea, and who had entered into a separated realm where they were free from all bondage.

Exodus 40:2 says, "On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation." This indicates that on the first day of the second year, according to the new calendar, God's dwelling place among the children of Israel was set up. We cannot emphasize enough that to have such a dwelling place is the goal of God's salvation. Moses knew that God's goal was not merely to save His people out of tyranny; he knew that it was to have a people set free from the world and brought into a realm of freedom for the building of His dwelling place. Because Moses knew God's heart, God's will, and God's goal, he could truly be called a man of God.

As we read through the Old Testament, we should focus our attention on this goal. In chapter fifteen Moses used three expressions related to God's goal: habitation, dwelling place, and sanctuary. These expressions describe the same thing. God's habitation is the place where He dwells, and this place is His sanctuary. Today the church is God's habitation, His dwelling place, and the sanctuary.

After the tabernacle was erected, war broke out. God's enemies rose up in an attempt to frustrate the building of the temple. These enemies included the peoples, the Edomites,

the Moabites, the Philistines, and the Canaanites. The peoples signify the unbelievers, the heathen. The descendants of Esau, the Edomites, signify those who are natural, those who are not chosen, redeemed, regenerated, and transformed. The descendants of Lot, the Moabites, signify the fleshy ones, for their source was an act of incest, a grossly sinful and fleshy deed. The Philistines signify worldly Christians, those who live between Egypt and the good land. There are a great many such worldly believers today. Finally, the Canaanites are related to the evil powers in the heavenlies.

Just as the children of Israel were troubled by all these enemies, so we in the Lord's recovery have also been attacked by the evil powers of darkness. The aim of all the attack, opposition, and evil speaking is to hinder the building of God's dwelling place for the fulfillment of His purpose. God's purpose is the building. This is God's goal, and it is our goal as well. But the intention of the enemy in his attack is to keep God's people from reaching this goal. Nevertheless, in the eyes of God, this goal has already been achieved. This was the reason Moses used the perfect tense in speaking of God's habitation. In the same principle, the Apostle John used the past tense in describing the New Jerusalem to indicate that from God's point of view His purpose to gain the building has already been accomplished. All the attack and opposition are actually positive signs, indicators that the building of God's temple is assured.

As we baptize new converts, we need the faith and the boldness to speak to them about the goal of their baptism. We must tell them that baptism is intended to bring them to God's habitation, to the mountain of God's inheritance, where His people are planted. When we have been brought through baptism to the place of God's inheritance, God will be able to build the dwelling place as His sanctuary.

B. The Song of Miriam

In 15:20 and 21 we see that Miriam followed Moses' lead to praise the victory of Jehovah. The order here is good and

proper: the men took the lead, and the women followed. The song of Miriam is actually a repetition of part of the song of Moses. Although she praised the Lord for triumphing gloriously, she did not speak of God's habitation. This indicates that although the sisters may be very zealous and inspired, they may not be altogether clear about God's goal. Nevertheless, their praises are still good. But as these verses show, the sisters should follow the brothers, not go ahead of them.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THIRTY

ISRAEL'S EXPERIENCE AT MARAH

Scripture Reading: Exo. 15:22-26; Rom. 6:4; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Cor. 2:2b; Phil. 3:10; Psa. 103:3; Matt. 8:17; 9:12

We have pointed out that Exodus is a book of pictures that portray God's salvation as revealed in the New Testament. This salvation is spiritual, mysterious, and related to the divine life. Without the pictures in the book of Exodus, it would be difficult for us to have a firm grasp of the meaning of God's salvation. Therefore, in His wisdom, God uses the pictures in Exodus to depict His salvation.

The crossing of the Red Sea marked the completion of the first stage of God's salvation of His chosen people. This stage includes three items: the Passover, the exodus, and the crossing of the Red Sea. The Passover is related to God's judgment. Through the enjoyment of the Passover lamb, His people were saved from the judgment of God. The exodus is related to the tyranny of Pharaoh and to enslavement in Egypt. God's people were not only under His judgment; they were also under the tyranny of Pharaoh. For this reason, they needed the Passover and the exodus as well. By means of the exodus, the people were delivered from Pharaoh's tyranny and from Egyptian slavery. The crossing of the Red Sea is related to the destruction of the Egyptian army, which perished in the waters of the sea. Through these three aspects of God's salvation, the children of Israel were saved from God's judgment, from the tyranny of Pharaoh, and from the army of the Egyptians.

We have seen that the crossing of the Red Sea signifies baptism. First Corinthians 10:2 says that the children of Israel were all "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Hence, the crossing of the Red Sea was a full type of

baptism in the New Testament. According to Romans 6:4, baptism ushers the believers into resurrection. In baptism we are placed into Christ's death and buried with Him. In this way we are also resurrected in Christ and with Christ. The result is that we "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4), that is, in resurrection life. All those who have been baptized into Christ should walk in resurrection. To be in resurrection is to be in another realm, in a realm that is beyond death. Just as the Red Sea was the separating line between Egypt and the wilderness, so the death of Christ realized by baptism is the separating line between the old realm and the realm of resurrection. Baptism separates us from the world and brings us into the realm of resurrection.

I. THREE DAYS' JOURNEY FROM THE RED SEA IN THE WILDERNESS OF SHUR

According to 15:22, "Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness." In the writings of Moses the wilderness has both a positive and a negative significance. However, most Christians have heard only that there is a negative significance. Many readers of Exodus may be surprised when they hear that the wilderness in this verse signifies resurrection. In order to understand this adequately, we need the proper knowledge of the Bible and some amount of spiritual experience as well.

The Red Sea was created by God as a baptistry for the children of Israel. This means that even in His creation God made some preparations to signify the salvation of His people. The geographical features signify spiritual things. Africa is on the west side of the Red Sea, and Asia is on the east side. The word Shur means a wall, and the name Migdol, mentioned in 14:2, means a fortress. According to some historians, there was a separating wall to protect the land of Egypt, a wall that began at the Mediterranean Sea and ended at Shur. After the children of Israel had crossed the Red Sea, for three days they journeyed in the wilderness

of Shur (15:22). The pillar of cloud led them to the south, toward Marah.

In order to know the spiritual significance of these geographical facts, we need to consider this portion of the Word according to the revelation in the New Testament and also according to our experience. We have pointed out that baptism ushers the believers into resurrection. We have also pointed out that the Red Sea was the baptistry in which the children of Israel were baptized. Hence, after they were baptized in the Red Sea, they were brought into resurrection. According to 3:18 and 5:1, Moses told Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go so that they might make a journey of three days into the wilderness and there sacrifice to the Lord their God and hold a feast unto Him. This journey of three days signifies resurrection. This means that it is in resurrection that the people of God were separated from Egypt. Hence, the wilderness is a realm of separation.

Now we must go on to see that the wilderness also signifies the realm of resurrection. We say this according to the New Testament revelation regarding baptism and also according to our experience. Baptism brings us into resurrection. As soon as a believer is baptized, he has the sense that he has been brought out of the old realm into a new realm, the realm of resurrection. Romans 6:4 says that, having been baptized into Christ, we should walk in newness of life. No doubt, to walk in newness of life means to live in the realm of resurrection. According to the type in Exodus, this realm is the wilderness of Shur. Thus, the wilderness of Shur is a type of the realm of resurrection. As we have seen, it also signifies a realm of separation. When the children of Israel entered into this realm, they were separated from Egypt both by the Red Sea and by the wall.

We are told in 15:22 that the children of Israel "went three days in the wilderness." Since three is the number of resurrection, this signifies that they walked in resurrection, that is, in newness of life. It is significant that the journey from the Red Sea to Marah was exactly three days, not two

days, four days, or even three and a half days. According to a note in the text of the Amplified Version, the distance from the Red Sea to Marah was thirty-three miles. Surely the children of Israel could have walked this distance in less than three days. We must believe that the pace of their travel was under God's sovereign leading and control. The fact that they traveled for three days is a portrait of walking in resurrection. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they certainly walked in a way that was different from the way they walked in Goshen. In Goshen they did not have the pillar of cloud, but in the wilderness they walked according to the guidance of this pillar. They were led by the Lord's presence to walk in a new way.

Perhaps you are wondering why the Bible uses the wilderness to signify resurrection, for we do not usually think of resurrection as a wilderness. To those who have been baptized into Christ, resurrection is not a wilderness. But it is a wilderness in the eyes of the worldly people. After we were baptized, our relatives and friends may have thought that we entered into some kind of wilderness. Before we were baptized, we were in Egypt enjoying the Egyptian "garlic," "leeks," and "onions," and our relatives and friends were happy with us. But by believing in the Lord Jesus and by being baptized, we were brought into a new realm, which our relatives and friends considered to be a wilderness. But in the eyes of God this wilderness is actually a realm of resurrection. If we have the heavenly view, we shall realize that the realm we entered through baptism is not a wilderness, but a realm of separation and resurrection. In this realm we walk in resurrection according to the Lord's guidance. Praise the Lord that in His creation God prepared even the geographical features in order to present a picture of His salvation!

According to 12:37, the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. Leaving Succoth, they eventually encamped between Migdol and the sea (14:2). God did not lead His people "through the way of the land of the Philistines,

although that was near" (13:17). Even though that was the usual way for people to journey from Egypt to the land of Canaan, God led His people southward instead, and then brought them to the Red Sea so that they could be baptized there. In the eyes of Pharaoh, it was foolish for the children of Israel to take such a way. He thought they were trapped there by the sea and had no way of escape. In the eyes of man God's way was foolish. However, God had planned to bring His people through the Red Sea into the wilderness of Shur. Furthermore, after He led them through the sea, He did not lead them northward according to geography. He purposely took them southward on a journey of three days to Marah.

II. NO WATER IN THE NATURAL WAY

We are told in 15:22 that during this journey of three days in the wilderness, the children of Israel did not find any water. This signifies that in the realm of resurrection there is no natural water, no natural supply. After we are baptized and brought into the realm of resurrection, we may expect to receive a certain kind of help, the help that comes from natural water. Before we were saved, and when we were living in the old realm of the world, we had an abundant supply of natural water from the Nile. But in the realm of resurrection there is no such water.

III. THE WATERS OF MARAH

God led the people to Marah, which means bitterness. Exodus 15:23 says, "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah." The fact that God led His people to Marah indicates that as we walk in the realm of resurrection, God will lead us to a place of bitterness, to Marah. The pillar of cloud led the people to a place where there were waters, but these waters were bitter. When the people discovered that the waters were bitter, they "murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" (v. 24). Like the children of Israel, we also

have complained and murmured about our bitter situations. Many times we have said in a complaining way, "What shall I do? What shall we drink? What kind of help is this?" If I had been Moses, I would have told the people not to complain to me. I would have reminded them that they were led to this place by the same cloud that protected them from Pharaoh and his army just three days before. But as a true servant of the Lord, instead of striving with this murmuring and complaining people, Moses cried out to the Lord (v. 25).

In response to his cry, the Lord showed him a tree (v. 25). When Moses cast the tree into the waters, the waters were made sweet. First Peter 2:24 indicates that this tree signifies the cross of Christ. Thus, the tree that healed the bitter waters denotes the cross on which the Lord was crucified. The cross of Christ, the unique cross, is the healing cross.

This picture corresponds to our spiritual experience. After we are baptized and begin to walk in newness of life, we are troubled because we have no natural water. On the one hand, we are like the people who complained and murmured. On the other hand, we are like Moses who cried to the Lord. When we cry out to the Lord in prayer, He shows us the vision of the crucified Christ. We need to see a vision of the cross. Seeing this vision, we apply the cross of Christ to our situation, and immediately the bitter waters become sweet. I have the full assurance that everyone who has truly been baptized into Christ has had this kind of experience. Our experiences may differ in degree, but in principle and in nature they are the same.

According to Romans 6:4, we walk in the realm of resurrection, in newness of life, after we are baptized. This realm is the real wilderness of Shur, a realm in which we are separated from the world by the wall and by the sea. As we walk in this realm, we have no natural resources, and we face much bitterness. But in resurrection we may experience the cross of Christ and live a crucified life. As we do this, our bitter situation becomes sweet.

Last year my wife and I came to a real Marah, a very bitter situation. But because we were walking in the realm of resurrection, we could experience the cross of the Lord Jesus and live a crucified life. We richly enjoyed the healing tree cast into the bitter situation. This tree caused the bitter waters to become sweet. For this reason, I gave a number of messages last year on the crucified life. Yes, my wife and I suffered from the bitterness in our situation. However, eventually we enjoyed sweetness because the healing tree with the crucified life had been applied to our circumstances. This is the way to experience and enjoy Christ's death in the realm of resurrection.

Whatever we experience in the realm of resurrection is an experience in resurrection. In the wilderness of Shur the children of Israel experienced the cross of Christ in resurrection. The bitter waters of Marah were changed into sweet waters in the realm of the wilderness. In the same principle, in the realm of resurrection we experience the death of Christ changing our bitterness into sweetness. May the Lord give us more experience of this.

We do not experience the bitter waters of Marah once for all. As long as we live on earth, we shall walk in the realm of resurrection and come to Marah again and again. The experience of the children of Israel at Marah portrays a principle, not merely an incident. This principle is basic in our Christian life. As we walk in the realm of resurrection, we shall thirst, only to discover that there is no natural water to supply our need. Only the waters of bitterness are available. Whenever we are in such a situation, we need to see the vision of the tree and then apply this tree to our circumstances. This tree will then heal our situation and change the bitter waters into sweet.

IV. THE LORD TO BE THE HEALER

Immediately after the waters were made sweet, the Lord made a statute for the people and an ordinance, "and there he tested them" (v. 25, Heb.). Then He said, "If thou wilt

diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am Jehovah thy Healer" (Heb., Jehovah Ropheka, v. 26). When I first read this promise, I could not understand why it was mentioned immediately following the healing of the bitter waters. If we consider this in the light of our experience, we shall realize that the cross of Christ heals not only our bitter situation, but it also heals us. Not only are the waters of our circumstances bitter; we ourselves are also bitter and in need of healing. Our very self is bitter. In other words, the self is sick. We are sick physically, psychologically, and also spiritually. There is bitterness in our body, soul, and spirit.

When I have been in bitter circumstances, often the Lord has pointed me to the cross of Christ. I realized that I needed to take the cross and live a crucified life. This saved me from my bitter situation, and my bitter circumstances were healed. However, at the same time the Lord has often shown me that there is bitterness within me. I saw that there was bitterness in my self as well as in my circumstances. I also saw that there is bitterness in my whole being, in my spirit, soul, and body, and that I needed to apply the cross of Christ to every aspect of my being. Spiritually, psychologically, and physically I needed the application of the cross of Christ. Time and time again I have experienced the Lord's healing in this way. As my situation was healed, I was healed inwardly. Both in my circumstances and in my being, bitterness was changed into sweetness.

You may think that you have no need to be healed in your mind, emotion, or will, much less in your spirit. Allow me to say that we all have problems with these parts of our being. Whether we are old or young, male or female, we are sick in our mind, emotion, and will. We are sick even in our spirit. Before I was saved, my will did not function properly. When it should have made a certain decision, it failed to do so. But

when it should not have decided things in a particular way, it proceeded to make that decision. Have you not experienced this? Furthermore, our emotion may not be balanced. When we are joyful, we may rejoice without restriction; when we weep, we may weep without restraint. Therefore, we need a great deal of healing. We realize this every time the healing tree is cast into our bitter circumstances.

As we walk in the realm of resurrection, we shall be led to Marah again and again. Every time we experience the healing tree cast into our circumstances, we spontaneously realize that something in our being needs to be healed. We may sense the need for healing in the mind, or realize that our will needs to be adjusted, or see that our emotion needs to be balanced. At other times we may become conscious that our spirit is bitter toward others and needs to be healed.

Just as the Lord tested the children of Israel at Marah, He uses our experience of His cross in bitter circumstances to test us and to prove us. By testing us, He shows us where we are and what we are. He exposes our motives, intentions, and desires. Nothing tests us more than the experience of the cross. The experience of the cross in bitter circumstances tests us and exposes every aspect of our being. When we are exposed in this way, we should pray, "Lord, I need You, and I need more experience of the cross. I need to put the tree not only into my circumstances, but also into my very being. I need to apply this tree to my mind, emotion, and will. I need to apply it to my spirit and to my attitude toward others." Through such an application of the cross, the Lord heals us.

This kind of healing is very different from the so-called healings that take place in healing campaigns. I have attended such campaigns, and not once did I see a genuine healing. Real healing takes place as we receive the dealing of the cross. We are healed when we are subdued and when we hearken to the voice of God, listen to His statutes, and obey His commandments. Then Christ's resurrection life becomes our healing power, and the Lord becomes our Healer.

Through His work of redemption Christ intends to be our Healer. Speaking of healings performed by the Lord Jesus, Matthew 8:17 says, "In order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, He Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases." All healings accomplished on fallen mankind are accomplished through the Lord's redemption. Through His redemption the Lord is our Healer. In Matthew 9:12 the Lord indicates that He is our Physician: "Now when He heard this He said, Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who are ill." As our Physician, He cares for us not only physically, but also psychologically and spiritually. He is able to heal our entire being.

First Peter 2:24 says, "Who Himself carried up our sins in His body onto the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed." This verse indicates that the cross is the tree and that the One who died on the cross is our Healer. He was crucified for our healing. If we would experience His healing, we need to be identified with His crucifixion. Suppose, for example, that you have stomach trouble. To be healed of this illness, you would need your stomach to become identified with the cross of Christ. If your stomach is identified with Christ's crucifixion, the crucified Christ will become your Healer. Your stomach ailment may be caused by living according to the self. In your eating you need the dealing of the cross. The cross must deal with the self in relation to eating. In the same principle, your mind may be sick because it has never been dealt with by the cross, never identified with the crucifixion of Christ.

The same may be true of your spirit. Possibly your spirit is not upright or is impure. The reason for the impurity or the lack of uprightness is that your spirit has not been touched by the cross of Christ.

Some brothers have not allowed their attitude toward their wives to be dealt with by the cross. For this reason, in their relationship with their wives they are sick. Hence, there is the need for healing in their married life. This

healing comes only through the application of the cross of Christ. This principle should be applied to every part of our being.

The Lord's word in Exodus 15:26 indicates that in His eyes the children of Israel were sick and in need of healing. Otherwise, the Lord would not have used the title "Jehovah thy Healer." As the Lord Jesus said, only those who are sick have need of a physician. The fact that the children of Israel needed Jehovah to be their Healer indicates that they were sick.

The same is true of us today. In certain parts of our inward being we are still sick and need the Lord's healing. As we pointed out, the process of healing takes place as we are touched by the cross of Christ. The only way to be touched by the cross is to see the vision of the tree and to cast this tree into the very place that needs to be healed. If your mind is bitter, cast the tree into your mind. If your attitude toward someone or something is bitter, cast the tree into your attitude. Do this with every part of your being, and little by little you will be healed. Every time we experience the cross of Christ, we shall have a deeper realization of our need to be healed through the touch of the cross. We need to be identified with the crucifixion of Christ by applying His cross to every part of our being that is bitter and sick. Then those parts will be healed. In this way daily and even hourly the Lord Jesus becomes our Healer.

The more we are healed by the Lord, the more we have an ear to hear His voice, a heart to keep His statutes, and the willingness to obey Him. Unless we are healed, we shall remain rebellious in every aspect of our being. Our natural being is a constitution of rebellion, for the element of rebellion is in all of our inward parts. How we need to be healed by seeing the cross and by having the cross applied to us! We need to see the tree on which Christ was crucified and then apply this tree to every part of our being. We must allow the cross of Christ to test our inward parts. As the cross is applied to our being, our inward parts will be healed and

subdued. Then those parts will listen to the voice of the Lord, obey His word, and keep His statutes. As a result, those parts will become one with the Lord in a practical way. May we all experience this healing day by day.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THIRTY-ONE

ISRAEL'S EXPERIENCE AT ELIM

Scripture Reading: Exo. 15:27; Num. 33:9; John 7:38-39; Psa. 92:12a; Lev. 23:40; Neh. 8:15; John 12:13; Rev. 7:9; Exo. 24:4, 1; Num. 11:16, 24-25; Luke 9:1; 10:1

After the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud led them to Marah, and then to Elim. If we study a map, we shall see that they did not journey in a way that was according to the human concept, but in a way that was according to the divine concept. We have pointed out that when the children of Israel made their exodus from Egypt, God did not lead them through the way of the land of the Philistines (13:17). Instead, He "led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea" (13:18). God deliberately led them to the south so that they could be baptized in the Red Sea, the baptistry He had prepared for them in His creation. Having crossed the Red Sea, they did not journey northward to the land of Canaan. God led them southward to Marah.

Remember that it was God Himself in the pillar that led the people on their journey. He led them to take a way altogether different from that which is according to the natural concept. If we had been there, we probably would have said, "Moses, where are we going? Are we on our way to the good land, or to Arabia?" To such questions, Moses might have replied, "I do not choose the way we take. The pillar is guiding us. Just three days ago, this pillar protected us from Pharaoh's armies. Don't you think we should trust in this pillar and follow its leading?" No doubt, the children of Israel expected to be led northward, to the good land; however, God led them southward, to Marah and to Elim. By this we see that God's way is different from ours.

I. THE EXPERIENCE OF RESURRECTION

Israel's experience at Elim is a picture of the experience of resurrection life. We all know that death ushers us into resurrection. However, our concept is that this experience of resurrection will be on a way that is upward, not on a way that leads downward. In our opinion, any way that leads downward is not in resurrection. Yes, in itself resurrection takes us upward, but its application requires us to take a way that leads in a downward direction. When we are in the heavenlies, we do not sense the need for resurrection. But when we are in a low situation, we become conscious of the need for resurrection life. When we are in death, even in a tomb, we need resurrection. For this reason, the experience of Elim is in a downward direction from Marah.

As we consider the spiritual significance of 15:27 according to our experience, we need to be reminded not to study the Word of God in a superficial way. We should study the Word according to the way of life, according to the way the Lord Jesus applied the Old Testament Scriptures in the Gospels. This way is deep. Although this account is very short, only one verse long, we need to take the time to study in a thorough way Israel's experience at Elim. Then we shall begin to see the riches implied in this verse.

We have pointed out that instead of northward, the direct way to the land of Canaan, the children of Israel journeyed southward. No doubt, the good land was higher in elevation than the land of Egypt. But the way into this elevated land was downward, down to the south. This indicates that to reach a high destination we need to take a downward way.

II. ISSUING FROM THE EXPERIENCE AT MARAH

Some readers of Exodus may think that the children of Israel journeyed southward because they did not have the faith to go directly into the land of Canaan. Although their lack of faith was a factor later, it was not the reason for their southward journey here. If they had not gone to the Red Sea, they could not have passed through the baptistry God had

prepared for them. They had to pass through water in order to be saved from the tyranny of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The blood of the Passover lamb saved them from God's judgment, but the water of the Red Sea saved them from the armies of Pharaoh. They were led to the Red Sea, not because they were weak in faith, but because they needed to be baptized. As we have pointed out, even after they had crossed the Red Sea, they did not immediately journey northward. Contrary to our expectation, the pillar of cloud led them downward from Shur to Marah. After their experience at Marah, the pillar continued to lead them downward to Elim.

Israel's experience at Marah signifies the experience of the cross. After we have an experience of the cross, we may expect to go upward. However, we shall go downward once again, for the experience of resurrection is in a downward direction. If you go upward instead of downward, you will not experience resurrection. Some Christians think that God leads His people only upward, never downward. But according to the picture in Exodus, the pillar of cloud led the children of Israel downward from Marah to Elim.

I can testify that the journey from Marah to Elim corresponds to my spiritual experience. After I have experienced the crucified life, I often expected to be in an upward situation. But just the opposite has taken place many times. God led me downward, into a situation that was lower and even more difficult to bear. We should not be frightened by this. If we follow the pillar of cloud in a downward direction, we shall arrive at Elim, where there are twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees. This is the experience of resurrection which issues from the experience of the cross, the experience at Marah.

III. TWELVE SPRINGS OF WATER AND SEVENTY PALM TREES

Elim is a plural noun that means the mighty ones or the strong ones. It is derived from a root that means mighty or strong. According to a number of scholars, this word also

means a grove of palm trees. The first meaning may be applied to the twelve springs, and the second, to the seventy palm trees. At Elim there were twelve mighty springs flowing and seventy palm trees growing. What a picture of resurrection life!

Consider the twelve springs flowing and the seventy palm trees growing. The springs were flowing forth, and the trees were growing upward. No doubt the palm trees at Elim were not dwarf palms, but giant palm trees reaching high into the air. Certainly the water from the springs flowed downward. Therefore, at Elim we have the water flowing downward and the trees growing upward. This is a picture of resurrection life flowing out of God into us and then growing up from within us. Firstly, resurrection life flows from God into us. The result of this inflow is that something grows within us.

We have pointed out that in His creation God prepared the Red Sea to serve as the baptistry in which His people were baptized. Now at Elim we see God's plantation. God created the twelve springs of water, but He planted the seventy palm trees. Hence, the springs are related to God's creation, and the palm trees, to His plantation. The principle is the same in the church life today.

Everything related to the experience at Elim was sovereign of the Lord. In His creation God prepared the springs, and in His natural plantation He prepared the palm trees. Certainly it was no accident that the children of Israel came to Elim and found there twelve springs and seventy palm trees. Why were there not eleven springs and sixty-nine palms? The answer is that in His sovereignty God placed twelve springs and seventy palm trees at Elim for a specific purpose. When we follow the Lord as the pillar of cloud, we shall come to a place of twelve springs flowing and seventy palms growing.

IV. TWELVE AND SEVENTY BEING NUMBERS FOR THE LORD'S PEOPLE TO CARRY OUT HIS MINISTRY

In the Bible the numbers twelve and seventy have a

spiritual significance. According to the Bible, twelve is composed of four times three. For example, the New Jerusalem has twelve gates, three on each of the four sides of the city. The number four signifies the creatures, especially mankind, and the number three signifies the Triune God. The fact that there are three gates on each side of the New Jerusalem indicates that we come into this city through the Triune God, that is, through the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Matthew 28:19 says that we are baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Since four signifies humanity and three signifies the Triune God, four times three signifies the mingling of God with humanity. Therefore, the meaning of the number twelve is the mingling of divinity with humanity.

This mingling is not temporal but eternal. As we consider the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and 22, we see that the number twelve is an eternal number, a number used in eternity. Furthermore, in the New Jerusalem we see that the mingling of divinity with humanity is related to God's administration, for the New Jerusalem is the center of God's universal and eternal administration. The number twelve also signifies eternal perfection and completion. Therefore, the number twelve signifies the mingling of divinity with humanity for the complete and perfect carrying out of God's administration eternally.

If we consider the New Jerusalem, we shall see the comprehensive significance of the number twelve. It is God mingled with man to carry out His eternal administration in a complete way. In this eternal administration there is no lack. Rather, everything is perfect and complete. In the Old Testament the children of Israel, God's chosen race, were of twelve tribes. In the New Testament the Lord Jesus selected twelve Apostles. These twelve tribes and twelve Apostles will be in the New Jerusalem. The twelve tribes will be the twelve gates, and the twelve Apostles will be the twelve foundations. This indicates that the twelve tribes and the twelve Apostles are for God's eternal administration.

Now we can understand the significance of the twelve

springs of water at Elim. These springs are for the mingling of divinity with humanity. They signify that God as living water is flowing into His chosen people to be mingled with them for the purpose of accomplishing His administration.

The twelve Apostles in the New Testament were springs flowing with living water. God flowed out of the Apostles into the believers. However, the flowing forth of the living waters is not limited to the Apostles. All who believe in Christ may be living springs. John 7:38 speaks of rivers of living water flowing out of our innermost being. The rivers in John 7 are the very springs in Exodus 15. Both the rivers and the springs signify the divine life in resurrection. John 7:39 shows that the rivers of living water are related to the Spirit: "But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Jesus was glorified in His resurrection (Luke 24:26). Immediately after Christ's glorification in resurrection, the disciples received the Spirit (John 20:22). The Spirit is the divine life in resurrection portrayed by the twelve springs in Exodus 15 and the rivers of living water in John 7. The divine life in resurrection flows out from God and into God's people for the mingling of divinity with humanity. This mingling carries out God's eternal administration.

In the Bible the number seventy is composed of seven times ten. Like the number twelve, seven also signifies perfection and completion. But in contrast to the number twelve, it signifies perfection and completion in time dispensationally, not eternally. The book of Revelation speaks of seven churches, seven golden lampstands, seven Spirits, seven lamps of fire, seven eyes, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. All these sevens are related to God's dispensation in time. In eternity the number seven will be replaced by the number twelve.

In the Bible the number seven is composed either of six plus one or of four plus three. In Genesis 2 we see seven

composed of six plus one: the six days of God's work plus the day of God's rest. The same is true in Revelation, where the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls are arranged in groups of six plus one. In Revelation we also see seven composed of four plus three. For example, the seven churches are in groups of three and four.

The number six represents man, who was created on the sixth day. When God the unique Creator (signified by the number one), is added to man, the result is completion, satisfaction, and rest. The unique Creator is the Triune God (signified by the number three) and man is a creature (signified by the number four). On the one hand, the Creator is added to man to produce the number seven. On the other hand, the Triune God is added to His creature, man, also to produce the number seven. In either case, seven signifies the addition of God to man, not the mingling of God with man.

The first mention of the number seven in the Bible is in Genesis 2:2, where we are told that God "rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." This use of seven is definitely related to time, not to eternity. Daniel 9:24 speaks of the seventy weeks of years that have been determined for the children of Israel. These weeks are also related to God's temporal dispensation, not to eternity. Furthermore, the local churches are signified by the number seven because the churches today are for God's dispensation in time. All these examples indicate that the number seven signifies perfection and completion dispensationally and temporally.

The number ten signifies fullness. As we consider our ten fingers and ten toes, we have the impression of fullness. Since seven signifies completion and perfection in time and ten signifies fullness, seventy, composed of seven times ten, signifies completion and perfection in time for God's dispensation in full. The fact that there were seventy palm trees at Elim instead of just seven indicates such a fullness of God's dispensation in time.

The twelve springs and the seventy palm trees are all in resurrection. In resurrection we have the flowing of the twelve springs for eternity. In resurrection we also have in time the growing of the seventy palm trees for God's dispensation.

In the Bible there are two important cases where the numbers twelve and seventy are used together. In Exodus 24:1 and 4 we read of the seventy elders of Israel and of the twelve tribes of Israel. When Moses was about to contact God for the carrying out of His administration on earth, the Lord told him to bring seventy elders of Israel. The twelve tribes may be likened to the twelve springs, and the seventy elders, to the seventy palms. We see another case in the New Testament. In Luke 9:1 the Lord "called together the twelve," and in Luke 10:1 "the Lord appointed seventy others." The use of the numbers in each case is significant. When used together, the numbers twelve and seventy indicate that the Lord's people are to carry out His ministry. The principle is the same both in Exodus 24 with the twelve tribes and the seventy elders and in the Gospel of Luke with the twelve Apostles and seventy disciples. In each instance the Lord's people were to carry out His ministry. God has a ministry which must be carried out by the flowing life signified by the twelve springs and by the growing life signified by the seventy palms. Only life flowing and growing can fulfill God's ministry.

In the past we may have talked much about resurrection life without having words to describe it. Now through the help of the picture of the children of Israel at Elim we see that resurrection life includes twelve springs and seventy palm trees. It includes life flowing in a perfect and complete way to carry out God's administration for eternity. It also includes life growing to carry out God's administration to express life that is flourishing (Psa. 92:12), rejoicing in satisfaction (Lev. 23:40; Neh. 8:15), and victorious over tribulation (John 12:13; Rev. 7:9). In the Bible palm trees signify life that is flourishing. They also signify rejoicing in life's satisfaction

and victory over tribulation. Eventually, resurrection life carries out God's ministry both dispensationally in time and eternally.

Both as the church corporately and as the believers individually, we need to experience the resurrection life at Elim. Oh, the resurrection life flows and grows! It flows out of God into us, and through this flowing it grows upward to express the riches and victory of the divine life.

We have pointed out that in the Bible palm trees signify flourishing, rejoicing in satisfaction, and victory. The growth of the flowing life expresses the riches of the divine life and its victory over all things. Those in the vast multitude in Revelation 7 are all holding palm branches and have come out of great tribulation. These palm branches signify both the riches in life and the victory of life.

If we consider the picture of Israel at Elim, we shall realize that it is a marvelous portrait of resurrection life. Something is flowing out of God into us, and something is growing through this flowing to express the riches and the victory of the divine life. As we consider this portrait further, I believe that the Lord will speak more to us regarding resurrection life.

V. ENCAMPING AS AN ARMY

At the end of 15:27 we are told that the children of Israel "encamped there by the waters." The word encamped indicates that God's people had been formed into an army. The flowing and growing life supplies God's people as His army. When we come to chapter seventeen, we shall see God's people entering into battle as an army. At Elim they were full of enjoyment of life that made them qualified for fighting. This enabled them to fight to carry out God's purpose to build His habitation.

At Sinai, God's people received the heavenly vision related to the building of the tabernacle. The long journey from Egypt to Sinai could not be made without fighting. At first, the people did not do the fighting themselves. God

fought for them and defeated Pharaoh and his army by destroying Pharaoh and his chariots in the waters of the Red Sea. After God's people had crossed the Red Sea and had the experiences at Marah and Elim, they were strengthened as God's army and qualified to fight for God's purpose. This was the reason that God did not fight for them in chapter seventeen. They themselves could fight through the flowing and growing life.

If we would be strengthened as God's army today, we also must firstly experience the flowing of the twelve springs and the growing of the seventy palm trees. We need the perfect and complete flowing life and growing life. Only then shall we be qualified and equipped as an army to fight for God's purpose. In the Lord's recovery we have the consciousness of being engaged in spiritual fighting. We are not merely settled in our localities; we are encamped in them. In order to fight, it is not sufficient simply to eat the Passover lamb with the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread. We also need to experience the cross and the resurrection; that is, we must pass through Marah and arrive at Elim.

As we consider the implications of 15:27, we realize that we also need to come to Elim. I have the assurance that, at least to some extent, the churches in the Lord's recovery are camping at Elim, enjoying the twelve springs and the seventy palm trees. How we thank the Lord for this picture of resurrection life! Have you seen the springs flowing and the palm trees growing? Have you seen that the result of this flowing and growing life is an army strengthened to fight for God's purpose? Praise Him that we are His army encamped by the flowing and growing life!

VI. FROM MARAH TO ELIM

In our experience we need not only the sweet water, but also the flowing water. This means that we need the water that has been changed from bitter to sweet and also the water that flows from the twelve springs at Elim. In order to have the flowing water, we must go on from Marah, the

experience of the cross, to Elim, the experience of resurrection.

From the time of Madame Guyon and her contemporaries to the time of Mrs. Penn-Lewis, the Lord's people for the most part were at Marah. Through the ministry of Mrs. Penn-Lewis, the subjective experience of the cross has been recovered in a full way. In the years following Mrs. Penn-Lewis, the Lord has gone on from Marah to Elim. At Elim He cares for His plantation with the twelve springs and seventy palm trees. However, many of those who seek the Lord still appreciate Marah very much and desire to remain there. They have not progressed beyond the writings of Mrs. Penn-Lewis concerning the cross. Instead, they still emphasize the experience of the cross. However, they do not pay much attention to the flowing springs and the growing palm trees. They mainly testify of how their bitterness has been changed into sweetness through the application of the cross. Those who linger at Marah have the healing tree, but not the seventy palm trees growing to express the riches and victory of the divine life. At Marah there is no plantation. There is only one tree cut down and cast into the bitter waters.

It is not my intention to make light of those who have gone before us in the Lord's recovery. My intention is to point out the need for us to progress from Marah to Elim. We need to go on from the healing tree to the growing and flourishing palm trees. In His recovery today God does not want us to linger at Marah. He needs us to go on to Elim and be strengthened there as His army.

Recently, I received a letter from someone asking for books written by the mystics of three centuries ago, in particular the writings of Madame Guyon and Brother Lawrence. Actually, the autobiography of Madame Guyon is a history of the experience at Marah. The same is true of *The Imitation of Christ.* Those who emphasized the experience at Marah in the past three centuries did not stress very much the twelve flowing springs and the seventy growing palm trees. Today the Lord

wants us to experience the springs that water God's plantation so that the palm trees may grow to express the riches of His life and victory.

Because at Marah there is no plantation, only the changing of bitterness into sweetness, there is no growth there. But at Elim we enjoy God's farm and the grove of palm trees to express the riches of the divine life and the complete victory of God's administration. In our experience the waters that have been changed from bitter to sweet must become the flowing waters in which, by which, and with which we grow like palm trees to express God's rich life and full victory.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THIRTY-TWO

THE EXPERIENCE OF MANNA

Scripture Reading: Exo. 16:1-30; Num. 11:1-10, 18-23, 31-34

The book of Exodus was not written according to doctrine, but according to experience. After the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, the Lord led them to Marah. There the people murmured because the waters were bitter. Instead of being angry with the people for their murmuring, the Lord showed Moses a healing tree that changed the bitterness into sweetness. Just three days earlier, God's people had experienced His salvation at the Red Sea. Pharaoh's army had been destroyed, and the people had been rejoicing with praises to the Lord. However, at Marah it seems that the people forgot their experience at the Red Sea. Nevertheless, realizing that His people were children and that this was the first instance of their murmuring, the Lord did not punish them. Instead, He changed the bitter waters into sweet waters.

From Marah, the people were led by the Lord to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water flowing and seventy palm trees growing. The experience of God's people at Elim must have been very exciting. Whenever we come to an Elim in our spiritual experience, we also are very excited. After their wonderful experience at Elim, the children of Israel "took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai" (16:1). As we shall see, after experiencing the flowing and growing life at Elim, they were led into a different situation, one which was rather difficult for them.

According to God's ordination, there is day, and there is also night. On the one hand, after day there is night. On the other hand, after night there is a new day. In our experience with the Lord we need both the day and the night. We need the experience at the Red Sea, and we also need the bitterness at Marah. We need the exciting experience at Elim, and we also need the experience in the wilderness of Sin.

God's people came to the wilderness of Sin "on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt" (16:1), approximately a month after the Passover in Egypt. The Passover and the experiences at the Red Sea and at Elim all were wonderful. But after all these wonderful experiences, the people were led by the pillar of cloud into the wilderness.

I. THE FLESH OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL STILL REMAINING AFTER THE EXPERIENCE AT ELIM

A. Murmuring against Moses and Aaron

Exodus 16:2 says, "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness." Here we see three parties: those who murmured, those against whom the murmuring was directed, and the Lord, who overheard the murmurings. According to verse 8, Moses said to the people, "Jehovah heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against Jehovah" (Heb.). Moses was very displeased with the people because of their murmurings. He was much more displeased than the Lord Himself was. The Lord charged Moses to tell the people that they would see His glory in the morning (v. 7). He also promised to "rain bread from heaven" for them (v. 4).

Although this message is entitled "The Experience of Manna," my burden actually is not on manna itself. My burden is to point out that after the marvelous experience at Elim, the flesh of the children of Israel still

remained. The same is true with us in our spiritual experience. After having an exciting experience at Elim with the twelve flowing springs and the seventy growing palms, we still are troubled by the flesh. The living water at Elim does not wash away the flesh. This is the reason that the so-called Pentecostal experiences do not deliver us from the flesh. Believers may experience the baptism of the Spirit or the so-called second blessing, but they still have the problem with the flesh. Even the genuine experience of the baptism of the Spirit is nothing more than the experience at Elim. As the record in chapter sixteen indicates, the experience at Elim does not solve the problem with the flesh.

By this we see, once again, that the book of Exodus is not written according to doctrine, but is written according to spiritual experience. According to doctrinal understanding, the experience of the twelve flowing springs and seventy growing palm trees at Elim should cause us to become mature saints. But the exciting experiences at Elim never have this result. The murmuring of the children of Israel in chapter sixteen proves this. They had been redeemed and delivered from Egypt, they had experienced the healing of the waters at Marah, and they had enjoyed the springs and the palms at Elim. But after all these experiences they could still exhibit the behavior shown in chapter sixteen. If we view this from the perspective of doctrine, we shall find it difficult to understand. But if we look at it from the viewpoint of our experience, we shall find chapter sixteen easy to understand. According to our spiritual experience, we realize that the exciting times at Elim never cause the believers to become mature saints.

After we have an experience at Elim, the Lord will expose the flesh of our natural being. This is the reason that even after we have the exciting experience of the twelve springs flowing and the seventy palm trees growing, we find that we are still living according to the flesh. The twelve springs quench the thirst in our spirit, but they do not cause our flesh to be put to death. In fact, the more we

experience the flowing springs, the more our flesh will be exposed. If your intention is to conceal your flesh, you will have to avoid the experience of the springs and the palms at Elim. The experience of the twelve springs at Elim is always followed by an exposure of the flesh.

Years ago, I read some books that talked about the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and of the so-called second blessing. These books claimed that once a believer had such an experience, all his problems would be solved. Certain books went so far as to say that sin would even be eradicated. However, our actual experience proves that these claims are false. After we enjoy the living water at Elim, our flesh is exposed. It has no place to hide. In our experience, there is inevitably the turn from day to night. We are powerless to lengthen the day or to keep the night from coming.

It is important for us to see through the superficiality of today's Christianity. Many Christians talk about the experience of the baptism of the Spirit. But even those genuine experiences of the baptism of the Spirit at most are the experience at Elim. We have pointed out that these experiences may quench our thirst, but they do not deal with our flesh. To the contrary, they actually cause the flesh to be exposed all the more. This was the reason that after their experience at Elim, the flesh of the children of Israel remained and was exposed. It had not changed in any way.

In like manner, although we may have exciting experiences of the twelve springs at Elim, we shall soon discover that we ourselves are unchanged. To quench the thirst in our spirit is one thing, but to deal with the fleshly aspect of our natural being is another. Do not expect the twelve springs at Elim to change what you are in the flesh. I am burdened that we be deeply impressed with this crucial point. If we are clear about this, we shall be freed from the influence of the erroneous concept that prevails in Christianity today.

Because our flesh remains after the experience at Elim,

we need to be led on by the Lord from Elim into the wilderness described in Exodus 16. This wilderness is not a specific place. We are simply told that it was the wilderness between Elim and Sinai. This indicates that after we drink of the living water at Elim, we shall be brought into a situation which is indefinite. In this kind of indefinite place our flesh will be exposed.

B. Exposed because of the Lack of the Heavenly Life Supply

As we shall now see, our flesh is exposed because of the lack of nourishment, because of the lack of Christ as the heavenly life supply. This is the reason that the mention of manna both in Exodus 16 and in Numbers 11 is in relation to the murmuring of the people. This indicates that the heavenly manna is given to deal with our flesh. Such a work cannot be accomplished by the springs at Elim; it can only be done by the heavenly manna.

The people murmured against Moses and Aaron because of their lust in the matter of eating. However, their murmuring actually was against the Lord Himself. The people had drunk a great deal of water, but they were still hungry because they had nothing to eat. Their hunger could not be satisfied by the water from the twelve flowing springs. No matter how much water we may drink, our hunger remains. On the one hand, we need our thirst to be quenched. But on the other hand, we need our hunger to be satisfied. The twelve springs can only quench our thirst; they cannot satisfy our hunger.

The Christian experience has different aspects. Many Christians, however, think that there is only one aspect, the aspect of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. According to them, the experience of the baptism is all-inclusive and satisfies a believer's every need. But according to the pictures in Exodus, this kind of experience cannot be everything. Yes, at Elim there are twelve springs, but there is no mention of food. For this reason, the people were still hungry. Within,

they were short of the necessary life supply. This shortage of the life supply caused the flesh to be exposed. Whenever we lack the supply of life, it is not possible for our flesh to remain hidden. If you check your experience, you will see that the very day after you have had an exciting experience at Elim, you have had the sense of dissatisfaction within. This dissatisfaction comes from the shortage of the heavenly life supply, from the shortage of Christ as the heavenly manna. In your experience, you have not yet partaken of Christ as your life supply.

Every believer has problems with the flesh and with the lust of the flesh. Do you know when the flesh is dealt with? It is dealt with only when Christ truly becomes our daily life supply. When Christ fills us and satisfies us, this satisfaction will cause our flesh to be put to death. In principle, this is the experience of every believer. After we enjoy the Lord at Elim, we discover that we still have a problem with the flesh and with the lust of the flesh. This problem is caused by hunger. Deep within, we are undernourished. We have a hunger that has not been satisfied. In our Christian experience we have not come to the place of experiencing Christ daily as our life supply to fill us and to satisfy us. However, when we daily enjoy Christ as our heavenly life supply, we are fully satisfied. At that time our flesh is subdued, and our lust is dealt with. Nevertheless, the flesh with its lust is not dealt with once for all. Whenever we are undernourished and are short of Christ, we shall become hungry again. This will cause the flesh and the lust to reappear and to become active once more.

Our flesh will remain until we are in resurrection and have a glorified body. Although I have been in the Lord for so many years, I must testify that the flesh is still with me. If I am not filled with Christ and satisfied by Him, my flesh will still be active. Do not think that a person who has been in the Lord for many years will reach the point where he is no longer troubled by the flesh. Although the flesh may be dealt with repeatedly, even hundreds of times, it is still with us. However, whenever we are satisfied by Christ as the

heavenly life supply, the flesh with its lust is conquered. But whenever we are short of Christ as our nourishment, the flesh will be exposed once again. My burden in this message is simply to make this matter clear to all the saints.

If we see that the flesh is always exposed when we are short of Christ as our daily life supply, we shall be enlightened concerning our experience with the Lord. Perhaps you have wondered why even after you have had certain glorious experiences in the Lord, you discovered that your flesh was the same as ever. By now we should realize that we need the heavenly manna as well as the twelve springs at Elim. If the Apostle Paul were still on earth, even he would need to be satisfied by Christ as the daily life supply, for he would yet be troubled by the flesh. Although we need to experience the twelve springs at Elim, we also need our hunger to be satisfied by Christ as the heavenly manna. Day by day we need to experience Christ as our life supply.

What helps us the most in our daily living with the Lord is not the drinking of the twelve springs at Elim; it is the eating of Christ as the heavenly manna. The experience at Elim comes occasionally. As the record indicates, it was not a continual experience of the children of Israel. However, the people partook of manna daily for a period of forty years. With the exception of the Sabbath days, they had to gather manna every morning for all these years. This indicates clearly that the experience of manna is daily and continual. If we have the adequate experience of eating Christ daily as our heavenly manna, our flesh and lust will be dealt with. But whenever we are short of manna, the flesh with its lust will appear again. This is the reason the negative experience recorded in Exodus 16 follows the positive experience at Elim in 15:27.

The negative experience of Exodus 16 is repeated in Numbers 11. We have pointed out that when the people complained at Marah, the Lord was not angry with them. When they murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness between Elim and Sinai, the Lord was somewhat

displeased. But in Numbers 11 "when the people complained, it was evil in the ears of Jehovah: and Jehovah heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of Jehovah burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp" (v. 1, Heb.). When the people complained this time, there was no need for Moses to say a word. In His anger the Lord came in as a burning fire. Verse 2 says, "And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto Jehovah, the fire was quenched" (Heb.). Verse 3 goes on to say that the name of that place was called Taberah, "because the fire of Jehovah burnt among them" (Heb.).

We need to see that this negative experience is related to the experience of manna. Once again we see that whenever we are short of Christ as our life supply, the flesh will be exposed. Lust appears because we are undernourished. Do not place your trust in your past experience with the Lord. Do not think that because you have been in the Lord for such a long time, you can no longer be troubled by the flesh. I can testify that although I am an elderly man and have been in the Lord for years, I still need the Lord to be my present life supply. Remember that the manna was sent every morning and had to be gathered every morning. This indicates that we cannot store up the supply of Christ. The Christ we experienced yesterday is not sufficient for today. If you attempt to preserve yesterday's manna, you will find that it will not nourish you or satisfy you. Rather, it will breed worms and stink (Exo. 16:20).

May we all be impressed with the need to experience Christ daily as our life supply. It is crucial to see that the shortage of the heavenly supply of Christ is what causes our flesh to be exposed. No matter what exciting experiences we have had in the Spirit, we still need to partake of Christ daily as our heavenly manna. If we are undernourished, our flesh will rise up, and our lust will disturb us and hinder our fellowship with the Lord. Day by day we need to be filled with Christ as the heavenly manna and satisfied by Him.

II. GOD'S DEALING WITH THE FLESH OF HIS PEOPLE

A. Hearing Their Murmurings and Showing Them His Glory

Let us go on to see how the Lord comes in to deal with the flesh of His people (16:4-30). He deals with their flesh by showing them His glory (16:7, 10). According to the doctrinal understanding of many Christians, a fleshly person cannot see the glory of the Lord. It is significant, however, that we are not told that the Lord's glory appeared to His people when they were at Elim. But His glory did appear to them when they were murmuring in the wilderness of Sin.

Consider this matter of the appearing of the Lord's glory in the light of your experience. When you were having a wonderful and exciting experience at Elim, did you have the sense of the Lord's glory, or were you simply carried away with your excitement? But at those times when you were murmuring and complaining, did not the glory of the Lord appear to you? I can testify that a number of times the glory of the Lord did appear to me when I was complaining, and this appearing caused me to be frightened. At Elim there is a great deal of excitement, but very little of the appearing of the Lord's glory in a definite way. However, when we murmur against the Lord, often that is the time His glory appears to us.

As the children of Israel were following the Lord in the wilderness and seeking Him, their flesh and their lust were still active. We have pointed out repeatedly that the reason for this was that they were undernourished. They murmured against the Lord because they lacked the adequate supply of life. While they were murmuring, the glory of God appeared to them. In principle, we have experienced the same thing. As we were following the Lord and seeking Him, our attitude sometimes became negative, and we began to complain and murmur against the church or against the leading ones in the church. Often, when we have been complaining in this way, we have seen the Lord's glory. The appearing of the

Lord's glory at times such as these is very frightening. The times when I have been the most fearful have been those times when the glory of the Lord appeared to me in the midst of my murmuring and complaining. The reason I complained was that I lacked Christ as my nourishment.

In their murmuring against the Lord, the children of Israel said, "Would that we had died by the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full: for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (16:3, Heb.). In our complaints we may say something like this: "Why did we ever come into the Lord's recovery? What is going on in the recovery? Would that we had died in the denominations!" Often in the midst of our complaining in this way the Lord's glory appears, and we are frightened.

In Exodus 16 we are told again and again that the Lord heard the murmurings of the people (vv. 7b, 8b, 9b). According to verse 12, the Lord said to Moses, "I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel." Be assured that the Lord hears your murmuring. Furthermore, as you are murmuring, He is looking at you; He is observing everything that is taking place.

In 16:7 the Lord said that in the morning the people would see His glory. Verse 10 says, "And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud" (Heb.). When the glory of the Lord appeared to the people, it caused them to stop murmuring. In principle, we have experienced the same thing. At certain times, because we were undernourished, our attitude has become negative as we were seeking the Lord. This shortage of Christ as our life supply caused us to murmur and complain. At those times, we saw the Lord's glory inwardly and were full of fear. Like the children of Israel, we are often very eloquent in our murmuring and complaining, much more eloquent than when we testify for

the Lord in the meetings. But the glory of the Lord appears to cause our murmuring and complaining to cease.

Would you say that the glory of the Lord appeared to rescue the people or to condemn them? The answer is that God's glory appeared for the purpose of rescuing them by condemning them. This understanding also can be confirmed by our experience. Many times the Lord comes in to rescue us by condemning us. When we are undernourished and our attitude is negative, we may fear that the Lord may come in to slay us. Although we may complain against the Lord, we do not stop seeking Him. In the same principle, we may complain about the church or about the elders; however, we are not willing to give up the church life or to forsake the Lord's recovery. A number of times saints have come to me with complaints about the church. When I asked them why they did not leave the church and go elsewhere, they told me that they could not find a better place. When I suggested that they stop complaining and simply be satisfied with the church life, they told me that they could not do that either. On the one hand, they would not be satisfied with the church life. But on the other hand, they would not give it up. Many times those who complain about the church in this way have a deep inner sense of the appearing of the Lord's glory, and they fear that He may smite them. This is the appearing of the glory of the Lord to rescue us by condemning us.

B. Sending Them Quails

After the glory of the Lord appeared to the people, He sent them the meat they wanted. He sent quails (16:13; Num. 11:31) to satisfy their lust in eating (16:12; Num. 11:18, 32), to show them His sufficiency and to discipline them with His anger (Num. 11:19-20, 33-34).

In Exodus 16 the Lord did not deal with the people in a harsh way. But when they murmured and complained again in Numbers 11, the Lord said through Moses, "Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at

your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised Jehovah which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?" (vv. 19-20, Heb.). According to verse 33, "Jehovah smote the people with a very great plague." He then called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah, which means the graves of lust (v. 34).

Many Christians have experienced such a thing in a spiritual way. The Lord satisfied their lusts by giving them what they desired. Then, spiritually speaking, He came in to smite them, and they suffered spiritual death. The more these ones enjoy the "quails," the more they are smitten. For a long period of time, perhaps for years, they remain deadened in the spirit.

Only after so many things had happened to the children of Israel did the Lord send manna to them. This indicates that manna is not given in a simple way. Many Christians, however, hold the mistaken concept that manna comes easily. Actually, we can enjoy manna only when certain conditions are met. This is the reason that, although one verse is devoted to the experience at Elim, two chapters cover the experience of the manna.

The experience of Christ as the heavenly manna is not as simple as many Christians may suppose. The children of Israel did not enjoy manna as soon as they crossed the Red Sea. Rather, they had to have the experiences at Marah and Elim. Then when their flesh had been exposed and they were disciplined by the Lord, the manna came. It is the same with us in our experience with the Lord. Christ as the heavenly manna comes to us in this way.

Many saints have the practice of spending time with the Lord early in the morning. However, sometimes no manna is gathered during these early morning times. The reason for the shortage of manna is that the conditions for the giving of manna are not fulfilled. Exodus 16 and Numbers 11 reveal that manna is given only when a number of conditions have been met. This shows that in our Christian walk we need to

reach a certain point before manna can be sent to us. This is a basic principle. Manna is given only after our flesh has been exposed due to the shortage of the inner life supply. It is given when we recognize our need for something more than the twelve springs at Elim. We need manna; we need Christ as our heavenly life supply.

When the children of Israel murmured at Marah and the Lord showed Moses the healing tree, the Lord did not deal with the people. On the contrary, the tree was cast into the water, and the bitter waters became sweet. But in Exodus 16 the Lord told Moses to say to the people that He had heard their murmurings and that He would appear to them in His glory. The Lord was somewhat displeased with them, and He disciplined them. After this discipline had been carried out, the manna was sent.

III. THE WAY MANNA IS SENT

A. In the Morning

Let us consider briefly the way manna is sent (16:13-14; Num. 11:9). Manna is always sent in the morning. It is significant, however, that the quails which satisfied the lust of the people came in the evening. Manna comes to refresh us at the beginning of the day. Because it is sent in the morning, it causes us to have a new beginning.

B. With the Dew

Secondly, manna comes with the dew. Numbers 11:9 says, "And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it." In Exodus 15 and 16 we see three types of water: the waters at Marah, the twelve springs at Elim, and the dew in the wilderness. We need to experience all three kinds of water. We need the water that has been changed from bitter to sweet, we need the water flowing from the twelve springs, and we need the water that comes as dew. Actually, I treasure the dew much more than the water that flows from the springs.

When some hear this, they may remind me that there will be no dew in the New Jerusalem, only the flowing of the

river of water of life (Rev. 22:1). The reason there will be no dew in the New Jerusalem is that dew comes during the cool of the night, and there will be no night in the New Jerusalem. As we have pointed out, in our experience with the Lord we presently have both day and night. After the night has passed, we need the dew, which is the Lord Himself, to water us softly and gently. Because we still must pass through many nights, many situations filled with darkness, we need the refreshing dew to water us. Morning by morning, the Lord's grace descends upon us as the fresh dew.

If we would enjoy manna during our time with the Lord in the morning, we must experience Him as the dew. Manna does not come alone; it always comes with the dew. In fact, the dew comes first and serves as the base for the sending of the manna. Manna does not come with the water that has been changed from bitter to sweet, nor with the water flowing from the twelve springs. It comes with the dew. Whenever we have the dew, we have manna also. This means that when we experience the Lord's refreshing and watering grace, we also receive Him as our heavenly life supply.

Do not take this word about the dew as a doctrine, but receive it as a word that corresponds to your experience. Even the younger ones among us can testify that such a word matches their experience. At Elim we experience the water flowing from the twelve springs, but we do not have the dew. As soon as we move on from Elim, we sense a dryness within. This indicates that we need to experience the morning dew, the dew that is the foundation for the giving of the manna.

C. Around the Camp

Numbers 11:9 also indicates that the manna comes around the camp. The camp refers to the arrangement of God's people into an army. This indicates that the nourishment of manna is also for God's people, as an army, to fight the battle for God's interests on earth.

In forthcoming messages we shall have much more to say about manna. The main point of this message is that after we have a wonderful and exciting experience at Elim, we discover that the flesh is still with us. The exposure of the flesh is the result of being undernourished. This indicates our need to have our hunger satisfied by being filled with Christ day by day. Whenever we are not filled with Him, our flesh with its lust will appear again.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THIRTY-THREE

GOD'S DEALING WITH THE FLESH OF HIS PEOPLE

Scripture Reading: Exo. 16:1-4, 8-13a; Num. 11:1-6, 10-23, 31-34

The book of Exodus presents a picture of God's full salvation. In God's salvation two matters are crucial. The first is that God wants to be everything to His chosen people. He wants to work Himself into those whom He has predestinated unto Himself. Second, since God wants to be everything to us, He does not want us to do anything. Rather, He wants to do everything for us.

As we apply these two matters to the book of Exodus, we see that it was God Himself who dealt with Pharaoh and the Egyptians. God did not ask the children of Israel to fight in order to be released from Egyptian tyranny. God did everything to bring about the total defeat of the Egyptians. When Moses confronted Pharaoh, all he had was a rod, a dead stick. It was God who did everything for His people.

Consider what God did for His people within less than forty days. He sent the plagues upon the Egyptians, and on the night of the Passover He slew the firstborn. Then He delivered the children of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh and brought them through the Red Sea, in which the Egyptian army was drowned. Furthermore, God brought the people to Marah, where He changed the bitter water into sweet water. Then He led them onward to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees.

I. THE PEOPLE'S GREEDY LUST

According to 16:1, the children of Israel "came unto the

wilderness of Sin…on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt." The Passover was on the fourteenth day of the first month. Therefore, the record of chapter sixteen describes what took place just thirty-one days after the Passover. When I first realized this, I was very surprised. During this short period of time, God's people had seen a number of miracles. However, they were not adequately impressed with the Lord's sufficiency. The Passover was a great event, and the crossing of the Red Sea was even greater. Furthermore, the experiences at Marah and at Elim were significant. Nevertheless, when the people came to the wilderness of Sin and murmured and lusted after the fleshpots of Egypt, it seems as if they had had no experience at all.

Not many readers of Exodus have given adequate attention to chapter sixteen. Actually this chapter is greater than either chapter twelve or chapter fourteen. In chapter twelve we have the Passover, in chapter fourteen the crossing of the Red Sea, and in chapter sixteen the eating of the manna. The eating of manna signifies that God's people had reached the point where they had begun to be a heavenly people, a people whose nature had begun to be transformed with the heavenly element.

Many of the miracles in the Scriptures were carried out with the physical things of God's creation. For example, the Lord Jesus fed the multitude with loaves and fishes (Matt. 14:19). But can we say that the manna in chapter sixteen was an item of God's old creation? No scholar can tell us what was the substance or element of manna. Whatever the substance of manna was, surely it did not belong to the old creation. In God's old creation there is no such thing as manna.

In chapter sixteen there are two miracles: the sending of the quails and the sending of manna. The quails belong to the old creation. A wind went forth from the Lord and brought quails (Num. 11:31). This was no doubt a miracle, but it made use of natural and physical things. The sending

of the manna, however, was different. Manna came from heaven (Exo. 16:4). Although we know that manna came from heaven, we do not know what the element of manna was. We cannot say what was the essence of manna, but we do know that it was food of a category different from all earthly food. To partake of manna was to have a heavenly diet. This heavenly food did not belong to the old creation.

People invariably live according to what they eat. Dietitians tell us that we are what we eat. For example, if we eat a great deal of fish, we shall become a composition of fish. Day by day for a period of forty years, the children of Israel ate manna. As a result, they became constituted with manna. We may even say that they became manna. Although we do not know the essence of manna, we know that it was the kind of food that caused people to become heavenly. By eating such heavenly food we become heavenly people.

By giving His people manna to eat, God indicated that His intention was to change the nature of His people. He wanted to change their being, their very constitution. They had already undergone a change of location. Formerly they were in Egypt. Now they were with the Lord in the wilderness, a place of separation. However, it is not sufficient merely to have a change of location, for this is too outward and too objective. There must also be an inward, subjective change, a change of life and nature. The way for God to produce such a change in His people is by changing their diet. By eating Egyptian food God's people had been constituted with the element of Egypt. The element of the world had become their composition. When they were in Egypt, they did not partake of anything heavenly, for everything they ate was according to the Egyptian diet and was Egyptian in nature. Although God's people had been brought out of Egypt into the wilderness of separation, they were still constituted with the element of Egypt. Now God's intention was to change their element by changing their diet. He did not want them to eat anything that came from a worldly

source. They were no longer allowed to eat Egyptian food. God wanted to feed them with food from heaven in order to constitute them with the heavenly element. His desire was to fill them, to satisfy them, to saturate them with food from heaven, and thereby to make them a heavenly people.

Before God sent manna from heaven, He sent the quails (16:13). The quails caused the people to be even more fleshly. The nature and substance of the quails corresponded to the nature and substance of the children of Israel. Manna, however, did not, for it was of another category, of another kingdom and realm. Thus, by sending manna God showed that His intention was to change the composition of His people. He is not satisfied with a mere change of place. There must also be a change of constitution. We, God's people today, are a composition of earthly things, a composition of the Egyptian element. Hence, God's goal is not simply to change our behavior; it is to change our inward being, the very inner fabric of our constitution. Although we have been constituted with the substance of Egypt, God intends to constitute us with a heavenly element. It is vital for all of us to see this.

God knew that the children of Israel were in need of food. If they had had faith in the Lord, they would have encouraged one another simply to rest in Him. They would have said, "Our God knows our need. There is no need to murmur or complain. Let us trust in Him and be at rest. Remember what the Lord has done for us in recent days. He dealt with Pharaoh, He slew the firstborn, He defeated the Egyptians, He brought us through the Red Sea, and He has supplied our every need." But instead of exercising faith in the Lord, the children of Israel seemingly forgot everything the Lord had done for them. Instead of praising Him and thanking Him for what He had done, they murmured and complained. Their words were sharp and ugly as they spoke to Moses: "Would that we had died by the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought

us forth into the wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (16:3, Heb.). Even Moses was touched by the people's murmuring. This is proved by the fact that Moses said, "What are we, that ye murmur against us?" (16:7). In uttering this word, Moses was not victorious. To the contrary, this was a sign that he had been defeated, having been touched by the murmurings of the people. If I had been Moses, I would have spoken a much stronger word. I might have said, "Have you forgotten everything I have done for you? You remember the fleshpots, but you don't recall the tyranny, the labor, and the sufferings in Egypt. I brought you out of that tyranny. Why do you murmur against me?" Compared to us, Moses was victorious. Nevertheless, he was not victorious in an absolute way.

We have pointed out that in His salvation God intends to be everything to us and to do everything for us. He is real, living, faithful, and purposeful. Because God has a purpose in His salvation, there is no need for us to beg Him to have mercy upon us and to rescue us. God is working for us, and He knows all our needs. If we know the Lord and His ways, we shall not complain or murmur whenever we have a need. Instead, we shall say, "Praise the Lord! He knows our every need. If He wants us to miss a meal, then let us have a fast with praising and rejoicing before Him. Even if He withholds food for several days, we shall still rejoice. He knows our need, and He will send the supply at the right time. If He chooses for us to fast instead of feast, let us still praise Him. He knows what is best for us. Let us accept with rejoicing whatever He gives us."

If this had been the attitude of the children of Israel, God would not have sent the quails. He would simply have sent manna early the next morning. His purpose in sending manna was to change the constitution of His people. Manna produces a metabolic change in which the Egyptian element is replaced by the heavenly element. Such a heavenly metabolism causes God's people to be transformed. In name, the children of Israel were not Egyptians. But in

nature and in composition they did not differ from the Egyptians in the least. By giving the people manna God seemed to be saying, "I have rescued you from Egypt positionally, but you have not yet been changed dispositionally. Now I shall change your constitution by changing your diet from an Egyptian diet to a heavenly diet. In this way I shall change your nature and your being, and I shall constitute you into a peculiar people. Because I want you to be heavenly, I shall not feed you with anything which has its source in the earth. Day by day, I shall send heavenly food, food from My dwelling place in heaven. This food will change your constitution." May we all see that God's intention in His salvation is to work Himself into us and to change our constitution by feeding us with heavenly food.

II. GOD'S DEALING

Let us now go on to see how God dealt with His people when they murmured and complained about the lack of food. As we consider this matter, we need to realize that we all have the tendency to understand the Bible in a natural way. According to our natural understanding, we may think that in Exodus 16 God was merely testing the children of Israel. We may believe that God purposely withheld food in order to test His people and to expose their lack of faith. Some may even refer to Hebrews 3:12 regarding an evil heart of unbelief. According to this point of view, the children of Israel did not have the faith to wait on God, to trust in Him, to rest in Him, and to praise Him. Because of an evil heart of unbelief, they complained. Therefore, God rebuked them. Then He sent the quails in the evening and the manna in the morning.

This understanding of Exodus 16 is very superficial. To understand the chapter in this way does not require the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Those who understand this portion in such a way read the Bible like an elementary

school child who can read the words, but has nothing more than a natural and superficial grasp of what he reads.

If we have spiritual vision, we shall see that Exodus 16 reveals that God's redeemed people still wanted to live a natural life. God's intention, however, was for them to live a heavenly life. Desiring to live in the same way they did in Egypt, the people remembered how they sat by the flesh-pots enjoying the food of Egypt. But God's desire was that they no longer eat Egyptian food. He wanted them to change their diet and to live a heavenly life. He wanted them to forget the Egyptian diet and to partake of heavenly food, a kind of food that no one had ever eaten before. God seemed to be saying to His people, "Until now, no one has eaten heavenly food. I want to make you a heavenly people, and I want you to have a heavenly life and live in a heavenly way. From now on, I shall feed you with a heavenly diet."

In reading the Word I have learned not to place any trust in my natural understanding. As I was reading this chapter of Exodus, I was not satisfied with the natural understanding of this portion of the Word. I do not want to waste the saints' time by speaking according to the natural concept. Therefore, I said to the Lord, "If You require me to speak from this chapter, You must give me Your light and Your vision. Show me what is in Your mind concerning this chapter." As I prayed, looked to the Lord, and considered this chapter in His presence, the light began to shine. Under the shining of the light, I saw that the main point here is that although God's people wanted to continue living the old Egyptian life, God's intention was to cause them to live another kind of life. Because His aim was to change their diet, He did not send them food immediately after they came into the wilderness. In His wisdom, God purposely delayed in providing food for them. If He had changed their diet earlier, the people would not have been impressed adequately. He realized that if He waited until His people had a need and then sent the heavenly manna, they would be more deeply and lastingly impressed.

The children of Israel fed on manna in the wilderness for a period of forty years. The Bible tells us that only twice were they troubled with respect to manna. In Exodus 16 the people were disciplined by God. This discipline trained them not to desire the Egyptian diet. But, according to Numbers 11, a year later the people once again lusted for the food of Egypt. But after they had been disciplined by God more severely at Kibroth-hattaavah, they no longer had any problems with the heavenly diet provided by God. God certainly was a good Father to His people. Firstly the children of Israel were disciplined in the wilderness. Then, a year later, they were disciplined at Kibroth-hattaavah. If God had sent manna before the people had come to the wilderness, they would not have appreciated it, and they probably would not have learned anything. After the people arrived in the wilderness and realized that there was no food, they began to murmur and complain. On the evening of that day, God sent quails to satisfy their lust. Then, the next morning, the manna came. No doubt, this made a deep impression on the people.

A. Satisfying Their Lust with Quails

The food in Egypt suited the flesh of God's people. The more they ate of Egyptian food, the more fleshly they became, for the Egyptian diet corresponded to the people's flesh and nourished it. Manna, however, was food of another category. It came from heaven and it caused those who ate it to become heavenly. When the children of Israel were murmuring in the wilderness, their murmuring was according to their flesh. This means that they were murmuring according to the old self, according to the old person. In their murmuring they were not living as God's redeemed people, but as natural people.

The flesh here does not signify only the lustful part of our being; it signifies the totality of our fallen being, the whole of our old person. Although God's people had been redeemed, they were still living like Egyptians, like those who had not been redeemed by God. For this reason, God sent quails to

satisfy their fleshly lusts. The first time He sent quails was in Exodus 16. Although He disciplined the people, His discipline on this occasion was not severe. The second time "the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against the people, and Jehovah smote the people with a very great plague" (Num. 11:33, Heb.). Numbers 11:34 goes on to say, "And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted." Kibroth-hattaavah means the graves of lust.

Before God smote the people with a great plague, He sent quails in abundance. In a miraculous way, the Lord fed the people with quails for thirty days (Num. 11:19-20). In Numbers 11:31 we have a description of the vast number of quails: "And there went forth a wind from Jehovah, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth" (Heb.). What an abundance of quails! At first, the people were pleased. But eventually the quails became loathsome to them, for the people had to eat them until the flesh came out of their nostrils (Num. 11:20). In Numbers 11:33 we are told, "And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against the people" (Heb.).

We need to apply the record in Numbers 11 to our experience. If we continue to lust for worldly things after we are saved, God may give them to us. For example, suppose you lust after a new car. God may give it to you in order to fulfill your lust, but He will not be happy in doing so. Rather, He will give you what you lust after in order to show you His glory, His anger, and His sufficiency. Just as God sent an abundance of quails to the children of Israel, He may give you so many cars that they become loathsome to you. God will give you what you lust after, but you may experience His displeasure. Sooner or later, the very cars you lust after will become loathsome to you.

I have known some believers who had a great love for

money when they were young Christians. But after they became rich, the money they loved became loathsome to them. Furthermore, they suffered spiritual death. All Christians today need to hear the teaching of the Word concerning this.

I would encourage all the saints not to love the world and not to lust according to the flesh after worldly things. But this is the very thing many Christians are doing today. In order to satisfy their lusts, they are pursuing the things of Egypt. God may allow them to have what they desire. This, however, is not a positive sign. Do not think that if God gives you what you lust after, He agrees with you, He is happy with you, or He intends to edify you. On the contrary, this is a sign of His anger and displeasure. Most of today's Christians have been smitten by God in His anger. For this reason, with them there is no life, only spiritual death.

I hope that all the saints in the Lord's recovery, especially the young people, will learn to forget the world and not to lust after Egyptian things. The God who has saved us is real, living, faithful, and purposeful, and He will take care of our needs. There is no need for us to lust after worldly things. We are no longer worldly people. We are God's chosen people, and He wants us to live a heavenly life. I can testify that the Lord is faithful and worthy of our trust. Through my experience I have learned not to act on my own. Anything I do in myself will displease the Lord. I repeat, the Lord wants to be everything to us and to do everything for us. It is His desire to give us heavenly food, to rain manna upon us. By partaking of this heavenly food, we shall be a heavenly people living a heavenly life. This will make us altogether different from worldly people.

B. Showing the People His Glory

By means of God's discipline the children of Israel saw His glory. However, they did not see it in a pleasant way. In the foregoing message we pointed out that often when we are murmuring against the Lord, His glory appears to us.

However, when we are right with Him, His presence may not seem particularly noticeable. For example, in the meetings of the church you may not sense the Lord's presence in a special way. But if you attempt to indulge in some form of worldly entertainment, you may have a strong awareness of His presence. The Lord within you may be very active, even aggravated. This is the glory of the Lord appearing to you. When you are doing the Lord's will, you may not sense that the Lord is with you. But when you are disobeying the Lord, you will have the definite impression that He is with you. This is the appearing of the Lord's glory, but not in a positive way.

C. Showing the People His Sufficiency

Furthermore, usually through some kind of negative experience, many of us have come to know the Lord's sufficiency. We have learned, perhaps in a shameful way, that the Lord truly is sufficient. For example, a brother from the Far East may arrive in this country very poor. But several years later, he has a doctoral degree and a high-paying job. Now he can testify of God's sufficiency. Others can testify that although they wanted a home with three bedrooms, God gave them a five-bedroom home. In this matter, God showed them His sufficiency. However, He did so not in a positive way, but in a negative way.

With the Lord there is no scarcity. However, in Numbers 11 Moses did not realize this. He told the Lord that among the people there were six hundred thousand footmen (v. 21). Then he went on to ask the Lord, "Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?" (v. 22). Here we see that Moses wondered how God could supply meat for six hundred thousand men plus women and children for a period of thirty days. According to verse 23, the Lord answered Moses, "Is Jehovah's hand become short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not" (Heb.). The Lord did not need

flocks, herds, or fish. His intention was to send a vast quantity of quails.

Many of us can testify that, after we were saved, we did receive what we lusted after. In fact, we received it in such abundance that it came out of our nostrils and caused us to suffer spiritual death. For example, the more cars and houses a brother has, the more problems he may have. Eventually, these things became loathsome to him. Although it may be in such a negative way, we come to see that the Lord is sufficient. Then we worship Him for His sufficiency.

Like the children of Israel in Numbers 11, we need to see God's anger and His sufficiency. Then we shall truly know that the Lord is faithful to meet our needs. Because He is our Shepherd, we shall not want. In fact, we may sometimes have much more than we need. Sooner or later, we shall learn not to lust after anything. We may even have to tell the Lord that we do not want any more cars or houses. In other words, we do not want any more quails. Rather, we are content with heavenly manna. The manna comes in a simple way, and it is never troublesome.

At the beginning of their years in the wilderness, the children of Israel learned not to lust after Egyptian food. For a year, they were not troubled by their diet of manna. But when they complained again, God disciplined them and trained them in a severe way. After this discipline, they learned a lasting lesson. From that time onward, they were satisfied with the heavenly diet. They continued to feed on manna for more than thirty-eight years. Have you learned to be satisfied with heavenly food and not to lust for the things of Egypt? As God's redeemed people, we should not lust after worldly things. We need to realize that our God is real, living, faithful, and purposeful. Because He has saved us with a purpose, He will surely lead us and care for us in His own way. There is no need for us to worry or to lust after anything. He knows all our need, and He will meet our need at the right time according to the heavenly diet.

The more we enjoy the food the Lord sends us, the more heavenly we shall become. Let us forget the fleshpots of Egypt and be happy and satisfied with the heavenly diet. Let us enjoy God's heavenly supply so that we may be a heavenly people in every way. Then, although we walk in a wilderness on earth, we shall be a heavenly people with a heavenly diet. The source of our supply is not on the earth—it is in the heavens. Day by day, God rains the heavenly food upon us so that we may eat of it and become a heavenly people.

God's way to deal with the flesh of His people is to change their diet. This is the real dealing with the flesh of God's people. Viewing this matter of dealing with the flesh in a superficial way, some Christian teachers say that the flesh is dealt with by the cross. But whether the flesh remains whole or is cut into pieces, it is still the flesh. The proper dealing with the flesh comes through a change of diet.

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they wanted to live in the old way. They desired the foodstuffs of Egypt. According to Numbers 11:5, they said, "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic." This Egyptian diet constituted the people with the element of Egypt, an element that corresponded to their flesh. God's intention is not only to deal with the flesh of His people; it is also to cause the flesh to be set aside. His intention is to give His people another diet and thereby to reconstitute them. In Exodus 16 we see that their diet should no longer consist of foodstuffs from Egypt; it should consist only of heavenly food. This is God's way to deal with the flesh.

As fallen beings, we, in the totality of our fallen nature, are nothing but flesh. Even if this flesh is cut into pieces, it remains flesh. God's way to deal with the flesh is to put it aside and not to feed it. For this reason, He changes the diet of His people and sends them food which their flesh does

not like. By changing their diet and feeding them with manna from heaven, He causes them to have a different constitution. This is the crucial point in Exodus 16. In this chapter we see the change of diet that results in the reconstitution and transformation of God's chosen people.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FOUR

THE CHANGE OF DIET

Scripture Reading: Exo. 16:1-5, 13-31, 35; Num. 11:1-9, 18-20, 31-34; John 6:27, 31-35, 48-51, 57-58

In this message we shall consider the change of diet implied in chapter sixteen. There is no matter in the whole book of Exodus more crucial than this. In the past we have seen the importance of the Passover in chapter twelve. The Passover implies redemption and regeneration, for with the Passover we have the blood of the lamb for redemption and the meat of the lamb for life. Hence, with the Passover we have redemption and life, two basic matters. In Exodus 12, however, we do not see the crucial matter of the change of diet. God's intention is to change our constitution; that is, He intends to reconstitute us. Not many readers of this book have seen that the reconstitution of God's people is implied in chapter sixteen. The main point in this chapter is that God intends to reconstitute His redeemed people by changing their diet.

Exodus presents a clear picture of God's salvation, a picture that is not found in any other book of the Bible, including the Epistles of Paul. This picture shows us that in God's salvation He desires to work Himself into us to be everything to us. God intends to be our everything so that we can be built up as His dwelling place on earth. To portray this, Exodus concludes with the setting up of the tabernacle as the dwelling place for God's glory.

For the fulfillment of His purpose, God does not want His redeemed people to be anything or to do anything. In order that we may be His dwelling place, He wants to be everything to us and do everything for us. This indicates that we are to be nobody and to do nothing. Are you willing to be a

nobody? Are you also willing to cease from your doing? I doubt that very many believers can answer these questions in a positive way. When we were living in the world, we had no heart for the Lord, and we did not care to do anything for Him. But after we came into the Lord's recovery, we immediately had the desire to become something and to do something for the Lord. This is true of young and old alike. The older ones have many plans, and the young ones have a great deal of desire and energy. Although we want to be something and to do as much as possible, God would say, "I don't want you to be anything, and I don't want you to do anything. Let Me do everything for you and be everything to you."

As we consider the picture of God's salvation presented in Exodus, we see that the children of Israel were not to be anything or to do anything. Whenever they did something, the Lord was offended, even when they did something good. The Lord simply wanted the people to be in His hand so He could work Himself into them. If we have a clear understanding of this, we shall have a solid basis to understand the book of Exodus.

When we come to chapter sixteen, we see the importance of being reconstituted. In chapter twelve God's people were redeemed, and in chapter fourteen they were delivered. But although they had been redeemed, saved, rescued, delivered, and freed, and although their needs had been supplied, there was still the need for them to be reconstituted. God's people need a new constitution. The main point in chapter sixteen is not redemption, deliverance, or even supply. The focal point of this chapter is reconstitution through a change of diet.

Although the children of Israel had been redeemed and delivered, they were still Egyptian in their constitution. The cells and the fibers of their being were Egyptian in nature. As far as constitution is concerned, there was no difference between them and the Egyptians. The children of Israel had been saved, redeemed, rescued, and supplied, but their constitution was altogether the same as the Egyptians. God

could never use such material for His heavenly dwelling place.

God's desire is to use His people as the material for the building of His habitation on earth. However, although the people were no longer in Egypt, they were still Egyptian in their constitution. Their tissue was Egyptian. They were a composition of the Egyptian element, for they grew up in Egypt and were raised on the Egyptian diet of cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. Everything they ate was Egyptian. God's intention is not to bring a number of redeemed Egyptians into the heavens. He may deliver from Egypt those who have an Egyptian constitution, but He will not bring such people into His dwelling place. In order to be the material for His habitation, His people must be reconstituted. Like the children of Israel, we today have been delivered out of Egypt, out of the world, but in our nature and constitution we are still worldly. Therefore, it is necessary for us to grasp the crucial point in chapter sixteen concerning the change of constitution.

By the time God brought His people into the wilderness, He was ready to change their constitution. This was the reason He did not immediately supply them with food. When they marched out of Egypt, they carried with them a certain amount of Egyptian foodstuffs. This food supply sustained them for about a month. When their Egyptian food was consumed, the people were in need. Although God knew their need, He did not act immediately to meet it. This is often God's principle in dealing with us. He knows that He must do something for us. But He refrains from doing anything because He realizes that if He acted prematurely, we would not get exposed. Therefore, in Exodus 16 God waited quietly behind the scene until the children of Israel were exposed. After they had eaten the last of the Egyptian food and had nothing for the next meal, the people were troubled. They were bothered to such an extent that they forgot the miracles God had performed, and they murmured and complained to Moses and Aaron. As we have pointed out, in their murmuring they were

very eloquent. But as they murmured and complained, they were exposed. Two things concerning them were exposed: that they were constituted of the Egyptian element, and that their appetite, hunger, thirst, and desire were still Egyptian. In their murmuring they expressed their desire for Egyptian food: "Would that we had died by the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full" (16:3, Heb.). This proves that their appetite was Egyptian.

Suppose God had rained down manna before the children of Israel arrived in the wilderness of Sin, and it was there waiting for them. In that case, the people would not have been exposed. They would simply have eaten the manna, and the problem of their Egyptian constitution and appetite would not have come to light. Therefore, in His wisdom, God did not send the heavenly supply of manna until the people were exposed through the lack of nourishment.

Whenever we are undernourished, we are exposed. If we are always adequately nourished, many things will remain covered. But when we lack the proper nourishment, we are invariably exposed. When they are satisfied with good food, most people would not think of stealing. But if there is a severe shortage of food, many refined and cultured people will become thieves. They will be exposed by the lack of food. According to the record in Exodus 16, God did not give His people anything to eat until after they had been exposed. It was necessary for their Egyptian hunger, appetite, desire, and constitution to be brought to light.

After the people had been exposed, God came in to satisfy their lust by sending quails in the evening. According to 16:12, the Lord said to Moses, "I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God" (Heb.).

We need to see the significance of God's sending the quails and the manna. God sent the quails to satisfy the people's Egyptian appetite, but He sent the manna to reconstitute

them. Furthermore, with the sending of the quails, there was no regulation or restriction. God did not tell the people when to gather the quails or how to gather them. The quails were sent in an unrestricted way because the flesh does not want to have any restrictions. In other words, because the Egyptian diet is without restraint, the quails were sent in a way to match that diet, in a way without restraint or regulation. Those who ate the quails were not restricted or regulated in any way. The sending of manna, on the contrary, was accompanied by a number of regulations.

Some may be surprised to hear of regulations related to the sending of manna. According to their understanding, with grace there are no regulations. Actually, there are more regulations with grace than with the law. If a person lives apart from the divine life, he may be wild and unrestrained. God's life, however, regulates and restricts. The more proper we are in life, the more regulated we shall be. Take the example of driving a car. If you drive a car without regulations, you risk being involved in a serious accident. You may even be killed.

The regulations concerning the sending of manna and the eating of manna can also be illustrated by the observance of table manners. I have learned that those of certain nationalities, the British and the Germans for example, pay much attention to proper table manners. Although we may not care for table manners as an end in themselves, we must have certain regulations in order to eat properly. It is very difficult to enjoy our food if we do not eat it in the correct way. For instance, can you have the full enjoyment of a steak if you try to cut it with a spoon? The more proper we are in eating steak, the more we shall enjoy it. We should not have the attitude that we can disregard eating regulations and care only for the food.

We have seen that the quails were sent in a way that was without regulation. The quails covered the camp, and the children of Israel gathered them in any way they wanted. The sending of manna, however, was different. In order to

gather the manna, the people had to rise up early in the morning and collect it before the sun became hot. Furthermore, instead of collecting the manna in a greedy way, the people were restricted in the way they gathered it. In 16:16 we see that the Lord commanded, "Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents." This indicates that God wants us to cooperate with His regulations. When we do this, we are actually cooperating with God Himself and are one with Him. To obey God's regulations means that we are like Him and according to Him.

We see another regulation concerning manna in 16:19, where Moses charged the people not to leave any manna until the morning. Those who disobeyed this regulation found that the manna "bred worms, and stank" (v. 20). Furthermore, the children of Israel were commanded to gather on the sixth day "twice as much bread, two omers for one man" (v. 22); they were not to gather it on the Sabbath. These regulations also indicate that to eat manna is to be according to God.

Eating quails makes people wild and unrestricted, but eating manna regulates them and causes them to be according to God. Those who are being reconstituted will be regulated. They will rise up to gather manna according to God's timing, and they will collect it according to God's way, not according to their greed. God does not allow us to be either lazy or greedy. We are to be diligent, but we are not to gather manna according to our greed. Those among the children of Israel who gathered more still did not receive more than one omer.

I hope that we all shall grasp the point that eating manna causes us to correspond to God. The more manna we eat, the more we correspond to Him and are identified with Him. Our behavior and all our actions are then according to God's regulation. In this way we become those who live, act, behave, and walk according to what God is. The eating of quails, by

contrast, corresponds to the Egyptian style, fashion, and manner. It is wild and without regulation. But the eating of manna makes our behavior identical to God's behavior. It causes us to act just as God does.

The crucial point in chapter sixteen is God's intention to reconstitute His redeemed people. After God has redeemed us, saved us, and delivered us from the world, He will change our diet in order to change our constitution. His aim is to eliminate every trace of the Egyptian constitution. Students of medicine know that a new diet causes our cells and fibers to be gradually changed. When I came to this country from the Far East many years ago, I had been constituted according to the Chinese diet. But through the years I have been reconstituted according to the American diet. This illustrates God's desire to reconstitute His people by changing their diet. Through a change of diet, their tissues and fibers are reconstituted.

We have spoken many times of the Egyptian diet. Now we come to the important matter of what the Egyptian diet is and what it includes. The Egyptian diet denotes all the things we desire to feed on in order to find satisfaction. Such a diet may include television, sports, music, magazines, newspapers, or other forms of worldly entertainment. Some people cannot live without television or newspapers. This indicates that these things are part of their Egyptian diet. Still others feed on window-shopping. They may not care to buy anything, but they enjoy looking at things in the store windows. Through these illustrations we can readily understand that America is the leading country with respect to the Egyptian diet. In this country there is a modern Nile River bearing all manner of worldly supply.

Before we were saved, we all had an Egyptian diet. But after we are saved, we should change our diet. However, many Christians still live according to their old diet after they are saved. This means that they continue to hunger and thirst for the things of the world.

Some may think that in speaking of the Egyptian diet I

am dealing with the matter of loving the world. This is a very superficial way of looking at the issue involved in the change of diet. The point here is that whatever we desire, hunger, and thirst after is the diet according to which our being has been constituted. Apart from those in the local churches, few Christians have been reconstituted through a change of diet. By staying in the homes of many Christians in the course of my travels, I have learned that the appetite of many believers is still for the things of Egypt. Not many have a genuine hunger and thirst for Christ.

In the wilderness God gave the children of Israel nothing except manna to eat. According to Numbers 11:6, the people complained, "But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes." How marvelous it was that God gave the people nothing except manna! This indicates that He gave them nothing except Christ. I thank the Lord that a good number of the church people do not have an appetite for anything other than Christ. Day by day, the hunger of many in the churches is for Christ and Christ alone. We thirst for Him and desire to contact Him, to read the Word, to call on His name, and to read the printed messages. Truly the Lord has changed our diet.

I can testify that I live on the Lord Jesus Christ, not on anything else. Frequently, I read a newspaper. But whenever a newspaper becomes part of my diet, I immediately repent, confess, and ask the Lord to forgive me for turning to something other than Him to satisfy my desire. Whenever we hunger and thirst for something other than Christ, we are wrong.

It is important to understand this message in a proper way. My burden is not to issue a charge to the saints about the love of the world. It is to point out the need for a change in our diet. May the Lord take away the desire and hunger for anything other than Christ! We need clothing and a proper dwelling place. However, our appetite, our desire, should not be for these things. Our appetite should be for Christ. We should not try to find satisfaction in clothing or

in a better house. God has changed our diet from the things of Egypt to Christ alone.

This does not mean that we are to live as if we were monks or nuns. We are not to be like the Amish, who are allowed to wear only certain colors. The sisters need to dress in a suitable way, but they should not have an appetite for fashion or style. Instead, their appetite should be for Christ. We all need to say, "Lord Jesus, I love You. I want to breathe You, drink You, and eat You. Lord, I long to feast on You." Our hunger, thirst, desire, and appetite should be for Christ as the heavenly manna.

Over a period of forty years, God gave the children of Israel nothing to eat except manna. As we have already mentioned, no one knows the essence or element of manna. We only know that it daily came from the heavens. From John 6 we also know that this heavenly manna is a type of Christ. Christ came from God to be our diet. We need to eat Him, drink Him, and breathe Him. We need a change in our inward constitution, not merely a change in our outward behavior. If we would have such an inward change, we need to have a change of food supply, for the food we eat is the source of our constitution. Dietitians tell us that we are what we eat. The food we eat enters into us organically and becomes our constitution. As God's people today, we need to be reconstituted with Christ as our very element. In this way, we shall become Christ as far as our constitution is concerned. Through the change of diet, we receive the heavenly essence that reconstitutes us with Christ. This change of constitution through a change of diet is altogether different from the methods of self-improvement practiced in religion.

I. THE EGYPTIAN DIET

A. Making People Egyptian

The Egyptian diet causes people to become Egyptian. For example, if people are consumed with watching television, they become television. Likewise, if they are given to a

certain sport or amusement, they become constituted with that sport or amusement. These illustrations indicate that the Egyptian diet constitutes people with the Egyptian element and makes them Egyptian in composition.

B. Fitting the Lust of the Flesh

Furthermore, the Egyptian diet fits the lust of the flesh (16:3; Num. 11:4-5). Anything worldly just fits the taste of our lustful flesh.

C. Provoking God's Holy Anger

The people's desire for the Egyptian diet provoked God's holy anger (Num. 11:1). It was in His anger and displeasure that He sent them quails.

D. Causing Death

Finally, the Egyptian diet issues in death (Num. 11:33-34). The result of the Egyptian diet is always spiritual death. Because so many Christians still desire the things of Egypt, they suffer spiritual death, having been smitten by God's holy anger.

II. THE HEAVENLY DIET

A. Making People Heavenly

The heavenly diet makes people heavenly. This heavenly diet is actually Christ Himself. He is the food, the manna. Therefore, by eating Christ we become Christ; that is, Christ becomes our very constituent.

B. Fulfilling God's Purpose

The heavenly diet fulfills God's purpose. Those who built the tabernacle were not Egyptians. They were those with a heavenly constitution. It was at least four months after the children of Israel left Egypt that they began to build the tabernacle. During these months, their diet had been changed and their constitution was at least in the process of changing and of being replaced with the element of manna. By feeding

on manna, God's people eventually became manna. As those constituted of manna, they could build the tabernacle as God's dwelling place. This picture shows that only those who have been reconstituted with Christ are qualified to build up the church as God's dwelling place today. This is what it means to say that the heavenly diet fulfills God's purpose.

The garlic, leeks, onions, melons, and cucumbers were only good to make God's people Egyptian in their constitution. Such things could satisfy their lusts, but they could not enable the people to fulfill God's purpose. In order for God's purpose to be accomplished, His people had to be reconstituted with manna. This reveals that our constitution must be rearranged through the eating of Christ. Christ must replace the Egyptian diet. For the building of the church, we all need to be reconstituted with Christ. Remember that those who built the tabernacle had experienced a change of diet and had begun to be reconstituted with the element of manna. Only such people can build God's dwelling place. In fact, after being reconstituted, they themselves are the dwelling place of God.

C. Testing the People in Relation to God's Will

The heavenly diet also tests us in relation to God's will and proves where we are (16:4-5, 16-30). Are we one with God and identical to Him? Where we are will be proved by the detailed regulations concerning the gathering of manna. These regulations prove whether or not we correspond to God.

D. Keeping the People Alive to Fulfill God's Purpose

The heavenly diet also keeps God's people alive to fulfill His purpose (16:35; John 6:57). By means of the heavenly diet we are kept alive for the sake of God's dwelling place, not for any other purpose.

It is crucial that we all recognize the need for a change of diet. We need to ask ourselves what we hunger and thirst for and what kind of appetite we have. Our diet must change

from an Egyptian diet to a heavenly diet. We must turn from the fleshpots, the fish, the cucumbers, the melons, the onions, the garlic, and the leeks to Christ, the unique heavenly food supplied by God. For Christ to be our diet means that He is everything to us. He is even our television, entertainment, music, newspapers, and sports. We all should be able to testify that the Lord has changed our diet from so many items to just one, the heavenly manna. In a forthcoming message we shall see the riches of manna in all its aspects. May the Lord change our diet so that we may be reconstituted with Christ and become God's dwelling place.

Along with the change of diet, we need a change of appetite. I wonder if the children of Israel truly experienced a change of appetite. They might have eaten manna simply because they were forced to do so. They had nothing else to eat.

The Lord Jesus said, "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides to eternal life" (John 6:27). Today all the people in the world are working for the food which perishes. This perishing food includes things such as television, sports, music, and entertainments. All satisfaction of this kind will perish. Christ Himself is the only food which does not perish. This food abides to eternal life.

By food we mean anything we take into us for our satisfaction. If we understand this principle, we shall realize that today's worldly food consists not only of physical food, but also of all other things people live on, including education, money, position, promotion, sports, and entertainment. The worldly people have physical food and psychological food, but they do not have spiritual food. Instead of working for the food which abides to eternal life, they labor for the food which perishes.

The Lord Jesus is the real manna. In John 6 He indicates that we should seek Him and eat Him. However, not many Christians realize the need for a change of diet. All those who have been regenerated need to change their diet. This is the reason that Exodus 16 is even more crucial than Exodus 12. In

chapter twelve we see a people who have been redeemed, but we do not see a people who have been reconstituted. At the time of chapter fourteen, God's people had come out of Egypt, but Egypt had not come out of them. According to their constitution, they were still Egyptians. Thus, God's intention was to change their constitution by changing their diet. By the time the children of Israel had built the tabernacle, their diet had been changed. Their constitution had probably begun to change also. When they were building the tabernacle, they did not eat Egyptian food. Instead, their diet consisted of manna.

Furthermore, after the tabernacle was set up, they spent much time in taking care of the tabernacle. They had to take it down, carry it, and set it up again. During their years in the wilderness, the children of Israel did nothing except eat manna and care for the tabernacle. They did not engage in any other industry or endeavor. This shows that God did not ask them to do anything, not even to engage in farming. God fed them by sending manna from heaven. The people simply gathered it, prepared it, ate it, and took care of the tabernacle. What a marvelous picture this is!

As we consider this picture, we see that God only wants us to eat Christ and to take care of the church, His dwelling place. We should not allow ourselves to lose interest in these things. Day by day, we should simply eat Christ and practice the church life. We are here for Christ and the church, not for anything else. In the opinion of the outsiders, we in the Lord's recovery spend our time doing nothing. Some even condemn us because apparently we do not carry on any work for the Lord. However, just as the children of Israel daily gathered manna and cared for God's dwelling place, we are daily eating Christ and caring for the proper church life.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FIVE

THE HEAVENLY DIET—MANNA

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 16:4-5, 13b-15, 31; Num. 11:6b-9

If we would understand the Bible, we need heavenly enlightenment and vision. This is especially true if we are to see the spiritual significance of the various matters in the book of Exodus. In the foregoing messages we have seen that Exodus is a book of pictures. However, if we have no light and no vision as we read this book, we shall not be able to grasp the meaning of all these pictures.

Many Christians know that during the years of wandering in the wilderness, the children of Israel ate manna. But not many of them know in a thorough and adequate way the significance of the manna in Exodus 16. They may be familiar with the story in Exodus, and they may even know that manna is a type of Christ as food to us. But they do not have a full realization of the importance of eating as recorded in this chapter.

The concept of eating is a basic and underlying concept in the Bible. As we review the importance of eating in the Scriptures, we need to remember the principle of first mention. According to this principle, the first mention of a matter in the Bible governs its meaning throughout the Scriptures. After God created man, He gave him a command and a warning about eating: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). Eating is a basic concept in the divine Word because it concerns man's relationship to

God. Therefore, after describing the creation of man, the Bible speaks of man's living, which is related to eating.

In Genesis 1:26 we see that man was created in God's image and after His likeness. The words "image" and "likeness" indicate that man is to be God's expression. However, image and likeness are both somewhat outward. They do not necessarily involve inward content. For this reason, Genesis 2 shows the importance of man's eating. This chapter reveals that God's intention for man was that man would eat of the tree of life. Outwardly man possessed God's image and likeness. But inwardly man needed to take the fruit of the tree of life into him as his content. The tree of life no doubt is a symbol of God as life to man. According to His eternal plan, God created man in His image and after His likeness so that man might express Him. Then God placed the man He had created in front of the tree of life (Gen. 2:9) with the intention that man take God into him to be his very life. This is the first reference to eating in the Scriptures.

At the end of the Bible, in Revelation 22, we once again see the tree of life. Verse 2 says that on either side of the river which flows from the throne of God and the Lamb there is the tree of life. Verse 14 goes on to say that those who wash their robes have right to the tree of life. Verse 19 refers to our share in the tree of life. These references in Revelation 22 all indicate that in eternity and for eternity God's redeemed people will be eating of this tree. Furthermore, Revelation 2:7 says that those who overcome will eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

After man's fall, God came in to redeem His people. The Passover is a complete picture of God's redemption and of God's intention and purpose in redemption. According to the picture in Exodus 12, the concept of eating is basic and central in redemption also. At the time of the Passover, the blood of the lamb was put on the "two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses" wherein the lamb was eaten (Exo. 12:7). Then the people ate the flesh of the lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (v. 8).

Furthermore, the main point in Exodus 16 is the eating of manna. This chapter does not deal with behavior, conduct, or self-improvement; it deals with eating. In John 6 the Lord Jesus clearly said that He was the real manna, sent from heaven by God the Father to be food for God's chosen people. Therefore, it is vital for us to learn how to eat Him. In verse 32 the Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Moses has not given you the bread out of heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread out of heaven." Then the Lord went on to say that the one who eats Him will live because of Him (v. 57). Manna is also mentioned in Revelation 2:17, where we are told that the Lord will "give of the hidden manna" to the one who overcomes. These verses help us to see that in the Bible the concept of eating is basic and central.

We all realize that in order to live properly we need to eat properly. If we take in poison, for example, we shall surely die. I once read an article which said that a person's diet can affect his temper. According to this article, a child's temper in particular is affected by his diet. This illustrates the importance of the proper spiritual eating. Surely if we partake of Christ as the real manna, we shall find it difficult to lose our temper. As we have pointed out in a foregoing message, this heavenly food causes our lusts to be restricted. It also deals with our selfish ambition. On the one hand, the heavenly manna nourishes us and heals us; on the other hand, it eliminates the negative things in us. Because eating is such a crucial matter, the regulating of man's diet is another basic concept in the Bible.

Do you know what brought about the fall of man? Man fell by eating improperly. In the same principle, we are saved and healed by eating in a proper way. Man fell by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but he is saved and recovered by eating of the tree of life.

I. A TYPE OF CHRIST

Manna is a type of Christ (John 6:31-35, 48-51, 57-58). As the real manna, Christ was sent by God the Father (v. 32) for

God's chosen people to live by Christ (v. 57). Although we may readily acknowledge that manna is a type of Christ, we should not regard this in a natural way or superficial way. As we consider the account of the sending of manna in Exodus 16, it is important for us to see the relationship between our eating and our living. We must eat in order to live. This is another basic principle in the Bible. Therefore, in John 6:57 the Lord Jesus said, "He who eats Me shall also live because of Me." Without eating, it is not possible for us to live.

Now we must go on to see that the way we live depends on what we eat. If you eat a great deal of fish, you will be constituted of the element of fish, for you will absorb the life and nature of fish. Certainly you will not be constituted of fish if your diet includes only chicken or beef, but no fish. The kind of life we have depends on the kind of food we eat.

According to the picture in the book of Exodus, the children of Israel were destined to have a heavenly living. However, when they came out of Egypt, they brought Egyptian food with them. During the first few weeks of their travels, they ate this Egyptian food. But when the supply of Egyptian food was exhausted, the people were troubled and began to murmur and complain. Although the shortage of food was a problem to the people, it was a cause of joy to God, for it gave Him an excellent opportunity to change the living of His people. God's intention was to change their living from an Egyptian living to a heavenly living. God did not want merely to adjust, change, or regulate the people outwardly. He wanted to change them organically by changing their diet. When the children of Israel were in Egypt, they had many different things to eat, all elements of the Egyptian diet. However, God wanted to change their diet from many items to just one item, and that item was the manna which came from heaven.

In Genesis 2 God's intention was that the tree of life become man's unique diet. Revelation 22 indicates that the tree

of life will be our unique diet in eternity. Although this tree will bring forth twelve kinds of fruit, there will nonetheless be just one tree in the New Jerusalem, not many trees. In today's Christianity, on the contrary, there are thousands of trees; that is, there are thousands of sources of food. But in God's economy there is one tree—the tree of life. This tree was in the garden, and it will be in the New Jerusalem.

In Exodus 16 and John 6 the tree of life appears by the name of manna. If you read the Bible carefully and with understanding, you will see that manna and the tree of life are interchangeable. The manna is the tree of life, and the tree of life is the manna. This means that the manna in Exodus 16 was the tree of life in Genesis 2, and that the manna in John 6 will be the tree of life in Revelation 22. Manna and the tree of life are different terms to describe one thing. God does not have two kinds of food for His chosen people. Because there is one God, there is also just one kind of food. Christ is both our manna and our tree of life for eternity. We have one God, one Christ, and one Spirit. We also have one food, one diet.

The people in the world, however, live by many different kinds of foods. In the previous message we pointed out that worldly people may live on such things as education, sports, and amusements. Just as there are supermarkets for physical groceries, there are also psychological and religious supermarkets for psychological and religious groceries. Because the people in the world feed on so many things other than Christ, we may rightly regard them as today's Egyptians. Before we were saved, we were in Egypt enjoying the Egyptian diet with all the other unsaved people. But we have been saved and have made our exodus out of Egypt. Now God intends to change our diet. However, we may still desire to sit by the fleshpots in Egypt, to feed on cucumbers, melons, onions, leeks, and garlic, or to enjoy fish from the Nile. Therefore, we face the problem of having more than one element in our diet. We also have the problem of living on many things other than Christ. For example, although I encourage the

young people to get a good education, I must remind them not to live on education. Education should not become our diet.

According to God's economy, we should live on Christ and on Christ alone. Christ should be our unique diet, and we should live by Him. We should not seek to live on any other food. Whatever satisfies, strengthens, and sustains us is our food. The unique food we take for our sustenance, strength, and satisfaction must be Christ. However, many believers do not take Christ as their unique source of satisfaction, strength, and sustenance. Instead, they are trying to be satisfied, sustained, and strengthened by other things. Because God wants us to live on Christ, we should be sustained, strengthened, and satisfied by Christ alone.

We have strongly emphasized the fact that God wants to change our diet. His intention is to cut off the worldly diet and to limit us to a diet of heavenly food, which is Christ. Because terms such as temptation and loving the world have been used in a light way in Christianity, I prefer not to use them in speaking of the divine revelation in Exodus 16. I wish to inquire concerning your diet. On what are you living day by day? What do you take in to satisfy, sustain, and strengthen you? We all must face these questions and answer them. We all should be able to say, "The Lord is the only One who satisfies me. Apart from Him, I have no satisfaction. I am daily strengthened and sustained by Christ. He is the only food on which I rely."

I can testify that for more than fifty years I have not been satisfied, strengthened, or sustained by anything other than Christ. From the time I was saved at the age of nineteen, Christ has been my satisfying food. I have obtained certain good things, but none of these things has satisfied me even once.

Christ must be our food, satisfaction, strength, and sustenance. This does not mean, however, that we do not need certain things for our human living. We need various good and useful things, including, for example, education. But we

should not allow these things to become our food. We may need them and we may have them, but we should not live on them or by them. Our only food is Christ.

The Christ who is our food is the Christ who has become subjective to us. He is the processed God indwelling our spirit as the all-inclusive Spirit. On the one hand, Christ is in heaven as the Lord of all; on the other hand, He is dwelling in our spirit as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. We look to the Lord in the heavens, and we fellowship with the Spirit in our spirit. Praise the Lord that He is within us subjectively! The main purpose for His being so subjective to us is that He may be our food, our life supply. Anything which is to be our food and life supply must be something that can enter into us and then be assimilated by us. It must be taken in and become part of the very tissue and fiber of our being. Christ is subjective to us in precisely this way. In 1 Corinthians 6:17 Paul tells us, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." Whenever we eat a certain food, we join ourselves to that food. For example, when I eat fish for dinner, I join myself to the fish. In the same principle, when we eat Christ as our real food, we are joined to Him and become one spirit with Him. Hence, the Christ who is subjective to us, to whom we are joined and with whom we are one spirit, is our food, our heavenly manna. It is crucial for us to see this.

In giving these messages on the book of Exodus, I am not content merely to carry on a Bible study or to pass on teachings to the saints. My desire is that we shall experience all these matters in a way that is actual and practical. Before giving this message, I prayed to the Lord again and again that we all may see our need to live on Him and by Him. We don't need teachings, doctrines, and Bible knowledge. We need to take Him as our food and to live by Him. Feeding on Christ and living by Him should not be an occasional practice. Rather, it should be the way we live twenty-four hours a day.

During the past months, most of the confession I have made to the Lord has been related to my shortcoming in the matter of living Him by being one spirit with Him. Every day

I have had much to confess to the Lord regarding this. Early in the morning I pray, "Lord, grant me today's portion of grace that I may live You and practice being one spirit with You. " For about an hour I may be successful in living in one spirit with the Lord. Then I become conscious of the fact that I am no longer one spirit with Him. Thus, I need to confess, ask for the Lord's forgiveness, and come back to Him. To be one spirit with the Lord is like breathing: it does not happen once for all, but takes place moment by moment.

In my early days I found it difficult to overcome certain besetting sins. Now, by the Lord's mercy and grace, I am no longer troubled by those sins. What I find difficult today is learning to be continually one spirit with the Lord. This is a very hard lesson to learn. If I myself do not practice being one spirit with the Lord, then my ministry concerning this matter has no reality. Living Christ and living by Christ should not be mere doctrine; it must be our practical daily living. I myself must learn to live this way. In my experience I have discovered that being one spirit with the Lord requires great sensitivity. The besetting sins are coarse and crude, but living in one spirit with the Lord is very delicate and fine.

When I was young, I wondered why the Lord charged us to watch and pray (Matt. 26:41). I wondered what need there was for me to watch. Now I am learning that we need to watch lest we inwardly lose contact with the Lord. We need to be watchful lest we turn off our spiritual switch and become separated from Christ in our experience. In order to be cut off from Christ, we need not do something coarse, such as lose our temper. We can be cut off from Him simply by looking at our husband or wife in a way that is unkind. We need to turn to the Lord, confess, and receive His forgiveness. We even need to ask Him to cleanse our eyes. The reason we have an unkind expression on our face is that we are not at that instant one spirit with the Lord.

Every morning we should ask the Lord to give us the grace to be one spirit with Him for that day. Then we need to

exercise to be one spirit with Him in a practical way throughout the day. If we try to practice this, we shall realize that time after time we are no longer one with Him. Our experience may be somewhat like a lamp that, because of some electrical problem, switches off and on unpredictably. I once had such a lamp in my study, and I found it very troublesome. One moment the light was on; the next moment it was off. It would switch off and on all day long. We are often this way in our experience with the Lord. All those who want to live Christ by being one spirit with Him will be troubled by such on-and-off experiences.

As you are getting ready for bed at night, ask the Lord to prepare you to practice being one spirit with Him the next day. If we endeavor to live in oneness with the Lord, we shall discover that taking Christ as our food has been for us largely a matter of doctrine. It is not yet much of a reality in our daily life.

Many Christians know that manna is a type of Christ. But simply to know this as a doctrine does not mean anything. God's intention is for us to live on Christ all day long. He does not want us to live on anything other than Christ. We need certain things for our living, but they should not become food to us. Christ is our unique diet, and we should live by Him and on Him alone. May our eyes be opened to see this crucial matter.

II. THE UNIQUE FOOD FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

The heavenly manna is to be the unique food for God's people. The children of Israel could even say, "There is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes" (Num. 11:6b).

In relation to Christ as the unique food for God's people, I wish to say a word about the uniqueness of the ministry. Some Christians claim that there are many different ministries. In Christianity today, as we have already pointed out, there are hundreds of sources; there are also hundreds of so-called ministries. However, in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, there is just one ministry. The twelve

Apostles all shared in the same ministry. In a message entitled "The Ministry in the New Testament Economy" (see *Truth Messages,* Message Four), we considered the truth regarding the ministry in the New Testament economy. We pointed out in that message that in the eyes of the Lord, there is just one ministry in the New Testament age. The twelve Apostles did not have different ministries. Rather, they all shared in the unique New Testament ministry. Speaking of Judas, Peter said that he "was numbered among us, and was allotted his portion of this ministry" (Acts 1:17). This proves that the twelve Apostles were all in "this ministry." This indicates that there is one unique ministry in the New Testament. Therefore, when the Apostles prayed about a replacement for Judas, they asked the Lord to show them whom He had chosen to "take the place of this ministry" (Acts 1:25).

The Apostle Paul also had a part in this ministry. In 2 Corinthians 4:1 he spoke of "having this ministry, as we have received mercy." He did not say, "I have this ministry," nor, "We have these ministries." Furthermore, in 1 Timothy 1:12 Paul said, "I give thanks to Him who empowers me, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He has counted me faithful, appointing me to the ministry." In this verse Paul does not say, "He appointed me to my ministry"; he says that the Lord appointed him to the unique New Testament ministry.

The apostles had one ministry because they ministered the same kind of food. We all know that in the New Testament there are four Gospels. We cannot deny that there are differences among the Gospels. Matthew wrote from the angle of the kingship; Mark, from the angle of service; Luke, from the angle of redemption through the proper humanity; and John, from the angle of life through Christ's deity. Nevertheless, the Gospels present one Person. The writers of the four Gospels all minister the same Christ. This indicates that although the Gospel writers differ in emphasis, they are one in their ministry. Each of the Gospels is a biography

of the same wonderful Person. In today's Christian world, however, there are many different ministries. These ministries have been a cause of division. Instead of one tree with one diet, there are hundreds of trees producing many different kinds of food.

Those who oppose the Lord's recovery sometimes say that the local churches listen only to one person, Witness Lee, and do not receive the ministry of anyone else. It is not true to say that the churches listen only to me. However, I will strongly declare that all the churches have just one ministry. We in the Lord's recovery today have the unique ministry. This is the same today as it was at the beginning of the recovery. Furthermore, this ministry is the same throughout the world. In the United States, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australasia, the ministry is one and the same. Although there is one ministry in the Lord's recovery, there are hundreds, even thousands, of speakers. But all these speakers are speaking the same thing, although they may speak it from different angles. Praise the Lord for the ministry in His recovery! We are all eating from one tree, the tree of life. We do not have any other source.

In the Lord's recovery we cannot accept any ministry that is not part of *the* ministry. To accept other kinds of ministry would be to take in some food that is different from the heavenly manna. We thank the Lord that from the very beginning He showed us what is the ministry of Christ, the ministry of life. We have one tree of life, one manna. Throughout the years I have been in this country, I have given thousands of messages. But all these messages have conveyed one food, one diet: Christ as the unique food for God's people.

If the Lord were to allow me, I could give message after message concerning doctrine. But the Lord does not permit me to speak on such things. When I was giving the life-study messages on Revelation and Matthew, the Lord preserved me from being distracted from the tree of life to knowledge of prophecy. Sometimes, however, I am asked questions related to Bible prophecy, for example, regarding the sixty-two

weeks in Daniel 9. Such a question can be a temptation. As I have opened my mouth to answer a question such as this, I have been reminded that my commission is to minister Christ as the unique food. We do not have another tree called the tree of doctrine or the tree of prophecy.

In the Lord's recovery we care for the wheat, not for the chaff. Although there may be thousands of grains of wheat, all the grains produce wheat, not some other kind of crop. In the same principle, the Bible produces only Christ as our unique food. For this reason, we do not accept those ministries that impart other kinds of food.

According to the Bible, God has one ministry. This ministry is the ministry of Christ, the ministry of life. All those who share in this unique ministry speak with the same tone and have the same goal. I am thankful that during the years the Lord's recovery has been in this country our tone and goal have been one. The reason for this oneness is that our ministry is one and the life we are ministering to the saints is also one.

I have been burdened to emphasize the importance of the unique ministry in the Bible and in the Lord's recovery today because some criticize us for not receiving other ministries. They find fault with the fact that the ministry in the Lord's recovery is one. This criticism concerning the ministry is subtle, like the speaking of the serpent in Genesis 3. I hope that this word will inoculate us against the poison of the subtle one. Whenever someone speaks critically of the unique ministry in the Lord's recovery, we should reply that we have one ministry because in the Bible there is just one tree of life. Since we have one God, one Christ, and one Spirit with one tree of life, we also have one ministry. Praise the Lord that in His recovery there is only one ministry! Because the ministry is unique, there are no divisions among us. However, if there were two ministries, there would be division. If there were twenty ministries, there would be twenty divisions. We thank the Lord that we are preserved in oneness because we have one ministry.

We need to be clear, however, that to have one ministry does not mean that there is just one speaker for all the churches. There are more than three hundred fifty local churches on earth today. How could any person be the only one to speak in all these churches? As we have pointed out, both in the Far East and in the West, there are many speakers speaking the same thing for the same goal.

Because manna was the unique food for God's people, they were not permitted to have any choice of food according to their own tastes. In the matter of eating, people like to eat food that suits their personal tastes. For example, in Hong Kong there are many Chinese restaurants which specialize in different kinds of cooking. For our physical food we can choose from a wide selection of Chinese restaurants as well as from many different styles of Western cooking. But in the New Jerusalem there will be just one kind of food and one diet. According to the vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 22, the river of water of life flows out from the throne of God and the Lamb, and along the river grows the tree of life. It is also this way in the Lord's recovery, where we have Christ as our unique diet.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SIX

THE HEAVENLY DIET—MANNA

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 16:4-5, 13b-15, 31; Num. 11:6b-9

III. ITS CHARACTERISTICS

Let us now turn to the various characteristics of manna. In Exodus 16 and Numbers 11 we are given a brief description of manna. In this short description at least fourteen aspects of manna are pointed out. Every aspect is one of the characteristics of manna.

A. From Heaven

The first characteristic of manna is that it came from heaven (16:4a). Hence, manna is heavenly. Although we do not know the essence or substance of manna, we know that it came from heaven. In Exodus 16:4 the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you." Manna is difficult to analyze. No doubt, it contained nourishment to meet all the requirements of man's physical body. Otherwise, it could not have sustained God's people those many years in the wilderness. On the one hand, manna has all the elements needed to sustain man's physical body; on the other hand, manna is a heavenly food.

Just as we cannot analyze or explain manna, we cannot analyze or explain the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was sent from heaven by the Father to be the real manna. As the bread which came from heaven, He is the food by which God's people live. In John 6:51 the Lord Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall

live forever." Who can analyze the essence of Christ as our heavenly food? It is impossible to analyze His substance scientifically. But although we cannot analyze Christ's essence or fully explain it, He is nonetheless very real. He is invisible and intangible but He is substantial, and He sustains God's people.

From the time of the Roman Empire until today, many earthly governments and world leaders have tried to quench the Lord's move on earth. They have also attempted to destroy and annihilate His Body. But all their efforts have been in vain. Christ's Body could not be destroyed because within the church there is a heavenly essence, a heavenly element, which sustains the church in its sojourn on earth. Because Christ imparts this element into the church, nothing can destroy it or terminate it.

Just as manna sustained nearly two million people in the wilderness for forty years, so Christ as the real manna sustains the church today. This manna does not have its source on earth; it comes down from heaven where God is. Thus, manna is not only heavenly food, but also godly food. On the one hand, the Lord Jesus is "the bread out of heaven"; on the other hand, He is "the bread of God," the One who came down out of heaven to be our food (John 6:32-33).

B. With the Dew

In Exodus 16:13 and 14 we see that manna came with the dew: "In the morning the dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing" (Heb.). This small, round thing was manna. Numbers 11:9 also tells us that manna came with the dew; "And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it." It is significant that in sending the quails God used the wind. But in sending the manna, God used dew. Certainly God could have sent the manna without the dew. The fact that manna came with the dew must have a definite spiritual significance. Because my experience of this is not yet complete, I cannot explain fully why manna came with the dew. But according to

spiritual experience, I can point out that the dew signifies daily grace, the grace we receive each day. In Psalm 133:3 we read of "the dew of Hermon…the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion." The dew of Hermon signifies grace which descends from the heavens. Hermon, a high mountain, signifies the heavens, the highest place, from which the dew descends. The dew signifies the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dew is different from rain, snow, or frost. It is softer than rain and not as cold as frost. According to Lamentations 3:22 and 23, God's mercy, like the dew, is fresh every morning. Mercy in the Old Testament eventually issues in the grace of the New Testament. For this reason, Jeremiah used the word mercy in Lamentations 3. Every morning the Lord's grace is as fresh as the dew.

We have pointed out a number of times that grace is God reaching us. When God reaches us in a positive manner, full of mercy and compassion, He becomes grace to us. Manna always comes by means of this grace.

We encourage the saints to practice morning watch at the beginning of each day. However, although we may regularly have morning watch, often during our time with the Lord in the morning we do not experience the freshness of dew. Consequently, we do not gather any manna. Instead, the Word seems merely to be letters in black and white. But whenever we experience the dew in the morning watch, we know that God reaches us and visits us. This visitation of God is the Lord as our grace. Our experience testifies that where the dew is, there manna is also.

When we have dew as we read the Word in the morning, the Word truly is food to us. If we do not have the refreshing dew, we cannot have the manna that comes with the dew.

This picture of the manna and the dew is very precious. Truly a picture is better than a thousand words! The dew in the morning is refreshing. Without this dew, this grace, we are very dry. But with the dew we are watered and refreshed. Thank the Lord that manna comes not by itself, but with the dew.

C. In the Morning

We have pointed out that the quails came in the evening, but the manna was sent in the morning. Exodus 16:21 says that the children of Israel "gathered it every morning." The fact that manna came in the morning indicates that it gives us a new beginning. Because the earth revolves on its axis daily, every day we have a new beginning, a new turn. We also have new beginnings monthly and yearly. Manna is not related to the yearly or monthly beginnings, but to a daily new beginning. If God sent the manna yearly, we could not survive. If manna were sent monthly, we would not be strengthened, sustained, and satisfied. Thank the Lord that He sends the manna daily. Every morning we can have a new beginning.

In our spiritual experience we need these daily turns, these daily new beginnings. Sometimes at the end of the day I am eagerly awaiting the next morning and a new beginning. As I go to bed at night, I may say, "Lord, after resting tonight, I expect to have a new beginning with You in the morning." Praise the Lord for every new day, for every new beginning! Manna always brings us such a new start.

We may also say that every new beginning brings us fresh manna. If you expect to receive manna from the Lord, you need to pray, "Lord, I am ready for a new turn. I don't want to live the same way as in the past. I want to have a new beginning with You." As you come to the Lord in the morning, are you willing to pray like this? If you tell Him that you are ready for a new start, you will experience the dew, and with the dew, the manna. However, if your desire is to relive the past, to live the same kind of life you did years ago, manna will not come to you.

In order to have manna, we must be prepared for a new beginning. From my experience I can assure you that manna comes whenever you are willing to have a new beginning. In the morning let us come to the Lord and say, "Lord, I want a new beginning. I do not want to be the same as yesterday. I thank You, Lord, that in Your sovereignty and in Your

economy, You offer us a new beginning every day of the year." If you pray to the Lord in this way, eager for a new beginning, the manna will come in the morning with the dew.

Concerning the gathering of manna with the dew in the morning, we do not need more doctrine. What we need is more experience in our daily life. Many years ago we learned that manna is a type of Christ. How pitiful that among Christians today this is mainly a matter of doctrine! When I was with the Brethren, I was taught clearly that manna typifies Christ. But I was not helped to gather the manna day by day. Instead of life, there was mere doctrine.

Many of the good things related to Christ have become traditional doctrines. Even unbelievers may be familiar with certain truths concerning Christ. Some may even realize that manna is a type of Christ. What we need is not traditional doctrine, but more practical experiences in life.

Thousands, even millions, of people read the Bible without receiving the smallest amount of manna. In their reading of the Scriptures there is nothing but letters in black and white. Under the influence of tradition, they do not care to receive new light. They are not even interested in seeking for such light. They are content to understand the Bible according to traditional knowledge and according to ethical aspirations. They want to learn the teachings of the Bible in order to improve their behavior. They approach the Scriptures in the same way the Chinese approach the classical writings of Confucius. I once even heard a missionary say that the teachings of the Bible are identical with those of Confucius. What a deplorable misunderstanding of the Word of God!

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, the Judaizers had no heart for Him. They were fully occupied with the traditions of their fathers. Their understanding of the Old Testament was according to traditional teaching and knowledge. After Saul of Tarsus was saved, he probably spent a good deal of time checking his experience with the Old Testament. He surely did this according to the leading of the Spirit, not

according to traditional knowledge inherited from his forefathers in Judaism. Therefore, Paul received light, revelation.

Our experience today should be the same as that of Paul. I can testify that I receive light from the Lord concerning the Word because I do not care for the traditions of Christianity. If I were still caring for religious tradition, I would not receive any enlightenment. In 1964 I was advised by a certain person not to teach that Christ is the Spirit, even though this truth is revealed in the New Testament. I was told that such a teaching would not be accepted by today's Christians. Because people care so much for traditional teaching, they are blind. Year after year, they receive no new light. We praise the Lord that we are receiving new light almost daily. We should not be limited by what we saw years ago. Even scientists are open to new discoveries. If we want to progress spiritually, we need to lay aside tradition. As we come to the Word, we should forget our traditional knowledge.

Christianity has become a religion of tradition which neglects Christ as the reality. The Sunday morning services are filled with tradition. The situation among us in the Lord's recovery must be altogether different. Daily we need to go on with the Lord. We should not only read the Bible, but also deal with the living Person of Christ who dwells in us. As we read the words of the Scripture, we must contact this living Person. Instead of being occupied with doctrines or methods, we should desperately seek the Lord Himself. If we pursue the Lord in this way, we shall have a new beginning with Him every morning.

Our time with the Lord in the morning should not be according to tradition or custom. The custom in some households is to rise early and then spend time reading the Bible. But it is possible to read the Word every morning without gathering any manna, for we may not have living contact with the Lord. The printed words in the Bible do not give us life. In John 5:39 and 40 the Lord Jesus said to the religionists, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is these that testify

concerning Me; and you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." If we want to receive life, we must come to the Lord. To have life we must have Him.

There is a big difference between a prescription for some medicine and the medicine itself. We do not have the medicine simply by studying the prescription. However, this is the very thing many Christians are doing today. In some cases they do not even study the prescription in a proper way. On the one hand, my heart rejoices because of what the Lord has shown us. On the other hand, my heart aches because of the situation among Christians. Who really cares for the Lord Himself? Very few actually care for Him, even though He is so living and so available.

In a previous message I pointed out that my confession to the Lord each day primarily concerns my shortcomings in remaining one in spirit with Him. We know that 1 Corinthians 6:17 tells us that he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. We also know that we should live according to this mingled spirit. But how much do we actually live in this spirit? Perhaps among us in the Lord's recovery this also has become a doctrine instead of a real and genuine practice in life. In your daily life, is the matter of being joined to the Lord in one spirit a practice, or is it merely a doctrine? If this is mere doctrinal knowledge, it does not mean anything. It is very easy for any revelation to become a traditional teaching. Let us turn from all the traditional teachings and seek the Lord Himself. If we do this, light from the Word will shine upon us.

Although Exodus 16 is a great chapter in the Bible, many Christians do not have an adequate appreciation of it because they are still under the influence of religious tradition. Perhaps we would be more impressed with this chapter if we were primitive, uneducated people with no knowledge of the Scriptures. If this were our situation, we might be able to see more easily that this chapter reveals God's intention to change the source of our being, to change our very constituent. It is a superficial understanding of this chapter simply to say that manna is heavenly food which typifies Christ.

This kind of doctrinal understanding has no effect on our living. It may even hinder us from receiving God's revelation conveyed in this portion of the Word. However, if we turn from traditional teaching and pray over this chapter, we shall be enlightened to see that, as believers, we should live on Christ alone. Only the living Christ should be the food on which we live day by day.

What a great difference there is between such an understanding of this chapter and traditional teaching! Many of us heard teachings about Christ as manna when we were in religion. But what effect did it have on us? It did not keep many from indulging in worldly entertainment. Some have received the superficial teachings about not loving the world. They have been told not to hunger for the cucumbers and garlic of Egypt. How superficial! The deep truth in Exodus 16 is that God wants to change our diet. The crucial point here is not whether or not we love the world; it is whether or not our diet has been changed. There is a tremendous difference between learning not to love the world and having a change of diet.

As we seek the Lord for a new beginning and for the supply of manna, we need to turn to our spirit. However, it is easy for us to exercise the mind instead of the spirit. Because this is our tendency, it is a good habit to contact the Lord in the Word before we become occupied with the affairs of the day. Once we have become involved in so many things, it is much more difficult to exercise our spirit to contact the Lord. The first thing we should do each morning is to come to the Lord in the Word and feed on Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SEVEN

THE HEAVENLY DIET—MANNA

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 16:13b-15, 31-36; Num. 11:6b-9

In the previous message we pointed out that manna came from heaven (16:4), that it came with the dew (16:13b-14; Num. 11:9), and that it came in the morning (16:13b, 21). In this message we shall consider a number of other characteristics of manna.

D. Small

Contrary to the human concept, manna was something small (16:14b). People usually appreciate something that is great, and we often praise the Lord for His greatness. However, where can you find hymns of praise for the smallness of Christ? We have looked through many hymnals, but have not found any hymns on Christ's smallness.

Building materials may be very large, but food must be small enough to fit into our mouth. The food taken in by us must be small enough to eat. If we want to eat a large piece of meat, we need to first cut it into small pieces.

Throughout the centuries, few of those who believe in the Lord have had an adequate appreciation of the preciousness of the Lord's smallness. Many regard the four Gospels as the record of the life of a great person. Actually the Gospels do not emphasize Christ's greatness. Yes, the Lord Jesus was a descendant of David, a descendant of a royal family. However, He was born in a manger, and He was raised in the home of a carpenter in a small, despised town. This indicates that the

Lord did not make a display of His greatness. On the contrary, He preferred to be small in the eyes of man.

According to John 6, the crowd wanted to enthrone the Lord Jesus as a king, but He fled from such an exaltation of Himself. The next day He returned and presented Himself as the bread of life (John 6:35). He did not want to be a king; He wanted to be food that His people may receive Him as their life and life supply. Instead of being great, the Lord wanted to be small in order to be food for us.

From the time of Christ's ascension until now, Christian teachers have tended to stress the greatness and exaltation of Christ. Nevertheless, Christ still wants to be small so that we may eat Him. The great revivals in the history of the church have not focused on Christ's smallness. This is the reason that such revivals usually have not lasted very long. Furthermore, the corruption in Christianity has always come in through the door of greatness. If we would close this door, no element of corruption could enter into the church.

In His smallness the Lord is altogether different from our natural concept of Him. Even we in the Lord's recovery may desire to see great things. Because of the desire for greatness, many of those in the Pentecostal or charismatic movement are given to boastfulness and exaggeration. For this reason, we should discount a large percentage of the reports of healings and miracles that supposedly take place in today's Pentecostalism. Some may boast that many healings took place in a particular meeting when there was not even one genuine healing.

Some years ago reports were circulated about a great revival that supposedly was taking place on the island of Timor. According to these reports, miracles were commonplace. Claims were even made that people had been raised from the dead. A former missionary who was there and is now in the Lord's recovery attended some of these revival meetings to observe what was happening. In one meeting the leader announced that during the course of the

meeting water would be changed into wine. At a certain point, this brother saw the leader take out a bottle he had hidden and pour wine from it into a container of water. What falsehood! Falsehoods such as this are allowed to creep in because so many Christians have the desire for greatness.

Miracles are not food. Even a genuine miraculous healing may not be food to us. The Lord Jesus wants to be our food. It is possible to be healed by the Lord without receiving Him as food. Healings may be great and miraculous, but still not have the nature of food. However, it is possible to receive divine healing in the proper way so that through the healing the Lord becomes a supply of life to us. This kind of healing is not outwardly great; rather, it is small in appearance.

Those things in our Christian life which do not supply life to us either are not genuine or are not normal; they are contrary to the nature of food. According to the Gospel of John, people tried to exalt the Lord Jesus, but He always fled from such exaltation. In John 2 the Jews saw miracles performed by the Lord Jesus. However, He would not commit Himself to them. He would not trust in those who were impressed by miracles. In John 3 Nicodemus came to the Lord Jesus by night. Without anything miraculous taking place, the Lord was life to this man in a very ordinary way, in a way that was calm, hidden, small, and silent. This is the divine way.

Even we in the Lord's recovery may expect to see great things take place. Such a desire has often opened the door to trouble. The desire for greatness invariably results in suffering. However, this suffering may help to terminate the desire for greatness.

Because the Bible does not give us the dimensions of manna, we do not know how small manna was. Both in His greatness and in His smallness, Christ is immeasurable. The detailed description given of manna in the Scriptures simply includes a word about its smallness. Manna is small in order to be taken in as food. As the real manna, Christ is small enough for us to take in, digest, and assimilate.

E. Fine

Another characteristic of manna is its fineness (16:14a). Manna was very fine and even. By nature, we are coarse and unbalanced. Even in virtues such as kindness or humility, we may be rough and unbalanced. Rarely do we find a person who is fine, even, and balanced. However, when we take the Lord Jesus as our food, enjoying His word as our life supply, we are balanced. We become fine and even.

F. Round

In 16:14 we see that manna was round. It is difficult to determine whether the manna was round like a flake or round like a ball. The roundness of a flake is circular, whereas the roundness of a ball is spherical. The Hebrew word seems to indicate that the manna was like a flake. But elsewhere we are told that manna was like coriander seed. This implies that manna was like a ball.

The roundness of manna signifies that Christ is eternal, without beginning or ending. Christ is eternal food with an eternal nature for eternal nourishment without limitation. Whoever eats Him will have eternal life with the eternal nature and will receive eternal nourishment. By eating Christ, we become eternal people, those who are beyond time. The eating of Jesus brings us out of time and into eternity. The life we received in regeneration is an eternal life with an eternal nature. Because we have received such a life, we have become eternal people. In a sense, we are eternal already, although, of course, we are still in time. The more we eat the Lord Jesus, the more eternal we become.

The roundness of manna indicates that Christ is eternal, perfect, and full. With the manna there is no shortage. The Lord Jesus and His word are perfect and full. By eating Him we are transformed. The more we eat the Lord Jesus and His word, the more eternal, perfect, and full we become. In this diet of heavenly manna there is no defect or shortage.

G. White

Exodus 16:31 indicates that manna was white. It was clean and pure, without any kind of mixture. No earthly food is like this. Everything we feed on apart from Christ and His word is a mixture. Only Christ and His word are pure. The more we feast on Christ and eat His word, the more we are purified and saved from every kind of mixture.

If we come daily to the Lord Jesus and take Him into us and feed on His word, we shall undergo a process of purification that makes us more and more pure. Those who feed on Christ eventually become simple and pure. Most people are complicated. How can these complicated people be simplified? The only way to be simplified is to eat the Lord Jesus. The more we eat Him and receive His word, the more we are simplified. In this way we become single and pure.

As we partake of Christ as our manna, we are not only purified and simplified, but we also become white. To be white means to be without stain. As we feed on Christ, the stains within us are eliminated. Although we may be good in certain respects, we may not be white. For example, our love and humility may have a certain natural color. Actually, none of our human virtues is white. But the more we take in Christ as our life supply, the more our natural color is eliminated, and the whiter we become.

H. As Frost

The manna was also like frost (16:14). Frost is something between dew and snow. Both dew and frost are refreshing. But although dew refreshes, it does not kill germs. Frost, however, does kill germs. As manna, not only does Christ refresh us; He also kills the negative things within us. Whenever we experience Christ as the life supply, we are watered and refreshed, and the negative things within us, such as our negative attitudes, are put to death. We experience both the refreshing of the frost and its killing.

As the best kind of air conditioning, frost also cools us. All the worldly people are too hot in their pursuit of sinful pleasures and worldly amusements. Many of today's Christians are also too hot, too feverish; they need to be cooled down. This is especially true of those in Pentecostalism or in the charismatic movement. Those who are involved in the charismatic movement need to eat manna and experience the frost. Actually, we all need the experience of frost. Because we are so hot in certain matters, we need to become cool and sober. We all need to be cooled down in order to be refreshed in a proper way. As we partake of Christ and His word, we are cooled down and refreshed by the frost.

I. As Coriander Seed

In 16:31 and Numbers 11:7 we are told that the manna was like coriander seed. This indicates that as food Christ is full of life. When we eat Christ, He comes into us as a seed. Compared to corn or wheat, the coriander seed is tiny. Although this seed is very small, it is full of life, and it brings the life element into our being. As such a seed, Christ grows within us.

If we try to receive Christ in His greatness, we are mistaken. The Christ we receive as nourishment is small, like a coriander seed. The normal and proper enjoyment of Christ is to take Him in as a small seed full of nourishment.

As the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, Christ is not great; He is actually very small. If He were not small, how could He dwell in us? In our daily experience the Spirit is small, not great. However, those in the charismatic movement desire to have the Spirit in a great way. They want the whole world to be stirred up by a mighty move of the Spirit. Some Christians have been praying for this for years, but no such move of the Spirit has taken place. In the church the life-giving Spirit moves in us and among us in a small way, here and there capturing people for the Lord. Although the Spirit's working is on a small scale, it never stops.

In many cases those who are saved in a spectacular way do not go on with the Lord. But those who are converted in a seemingly uneventful way often go on with the Lord steadily and absolutely. Like coriander seeds that grow quietly and without excitement, they grow gradually and positively. With them there is nothing special, nothing unusual, but life grows and multiplies. This is the way to enjoy Christ as coriander seed, full of life.

J. Solid

The fact that manna also was solid is implied in the description of how the people prepared it; they "ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and boiled it in pots" (Num. 11:8, Heb.). In order to be ground, beaten, and boiled the manna had to be solid. Perhaps it was hard like certain grains.

In your experience is Christ soft or hard? Often in my eating of Christ I find that He is solid, even hard. Contrary to our natural concept, Christ is not soft. However, many Christians like to think of Christ as being very soft. But the manna was so solid that it had to be ground, beaten, and boiled in pots. Before cakes could be made of manna, the manna first had to be ground.

Perhaps you are wondering what this means. When I was young, I thought that the children of Israel simply gathered the manna, brought it to their tents, and ate it. Numbers 11:8 troubled me for a long time. Eating manna is not a simple matter. After gathering it, we need to grind it, beat it, boil it, and then make cakes of it. Many Christians read the Bible, but they do not receive any food because they lack the grinding, beating, and boiling. Daily in our experience we need to grind Christ, beat Christ, and boil Christ. Our experiences are the millstones, mortars, and pots for grinding, beating, and boiling Him. Certain experiences are like grinding stones, whereas others are like mortars and pots. Through different kinds of circumstances and situations the Bible is food to us. We may have gathered manna but may not have ground, beaten, or boiled it. We may have only raw manna,

which is not good for eating. After the manna is ground, it is made into cakes. To make these cakes we need certain situations and circumstances. We also need other saints with more experience to help us grind, beat, and boil the manna. Apart from this process, the manna is not yet suitable for eating.

Although we may gather manna during our time with the Lord in the morning, this manna may still not be ready to eat. But through our experiences in different circumstances, the manna is ground, beaten, and boiled. Then it is ready to eat.

K. Its Appearance like That of Bdellium

In Numbers 11:7 we are told that the appearance of manna was like the appearance of bdellium (Heb.). It is difficult to translate this verse properly. The King James Version says that the color was as the color of bdellium. Bdellium has been interpreted to signify two different substances, both a white transparent gum and a white pearl. The pearls produced by resin from certain trees are very much like pearls produced by oysters. When the resinous gum that flows out of these trees hardens, it forms pearl-like balls. The word bdellium in this verse may refer to these balls. Hence, two substances may be called pearls, one produced by oysters and the other produced by the secretion of resinous gum from trees. Both kinds of pearls are bright and transparent.

The Hebrew word rendered "color" or "appearance" in this verse actually means an eye. Manna has an eye. The eye of the manna is like the eye of a pearl. A pearl somewhat resembles an eye. If you examine a pearl, you will see that it is like an eyeball. Every piece of manna looked like an eyeball, round, bright, and transparent. Do you realize that your eyeball is transparent? Otherwise, we would be blind. Our eyeball is transparent like the lens of a camera.

The more we eat Christ, the more eyes we shall have and the more transparent we shall become. The four living creatures in Revelation 4 are "full of eyes in front and behind"

and "full of eyes around and within" (vv. 6, 8). Eyes are for living things to receive light and vision. The fact that the four living creatures are full of eyes indicates that they are crystal clear in every respect.

An eye signifies transparency. With the exception of our eyes, which are transparent, our whole body is opaque. If we do not have Christ, we do not have any eyes, and we are altogether opaque. When we were saved, we began to be transparent. Now the more we enjoy Christ as the heavenly manna, the more transparent we become. Whenever we are with saints who enjoy Christ as food, we sense that they are transparent. As the manna, Christ is transparent. When we eat Him, we become transparent also.

This transparency will eventually become our appearance. If we enjoy Christ day by day, eating Him as the manna with the appearance of bdellium, we shall have the appearance of Christ, the appearance of an eyeball, and this appearance will become our color. By eating Christ our color becomes the transparency of Christ. In this way, transparency becomes our appearance and our color.

Eating Christ causes us to have more eyes. The more we eat Him and eat His word, the more we become living creatures full of eyes. Sometimes I wish that I were not limited to two physical eyes. With more eyes I could see a great deal more. If we had more spiritual eyes, we would be much more bright and transparent. The way to have more eyes is to eat more of Jesus as the real manna with the appearance of bdellium, the appearance of a bright, transparent eyeball. When we are in the New Jerusalem, our whole being will be transparent, like the wall of the city. Because the wall of the city is wholly transparent, the glory of God can shine through it. By eating Jesus, we shall eventually become transparent throughout our entire being.

L. Its Taste like That of Fresh Oil

Numbers 11:8 says that the taste of manna "was as the taste of fresh oil," or of "oil cakes." Oil typifies the Holy

Spirit. When we eat Christ as our manna, we taste the Spirit of God. The oil here is fresh. The Spirit we taste when we enjoy Christ as manna is always fresh.

M. Its Taste like That of Wafers with Honey

Exodus 16:31 says that "the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." Honey is sweet. Honey is the mingling of two lives, the produce of the animal life and the vegetable life. The honey bees which produce honey receive the supply from flowers, from the vegetable life. As our manna, Christ has this element of the mingling of the animal life with the vegetable life. This mingling is our sweet nourishment.

We have pointed out that the taste of manna is like that of fresh oil and also like that of wafers with honey. The taste of fresh oil is fragrant, whereas the taste of honey is sweet. Fragrance and sweetness are the two most important aspects of taste. The taste of oil signifies fragrance, and the taste of honey, sweetness. Tasty food is always either fragrant or sweet. Christ tastes like oil and honey. The oil is mingled with the cakes, and the honey is mingled with the wafers. As our food, Christ has the flavor of oil and honey.

In our enjoyment of Christ, we sense His fragrance and sweetness. Within Him there is the taste of oil and honey. Christ is never bitter or salty to our taste. He is always fragrant and sweet.

N. Good for Making Cakes

After the manna had been ground, the people made cakes of it (Num. 11:8). These cakes were a form of fine bread and were nourishing. As the cakes made from manna, Christ is rich in nourishment. The Bible says that Christ is the bread which came down from heaven (John 6:41). The fact that Christ is bread signifies that He is food rich in nourishment. This aspect of Christ as manna is typified by the cakes. The difference between bread and cakes is that

bread is somewhat rough, whereas cakes are fine. Praise the Lord that He is a fine cake full of nourishment!

O. A Mystery

Finally, manna was a mystery. In fact, the word manna means, "What is it?" None of the children of Israel knew what manna was. Have you noticed that in describing manna the Bible likens manna to certain things? For example, 16:14 says that manna was as small as the hoar frost on the ground, and 16:31 says that manna was like coriander seed and that its taste was like wafers made with honey. Again and again, the words "as" and "like" are used. The Bible does not actually tell us what manna was because manna is mysterious.

Although manna came from heaven and did not belong to the old creation, it could nourish man's physical body. To do this, manna must have contained certain elements and minerals which were part of the old creation. This shows the mysteriousness of manna.

As the real manna, Christ is mysterious; He cannot be explained scientifically. In the New Testament there are various indications of the mysteriousness of Christ. For example, after His resurrection Christ entered into a closed room where the disciples had gathered. The disciples "were startled and became frightened and thought they beheld a spirit" (Luke 24:37). Knowing they were troubled, the Lord said, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you behold Me having" (v. 39). In resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). Nevertheless, He had a body that could be seen and touched. The disciples could even see the nail prints in His hands and feet. It is difficult to say whether Christ today is spiritual or material. On the one hand, He still has a body of flesh and bones. On the other hand, the Bible tells us that Christ lives in us and is being formed in us (Gal. 2:20; 4:19). We simply cannot explain Christ because He is mysterious. As manna, Christ is indeed a mystery.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THIRTY-EIGHT

THE HEAVENLY DIET—MANNA

(4)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 16:31-36; Heb. 9:4; Rev. 2:17

In this message we come to a very deep matter concerning manna: the keeping of an omer of manna in a pot before the Lord for future generations (16:31-36). The commandment to lay up this portion of manna before the Lord was somewhat unusual. Nowhere else in the Bible do we read that God commanded His people to preserve an item of food before Him for coming generations. But after the children of Israel had begun to enjoy manna, God charged them to "take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before Jehovah" (16:33, Heb.). Later we shall see that the manna was placed in a golden pot (Heb. 9:4).

What is the significance of the commandment to preserve an omer of manna, the heavenly food for God's people? Why was the manna placed in a golden pot, and why was it put into the ark along with the tables of the covenant? The manna was in the pot, the pot was in the ark, and the ark was in the Holy of Holies. Furthermore, the Holy of Holies was in the tabernacle, and the tabernacle was surrounded by the fence of the outer court. Within the outer court was the tabernacle, within the tabernacle was the Holy of Holies, within the Holy of Holies was the ark, within the ark was the pot, and within the golden pot was an omer of manna.

Apparently the ark was the focal point of the tabernacle. Actually, the manna preserved in the pot placed within the ark was the central point. The manna in the pot was hidden

under five layers of coverings. The actual focal point, therefore, was the manna in the golden pot.

We would do well to ask ourselves what is the focal point of our Christian life. Just as the manna in the golden pot was the focal point of God's dwelling place, so Christ as the manna eaten by us should be the focal point of our being. The tabernacle was God's dwelling place in the Old Testament, and we are God's dwelling place today. From the standpoint of experience, we may consider ourselves as identical to the tabernacle, for the tabernacle was God's building, and we are also His building. The church is God's tabernacle today. We are corporately identical to the tabernacle because we are part of the church. As part of the church, the focal point of our being should be manna. To describe this manna in a fuller way, we may say that this manna is the Christ we have eaten, digested, and assimilated. Hence, the focal point of God's building today is the Christ eaten, digested, and assimilated by His people.

Now we can understand why God commanded that a certain amount of manna be kept in a golden pot before Him. This indicates that the Christ whom we have eaten, digested, and assimilated is our center. What is the center of your being today? To say that our center is manna would be to use an Old Testament term. In New Testament terminology, we should answer that the center of our being is the very Christ we have eaten, digested, and assimilated. I can boldly testify that the focal point of my being is such a Christ.

IV. A MEMORIAL BEFORE GOD

The manna that was kept in the pot was preserved to be a memorial before God for the coming generations. Exodus 16:32 says, "Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt." As we consider this record from the standpoint of

our experience, we see that as we partake of Christ day by day, we are also preserving Him. Many Christians, however, are not preserving very much of Christ. We all need to preserve Christ. Before I came into the church life, I did not preserve much of Christ. But by the Lord's mercy I can testify that during the past thirty years I have preserved a great deal of Christ. In this matter, I am very happy for the young people. Even the young ones among us are blessed in preserving a good amount of Christ. The amount of Christ we preserve depends on the amount of Christ we eat. The more we eat Christ, the more we preserve Him.

In the Old Testament manna was preserved in proportion to the gathering and the eating. In 16:33 Moses told Aaron to put an omer full of manna in the pot. In the collecting and eating of manna, some of the children of Israel may have been greedy, whereas others may have been lazy. According to 16:16 the people gathered "an omer for every man." In verse 17 we are told that the children of Israel "gathered, some more, some less." However, after they had measured the manna which had been gathered, "he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack" (v. 18). Those who were greedy in their gathering of manna received one omer, and those who were lazy also received one omer. According to our measurement, the manna we gather may measure much more than an omer. But according to God's measurement, its measure is exactly one omer. In spiritual things we should not be greedy. No matter how capable we are in collecting manna, eventually we all receive one omer.

We have seen that the amount of manna collected each morning came to one omer for each person. The amount of manna that was eaten each day also was one omer for each person. No matter how great a person's appetite or capacity was, he ate one omer of manna. On the other hand, a person whose appetite and capacity were small also ate an omer.

The fact that an omer of manna was kept in the pot indicates that the amount of manna to be preserved was the

same as the amount collected and eaten. This indicates that we cannot keep more of Christ than we gather and eat. Rather, we collect and eat a certain amount, and we preserve that same amount. Using Old Testament terms, what we collect and eat measures an omer, and what we preserve also measures an omer. No matter how much we collect, we still have one omer. Likewise, no matter how much we are able to eat, we still eat just one omer.

The children of Israel were not permitted to save up the manna for the next day. In 16:19 Moses told the people, "Let no man leave of it till the morning." Nevertheless, "they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until morning, and it bred worms, and stank" (v. 20). It was necessary for the children of Israel to eat their allotment of manna each day. If they tried to keep it until the next morning, it would become rotten. This indicates that to save according to the natural concept is not biblical.

In Matthew 6:34 the Lord Jesus tells us not to be anxious about tomorrow. Let tomorrow be tomorrow. Do not worry about it. Those who worry about tomorrow will try to save as much as possible. Such saving is never for today, but always for tomorrow. However, we should not live a life of tomorrow. We have only today—we do not have tomorrow. No one can live tomorrow. Every morning we should simply gather manna. We should be neither greedy nor lazy, but collect manna according to God's word. God tells us to gather manna in the morning, and we do so according to Him. Then after grinding, beating, or boiling the manna, we eat it. What a peace and rest to eat manna like this day by day! We have a restful and peaceful life without worries and problems. Every day we eat our daily portion of manna and live one day at a time.

The point here is that God commanded the people to keep one omer of manna, the very amount they collected and ate each day. This indicates that the amount of Christ we eat is the amount we can preserve. God does not command us to preserve any other kind of food before Him. But He does

require us to preserve an amount of Christ which equals the amount we have eaten of Him.

A. Christ as the Reconstituting Element for God's People

The fact that the Christ we eat is the Christ we preserve indicates that whatever we eat of Christ will become a memorial in generations to come. Only the Christ we have eaten and experienced is worthy of remembrance. The Christ whom we enjoy will be an eternal memorial, because the Christ we experience and enjoy becomes our very constitution. He actually becomes the reconstituting element for God's people, that element which causes them to be reconstituted. Nothing of what we are, what we have, or what we can do is worthy of remembrance. Only the Christ who has become our constitution is worthy to be an eternal memorial. What we remember in eternity will be nothing other than Christ. For generation after generation, Christ will be our memorial.

When some Christians are in eternity, they may not have very much of Christ to remember. Because they are not eating much of Christ today, they will not have much of Him to recall in eternity. However, if we are right with the Lord day by day and eat Him consistently, we shall have much to say about Him in eternity. We shall recall the wonderful times we had in the church life eating Christ and enjoying Him. Whatever we enjoy of Christ in the church today will become an eternal memorial. This memorial will be preserved in the presence of God, even in His very being.

B. Christ as the Heavenly Supply to God's People for God's Dwelling Place on Earth

According to the Bible, this memorial of manna indicates that as the real manna Christ is the source of supply for God's dwelling place. Christ is the heavenly supply to God's people for God's dwelling place on earth. In a later message we shall see that with manna as their supply the children of

Israel built the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a symbol of the children of Israel, who were the real dwelling place of God by being supplied with manna and reconstituted with it. In this sense, the supply of manna even became the tabernacle.

What we shall recall concerning Christ in eternity will have two aspects: the aspect of the enjoyment of Christ as our reconstituting element and the aspect of Christ as the supply to make us God's dwelling place in the universe. These two aspects are clearly related to our experience in the Lord's recovery today. By taking Christ as our life supply, meeting after meeting we are enjoying Christ as our constituent, and we are building up God's dwelling place. These aspects of our experience of Christ will become a memorial in eternity. Do not think that when we are in eternity we shall not remember our experience today. On the contrary, we shall remember how we enjoyed Christ and how we took Him as our supply to become God's dwelling place. This is manna preserved as a memorial before God.

V. THE HIDDEN MANNA

Let us come now to the matter of the hidden manna. The memorial is the hidden manna. In Revelation 2:17 the Lord Jesus says, "To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna." Manna is a type of Christ as heavenly food enabling God's people to go His way. A portion of that manna was preserved in a golden pot concealed in the ark. The open manna was for the enjoyment of the Lord's people in a public way; the hidden manna, signifying the hidden Christ, is a special portion reserved for the overcoming believers.

In the past we pointed out that the open manna was the manna gathered by the children of Israel every morning, the manna that was public. But the omer of manna placed in the pot and kept within the ark in the Holy of Holies was hidden. This manna was not for the congregation in a public way. However, from the viewpoint of our experience

it is also possible to say that open manna is manna which we have not eaten, whereas hidden manna refers to manna which we have eaten, digested, and assimilated. Whenever we eat manna, this manna spontaneously becomes hidden manna.

We need to remember that we are identical to the tabernacle in the Old Testament. Our spirit deep within is the Holy of Holies. In our spirit we have Christ as the ark of God. The manna not eaten by us remains open, under the sky. But the manna we eat becomes hidden within us. Many Christians know only the open manna. Because they do not eat Christ as their manna, they do not have the hidden manna. But to those of us who are daily eating of the manna, the open manna is becoming the hidden manna.

A. An Omer—the Tenth Part of an Ephah

We have pointed out that the manna kept as a memorial was an omer in measure. In 16:36 we are told, "Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah." If you read Numbers 18:26-30, you will see that the tenth part denotes a special portion that was reserved for the priesthood. This indicates that the hidden manna was not for the congregation in general, but for the serving priests in particular. If as children of God we do not eat manna, we shall have only open manna, not hidden manna. Without the hidden manna, we shall not be able to function as priests. On the contrary, we shall simply be among the general public, part of the congregation. But if we eat manna, digest it, and assimilate it, we shall have hidden manna. Spontaneously the manna we eat causes a transformation that transfers us from the general congregation to the priesthood.

When the saints do not function in the church life, they are not living as priests. Because they have not been eating manna, they are merely part of the congregation. However, if you eat the open manna, this manna will become the hidden manna which enables you to function in the church

life. Thus, the more you eat of Christ, the more function you will exercise. In this way you will become a priest in reality and practicality. Formerly you were simply part of the congregation in general; now you are a functioning priest. Once you were outside the tabernacle; now you are living in the Holy of Holies. Eating manna really makes a difference. Manna constitutes us into a different kind of people. If we do not eat manna, we shall simply be among the congregation. But if we eat manna, we shall be transformed into priests with the hidden manna as our specific portion. The Christ we enjoy and experience spontaneously becomes our specific portion. He is the manna hidden within us.

In this message I have been speaking according to experience, not according to doctrine. It is rather easy to talk about open manna. However, it is difficult to understand what is meant by hidden manna. But if we consider the hidden manna from the standpoint of our experience, we shall gain a proper understanding of it. Whenever we eat Christ as the open manna, this manna becomes hidden within us. This causes us to become a different kind of people. Once we were part of the general congregation, but now we are in the priesthood. As functioning priests, we serve God by enjoying Christ as our specific portion.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE THIRTY-NINE

THE HEAVENLY DIET—MANNA

(5)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 16:13b-15, 31-36; Heb. 9:4; Rev. 2:17

B. In a Golden Pot

In 16:33 we see that an omer full of manna was placed in a pot and laid up before the Lord to be kept for future generations. Hebrews 9:4 speaks of "the golden pot that had the manna." Thus, the hidden manna was in a golden pot. The manna concealed in the golden pot signifies that our life is hidden with Christ in God. In Colossians 3:3 Paul tells us that our "life has been hidden with Christ in God." The Christ hidden in God is the manna hidden in the golden pot.

In the Bible gold signifies the divine nature. According to 2 Peter 1:4, we are partakers of this divine nature. Only the nature of God, the divine nature, can preserve Christ as our hidden manna. Praise the Lord that within us we have a golden pot; that is, we have the divine nature. We cannot preserve Christ in our mind or emotion. We can preserve Him only in the divine nature which we have within us through regeneration. Actually, the divine nature within us is God Himself. The manna in the golden pot indicates that the very Christ whom we enjoy as our life supply is preserved in the divine nature which is now in our inmost being. Christ is our special portion of food hidden in the divine nature. When we touch the divine nature, the golden pot, we enjoy Christ as the manna hidden within it.

C. Within the Ark of the Testimony in the Holy of Holies

The golden pot with the hidden manna was inside the ark of the testimony in the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:3-4). Most of us realize that the ark typifies Christ. Christ as the manna is preserved in the divine nature, and the divine nature is in Christ typified by the ark. This Christ is in our spirit, which in our experience is the Holy of Holies.

Once again we see that this is difficult to understand doctrinally. However, if we apply this picture of the manna, the golden pot, and the ark to our spiritual experience, we shall be able to understand it. We all can testify that we surely have enjoyed Christ. We have also seen that the Christ whom we enjoy becomes the Christ we preserve. We enjoy one omer of manna, and we also preserve one omer. The Christ we enjoy is preserved in the divine nature that is within us. This divine nature is altogether in Christ, the reality of the ark. Moreover, Christ is in our spirit. As we remain in the spirit, we contact Christ. In the Christ we contact is the divine nature which preserves the Christ we enjoy as the hidden manna.

Our spirit is for the church, in the church, and with the church. The church is composed not with our body or soul, but with our spirit. Ephesians 2:22 tells us that God's dwelling place is in our spirit. We may even say that our spirit mingled with the divine Spirit is the church. When we enjoy Christ, we preserve Him in the divine nature which is in Christ who is in turn in our spirit. Since our spirit is for the church, with the church, and in the church, in experience we are actually God's tabernacle today.

D. Before the Testimony

In 16:34 we read that Aaron laid up the pot with an omer of manna "before the Testimony, to be kept." Some translators of the Bible consider that the testimony here refers to the ark. We strongly disagree with this interpretation. In the Old Testament the testimony does not refer to the ark; it refers to the

law of God, the Ten Commandments. The ark was called the ark of the testimony because the two tablets of the law were placed within the ark. Furthermore, the tabernacle was called the tabernacle of the testimony because it contained the testimony in the ark. Hence, the ark was the ark of the testimony, and the tabernacle was the tabernacle of the testimony. Within the ark in the tabernacle was God's testimony, the law. If we say that the testimony in 16:34 refers to the ark, then the golden pot with the hidden manna must have been outside the ark, for this verse tells us that the pot was placed before the testimony. But by reading the Scriptures carefully, we shall see that the golden pot was within the ark along with "Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant" (Heb. 9:4). The golden pot must have been placed directly in front of the two tablets within the ark.

This picture of the golden pot before the tables of the testimony indicates that the manna concealed in the pot corresponds to the Ten Commandments. This means that manna corresponds to God's law. The manna contained in God's nature corresponds to God's testimony, which describes the nature of God and testifies concerning it. The law is a testimony of what God is. As we have pointed out a number of times, the law testifies that God is holy and righteous, and that He is light and love. These four attributes are the main aspects of the description of God's nature afforded by the law. God's nature is holy and righteous, and God Himself is light and love. The Ten Commandments describe these attributes and testify of them. The fact that the manna hidden in the golden pot was placed before the testimony indicates that manna corresponds to God's testimony and meets its requirements.

We need to apply this to our Christian experience. The revelation in the Bible indicates that as regenerated ones we have God's testimony within us. We have the law of life (Rom. 8:2), and we have a conscience. In our experience we have learned that our efforts in the natural life to fulfill God's requirements always end in failure. There is nothing

in the natural life which corresponds to God's testimony. However, when we partake of manna as our life supply, the manna we eat becomes the hidden manna. This hidden manna, preserved in the divine nature within us, corresponds to the law of life and meets its requirements. In the words of Romans 8:4, the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in those who walk according to spirit.

The tables of the covenant in the ark indicate that God's testimony is in Christ. This testimony makes demands upon us and requires certain things of us. In ourselves we cannot fulfill these demands and requirements, for we have nothing in us which corresponds to God's testimony. But when we take Christ into us as our food and as our life supply, the hidden Christ, Christ as the hidden manna, brings us into line with God's testimony. In other words, the Christ preserved within us causes us to correspond to God's testimony.

We have seen that according to 16:34 the pot with the manna was "laid up before the Testimony." Many versions capitalize the word testimony. If the testimony denotes the ark, then the golden pot with the hidden manna was outside the ark. But Hebrews 9:4 says plainly that the golden pot with the manna was in the ark. Therefore, the testimony in 16:34 must not refer to the ark, but to the tablets of the law which were in the ark. How significant this is when viewed in the light of our experience! The Christ we enjoy today is not outside of us, corresponding to God's law. On the contrary, the Christ we enjoy is within us. Furthermore, this inward Christ corresponds to the law, which is also within us. We praise the Lord for the law of life within us. This law makes demands. But we have Christ as the inward, hidden manna to correspond to God's testimony and to fulfill its demands. The Christ we eat and assimilate causes us to agree with the inner law of life. Therefore, we have three crucial items: the food, the testimony, and the correspondence of the food to the testimony. Hallelujah for the manna hidden in the divine nature, corresponding to

the demands of the inner law of life! Because of this marvelous correspondence, we can be free from all struggle, strife, and fighting within. We can be at peace. On the one hand, we have the law with its demands; on the other hand, we have Christ as our life supply which corresponds to the law. As a result, we can be at peace.

At this point we need to be reminded that this experience is related to the church and takes place in the church. We have seen that the church is today's tabernacle. Within the church as God's tabernacle, God's dwelling place, we have three inward matters: the hidden manna, the testimony, and the corresponding peace. As we experience these things in the tabernacle, we serve God, and God accepts our service. Furthermore, this is the place of God's speaking, the place of His oracle.

The various aspects of the experience of the hidden manna are beyond human utterance. It is better that we do not say too much concerning them. It is sufficient simply to have a map to guide us in our spiritual experience. As we read this map, we shall understand our experience and know where we are regarding the hidden manna.

E. For the Overcomers for the Building of God's Dwelling Place

According to Revelation 2:17, the hidden manna is for the overcomers. The open manna was for the enjoyment of the Lord's people in a public way; the hidden manna is a special portion reserved for His overcoming seekers who overcome the degradation of the worldly church. While the church goes the way of the world, these overcomers come forward to abide in the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, where they enjoy the hidden Christ as a special portion for their daily supply.

Every proper priest is an overcomer. Do not think that it is impossible for you to be an overcomer. You can become an overcomer by enjoying Christ as manna. Eat the open manna, and Christ will become the hidden manna. This

hidden manna will constitute you into an overcomer. It will also fulfill the requirements of the inner law of life and bring you into peace. As a result, you will be an overcomer according to Revelation 2:17.

According to the Old Testament, the children of Israel ate manna in the wilderness for a period of forty years. But sixteen hundred years later the Lord Jesus spoke to the church in Pergamos, and to all the seven churches in Asia, concerning the hidden manna. After all these centuries, the Lord brought His people back to manna. God's intention is that all the churches eat the manna. However, in the churches we should not eat simply the open manna, but should also eat the hidden manna, which makes us priests and overcomers.

By eating the hidden manna we shall receive a white stone (Rev. 2:17). In the Bible a stone signifies building material. If we eat of the hidden manna, we shall become priests and overcomers. Eventually, the hidden manna will transform us into stones for the building of God's dwelling place.

In ancient times the eating of manna was related to the building of the tabernacle as God's dwelling place. Today the eating of Christ as the hidden manna is also related to the building of God's dwelling place. The Bible consistently reveals that eating manna is for the building up of God's dwelling place.

Our understanding of the hidden manna is limited by our experience. I cannot minister more regarding this than I have experienced. At least we have seen that today we are eating Christ and preserving Him. Simultaneously, He is transforming us into priests and overcomers. He is also making us white stones for the building of God's dwelling place in spirit.

Many Christians today are seeking miracles without realizing that all these points related to manna are genuine miracles. While many seek superficial miracles, we enjoy the deeper miracles found in manna. Day by day we are eating Christ and enjoying Him. Is this not a miracle? If the

eating of manna by the children of Israel was a miracle, surely our eating of Christ today is also a miracle. Regarding manna, there is miracle upon miracle.

Even the amount of our daily portion of manna is miraculous. No matter how diligent, or even greedy, we may be in gathering manna, we eventually end up with just one omer. Realizing this will cause us to be at peace and to live one day at a time. Do not try to save up manna for tomorrow. Instead, live by the Lord's miraculous provision today. What you enjoy of Christ will be what is preserved with Christ in the divine nature. This takes place altogether in our spirit and is related to the church. The Christ we enjoy in the church is hidden in God and preserved in the nature of God. The measure of Christ we preserve in the golden pot is in the ark and corresponds to God's law. All this is in the Holy of Holies, which is in the tabernacle.

Those who are greedy may try to store up manna for tomorrow. But the manna you save in this way will not feed you the next day. Instead, it will breed worms. It is strange, however, that the omer of manna preserved in the golden pot does not spoil or become rotten. It remains forever.

In 16:21 we are also told that when the sun became hot, the manna melted. On the one hand, manna could be ground, beaten, and boiled. On the other hand, it melted when left out in the hot sun. However, the omer of manna preserved in the golden pot did not melt. This is a further indication of the miraculous nature of the provision of manna.

God's intention is to give each of us an omer of manna, whether we collect more or less. The amount of manna we receive depends on God, not on us. The measure is in His hand. Furthermore, in the eating of manna, we eventually are able to eat just one omer. This indicates that the amount of manna we eat is not according to our appetite, but according to the Lord's arrangement.

When some hear that the gathering and eating of manna are according to God, not according to us, they may say, "There is no reason for us to go out to gather manna.

Whether we gather it or not, the Lord will have mercy on us." However, if this is our attitude, the Lord will not have mercy on us. We must do our part to gather manna. All the rest is up to Him. No matter how much we collect, we shall receive one omer. Likewise, no matter how much we can eat, we shall eventually take in just one omer. Do not think that by eating greedily you can partake of more manna.

All the different aspects of manna are miraculous. The whole story of God's sending the manna is a miracle that cannot be explained by our natural understanding. On the sixth day the children of Israel collected a double portion in order to have a supply for the Sabbath day. In this case the extra portion did not breed worms. Surely this is according to God. Furthermore, we have seen that the manna in the golden pot did not spoil or melt. This reveals that the experience of manna is not according to man's regulation. God is the One who determines how manna should be gathered, eaten, and preserved. If we try to store up manna, it will breed worms. But if God tells us to collect a portion for two days, the manna will remain fresh. Then if God requires us to preserve an omer in a golden pot, that portion of manna will remain forever.

Concerning manna, the regulations are not according to our natural concept. This indicates that the enjoyment of Christ is not according to man's way or estimation. Our enjoyment of Christ must be according to God. The way to enjoy Christ wholly depends on God's regulations. Although we cannot fully express this in words, we can appreciate it according to our experience.

We may be greedy even in our seeking after the Lord. This is especially true of young people, who do not like to be limited. Nevertheless, the greedy ones need to be scaled down by God. We may collect a great deal of manna, but God will regulate us and reduce us to the proper measure. This does not imply, however, that we should be lazy. Furthermore, we should not try to balance ourselves or measure ourselves. We should simply allow the heavenly measure to balance us.

No matter how greedy we may be in gathering manna, eventually we shall be the same as others, and we shall not receive more than they receive. It does not work to try to adjust ourselves. The greedy ones will never be lazy, and the lazy ones will never be greedy. To try to change ourselves is just religious endeavor. We should simply seek the Lord. What we receive of Him will be a miracle according to His mercy. No matter how much manna we may collect, after the manna has been measured out, we each shall have one omer.

When they hear that whether we gather more or less we shall each receive an omer of manna, some may say, "Then we should not try to do anything." If it is possible for you to cease all that you are doing, I encourage you to stop your activity. Actually, however, everything depends on the Lord.

The point regarding the fact that God balances us may not be clear to all the saints. Manna itself is a miracle, and the dealing with manna is also a miracle. Everything related to manna is miraculous. The way it was sent was miraculous, and the way of balancing according to the heavenly measure is also miraculous. It is difficult for us to understand why after collecting so much manna we still receive just one omer. In the same principle, it is also difficult to understand why those who collect less than an omer also receive one omer. All this is miraculous.

The Bible does not tell us that manna melted after the children of Israel brought it back to their tents. However, if it was left in the open air, it melted when the sun became hot. Perhaps the temperature in the tents was higher than the temperature outside. Nevertheless, the manna melted when left in the open air, but it did not melt in the tents of the Israelites. This shows that the whole experience of manna is not according to the natural or scientific concept. Furthermore, it is not according to man's arrangement. The children of Israel had to collect, enjoy, and keep manna according to God and according to His regulations. The same is true of us with respect to the experience of Christ as our life supply.

We have seen that the manna preserved in the golden pot remained for generations without spoiling or melting. The principle here, as with everything else related to manna, is that manna was a miraculous provision from the Lord. This miracle, moreover, was not short-lived. The sending of manna was a long-term miracle which continued for about forty years. Morning after morning, the manna came in a miraculous way. No matter where the children of Israel were in their travels, manna came each morning. The sending of manna was not confined to a certain place. Although the manna in the wilderness was a long-lasting miracle, it was not as lasting as Christ is to us. As our food, Christ will last for eternity. Partaking of Christ is a miracle. It is not according to the natural concept, and it cannot be understood by scientific investigation.

If you do not believe that partaking of Christ is a miracle, I would ask you why among the vast number of today's Christians you hunger after Christ and so many others do not. Is this not a miracle? Why do you partake of Christ when others have no appetite for Him? Among children in the same family, some have a heart for Christ and others are indifferent. A group of Christians may hear the same messages and receive the same spiritual truth, but some seek the Lord and others do not. This is a further indication that our partaking of Christ is miraculous.

The tabernacle in the Old Testament portrays spiritual experience. In the tabernacle there was the Holy of Holies. Within the Holy of Holies was the ark, and in the ark was a golden pot containing manna. All this is a picture of our experience. In the Holy of Holies, our spirit, we have Christ, the ark of God. Within Christ there is the golden pot, the divine nature, preserving the Christ we have enjoyed. This picture reveals that the hidden manna is preserved in the depths of our being, in the Christ hidden and held in the divine nature. This hidden and preserved Christ will be a memorial for eternity.

If we are asked where the hidden manna is today, we

should not simply say that it is in our spirit. We must go on to say that the hidden manna is in the golden pot, that the golden pot is in the ark, and that the ark is in the Holy of Holies. This is a picture of our enjoyment of Christ.

The Bible is a wonderful book. After the children of Israel had begun to eat manna, God commanded them to preserve an omer of manna in a golden pot and to place this pot in the ark of testimony. God's intention here is to portray our experience of Christ. Certain Christian teachers do not interpret the picture this way because their view of things is objective. According to their interpretation, the Holy of Holies refers to heaven. If their interpretation is accurate, then the golden pot containing the hidden manna is far away from us. This interpretation covers only the heavenly aspect, not the aspect of spiritual experience. To care for the aspect of experience, we need to interpret the picture in a subjective way. According to this point of view, the Holy of Holies refers to our spirit. Where is the hidden manna today? It is in the divine nature within our spirit. If we have the genuine experience of Christ, we shall appreciate Christ and enjoy Him in the divine nature within our spirit.

We today are God's tabernacle. As the tabernacle, we have the ark, Christ, in our spirit. We have pointed out again and again that the golden pot is in the ark and that the manna is in the golden pot. In our experience we enjoy three precious things: the ark, the golden pot, and the manna. How subjective is Christ as the hidden manna! He is the manna we have taken in and enjoyed. This manna will be preserved as a memorial for eternity. What you enjoy of Christ will be preserved in the divine nature for eternity. I believe that when we enter into eternity we shall become more clear concerning this.

The picture of the preserving of the manna in the golden pot is related to our experience of Christ. Because many Christians do not grasp the significance of this picture, they only realize that manna is good for food. They have no idea that the manna we enjoy is to be preserved as a memorial in

the divine nature within us. We thank the Lord for the picture at the end of Exodus 16. This picture portrays the experience of Christ as manna. If we eat Christ as manna, the manna we eat will be preserved in the divine nature within us. This hidden manna is a memorial of Christ as the supply to God's people for the building of God's dwelling place. Such a memorial will be a remembrance for eternity. Everything else may change, but our experience of Christ will remain for eternity. What we enjoy of Christ today will become a memorial in the future. Whatever we eat of Him will be preserved in the divine nature as an eternal memorial. This is the significance of the picture at the end of chapter sixteen.

We should not follow those Bible teachers who interpret this picture only in an objective way. We need to understand this picture in a subjective way according to our experience. If we view the portrait of the preserving of manna in this way, we shall see that we are the tabernacle and that the contents of the tabernacle are within us. The ark and the testimony, the law of life, are within us. Furthermore the golden pot with the manna is in us as a memorial for eternity.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FORTY

THE LIVING WATER OUT OF THE SMITTEN ROCK

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-13; 1 Cor. 10:1-4

Having already covered the heavenly manna in chapter sixteen, we come in this message to the living water out of the smitten rock (17:1-7).

THE MANNA AND THE LIVING WATER

We need to pay attention to the sequence of events in chapters sixteen and seventeen. In chapter sixteen we have a clear picture of manna, and in chapter seventeen, the record of the living water flowing out of the smitten rock. This sequence is not accidental; it is according to the Lord's sovereignty. The same sequence is found in John 6 and 7. In John 6 we read of the heavenly manna, and in John 7, of the living water. This is a further indication that the sequence of the manna and the living water is according to God's sovereign arrangement.

In His work of creation God prepared the rock spoken of in Exodus 17 and placed it in exactly the right spot geographically. When the children of Israel came to that place, the rock was waiting for them. In chapter seventeen we are not told that Moses was commanded to look for a rock or to bring a rock to the people. Rather, there is the clear indication that the rock was already there. Just as God had prepared the Red Sea to serve as a baptistry for the children of Israel, so He had prepared a rock, probably a very large one, to serve as a type of Christ in chapter seventeen.

After God created man, He placed him in a garden with the tree of life and a flowing river. The tree of life corresponds to manna, which satisfies man's hunger, and the flowing river corresponds to the living water, which quenches man's thirst. In Genesis 2 the tree of life is mentioned before the river. But in Revelation 22, the river of water of life is mentioned before the tree of life. According to Revelation 22:1 and 2, the tree of life grows in the river. Why does Genesis speak first of the tree of life and then of the river, whereas in Revelation 22 the order is reversed? In the beginning stage the tree of life is followed by the river, but in the ongoing stage the tree of life grows in the flowing river.

This is a picture of our spiritual experience. When we first heard the gospel, we received God's word. To receive the word is to receive manna. After we received the word, the Spirit began to flow in us like a river. This was the sequence at the beginning of the experience of salvation. Now as we go on in spiritual experience, the Spirit as a flowing river brings us the supply of the word, the manna. At the beginning of our Christian experience we have first the word and then the Spirit, first the manna and then the living water. But as our experience of salvation continues, the order is changed, and the Spirit supplies us with the word. Psalm 36:8 says, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." This verse refers to the initial stage of the experience of God's salvation. Here the fatness of God's house (the word) precedes the drinking of the river of God's pleasures (the Spirit).

It is significant that the children of Israel had the experience of living water recorded in chapter seventeen after they had begun to eat manna. Immediately after they began to partake of manna, they were led to a place where there was no supply of water. Far from being accidental, this sequence of events took place according to God's sovereign arrangement. This sequence is part of the accurate and complete picture of God's full salvation presented in Exodus. As we

have pointed out again and again, Exodus is a book of pictures portraying God's salvation. As we consider these pictures, we need to worship God for His sovereignty. In His creation He made the necessary preparations. Then, at the proper time, He led His people into the place where the rock was waiting for them.

FOLLOWING THE LORD'S LEADING

In 17:1 we read that the children of Israel journeyed according to the commandment of the Lord. They did not travel according to their own opinion or choice. The commandment of the Lord was no doubt related to the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, by which the people were led in their journeys. The pillar signifies the Lord Himself, who took the lead and guided the people on their way. There was no need for God to tell the people when to move or where to go. They simply had to follow the pillar. Day and night, a tall pillar stood between heaven and earth. By day the pillar had the appearance of a cloud; by night it had the appearance of fire. In 13:22 we are told that the Lord "took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." According to Numbers 9:17 and 18, "when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of Jehovah the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of Jehovah they pitched" (Heb.). This indicates that the commandment of the Lord is related to the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. Whenever the pillar moved, either by day or by night, the children of Israel journeyed. Thus, through the pillar God silently commanded the people concerning their travels.

In leaving the place where they first ate manna, the children of Israel simply followed the Lord's leading. They did not move according to their preference, and they did not know where they were going. They just followed the pillar as it led them to a dry place, a place where there was

no supply of water, but where there was a huge rock. Here in this place God's people were to experience His salvation.

SEVEN OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCES

When the children of Israel were in Egypt, they saw God's almighty power displayed in the plagues brought upon the Egyptians miraculously by divine intervention. Furthermore, they experienced the Passover and the exodus, through which they were delivered from Pharaoh's tyranny. Having made their exodus from Egypt, they crossed the Red Sea. In the words of 14:22, "the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left." Then, at Marah, God's people experienced the changing of the bitter water into sweet water. Passing on from Marah to Elim, they experienced the seventy palm trees growing and the twelve springs of water flowing. After this, in chapter sixteen, they partook of manna as the Lord's provision. In a short period of time, the children of Israel had seven outstanding experiences: the plagues in Egypt, the Passover, the exodus, the crossing of the Red Sea, the changing of bitter water into sweet, the seventy palm trees and the twelve springs, and the heavenly manna. If we consider our spiritual history, we shall realize that we also have had these basic experiences.

OUR NEED FOR LIVING WATER

After the seventh experience, the experience of the heavenly manna, the pillar led the children of Israel into a place where they would have still another experience—the experience of the living water. This indicates that even after we have experienced Christ as our manna, we still need to experience Him as our living water. In both spiritual life and physical life we need to drink as well as eat. We cannot live without drinking. Thirst is even more serious than hunger, for a person will die of thirst sooner than of hunger.

As we eat our food, we need something to drink. We also need to drink at other times during the day. Although we need to eat and to drink, drinking is more necessary than eating. Hence, in a sense, the living water flowing from the smitten rock is more crucial than manna.

Drinking is also necessary for proper digestion. If we eat solid food without ever drinking any fluid, our stomach will not be able to digest our food. For the digestion and assimilation of food, water is necessary. The same principle applies when unbelievers respond to the preaching of the gospel and open to receive the Lord. If they take in the word of the gospel without experiencing the Spirit, they will not be able to digest the word. After receiving the word, they need to experience the Spirit to help in the digestion of the word.

SMITTEN BY THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S LAW

An important difference between manna and the water from the rock is that the manna does not present as clear a picture of the death of Christ as does the water. This does not mean, however, that Christ's death is not indicated in the experience of manna. In chapter sixteen we are told that the manna was ground and beaten. Grinding and beating portray the death of Christ. In order to be our food, Christ had to suffer death. But this picture of Christ's death is not as clear as that of the smiting of the rock to release the flow of the living water. The smiting of the rock is a clear, complete, and full picture of Christ's crucifixion.

Although it is rather easy to grind coriander seed, it is difficult to smite a rock so that it splits open. It is one thing to beat manna with a mortar, but it is quite another thing to cause a huge rock to be cleft. The Lord told Moses to use his rod to "smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink" (17:6). We need to pay careful attention to the fact that the rock was smitten by the rod of Moses. In typology, Moses signifies the law, and the rod represents the power and authority of the law. The rock, of

course, typifies Christ. The smiting of the rock by the rod signifies that Christ was smitten by the authority of God's law. In the eyes of God, the Lord Jesus was put to death, not by the Jews, but by the law of God. During the first three hours of His crucifixion, Christ suffered under the hand of man. But during the last three hours, Christ suffered because He was smitten by the power of God's law.

THE ROCK AND THE SPIRIT

In many places the Bible tells us that God is our rock. Deuteronomy 32:18 refers to God as the rock who begot us. This indicates that as our rock God is our Father. This rock is a begetting rock, full of life. In 2 Samuel 22:47 and Psalm 95:1 we see that God is the rock of our salvation. Furthermore, this rock is our strength (Psa. 62:7) and our refuge (Psa. 94:22). This rock is our hiding place, protection, covering, and safeguard. Isaiah 32:2 speaks of the Lord as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." When we are weary, we can rest under the shadow cast by this rock and be refreshed. This rock, which was waiting in a dry place for God's people, has been smitten so the people may have living water to drink.

The water flowing out of the smitten rock typifies the Spirit. John 7:37 and 38 say, "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." This word was uttered on the last day of the feast of tabernacles. John 7:39 goes on to say, "But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were about to receive." This indicates clearly that the flowing water signifies the Spirit.

Many years ago I read an article which said that in Jerusalem in ancient times, when the Israelites celebrated the feast of tabernacles, they set up a rock. According to this article, over the rock waters were flowing as a reminder that the forefathers of the Jews had wandered in the wilderness

and had drunk of the waters which flowed out of the smitten rock. Near the rock there also may have been tents showing that the forefathers lived in tents and wandered in the wilderness, but had the smitten rock with the living water to quench their thirst. Such a picture may have literally been in the background when the Lord Jesus stood up to call the thirsty ones to come to Him and drink.

Another reference to flowing water is in John 19:34. Here we are told that after the Lord had died on the cross, "one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water." This was prefigured by the water flowing out of the smitten rock.

THE ROCK FOLLOWING GOD'S PEOPLE

Paul speaks of the water from the smitten rock in 1 Corinthians 10:4, where he says that the children of Israel "all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ." Paul boldly tells us that the rock followed God's people in their journey through the wilderness. Whenever the children of Israel journeyed, the rock went with them.

I have spent a good deal of time to find out what ground Paul had to say that the rock went with the children of Israel through the wilderness. All I have been able to find is a hint in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20. In Exodus 17 the rock was in one place, toward the south, in the wilderness of Sin. But in Numbers 20 the rock was in Kadesh, toward the north, in the wilderness of Zin. Because there was quarreling at both places, the same name—Meribah—was used on both occasions. The rock that was smitten in the south eventually appeared with the children of Israel in the north. Furthermore, the record in Numbers 20 describes an incident that took place approximately thirty-eight years later than what is recorded in Exodus 17. With these facts as his basis, Paul could say that the rock followed the children of Israel.

We need to believe Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 10:4.

Otherwise, we are short of faith. Instead of placing so much trust in science, we should trust the word of the Bible. The concepts of science may change, for they are altogether devoid of divine revelation, but God's word never changes. According to Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 10:4, the rock followed the children of Israel all the way from Horeb to Kadesh.

A PROPER UNDERSTANDING

We have pointed out that this rock is a begetting rock and that it is also our salvation, refuge, strength, rest, and refreshment. This rock is truly everything to us. Through incarnation, Christ came to earth as the rock. At Calvary, the appointed place, He was crucified, smitten by God's law with its power and authority. His side was cleft, and living water flowed forth. This living water is the Spirit, the ultimate issue of the Triune God.

This is not our interpretation of 17:1-6; it is the interpretation presented by the Bible itself. When we put together various verses like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, we see a picture showing the significance of the smiting of the rock by the rod of Moses. This picture reveals that Christ is the rock who begets us. He is the rock of our salvation, refuge, strength, and rest. Having been smitten by the power of God's righteous law, He was cleft, and living water came forth for us to drink. The living water is the Spirit as the ultimate issue of the Triune God. This water quenches our thirst and fully satisfies our being. This is the proper understanding of the picture portrayed in 17:1-6.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FORTY-ONE

THE LIVING WATER OUT OF THE SMITTEN ROCK

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-13; 1 Cor. 10:1-4

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL TEMPTING GOD

When the children of Israel came into a region where there was no water, they quarreled with Moses and tempted God (17:1-2; Num. 20:2-3). They had seen God's miraculous acts, but they did not know God's ways (Psa. 103:7).

Suppose that you had been among the children of Israel at that time. You would have seen God's miraculous power exercised in sending the plagues on the Egyptians. Furthermore, you would have experienced the Passover and a marvelous exodus from Egypt. Then you would have passed through the Red Sea as if you were walking on dry land. Following that, you would have tasted water which had been changed from bitter into sweet, and you would have enjoyed the twelve springs and the seventy palms at Elim. Just recently, you would have begun to partake of the heavenly manna miraculously provided by God. Now by following the leading of the pillar, you come to a place in the wilderness where there is no water. If this were your situation, what would you do? Would you complain and contend with Moses? When we come into such circumstances, we may think that we would thank the Lord. However, if we could actually do this, we would be the most spiritual of saints. If we were in such a situation, we would surely complain to the Lord. We would probably forget everything, including prayer, and

complain about our situation. Like the children of Israel, we might say to the leading ones, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" (17:3). I do not believe that any of us would praise the Lord or offer thanks to Him. Instead, we would blame the leading ones and find fault with them.

In 17:2 we are told that "the people quarreled with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink." While the children of Israel were quarreling with Moses and tempting the Lord, in their midst was the pillar, standing between earth and heaven. But in the very presence of this pillar, the people complained to Moses. Reacting to the people, Moses said, "Why quarrel with me? wherefore do ye tempt Jehovah?" (v. 2, Heb.). The people seemed to forget that the pillar was with them.

We may consider ourselves superior to the children of Israel and think that in such a situation we would never quarrel, complain, or tempt the Lord. We need to realize that for the children of Israel the pillar was outside of them. But for us today, the pillar is within us. Often when we complain about why we have come into a certain environment or circumstance, we have the sense deep within that the Lord who indwells us has brought us into this situation. Many of us can testify that a number of times when we have been complaining, we have sensed the Lord's presence within us. Sometimes we have had this kind of experience when we were complaining about the elders of the church or accusing them regarding something they had done. While we were criticizing the elders, we became conscious of the pillar within. Therefore, we should not think that 17:1-6 describes only the children of Israel. This portion of the Word is also a picture of us today.

If the children of Israel had known the ways of God, they would not have quarreled with Moses or tested the Lord. Rather, they would have realized that their deliverance from Egypt was not initiated or carried out by them. It was wholly God's doing, carried out on His initiative. God sent Moses to

the people to tell them that He would do everything necessary to bring them out of Egypt and into the wilderness where they would serve the Lord. The people would then have remembered that in Egypt they had seen God's mighty acts. This should have given them the assurance that God would meet all their needs. They would also have understood that they were not in the present situation by their own choice, but by the Lord's leading. The Lord led them there, and He was present with them, as indicated by the pillar which stood between heaven and earth. Hence, there was no need to worry about the supply of water. God certainly would not allow them to die of thirst. He would provide the water they needed. Therefore, they could be at peace.

If the children of Israel had been that spiritual, they would not only have offered thanks to the Lord; they would have praised Him with singing and dancing. They could have declared with confidence, "Our God has brought us here. He has His plan, and He will provide us with whatever we need for our living." Although this should have been the attitude of God's people, their actual attitude was altogether different. It seems as if they forgot everything God had done for them. Moreover, they even ignored the Lord's presence in the pillar. They quarreled with Moses and questioned whether or not the Lord was among them.

Lest we be tempted to laugh at the children of Israel or criticize them, we need to realize that our situation today is the same. In 17:1-6 we have a photograph of ourselves. In doctrine and in teaching we may be clear and knowledgeable. But when we are in the actual situation, we forget everything we know. It may even seem to us that there is no God, for we may question whether God is among us or not. At such a time, we may fail to realize that the Lord is within us.

MASSAH AND MERIBAH

In 17:7 we are told that the name of the place was called Massah and Meribah because of the quarreling of the

children of Israel and because they tempted the Lord. The original name of this place, perhaps the native name, was Rephidim. Massah means tried, tested, tempted, proved. Meribah means quarreling or strife. Massah was a place of testing. Three parties were involved in the test at Massah: Moses, the children of Israel, and God. Israel tested God, and God tested Moses on the one hand and the children of Israel on the other. Hence, at Massah all three parties were put to the test. Psalm 81:7 confirms the fact that God put Israel to the test at Massah and Meribah, for it says God proved the people "at the waters of Meribah." The only one who passed the test at Massah was God. Moses and the children of Israel failed. Although Moses and the children of Israel failed this test, God did not condemn them.

God tested the people by purposely guiding them by the pillar to a dry place. After leading the people to a place without water, God was silent and did nothing for a period of time. If He had immediately provided living water, the people would not have been exposed. In order to expose the people, God deliberately refrained from acting to quench their thirst. This put them to the test. As we have pointed out, because they quarreled with Moses and tempted God, they failed God's test. If they had known God's ways, however, they would have passed the test at Massah. They would have said, "The Lord has brought us here with a purpose. He will never let us down. Rather, He will surely meet our need. Let us thank Him, sing praises to Him, and dance before Him."

Moses also failed the test at Massah. At that time Moses was an old man, more than eighty years of age. Because he was an elderly person, we might expect him to be patient. But in this situation Moses was not patient. When the children of Israel quarreled with him, he reacted immediately by asking why they were quarreling with him and tempting the Lord. It seems as if Moses was saying, "There is no reason for you to quarrel with me. I haven't done anything wrong. Don't you realize that I was not the one who led you

to this place?" Moses' reaction to the people's quarreling indicates that in this situation he was defeated. Like the rest of the children of Israel, he did not pass the test.

Although Moses reacted to the people's complaint, in chapter seventeen he did not react too strongly. After speaking to them, he cried to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me" (v. 4). It is difficult to tell whether Moses here is praying or making an accusation. As he was crying out to the Lord, he seems to be making an accusation against the people.

If you had been Moses, how do you think you would have reacted? Doctrinally, we may be more knowledgeable than Moses was, but actually we are no better than he. According to our doctrinal understanding, we know that Moses should have said, "Lord, I thank You for Your faithfulness. I praise You and worship You for bringing us to this dry region. Lord, even though there is no water in this place, I look to You and believe in You. Your supply will come in time." Moses, however, did not pray like this. On the one hand, he reacted to the children of Israel; on the other hand, he accused them of wanting to stone him. All this shows that at Massah Moses was a failure.

A SERIOUS FAILURE

Although the Lord did not condemn Moses and the children of Israel for their failures at Massah in Exodus 17, He did condemn them for their failures at Kadesh in Numbers 20. When the people complained again about the lack of water, Moses, having learned the lesson at Massah, did not react at first. But unable to tolerate the situation, he eventually reacted very strongly, saying, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10). Then, disobeying the Lord's command to speak to the rock, "Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice" (v. 11). In doing this Moses violated God's economy. As a result, he was forbidden to bring the children of Israel into the good land. According to Numbers

20:12, the Lord said to him and Aaron, "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Heb.). Like their sister Miriam who died at Kadesh, Moses and Aaron were to die in the wilderness. They were to have no share in bringing the people into the land of Canaan.

The incident in Exodus 17:1-6 took place at the beginning of their time in the wilderness, when the children of Israel had just begun to follow the Lord. For this reason, although the children of Israel behaved very poorly and although Moses himself failed, God was not angry with them. Actually, He was fully prepared to meet the situation. As we pointed out, in His work of creation, He had prepared the rock which was to be smitten. Then by the pillar God led them to this very place. Even though the people quarreled with Moses and tempted God, the Lord was not angry with them. Thirty-eight years later, at Kadesh, the situation was much different. By this time, most of those who were there in 17:1-6 had died. This means that those present at Kadesh were of the new generation, those who had been born in the wilderness. In the chapters prior to Numbers 20 a large number of people had been slain by the Lord. In Numbers 20:1 we are even told of the death of Miriam. After her death the quarreling broke out in Kadesh concerning the lack of water. This instance of the people's quarreling was toward the end of their years of wandering. Therefore, the Lord was very angry with them. Furthermore, the Lord was strict in dealing with Moses.

In Exodus 17 Moses' failure consisted only in reacting to the quarreling of the children of Israel. But in Numbers 20 he not only reacted to the people's quarreling; he also broke the basic principle of God's redemption. Christ, typified by the rock, should have been smitten just once. This was the reason in Numbers 20:8 the Lord charged Moses to speak to the rock, not to smite it. The rock had already been smitten in Exodus 17. Nevertheless, Moses failed by smiting

the rock a second time. Christians throughout the centuries have done the same thing, in effect crucifying Christ again. To do this is a serious violation of God's principle in His redemption and administration. Far more than merely a personal matter, this was a matter relating to God's administration. This was the reason God dealt with Moses so severely.

We need to learn from this failure of Moses to be careful in our reactions that we do not touch God's administration. When we lose our temper, we need to take heed lest we act in such a way as to break a basic principle of God's redemption and administration. It is extremely serious to react in such a way as to touch God's administration.

EXPOSED BY DRYNESS

We have seen that the shortage of water is a test both to God and to God's people. In our family life or church life God often allows us to come to a stage of dryness. This is especially true in the church life. There is not one local church which is always flowing with living water. Sometimes in the church life we come to Marah, where the waters are bitter. On other occasions we come to Elim, where there are twelve springs of water flowing. However, we seldom stay at Elim very long. Under God's leading, we in the church are eventually brought to Massah, where there is no water at all. Here we are put to the test. When there is plenty of water to drink, it is easy for us to behave ourselves in the proper way. The brothers all act like gentlemen, and the sisters are pleasant and nice. But when there is nothing to drink, we may become quarrelsome and unruly, perhaps even casting off all restraint. The situation is the same in married life. When everything is pleasant and positive, the husband and wife may be humble, kind, and gentle. But when we are led to a dry place in our married life, our behavior undergoes a drastic change. Instead of kindness and gentleness, there is murmuring and quarreling. When there is enough food for everyone, there is no fighting. But when there is a shortage

of food, even those who ordinarily behave like ladies and gentlemen will fight for it. Likewise, when there is an adequate supply of water to drink, we can be polite and allow others to drink first. But when we are thirsty and dissatisfied because of the shortage of water, we shall fight and strive for ourselves. In this way, in the church life and in the family life, we are exposed.

Actually, the Lord brings us into a dry stage specifically for the purpose of exposing us. In such a situation the Lord tests us, and we test Him. He tests us to see how we shall react. Will we pray, praise, and thank the Lord, or will we murmur and complain? Furthermore, the leading ones among the Lord's people are also tested by dryness, just as Moses and Aaron were. They are tested both by God and by God's people. However, among all the parties tested, God is the only One who always passes the test. Rarely do the servants of God or the leading ones among the people pass God's test. Even more rarely do the people as a whole pass the test.

THE WATERS OF STRIFE

Ezekiel 47:19 and 48:28 both speak of "the waters of strife in Kadesh." In each case the Hebrew word for "strife" is Meribah, the name given to the waters in Numbers 20:13. The water which flows from the smitten rock should be the water of peace. But because of our failure, it becomes the water of Meribah, the water of strife, contention, quarreling. Although God is faithful and merciful, we are sinful and faithless. For this reason, the water which should be the water of peace is called the water of striving.

According to our opinion, God should not supply living water to those who are sinful and unfaithful. However, God did not withhold the supply of water. Rather, He used the law to smite His Christ so that living water could flow forth to quench our thirst. This reveals God's faithfulness and mercy.

The picture in Exodus 17 of the living water out of the

smitten rock exposes the sinfulness and unfaithfulness of God's people and the shortage of His servants. We who serve the Lord must take the lead among God's people to confess our shortage. We often react in a negative way when tests come. We are simply not able to pass the tests placed upon us by God and His people. Although God is faithful and merciful, we are sinful, just as the children of Israel were. Although they had been redeemed, at Massah they still behaved like sinners. Christ was smitten for us so that the living water could flow out of Him to quench the thirst of sinful people. In this picture we see an important aspect of the gospel.

In Exodus 17 Moses was more than eighty years of age, and in Numbers 20 he was nearly one hundred twenty years old. But neither time could he pass the test. The quarreling that breaks out because of the shortage of water puts us to a very difficult test. When the Lord allows the church to come into such a stage of dryness, not even His leading servants are able to pass the test. Whenever we are short of Christ as the living water to quench our thirst, we are automatically subject to God's test. Due to the shortage of water, today's Christians are subject to one test after another. Fighting, striving, quarreling, and criticizing are commonplace because of this shortage.

In order that we might learn a lesson, sometimes the Lord leads us into a dry land. Here we have the opportunity to test God and to be tested by Him. Both His people in general and His servants in particular are tested. But as we have pointed out repeatedly, only God is able to pass the test. He alone is qualified. This indicates the seriousness of being short of Christ as the living water to quench our thirst. How crucial it is for us to have Him to meet this need!

In a later message we shall see that for living waters to flow out of us, we need to be one with Christ in being smitten. He has been smitten, and we need to be smitten also. If we are not identified with Him in this matter, there will be no way for the living water within us to flow out. We all

need to be identified with the smitten Christ so that the living water may flow.

EATING, DRINKING, AND BREATHING

In the Bible more is said about spiritual water, or the water of life, than about spiritual food. It is rather easy for readers of the Scriptures to be impressed with the drinking of the water of life. Even when we were in the denominations, we heard messages about drinking the living water. But very rarely, if ever, did we hear anything about eating spiritual food. In the Word drinking is more vital than eating.

According to the revelation in the Scriptures, the eating is in the drinking, and the drinking is in the breathing. Some Christians have seen the importance of drinking, but not the necessity of breathing. Although we may have the doctrine of drinking, without breathing we would have no practical way to drink living water. If we would eat, we need to drink; and if we would drink, we need to breathe. If we have Exodus 16 but not Exodus 17, we have the eating without the drinking. In practice we cannot have one without the other, for the eating is always in the drinking.

The sequence in the Gospel of John indicates this. In chapter six John speaks of the eating of manna. Then in chapter seven he goes on to cover the drinking of the living water. The sequence of eating and drinking in John is the same as that in Exodus, where we have the manna in chapter sixteen and the water in chapter seventeen.

If we are enlightened by the Lord, we shall realize that we need drinking even more than eating. For this reason, in 1 Corinthians Paul emphasizes drinking more than eating. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 he says that we have all been made to drink of one Spirit. If we fail to drink, we shall not be able to eat. Drinking includes eating. This means that the spiritual food is included in the water of life. Hence, without the water of life, we cannot have any spiritual food.

According to Revelation 22:1 and 2, the tree of life grows

in the river of water of life. This reveals that wherever the water of life flows, there the tree of life grows. The water brings the tree to us. The water is the source, for it is the water of life, not the tree of life, which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. The fact that the river flows from the throne and that the tree grows in the river indicates that drinking of the water of life is even more crucial than eating of the tree of life.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FORTY-TWO

THE WATER OF LIFE IN RESURRECTION

Scripture Reading: Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4; 12:13; John 4:10, 14; 7:38-39; 19:34; Rev. 22:1-2, 17; 21:6

Concerning the water flowing from the smitten rock in 17:6, there are some matters which are spiritual and mysterious. In order to understand these matters, we need to see that every record in the Bible has a spiritual significance. We should not try to understand any portion of the biblical record simply according to the black and white letter. For example, the account of the sending of manna in Exodus 16 has certain spiritual aspects. By considering these aspects we find out that manna is very mysterious. No one can say what manna was. Manna was mysterious because it came from heaven. In the same principle, the water flowing from the cleft rock is also mysterious.

Because manna came from heaven, it is easy to realize that it was mysterious. However, we may not recognize the mysterious aspects of the water out of the smitten rock. Instead we may consider that this was something natural, something merely related to the earth. But how could so much water come out of one rock? Was the rock a fountain or a spring? How could it be the source of the water? Furthermore, is the water from the rock physical or spiritual? If we say that it is only physical because it issued from a literal rock, what shall we do with Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 10:4, where he says that the people "all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them"? According to this verse, both the water and the rock were spiritual.

Anything that is spiritual is mysterious. Hence, the spiritual drink and the spiritual rock are both mysterious. For

something to be mysterious means that it cannot be fully explained, although it may be enjoyed and experienced. Both the manna and the living water from the smitten rock are spiritual and mysterious.

What basis did Paul have for saying that the rock was spiritual? Perhaps his basis was the abundance of revelation he received from the Lord concerning things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. Having been instructed by Gamaliel, Paul had a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament. No doubt, through the revelation of the Lord given to him, Paul's eyes were opened to see the spiritual significance of a great many items in the Old Testament. This may have given him the assurance to say that the manna, the water, and the rock were all spiritual. But whatever Paul's basis was, we have the confidence that his interpretation was accurate.

The water is mysterious in that it flowed out of a rock which followed the people in their journey through the wilderness. Surely such a rock could not have been physical or material. How could a literal, physical rock travel with the people? The fact that Paul says that the rock followed the people indicates that it was a living rock. Hence, this rock was spiritual and mysterious. As we consider the matter of the water of life in resurrection, we must be impressed with the spiritual and mysterious aspects of the water from the smitten rock.

The water which came out of the rock is the water of life in resurrection. Resurrection denotes something which has been put to death and which is alive again. It also denotes life which springs forth out of something that has passed through death. The living water in Exodus 17 came out of a rock. Why did God cause water to come out of a rock? Since He is almighty, there was no need for Him to use a rock. He could simply have opened the ground and caused living water to spring forth. In the Bible this rock speaks of God's redemption and Christ's incarnation. It also speaks of Christ's humanity and of His death. The water which flowed out of the smitten rock sprang forth after

incarnation, human living, and death. It flowed only after these major steps of Christ had been accomplished. The Bible tells us clearly that the rock was Christ. How could Christ, who is God, become a rock? This implies incarnation and human living. In order to be the rock, Christ had to become incarnated and live among men for a period of time. Eventually, when He was on the cross, He was smitten by the authority of God's law. Hence, 17:6 is a profound verse. It implies Christ's incarnation, human living, and death.

It is easy to see that the smiting of the rock typifies the smiting of Christ in His crucifixion. Now we must go on to see that the water of life flows in resurrection. It could not flow until Christ had passed through incarnation, human living, and death. Today the water of life is still flowing in resurrection. We often sing about drinking the living water. But when we sing these songs or read verses such as 1 Corinthians 12:13, I doubt that very many of us realize that the living water we are drinking is in resurrection. In John 4:10 the Lord Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The living water to which the Lord refers is the water of life in resurrection. Before the Lord Jesus was smitten on the cross, this water was not available for us to drink.

According to John 7:38 and 39, the rivers of living water are related to Christ's resurrection. Here we see that the Spirit as the living water could be received only after the Lord Jesus had been glorified, that is, only after Christ had been crucified and had entered into resurrection. The glorification spoken of in John 7:39 refers to Christ's glorification in His resurrection. Luke 24:26 indicates that in resurrection Christ entered into His glory. Thus, when He was resurrected, He was glorified. After Christ's glorification in resurrection, the living water flows. The Spirit as the rivers of living water could be experienced by the believers only after Christ had passed through incarnation, human living, and death, and after He had entered into resurrection.

When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, "one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water" (John 19:34). Many Christians pay attention only to the blood which flowed from the Lord's pierced side, but not to the water. Notice that in John 19:34 the blood is mentioned first and then the water. This indicates that first we are redeemed and then we receive the Spirit.

Although we have pointed out that the water of life flows in resurrection, we have not yet given a definition of resurrection. Resurrection is difficult to define. To understand it properly, we need the revelation of the whole Bible. In fact, the focus of the Bible is resurrection. You may be surprised to hear that resurrection is actually God Himself. In John 11:25 the Lord Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." In this verse resurrection comes before life. According to our concept, however, we have first life and then resurrection. But in the divine sequence resurrection comes before life.

That resurrection is God Himself is indicated by the fact that the One who said that He is resurrection was God incarnate. He was the Word who was God and who became flesh (John 1:1, 14). In John 11:25 this very One declared that He is resurrection. Tracing backward, we see that resurrection was Jesus, Jesus was the Word made flesh, and the Word was God. This indicates that resurrection is the very God.

Some may wonder how God could be resurrection since resurrection involves death. Without death, there can be no resurrection. How could God die, or be involved in death, in order to be resurrected? To prove that He is resurrection, God had to enter into death. There was no other way to prove that He is resurrection. To enter into death, God had to become incarnate. He had to have a human body with a human life and nature. The very God who became incarnate and passed through human living and death also entered into resurrection. Anything which passes through death and comes forth living is in resurrection. As resurrection, God is

the One who became incarnated, experienced human living, and passed through death. Now in resurrection He is victorious, triumphant, and transcendent.

We need the Lord to enlarge our scope in reading the Bible. If we have a broad scope, we shall see that through incarnation the eternal God passed through the gate which brought Him into contact with the many difficulties, hardships, and pressures of human living, things to which He was not subject in eternity. But as the incarnated One, He experienced these sufferings, eventually even entering into death. Christ's resurrection was not merely the result of His coming out of the tomb; it was also the issue of thirty-three and a half years of human living with its hardships and difficulties. No hardship, difficulty, or negative environment was able to overcome Him or hold Him down. Instead, He passed through all these things and subdued them. He conquered every negative thing, including death, Hades, and the tomb. This is God in Christ as resurrection.

Because the water of life is in resurrection, it is victorious and triumphant. It transcends every negative thing. When we drink this water, we become people in resurrection and of resurrection.

Let us now look at three pictures portrayed in the Scriptures: the smitten rock with water flowing out of it, Christ on the cross with blood and water flowing from His pierced side, and God on the throne, out of which flows the river of water of life. These pictures do not signify three different kinds of waters, one flowing out of the rock, another flowing out of the body of Jesus, and still another flowing out of the throne of God. No, the water in these pictures refers to the one water. Why then does the Word separately portray the rock, the body of Jesus, and the throne? Moreover, what is the source of the flowing water? Is it the rock, the physical body of Jesus, or the throne? According to Revelation 22:1, the source of the living water is the throne of God. This verse reveals that the river of water of life proceeds out of the throne.

The throne of God with the flow of living water was in existence long before Jesus was crucified and before the rock was smitten. The living water proceeding out of the throne began to flow before Christ's death, not after it. According to the sequence in the Bible, the rock is first, the physical body of Jesus is second, and the throne is third. But in actuality the throne is first. The flowing of the living water began from the throne. Before the rock was smitten and before Christ was crucified, the living water was already flowing from the throne. Do not think that Revelation 22:1 portrays only what comes after Exodus 17 and John 19. This is a picture of something from eternity, of something that includes the whole Bible. This indicates that the living water was flowing before the incarnation of Christ. The incarnation, however, was a further step in the flowing of the living water. God flowed from His throne into the manger and also into the home of a carpenter. Thirty-three and a half years later, God flowed through the cross and then flowed on in resurrection.

The Bible tells the story of God's flowing. Throughout the centuries, God has been flowing, and He is still flowing today. In His flowing He passed through incarnation, human living, and death, and then He entered into resurrection. Now in resurrection He is the living water for us to drink. Therefore, the water of life we enjoy today is in resurrection.

The living water has many ingredients, many elements. Whenever we drink this living water in a proper way, it supplies us with all the elements and substances in the water. These elements work in us inwardly. Those who emphasize the so-called Pentecostal experiences think they are drinking a great deal of water when they speak in tongues. Actually they receive very little life supply, if any. However, in our experience we enjoy the inward working of this flowing water with all its ingredients. The water flowing in us is not the water without the element of incarnation; it is the water that includes incarnation, human living, and death,

the water of life in resurrection. Nothing can overcome this water or subdue it, for it is resurrection and it is life.

In this message I have been burdened to point out that the water of life is in resurrection. Actually, the water itself is resurrection. This means that the Spirit, signified by the flowing water, is resurrection. Resurrection is the Triune God, the Father as the source, Christ the Son as the course, and the Spirit as the flow. Today we are drinking the living water in resurrection. This water has passed through incarnation, human living, and death. Because this water is in resurrection, the more we drink it, the more we are out of our natural condition and are triumphant over hardships and difficulties. This living water delivers us from the world and from every kind of negative thing. Because the water of life is resurrection, we enjoy resurrection by partaking of it.

I. THE WATER OF LIFE BEING THE TRIUNE GOD FLOWING OUT TO BE OUR LIFE

The water of life is the Triune God flowing out to be our life. To say that the water of life is the Triune God may shock those who are systematic and dogmatic in their theology. They may regard such a statement as heretical. The fact that the water of life flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb indicates that God the Father is the source, that God the Son is the course, and that God the Spirit is the flow. Second Corinthians 13:14 confirms this. In this verse Paul says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Here we have the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship, or the flow, of the Spirit. This is the Triune God as the living water. Today the very water of life we are drinking is the Triune God flowing out to be our life.

When they read such statements, some may argue that the water of life is not God Himself flowing, but the flowing of God's life. What, then, is the life of God? We have no way to answer this question fully or to explain adequately what

the life of God is. However, from our experience we know that the living water is the very Triune God Himself.

Do not try to understand the Trinity in a doctrinal way. Instead, seek to know the Triune God in an experiential way. Day by day we may experience the flowing of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. I can testify that daily I have a good enjoyment of the flowing Triune God. Apart from this flowing, I would not be able to bear all the hardships and difficulties that I face time after time. Praise the Lord for the experience of the flowing of the Triune God as our water of life!

II. GOD EMBODIED IN CHRIST TO REACH HUMANITY

A. Incarnated to Live among Men

In order to flow into us, God has been embodied in Christ to reach humanity (John 1:14). This means that God was incarnated to live among men. The Lord Jesus lived on earth for thirty-three and a half years. When the man Jesus lived on earth, God lived in Him. This is a fact of history.

B. Crucified to Be Released

When I was a child, I felt sorry that the Lord Jesus was put on the cross. My understanding of Christ's crucifixion was according to my natural concept. Without crucifixion, there would not have been any way for the God embodied in Christ to be released. Through the incarnation God became confined and limited in the Lord Jesus. But by crucifixion He was released from this confinement and limitation. The Lord Jesus was once a single grain of wheat. If He had not fallen into the earth and died, He would have remained alone (John 12:24), and what was within Him would not have been released. But because He fell into the earth and died, He was released. The one grain has brought forth many grains. The divine life, the divine nature, and all the divine riches have been released by the crucifixion of Christ.

C. Resurrected to Be the Life-giving Spirit

After passing through incarnation and crucifixion, Christ was resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Again and again I am burdened to point out that Christ today is the life-giving Spirit.

From beginning to end, the Bible is a revelation of the Triune God. In Genesis 1:26 God refers to Himself as "us." This is a reference to the triune nature of the Godhead. Although the Bible speaks of many things, the focal point is that the Triune God has been processed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection to become the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. I never grow weary of declaring this marvelous fact. The flowing of the Triune God is inexhaustible. If we read the Bible from a divine viewpoint, we shall see that the central point of its revelation concerns the Triune God and the process through which He has passed to become the life-giving Spirit.

III. THE SPIRIT BEING THE WATER OF LIFE

The Spirit—the life-giving Spirit—is the water of life (John 7:38-39). We have pointed out that the water of life is the Triune God. Now we are saying that the Spirit is the water of life. Some may wonder whether the water of life is the Spirit or it is the Triune God. The proper way to understand the divine revelation in the Bible concerning this is to say that the water of life is the Spirit, the Spirit is the Triune God, and the Triune God is the water of life. What is revealed in the Bible brings us full circle. In John 1:1 we are told that in the beginning was the Word, that the Word was with God, and that the Word was God. John 1:14 goes on to say that the Word became flesh. Christ, in the flesh, the last Adam, has become the Spirit, and the Spirit is the Word (Eph. 6:17). If we prefer to analyze this marvelous revelation doctrinally and to debate about it instead of enjoying it, we shall suffer loss. The divine riches are available for us to drink. If we partake of them, we shall

be nourished and richly supplied. However, if we merely investigate them and analyze them, we shall deprive ourselves of this enjoyment and supply.

A. Flowing out of God on the Throne

The life-giving Spirit as the water of life flows out of God on the throne (Rev. 22:1). On the one hand, the One sitting on the throne is God; on the other hand, the water of life proceeding out of the throne is also God. The water which flows from God on the throne brings God's authority. When we drink of this water, we receive authority as well as power. We are subdued by the living water flowing within us.

Furthermore, the living water flowing from God's throne conveys to us the riches of the divine life. This is indicated by the fact that the tree of life grows in the water of life (Rev. 22:2). Because the riches of the divine life are carried in the flow of the living water, we receive these riches whenever we drink this water.

B. Flowing through the Smitten Christ

The Spirit flows through the smitten Christ, through the Christ typified by the cleft rock (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4). This flowing includes Christ's humanity, human living, and death. We cannot taste, experience, or enjoy the Lord's humanity except by the flowing of the living water within us. The more we drink this water, the more we experience and enjoy Christ's humanity, human living, and death.

C. Flowing in Resurrection

1. With the Power of Christ's Resurrection and with His Ascension and Enthronement

The Spirit as the water of life flows in resurrection with the power of Christ's resurrection (Phil. 3:10), with Christ's ascension, and with Christ's enthronement, comprising

glorification, lordship, and headship. Although it is difficult to explain, all this becomes our experience by drinking of the living water. We can testify that we have tasted Christ's resurrection, ascension, and enthronement.

2. For the Formation of the Body of Christ

The flowing of the water of life in resurrection is for the formation of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Because we all drink of the same Spirit, we can be one Body. Drinking of the one Spirit in resurrection makes us members of the Body and builds us up as the Body.

3. For the Preparation of the Bride of Christ

The flowing of the living water in resurrection is also for the preparation of the Bride of Christ. According to Revelation 22:17, the Spirit and the Bride sound forth the call to come and drink of the water of life. The Bride is prepared by drinking. The water which the Bride drinks is the Spirit. By drinking the Spirit, the Bride becomes one with the Spirit. This should not be a mere doctrine or teaching, but should be something we practice in our daily living. If we drink of the living water day by day, the Body of Christ will be built up, and the Bride of Christ will be prepared.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FORTY-THREE

DRINKING THE WATER OF LIFE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 17:3a, 6; John 7:37-39; 4:10, 14; 1 Cor. 10:4; 12:13, 3; Rev. 21:6; 22:1-2, 17; Acts 2:17a, 21

In the Bible the basic principle concerning man's relationship with God is that man needs to eat and drink of God. Because eating and drinking are so common in our daily life, they have not been given much consideration by the great teachers and scholars of the Bible. Nevertheless, in the Scriptures eating and drinking are basic and crucial.

EATING AND DRINKING IN GENESIS, REVELATION, AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

After the record of the creation of man, there is mention of the tree of life and of a river which "went out of Eden to water the garden" (Gen. 2:9-10). The tree of life was for man's eating, and the flowing river was for man's drinking. Hence, at the beginning of the Bible, eating and drinking are presented with respect to the relationship between God and man.

At the end of the Bible we also read of eating and drinking. In Revelation 21 and 22 eating and drinking are emphasized strongly. According to Revelation 21:6, the Lord will "give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely." In 22:1 we see the "river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," and in verse 2 we are told that "on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life." The river of water of life flows out of the throne, and the tree of life grows in the river. In Revelation 22:14 there is a promise related to

eating, and in 22:17, a call related to drinking. Verse 14 says that those who wash their robes have the right to the tree of life, and verse 17 says that whoever wills may take the water of life freely. In verse 14 we have the promise of eating the tree of life, and in verse 17 we have the call to drink of the water of life. Therefore, we may say that the Bible concludes with a word about eating and drinking.

In the Gospel of John, the Gospel that emphasizes the deity of Christ, there also are references to eating and drinking. According to this Gospel, God was incarnated so that we may eat and drink of Him. Chapter six covers the eating of Jesus as the heavenly manna, as the true bread, the living bread, the bread of God. In verse 57 the Lord Jesus speaks a clear, strong, and definite word concerning eating: "He who eats Me shall also live because of Me." Chapter seven goes on to speak of drinking the living water. On the last day of the feast of tabernacles, the great day of the feast, the Lord Jesus stood up and cried, "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink" (v. 37). Chapter three of John covers regeneration, and chapter four, the drinking of the living water. In this chapter a thirsty Samaritan woman comes to the well to draw water. At the well she meets the Lord Jesus, who talks with her and tells her that living water is to be found in Him. At a certain point He says to the woman, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (v. 10). Then in verse 14 He says that the water He gives will become in the one who drinks it a "spring of water welling up into eternal life" (v. 14). These words about living water are weighty and of great significance.

THE WAY GOD WORKS HIMSELF INTO US

We should not consider the eating and drinking spoken of in the Bible as commonplace. On the contrary, these matters are crucial. It is by eating and drinking that we, God's chosen people, take Him into us. Throughout the years, we have pointed out repeatedly that God's intention is to work Himself into us to be our life and our everything. But we

still need to be impressed with the fact that the way God works Himself into us is through our eating and drinking of Him.

HOW TO EAT AND DRINK THE LORD

When I was in mainland China more than thirty years ago, I did not see the light on eating and drinking the Lord as clearly as I see it today. In the early years of my ministry, I did a lot of gospel preaching, often preaching on the subject of God as the living water to satisfy us. I even translated the song, "Never, Never Thirst Again," from English into Chinese. I loved this song, was deeply impressed by it, and used it in my gospel preaching quite frequently. However, although I preached on God as the living water to quench man's thirst, I myself did not know how to drink of this living water. How ridiculous for me to preach on drinking the living water when I myself actually did not understand how to drink! We Christians often do ridiculous things such as this. Most believers know that Christ is the heavenly manna; however, not many know how to eat Him.

The first message I delivered on eating Jesus was in 1958. Before that time I did not know the way to eat and drink Him. But having been enlightened by the Lord concerning this matter, I began in 1958 to speak on our need to eat Jesus. After I gave the first message on this subject, a brother who was a professor at Taiwan University approached me and told me that it sounded crude to talk about eating Jesus. (The Chinese word I used means to eat up, to devour.) I reminded this brother that I was not the first to speak of eating the Lord. I pointed him to John 6:57, where the Lord Jesus says that the one who eats Him will live by Him. I told him that I was simply following the Lord and repeating His words. When the brother heard this, he had nothing further to say.

Throughout the centuries, Christians have talked about eating and drinking, but hardly anyone has known how to eat or how to drink. Christians have written many "how-to" books, books on subjects such as how to pray, how

to overcome sin, and how to be victorious. But do you know of a book which tells us how to eat Jesus or how to drink the living water? But as we have pointed out, eating and drinking of Jesus are extremely crucial matters.

FACTS, NOT PARABLES OR METAPHORS

When I was young, I was told that those portions of the Word which speak of eating and drinking the Lord are merely parables or metaphors. I was taught that we could not actually eat Jesus, that this is simply a figure of speech, a metaphor. But recently as I have been considering the eating and drinking of the Lord Jesus, I have been impressed by Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 10:4. Here Paul does not say that the rock was a type of Christ or a symbol of Christ; he says clearly that the rock *was* Christ. In 1 Corinthians 10:3 and 4 Paul speaks of the spiritual food, the spiritual drink, and the spiritual rock. Lacking Paul's boldness, we may weaken the force of his declaration by saying that the rock typifies Christ. Formerly I did not have the boldness to say that the water flowing out of the rock was spiritual. To my understanding, that water was physical, not spiritual. Furthermore, I did not dare to say that the rock from which the water flowed was a spiritual rock. But Paul says boldly and plainly that it was a spiritual rock which followed the children of Israel in the wilderness. Then he goes on to say, not that the rock was a type of Christ, but that the rock was Christ Himself. If we were to say this without Paul's word as a basis, we would surely be condemned as heretical.

We should not regard the eating and drinking of Jesus as parables or metaphors. I wish to declare strongly that these are facts. Daily, even hourly, I eat and drink the Lord Jesus. In John 6 the Lord says that He came from heaven to be our food. This is not a parable or a metaphoric utterance; it is a divine fact. Christ is our food and our drink. In John 7:37-38 he goes on to say that whoever thirsts may come to Him and drink and that out of his inner being will flow rivers of living water. This is a heavenly fact.

Although eating and drinking are very common in our

daily living, in the Bible they are matters of crucial significance. As we have pointed out, it is by our eating and drinking Him that God works Himself into us. By eating and drinking we take the Lord into us, and He becomes one with us organically. As we eat and drink certain elements, those elements are taken into us and become one with us in substance and in essence. For example, how can the meat and vegetables on the dining table become one with us? The only way is by our eating them. As we eat and drink, our food becomes one with us organically and, when it has been digested and assimilated, it actually becomes part of our being, our very fiber and tissue. Realizing this will help us to see the importance of eating and drinking in the Bible. Eating and drinking the Lord are of tremendous significance. Oh, how we need to eat Him and drink Him!

THE IMPORTANCE OF DRINKING

According to the biblical record, drinking is more important than eating. Revelation 22:17 does not say that whoever is hungry may come and eat; it says that whoever is thirsty may come and drink the water of life. This indicates that in the divine concept drinking is more crucial than eating.

In Genesis 2 the tree of life is mentioned first, then the river. But at the end of the Bible, in Revelation 22, the water of life is mentioned first, then the tree of life. According to Revelation 22:1 and 2, the tree of life grows in the water of life, a fact that clearly indicates that it is the living water which conveys the tree. This implies that eating is included in drinking and that drinking is more basic than eating. This is also proved by the fact that in our physical life we can survive longer without eating than without drinking.

According to the sequence in the Bible, food is presented first and then water. This is true both in the book of Genesis and in the book of Exodus. Exodus 16 speaks of food, the heavenly manna, and then chapter seventeen goes on to speak of the water flowing from the smitten rock. The same sequence is found in the opening chapters of Revelation.

Revelation 2:7 says, "To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." The water of life is not mentioned until Revelation 7:17, where we are told that the Lamb in the midst of the throne "shall guide them to springs of waters of life." At the end of Revelation, however, the order is reversed. We all know that both in speaking and in writing the final word is decisive and conclusive. The concluding word of Revelation, even of the whole Bible, puts drinking before eating. The unveiling of God's basic thought concludes not with eating, but with drinking. Revelation 22:17 tells us that those who are thirsty may come and drink. On the one hand, the Bible is profound; on the other hand, it is practical. In its practicality the Bible concludes with a call related to drinking. By this we see the vital importance of drinking.

If we do not know how to drink, we cannot be proper Christians. When some hear such a statement, they may wonder about all the believers who have gone before us, most of whom did not know the way to drink the living water. Nevertheless, many of them did drink of the living water. In much the same way, people who lived centuries ago did not know about vitamins. This does not mean, however, that they did not take vitamins into them. They took vitamins without realizing it. In the same principle, many of those Christians who have gone before us had many experiences of drinking the living water. However, it is nonetheless a fact that they did not know how to drink. They enjoyed drinking, but they did not have the science of drinking.

In this message and in the message which follows, I am burdened not simply with drinking itself, but in particular with the science of drinking. Daily I take vitamins purposely and knowingly, unlike those who take vitamins without having any knowledge of them. Likewise, if we know the science of drinking, we shall be able to drink knowingly and purposely. We shall have both the knowledge of how to drink as well as the actual drinking of the living water.

Even the psalmist in the Old Testament had the experience of drinking. Psalm 36:8 says, "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." The one river includes many pleasures, many joys. Even before the Lord Jesus came, the Old Testament saints experienced the joy of drinking. But when God came in the flesh, He sent forth the clear call to come to Him and drink (John 7:37). Drinking is vital to our Christian life.

THE COMPLETING MINISTRY AND THE MENDING MINISTRY

The New Testament was written by a number of different authors, including Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, Jude, and Paul. In Colossians 1:25 Paul says that he "became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God." Paul was commissioned with the ministry of completing the word of God. Without the writings of Paul the divine revelation in the Bible would not be complete. If Paul's writings were not included in the Scriptures, the Bible would be like an incomplete sentence. Thus, the Epistles of Paul are necessary for the completion of the word of God.

John's ministry is a ministry of mending. After the divine revelation had been completed through Paul, there was an amount of breakage. John came in to mend what had been broken. The Bible closes with Paul's completing ministry and John's mending ministry. As we know, the book of Revelation, written by John, is the last book in the Bible.

In both the ministry of Paul and the ministry of John, that is, in both the completing ministry and the mending ministry, the matters of eating and drinking are strongly emphasized. Paul covers both eating and drinking in the book of 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 3:2 Paul says to the believers in Corinth, "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food." This word implies eating. Then in 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul goes on to say that we have all been made to drink of one Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 10:3 and 4 Paul covers both eating and drinking: "And all ate the same spiritual food,

and all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ." Paul ministered spiritual food and drink to the saints. His ministry was a ministry of feeding and of supplying water to quench the thirst of God's people.

The Gospel of John was written at least twenty years after the last of Paul's writings. Since John's ministry was a mending ministry, his Gospel is a mending Gospel. Problems had been caused by certain ones who called themselves Christians but did not believe in the deity of Christ. In his Gospel John mended the damage caused by this lack of faith in Christ's deity. His Gospel reveals clearly that Christ is God. Furthermore, we have pointed out that in the very Gospel which emphasizes the deity of Christ the eating and drinking of the Lord are also emphasized. We have also seen that in the book of Revelation we find reference to both eating and drinking. This indicates definitely that John's ministry, like that of Paul, stresses the importance of eating and drinking the Lord. Without eating and drinking, there is no way for us to be proper Christians. It is of vital importance that we learn how to drink the living water. There is the need to give our attention to all that the Bible reveals concerning how to drink the Lord.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FORTY-FOUR

DRINKING THE WATER OF LIFE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 17:3a, 6; John 7:37-39; 4:10, 14; 1 Cor. 10:4; 12:13, 3; Rev. 21:6; 22:1-2, 17; Acts 2:17a, 21

In this message we shall consider what is revealed in the Bible concerning the way to drink the water of life. I can testify that I have spent more than thirty years to find out how to drink the living water. In the foregoing message I pointed out that although I preached a great deal about drinking of the living water, I myself did not know how to drink. Eventually, I had to ask myself, "You preach so much about drinking, but do you know how to drink?" I had to admit that I did not have the way to drink. I came to realize the urgency of finding out the proper way to drink. What would I do if, after a message on drinking the living water, someone were to ask me how to drink? Suppose someone approached you and said, "I believe that Christ is the living water, and I am thirsty for Him. Please tell me how to drink of this living water." How would you answer such a question?

Not all the divine secrets in the Bible are revealed in a clear and evident way. In His wisdom sometimes God reveals His secrets in a way that is rather hidden. These secrets are recorded in the Bible and revealed in it, but they are not altogether open. For example, the Bible commands us to believe, but it does not tell us how to believe. For years in preaching the gospel I have told people to believe in the Lord. Whenever someone has asked me how to believe, I have been troubled. What would you say if someone asked you how to believe in the Lord Jesus? Would

you tell that person in a doctrinal way that faith comes by hearing? If you simply tell him to believe, what will you do if you are asked how to believe? The best answer to this question is that we believe by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. To the unsaved we should not give complicated answers about how to believe. Do not try to explain that by believing we enter into an organic union with the Lord. Such explanations will only confuse them. Tell those who want to believe in the Lord to simply open their mouths and call, "O Lord Jesus." The way to believe in the Lord is to call on His name.

Just as the Bible does not tell us how to believe, so it does not tell us how to drink the water of life. The Scripture simply says that if we are thirsty we should come to the Lord and drink. If we go to the Lord and ask Him how to drink, He may say, "If you are thirsty and want to drink, just drink." We learn to drink by drinking. Thus, the way to drink is somewhat like the way to believe in the Lord. The way to drink is not exactly the same as the way to believe, but it is close. As we consider how to drink, I would like to present in a simple yet practical way what I have learned through more than thirty years of study. This word is given to those who believe in the Lord, not to unbelievers.

I. POSITIONED TO DRINK

As believers, we have been positioned to drink. This is the first aspect of the science of drinking. First Corinthians 12:13 says, "For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit." Through baptism we have been positioned to drink. As long as we have been baptized into the Lord, we have the position to drink of the living water. Before we were saved, we were far away from the living water. But now that we have been saved, we have been brought back to the water and positioned to drink of it. For example, there is a drinking fountain in our meeting hall. But in order to drink of this fountain, our mouth must

be in the proper position. Likewise, to drink of the living water, we must first be positioned to drink. Baptism gives us this position. Thank the Lord that we all are positioned to drink.

II. THE NEED OF THIRST

Even though we have been positioned to drink, we shall not drink unless we are thirsty. To drink the water of life there is the need of thirst (Exo. 17:3a; John 7:37; Rev. 21:6). Millions of today's Christians are not thirsty for the Lord. What a mercy it is to be thirsty! I can testify that day by day I am thirsty for living water. If I do not pray for a certain period of time, I become conscious of my thirst. It is a mercy that we are thirsty for the living water, especially when so many Christians have no thirst. Many of us can testify that during the day we are conscious of the thirst within us. This thirst causes us to pray and to contact the Lord. In a simple way, we may say, "Lord Jesus, I am thirsty for You, and I want to contact You." If we sense that our thirst is not adequate, we may need to pray, "Lord, increase the thirst within me." We all need such a thirst for the Lord.

III. COMING TO THE LORD

We also need to come to the Lord. In John 7:37 the Lord Jesus invites the thirsty ones to come to Him and drink. In like manner, the Spirit and the Bride send forth the call to come and drink of the living water (Rev. 22:17). Even though we have been positioned to drink and are thirsty, we still need to come to the Lord again and again. We need to come to the Lord continually, even twenty-four hours a day. If we tell the Lord that we want to come to Him all day long, He surely will answer our prayer. Tell the Lord, "Lord, I don't want to stop coming to You. I want to come to You twenty-four hours a day, even when I am asleep." No matter what we are doing, we may come to the Lord by calling on Him. Whenever we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, we come to Him.

IV. ASKING OF THE LORD

To drink the living water we need to ask the Lord for this water. In John 4:10 the Lord said to the Samaritan woman, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

V. CALLING ON THE LORD

Although we have been positioned to drink and we may be thirsty and although we may come to the Lord and ask of Him, we do not actually drink until we call on the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21). In 1 Corinthians 12 we find the secret of drinking. Verse 13 says that we all have been made to drink of one Spirit, and verse 3 tells us that no one can say Lord Jesus except in the Holy Spirit. To drink the Spirit is to call "Lord Jesus." Whenever we call on the name of the Lord in this way, we spontaneously drink the living water.

In 1 Corinthians 12 we see that the water is the Spirit, for verse 13 speaks of drinking of the one Spirit. The way to drink of the Spirit is to call on the name of the Lord. If we are thirsty and call "Lord Jesus," we immediately drink of the Spirit. Our calling is our drinking. According to 1 Corinthians 12:3, when we call "Lord Jesus," we are in the Spirit. I can testify that whenever I call on the Lord from deep within my spirit, I have the conviction and the consciousness that I am in the Spirit touching the Lord.

For many years I was troubled by Paul's word in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 about praying without ceasing. I wondered how it was possible to pray unceasingly. Now I see that we can pray unceasingly simply by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus continually. The secret of drinking the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12 is also the secret of praying without ceasing. Since we can call on the Lord unceasingly, it is possible for us to pray without ceasing. Except when we are asleep, we can continually call on the Lord's name. Perhaps calling on the Lord will eventually become such a part of our living

that we shall call on Him even when we are asleep. As those who seek the Lord and thirst for Him, we should continually call on His name. Whenever we call "Lord Jesus," we have the sense deep within that the Lord is truly one with us in spirit.

We can call on the Lord at any time and in any place. When you are tempted to lose your temper, call "Lord Jesus." Instead of trying to suppress your anger, call on the name of the Lord Jesus. If you call on the Lord at such a time, the living water will cause your anger to be subdued. To call on the Lord truly is to drink of the living water.

Some Christians do not agree with calling on the name of the Lord, preferring instead to contact Him quietly. I do not say that we must call on the name of the Lord in a loud way. However, I wish to point out that calling on the Lord's name does occupy an important place in the Scriptures. The Hebrew word for call means to call out to, cry unto, that is, to cry out. The Greek word for call means to invoke a person, to call a person by name. Hence, to call according to the Bible is to call a person by naming him audibly. Although prayer may be silent, calling is audible. The Lord Jesus is a living Person, near and available. Whenever we call on His name, He responds.

For many years I was a quiet Christian. The meetings I attended were so quiet that you could almost hear a pin drop. Eventually, however, I began to practice calling on the name of the Lord according to the Bible. When we call His name, we drink of the living water.

We have pointed out that the word call means to cry out or to invoke a person by name. The preposition "on" implies prayer. It indicates that as we call "Lord Jesus," we look to Him in prayer. Thus, we not only call the Lord's name, but we also call *on* Him. As we call His name, we pray to Him. Suppose you call "Lord Jesus" as you are driving your car. This is not merely a calling on the name of the Lord, but also a way of looking to Him and praying to Him. To drink the living water in a proper way is to call on the name of the Lord.

I wish to emphasize the fact that at any time and in any place we can drink the living water by calling on the Lord. For years I had the concept that I had to be formal in my contact with the Lord. I thought that before I could contact Him in prayer, I had to be properly dressed and then go to a place where I could either stand before Him or kneel down. Now I enjoy calling on the Lord everywhere and at any time. As I drink of the living water, I do not care for formality of any kind. I only know that whenever I call "Lord Jesus," no matter where I am, I truly enjoy the Lord.

Sometimes I may become conscious of a heavy burden within me. Spontaneously I begin to call on the name of the Lord, perhaps as I am dressing early in the morning. What an enjoyment! What a quenching of my thirst! By calling on the Lord in this way, I am inwardly strengthened to bear my heavy burden.

Some may still think that in praying to the Lord and calling on Him we need to be polite and reverent, praying at a proper time and in a proper place. This is a religious concept and is not at all practical. The Lord is our living water. If we care more for politeness or reverence than for drinking, the Lord would say, "I don't want your reverence. I want you to drink of the living water. I don't want you to reverence Me—I want you to drink Me. The way to honor Me is to drink Me." How different this is from the religious concept of reverence and formality! Those who solemnly sing "Holy, holy, holy" do not drink much of the Lord. Instead of caring for religious formality, let us say, "Lord Jesus, here I am. I am not in a sanctuary worshipping You in a religious way. I am here to drink You by calling on Your name."

In the past I encouraged the saints to spend time alone with the Lord every morning. Although I do not call back this word, I now can say that if you know how to drink the Lord, you can forget about trying to set aside a certain amount of time to contact Him. Let us call on the Lord no matter where we are or what we are doing. When we first wake up in the morning, we should drink the living water

by calling on the Lord's name. As we are washing and getting dressed, we can drink the water of life. We need to forget all formality and care for drinking the living water. Forms do nothing but kill. What we need is to take in the Lord Jesus in a pure way by calling on Him. Then we shall have the supply of the living water.

To call on the Lord spontaneously and informally is much better than approaching Him in a religious way with reverence, formality, and solemnity. I would rather hear the young people calling on the Lord on their way to the meeting hall than hear a choir singing anthems in a religious way. How good it is to hear the saints calling out to the Lord, "Lord Jesus, I love You! Lord, I am here to drink of You and to enjoy You." How much better this is than a formal, religious service! I realize that this may shock the religious people. But I know what I am talking about. By drinking of the living water I am often beside myself with joy in the Lord. I encourage you all to practice calling on the Lord's name continually. The more you call on Him, the more you drink of the living water.

Recently we have been having fellowship about opinions and the damage they cause in both the Christian life and the church life. The way to deal thoroughly with our opinions is to call on the Lord Jesus. Usually when we are strong in our opinion, we stop calling on the Lord. Those who are argumentative seldom call on Him. The same may be true of a sister who is unhappy with her husband. Due to this unhappiness, she may not be willing to pray or call on the Lord. Sometimes I remind such a sister that although her husband may have offended her, the Lord Jesus surely has not. Then I may ask her why she will not speak to the Lord. But often the sister will still refuse to call on the Lord. Because there is no calling, there is no drinking of the living water. Thus, instead of the supply of life, there is death and dryness. Let us stand against all such deadness. When you are tempted to quarrel with your husband or wife, drink of the living water by calling on the name of the Lord.

VI. RECEIVING AND TAKING BY BELIEVING

Finally, we drink the water of life through receiving and taking by believing. According to John 7:39, we receive the Spirit as the living water by believing into Christ. Revelation 22:17 speaks of taking the water of life freely. As we call on the name of the Lord, we spontaneously receive the living water and take it freely. If we call on the Lord, we shall have living faith. The more we call, the more we shall believe, and the more we believe, the more we shall receive and take the living water.

Calling on the Lord's name solves all our problems. If you are filled with sorrow and worry, call on the Lord. If you are disappointed, discouraged, or distracted, call on Him. Call on Him when you are weak and when you are strong. By calling you receive and take the living water.

VII. DRINKING AND THE WORSHIP OF GOD

A basic problem among Christians, especially among those in organized Christianity, is related to the religious worship of God. Even many unbelievers have the concept of worshipping God in a religious way. Those who care for God think that they should worship Him as the mighty, transcendent One. They regard the almighty God as the object of their worship. This concept is part of their very nature.

Because the Bible tells us to worship God, we cannot say that the thought of worshipping Him is wrong. But how are we to worship Him? In John 4:23 and 24 the Lord Jesus told the Samaritan woman, who had raised a question concerning worship, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and reality; for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and reality." The Lord's word clearly reveals that we are to worship God. However, the question still remains concerning how to worship Him. The Jews and the Moslems have their ways of worship, and those in the Catholic Church and in the denominations have their ways. Actually, all the

different religious ways of worship are wrong. Even the Samaritan woman in John 4 held a mistaken concept of the way to worship God. The Lord Jesus revealed to her that the proper worship of God is not in a certain physical place; it is in our spirit.

According to John 4, to worship God in our spirit is to drink of Him. Do not regard God as an object of worship which you then worship in spirit. In such a case the organ (the spirit) is right, but the way is still wrong. To prostrate ourselves before God is not the proper way to worship Him; to drink Him as the living water is. God does not want to be the object of our worship. Instead, He comes as living water for us to drink. When we drink of Him as the water of life, we worship Him in a genuine way. To drink of the Lord with our spirit is truly to worship Him.

The Lord's table meeting is a meeting for worship. To remember the Lord at His table is to worship Him. The way to worship the Lord in this meeting is not to kneel down or to prostrate ourselves, but to eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of Him. Eating and drinking constitute real worship. We do not remember the Lord by exercising our mentality to recall certain things. We remember Him by eating and drinking. To remember the Lord by eating and drinking is to worship Him.

Not many Christians have seen that God's intention is to work Himself into us. Most believers only realize that God is God, that we are God's creatures, that we became fallen, and that out of His love for us God sent His Son to die for us on the cross and to accomplish redemption. Genuine Christians also realize that Christ was resurrected and then sent the Holy Spirit to lead us to repentance, to cause us to believe in Him, and to receive Him as our Savior. Then, according to the natural concept, the Bible is used as a book of ethics to teach the believers to glorify God in their daily living. Finally, Christians are told that, after they die or after the Lord comes back, they will spend eternity with Him. The Bible, of course, teaches such things. However, these teachings are superficial. They are not the kernel of God's

revelation in the Bible. The kernel of the divine revelation is that God created us and redeemed us for the purpose of working Himself into us to be our life. We in the Lord's recovery need to see a fuller vision of this revelation. If we have such a full vision, our concept of worship will be regulated by it.

The Triune God works Himself into our being as we eat and drink of Him. As our food and water, He enters into us to be one with us organically. What we take into us by eating and drinking becomes one with us in this way. It penetrates our fiber and becomes our organic tissue. When the food we take in by eating and drinking is digested and assimilated, it becomes our constituent. Thus, we are a constitution of what we eat and drink. This is true both in the spiritual realm and in the physical realm. Through eating and drinking, the Bride becomes one with the Spirit. According to Revelation 22:17, the Spirit and the Bride speak as one to call those who are thirsty to drink of the water of life.

If we see that God's intention is to work Himself into us, we shall automatically eat and drink of Him. Mothers know that babies eat and drink automatically, not caring for any forms, manners, or regulations. Infants are better at eating and drinking than adults are. Our eating and drinking are often hindered by all the attention we give to table manners. Sometimes the more we pay attention to manners, the less we enjoy our food. I heard of a Chinese ambassador who attended a formal state dinner in Germany. Because he was so concerned about proper etiquette and table manners, he did not enjoy the food at all. He spent his time watching how others at the dinner conducted themselves and how they used their eating utensils. Table manners kept him from eating. Children are not like this. When my little granddaughter visits us, her grandmother often gives her something to eat. My granddaughter enjoys her food in a spontaneous and informal way. She is a good example of how we should pay less attention to forms and more to eating and drinking.

At the very time the Lord Jesus was speaking with the Samaritan woman, the priests in the temple were worshipping God in the formal, systematic, prescribed manner. But where was God at that time? Was He in the temple with the priests, or was He with the woman by the well in Samaria? As we all know, He was with the Samaritan woman. He met with her in the open air, away from the temple and the altar, without religious forms and rituals. Eventually, this Samaritan woman drank of the living water and offered real worship to God. At that time the true worship to God was offered not by the priests in the temple, but by the Samaritan woman who was drinking the living water. The priests worshipped God in vain; the Samaritan woman worshipped Him in reality by drinking Him into her being. The Spirit as the living water was infused into her. God was seeking real worship, and He received it from this Samaritan woman who drank of the Spirit as the living water.

Today's Christians need to see what real worship is. They condemn those in the Lord's recovery as heretical, when they themselves are heretical and ignorant of the truth. Like the priests in the temple, they are blind to what true worship is. In John 4 the Lord Jesus did not spend time talking to typical Jews according to the Old Testament way of worship. Instead, He conversed with an immoral, semi-heathen woman concerning the worship which satisfies God's heart. This woman worshipped God in her spirit by drinking of Him as the water to quench her thirst. Thus, God was worshipped by her in a genuine way. How much different this is from formal, religious worship!

Throughout the centuries, most Christian worship has been like that of the priests in the temple. Only a small number have worshipped God in spirit by drinking of Him as living water. But as we have pointed out emphatically in this message, this is the proper way to worship Him.

We must admit that to a large extent our way of meeting is subconsciously or unconsciously still under the influence of our religious background. The more we enter into the real

worship of God by drinking Him as the living water in spirit, the more we shall realize how short our practices have been. By the Lord's mercy I have come to see the worship God desires. Because of the vision I have seen, I do not care for religion, nor even for our own practices. Actually, we have no need of practices. Our need is to see that our God today has passed through the process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement to become the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit for us to drink. He is such a compound Spirit, and we have a spirit with which to drink of Him. In spirit we are one with Him. If we see this vision, the focal point of the divine revelation in the Bible, we shall know how to drink the Lord as the water of life.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FORTY-FIVE

FLOWING THE WATER OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: Exo. 17:6; John 4:14; 7:38; Rev. 22:2

In the Bible we see that the drinking of the water of life and the flowing of the water of life go together. The drinking is connected to the flowing, and the flowing is one with the drinking. In John 4:14 the Lord Jesus says, "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a spring of water welling up into eternal life." Here we see that if we drink the water of life, this water will become a spring within us welling up into eternal life. This welling up is what we mean by the flowing of the water of life. We find the same principle in John 7:37 and 38, where the Lord Jesus said of the one who believes in Him and drinks of Him, "out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." The drinking and the flowing are thus two aspects of one thing.

DRINKING AND FLOWING

Without the flowing of the water of life, our drinking is in vain. In fact, if we do not flow, we shall not be able to continue drinking. Drinking is nullified by the lack of flowing. The genuine drinking of the water of life depends on the flowing.

Let us use a water hose as an illustration. On the one hand, the hose takes in water from the faucet; on the other hand, it flows out water. Both the inflow and the outflow are necessary. The receiving and the flowing take place simultaneously. If we do not drink, we cannot flow; and if we do not flow, we cannot continue to drink.

It is a serious matter to have our drinking nullified by the lack of flowing. Of the many genuine believers in Christ who have drunk of the living water, not many experience the flowing of this water. Eventually, this causes their drinking to cease. If there is no outflow from within you, you cannot continue to take in the living water by drinking. Only the flowing can keep the inner current moving. It is not the drinking, the taking in, that keeps the current going; it is the outflow of water which does this. Many Christians either do not drink at all or find that their drinking avails nothing. The reason for this is that, even though they may drink, they do not flow. The lack of flowing causes the drinking to be of no avail. This is very serious. Therefore, in this message I am burdened to point out that concerning the experience of the living water the flowing of the water is even more important than the drinking of it. Yes, our experience of the living water begins with drinking. But if there is no flowing, there is no way for us to continue drinking. If the flowing does not follow our drinking, our drinking will stop. Our experience testifies that this is true.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF LOSING OUR THIRST

Furthermore, the lack of flowing may cause our thirst to disappear. Before we first drank of the living water, there was a thirst within us. It is very good to have such a thirst, but it is dreadful to lose it. The proper gospel preaching is not mainly to minister the water of life to others; it is to stir up a sense of thirst within them. When people are thirsty, it is easy to convince them to drink. Good salesmen know how to arouse in people the aspiration and desire to buy the product they are selling. Without such an aspiration or desire, people will have no interest, even in the most precious items. This illustrates the fact that thirst is crucial.

By the Lord's mercy we have been made thirsty for Him through the preaching of the gospel. I can never forget how my thirst was aroused through hearing a certain gospel message more than fifty-five years ago. I was so thirsty that

I could have drunk an ocean of water. One message created a thirst within me that has lasted even until now. Although fifty-five years have passed since I heard that marvelous message, I still thirst for the water of life.

We need to be impressed how crucial it is to flow the water of life. If the flowing stops, our drinking will stop; and if our drinking stops, we shall lose our thirst. Then, before our thirst can be revived and recovered, we shall have to pass through a period of spiritual death. After passing through such a time of dryness, we shall be stirred up by the Lord in His sovereign mercy to repent and return to Him. Our thirst will revive, and we shall begin to drink once more. I am deeply concerned about the degree of our thirst. Many among us have had the experience of losing our thirst. If we wish to maintain our thirst, we need to keep flowing and to keep drinking.

INFLOW AND OUTFLOW

Doctrinally speaking, in order to flow the water of life we must have our thirst quenched (John 4:14). This means that if we are not filled with the living water, there cannot be any overflow. The flowing comes from the overflow, and the overflow comes from having our thirst quenched. From the point of view of experience, however, we need not wait until our thirst is quenched in order to flow.

Since we have already begun to drink of the Lord to quench our thirst, we need to pay attention to the flowing. Many of us started drinking the water of life a long time ago. Our problem is related much more to flowing than to drinking. In preaching the gospel to unbelievers, I would emphasize the importance of drinking, but in ministering to believers I would emphasize the importance of flowing. As believers, we have already begun to drink of the living water. Our particular need is for the flowing of the water.

It is difficult to tell whether or not someone is drinking, but we can easily tell whether or not a person is flowing. Let us refer again to the illustration of the water hose. We cannot see the inflow of the water, but we can see the

outflow. Likewise, I cannot see the flow of the living water into you, but I can see the flow of it out of you. We may not know whether or not the water is flowing into us, but we surely know when it is flowing out of us. Such an outflow is evident to everyone.

FLOWING BY SPEAKING

Perhaps you are wondering what it means to flow the water of life in a practical way. The flowing can be compared to flushing out something with water. To flush out a pipe is to flood it with water for the purpose of cleansing; it is to wash it out by a sudden rush of water. As Christians, from our inner being there should be a flushing of the living water. In order to have this flushing out, this strong flowing, we need to call on the name of the Lord Jesus and pray. It is also helpful to sing to the Lord.

What is particularly helpful to bring about the inner flowing is speaking to the Lord, by the Lord, for the Lord, in the Lord, and with the Lord. The more we speak in this way, the more we shall flow. If there is no one to whom we may speak, we should speak to the things in our room. Speak to the desk, the door, the walls. Speak to anything and everything. If you have a pet in your house, speak to it. Speak to the dog, the cat, the birds, or the fish. Some may regard this practice as ridiculous, but I can testify of the difference it makes to speak. Christians should not be dumb, silent. On the contrary, we must be those bubbling and welling up with life. We all have something to which we can speak. We can speak to the windows, to the doors, and to bricks and stones. When we speak, something of the Lord Jesus flows out. By speaking we are like a water hose which has both the inflow and the outflow.

The amount of inflow is in proportion to the amount of outflow. The quantity of water which flows out of us determines how much water can flow into us. In other words, how much we flow determines how much of the living water we can drink.

Some of you may be very dry, even dried up. The reason for your dryness may be that you do not speak. Because you do not speak, you do not let the living water flow out. I encourage you to flow the living water by speaking. This may sound rather peculiar, but I can testify that it is practical and very effective.

SPEAKING IN THE CHURCH MEETINGS

We need to speak in a number of ways. First, we need to preach the gospel to unbelievers. Then we need to speak the truth to believers, to fellow Christians. We should also speak in the meetings of the church. Because I speak so much in the ministry, I have followed the practice of being somewhat quiet in the meetings. My intention in doing so has been to give others the opportunity to speak. For example, during the last forty-five years, I have not once in the Lord's table meeting gone up to the table to offer thanks and praise to the Lord in taking either the bread or the cup. This does not mean, however, that I have not been burdened to do so. Sometimes I have been strongly burdened concerning this, especially when the saints were dormant in spirit, and the meeting was so slow that the proper time to distribute the bread and the cup passed without anyone moving to do anything about it. In such a situation, the time for the sweet enjoyment of eating passes by, and the opportunity is lost. When the bread is finally passed, most of the pleasure of eating is gone. Many times in the Lord's table meeting we have failed to pass the bread and the cup at the right moment. Sometimes no one even thanks the Lord for the bread or for the cup. Rather, everyone is slow and silent. Recently I have come to regret the restriction I have imposed on myself, even though my reason has been to give opportunity to the saints to function by speaking and praying. Like anyone else, I need to flow forth praises and thanks in the church meetings. By doing this we release others to flow with living water. We all need to be liberated in the meetings. Do not sit around waiting for others to function. Instead, function actively to speak

for the Lord, and take every opportunity to flow with the living water.

A number of times saints have come to me with complaints about the meetings. These saints have told me that the meetings are too low, too poor. Usually when I hear such complaints and criticisms, I do not argue. I may not even reply. However, I would like to take the opportunity now to point out that those who complain about the level of the church meetings must themselves bear part of the responsibility for this. Perhaps the meeting was poor because they were silent, not willing to release the flow of living water. We all have many opportunities to speak in the meetings. Even in meetings that are devoted to the ministry of the Word, there is opportunity to speak both before and after the message is given. Also, we all can pray in the prayer meetings and offer praises and thanksgiving in the Lord's table meeting. All the meetings of the church are open to the saints. We need to function by flowing out the water of life. According to Ephesians 5:18-20 and Colossians 3:16, Christians should be continually speaking, singing, psalming, and giving thanks.

THE BEST REPELLENT

When we remain silent and refuse to speak, it is rather easy for us to become angry or to lose our temper. However, if we are continually speaking, singing, and giving thanks, it will be difficult for us to lose our temper. This indicates that the flowing of the water of life is a repellent which drives away the negative things, all the "flies," "scorpions," and "gophers." The Christian life is a life of fighting. Day and night, we fight against the negative things which seek to influence us and drag us down. We need a repellent to chase away the "bugs." Speaking is the best repellent.

Suppose I travel by airplane to visit the church in a particular city. If during the flight I remain silent, not praying, praising, or calling on the Lord Jesus, I shall be troubled by

negative or distracting thoughts. The "scorpions" may come not singly, but in hoards. Negative thoughts may swarm in my mind, thoughts concerning certain brothers or perhaps concerning the way my wife treated me a few days earlier, or about the way my children have apparently been ignoring me. If I fail to repel these "scorpions," these negative thoughts, by speaking, I shall have no heart to minister for the Lord when I reach my destination. I may not even sense any burden within.

Suppose, however, my situation is the very opposite. Instead of remaining silent, I continually speak by praising, praying, thanking, and calling on the name of the Lord. Because I speak, the living water flows within me continually. As I am greeted by the brothers, I shall spontaneously say, "Praise the Lord!" Furthermore, I shall be burdened to minister life to the church there.

When we are spiritually dry, it is easy for us to be irritated or angry. When we are not flowing the water of life, we easily lose our temper with our husband or wife. However, when we are overflowing with the living water, our irritation, anger, and temper are flushed away. What a difference it makes to be flowing the water of life!

WELLING UP INTO ETERNAL LIFE

Genuine revival is a matter of flowing, of bubbling. Let us read John 4:14 again: "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a spring of water welling up into eternal life." A characteristic of a spring of water is that it flows unceasingly. Anything that does not flow cannot be a spring. It may instead be like the Dead Sea, which does not have any outflow. When we drink of the living water, it becomes in us a spring of water welling up into eternal life. The phrase "welling up into eternal life" is difficult to understand. I do not believe that any Christians, even among us, fully understand this. What does it mean to well up into eternal life? Does this refer to the present or to eternity? It refers to

both. But what does it mean to say that the living water flows up now into eternal life? This is mysterious. The flowing of living water, the welling up of this water, always brings us into a situation where there is the fullness of life. According to my experience, whenever the water of life flows within me, I am brought into a situation that is filled and flooded with life. This is what it means for the living water to well up into eternal life.

Suppose I visit a brother in his home. However, in every way I am dumb, dry, cold, and dead. If this is my condition, there will be no welling up into eternal life. Instead, this brother and I will be dragged down lower and lower into death. But if as I am on my way to this brother's house, I flow the living water by speaking, the water will be welling up in me into eternal life. Then as I visit with him, the living water will continue to flow. By the flowing of the water of life, we shall be brought into a condition that is flooded with life. In a practical way this is what it means for water to well up into eternal life.

The more we speak, the more we are brought into a state where we are flooded with eternal life. This should be our experience in our daily life and also in the church meetings. Otherwise, our meetings will be like performances in a theater. We do not come to the meetings to perform; we come to testify, to express, to exhibit, the flowing out of the living water we experience day by day.

Regarding the flowing of the water of life by speaking, today's Christianity is far off the mark. The fundamentalists insist on certain formalities. These formalities bring people into death, not into eternal life. In Pentecostalism, on the contrary, there is a certain amount of speaking. Even though much of this speaking is ridiculous, it is better than no speaking at all, and it may even afford a little spiritual benefit. Nevertheless, there is no need for us in the Lord's recovery to speak like those in Pentecostalism. Instead, we have much to say about Christ as our life and about all that has been brought forth through the ministry of the Word. How much we have to speak about to one another! Let us be

neither like the fundamentalists nor like the Pentecostalists. Instead, let us come together to flow the living water by speaking.

This flowing, this flushing out, which comes through speaking will bring in life. It will produce the welling up into eternal life. The more speaking, singing, praying, and praising, the more flowing there will be among us. Let us seize every opportunity to flow in the church meetings. Let us not waste time in dumbness, in silence, but use every minute to flow the water of life. Such speaking will not only bring us into a situation where we are flooded with life, but also bring us into the fullness of the Spirit. The more we speak, the more we shall be brought into the fullness of the Spirit.

IDENTIFIED WITH THE SMITTEN CHRIST

If we would flow the water of life, we also need to be identified with the smitten Christ (Exo. 17:6; John 7:38). The smitten rock signifies the incarnated Christ in His crucifixion. In a previous message we pointed out that on the cross Christ was smitten by God. We need to be identified with this smitten One. This means that our human life, our natural life, must be smitten so that the living water may flow. There is no need, however, for us to try to smite ourselves. If we simply are one with the smitten Christ, identified with Him, we shall experience the crucifixion of our natural life. Then as Christ's divine life flowed out as living water through the smiting of His human life, we also shall experience the flow of the water of life through the smiting of our natural life. Only when our natural life has been smitten will the divine life flow out from us.

If we speak without being identified with the smitten Christ, our speaking, even our praise and prayer, will be natural. We need to be one with Christ in a way that is actual and practical. Then we shall experience the smiting of the natural life which took place in Him and with Him at the time of His crucifixion. If we are identified with the smitten Christ in such a way, the water of life will

flow not in a natural way, but in a way that is pure, without mixture. Whatever issues from us in prayer, praise, or testimony will be the flow of the divine life in its purity.

When we are identified with Christ in His death, our natural, human life will be put to death. Then whatever flows out of us will be the very life of God, the divine, eternal life. This life is the water of life. If we are identified with the smitten Christ, what flows out from us will be pure. There will not be the mixture of the divine life with the natural life.

Furthermore, this flow will bring us into a situation that is flooded with eternal life. According to Revelation 22:1 and 2, the supply of life is in the water of life, for the tree of life grows in the river of life. When the water of life flows within us, we are richly supplied. Moreover, the whole church will receive the rich supply of life. Oh, how we need such a flowing!

I encourage you to pray about the flowing of the water of life and to put what you have heard in this message into practice. However, we need to leave behind the traditional teachings and practices of Christianity. We all need to forget the influence of our background in Christianity. What we have been speaking in this message is according to the pure Word of God, not according to the tradition of Christianity. What we need is not Christian tradition, but the flow of the water of life. If we practice this flowing by speaking and by being identified with the smitten Christ, we shall have not only one river, but the rivers spoken of by the Lord Jesus in John 7:38. Rivers of living water will flow out from our innermost being.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FORTY-SIX

THE DEFEAT OF AMALEK

Scripture Reading: Exo. 17:8-16; 1 Pet. 2:11; Deut. 25:17-19; 1 Sam. 15:2; Rom. 7:24; 8:34b; Heb. 7:25; Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 8:13; Num. 24:20

It is important to see that the book of Exodus is a complete picture of God's full salvation. This fact is confirmed by the picture presented in 17:8-16. In chapter sixteen we have the manna from heaven as the life supply, and in chapter seventeen, the living water flowing out of the cleft rock for the quenching of our thirst. Then in 17:8-16 we have the war against Amalek. To be sure, this sequence is not at all coincidental. On the contrary, it is according to God's plan. According to the picture in chapters sixteen and seventeen, after we have received the heavenly life supply and the living water from the cleft rock, we are ready to fight against Amalek.

The battle against Amalek was the first fight in which the children of Israel were engaged. When they were in Egypt, they did not fight. At the Red Sea there was war between God and Pharaoh, but the children of Israel themselves did not fight against Pharaoh's army. However, in chapter seventeen we see the children of Israel engaged in a battle against Amalek. Many students of the Bible realize that this fight depicts the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. This indicates that as we are going on with the Lord, the first fight is that between the flesh and the Spirit. The fact that the first fight in which the children of Israel were engaged was that against Amalek indicates that after we are saved and baptized, the first conflict we experience will be the warfare between the flesh and the Spirit who regenerated us.

In chapters fourteen through seventeen we have a portrait of the many experiences through which we pass after baptism. These experiences include the experiences at Marah and Elim, the eating of the heavenly manna to satisfy our hunger, and the drinking of the living water to quench our thirst. After these experiences, we are equipped and made ready to fight against the flesh. This is confirmed by our experience with the Lord. After we were saved and baptized, we had the experiences at Marah and at Elim. Then we ate the manna and drank the living water. Only then did we discover how much the flesh frustrates us from following the Lord. The flesh is the enemy which hinders us from going on with the Lord. In this matter, the flesh is a greater enemy than the world is.

I. THE SUPPORT FOR FIGHTING

If we are inwardly hungry and thirsty, we shall not be able to fight against the flesh. In order to fight, we must first have our hunger satisfied and our thirst quenched. We need manna, the heavenly food, and the water out of the rock, the living water. Only then shall we have the strength to fight. The manna and the living water supported the children of Israel in their fight against Amalek. Without this support, the children of Israel could not have engaged in this battle. It is the same in our spiritual experience. If we do not enjoy the heavenly manna daily and drink of the living water consistently, we shall be defeated by the flesh and subdued by it. Those Christians who do not partake of the manna and drink of the living water are already subdued by the flesh. Without the manna and the living water we are spontaneously one with the flesh and walk according to it. Only when we are supplied by Christ and with Christ and have our thirst quenched by the life-giving Spirit are we ready to fight against the flesh.

Exodus 17:8 says, "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim." This verse indicates that Amalek took the initiative to fight against the children of Israel. Amalek

attacked them because of envy. The Amalekites had heard what had happened to the children of Israel, and they were jealous. Therefore, Amalek came out to fight against God's people.

Whenever we are not satisfied with Christ and not supplied by the life-giving Spirit, we are subdued under the flesh. But whenever we rise up and enjoy Christ as our manna and drink of the life-giving Spirit as the living water, we are no longer subdued by the flesh. The activities of the flesh are, of course, instigated by Satan, who works through the flesh. The flesh cannot tolerate our enjoyment of Christ and our drinking of the living water. For this reason, the flesh rises up to fight against us and to attempt to subdue us.

Before we began to enjoy Christ as our food and the life-giving Spirit as our living water, we did not have any consciousness that the flesh was fighting against us. At that time we were absolutely subdued under the flesh. We lived in the flesh, acted by the flesh, and walked according to the flesh. Everything we did was in the flesh. Nevertheless, we did not have any realization that the flesh was so active and prevailing. We were helpless victims under the evil power of the serpent, Satan. The serpent could work in us and upon us, and we had no consciousness of it. But one day we began to partake of the heavenly food and to drink of the living water. Then we began to rise up from under Satan's hand and refused to be victims any longer. It is at such a time that Satan instigates the flesh to fight against us. Many of us can testify of this. We can testify that after we began to enjoy Christ and to drink of the living water, the flesh rose up to fight against us. Praise the Lord that we have the heavenly manna and the living water to support us as we fight against the flesh!

Day by day we are supplied with manna, the heavenly Christ, as our portion. The Lord Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Each day we need to pray like this: "Lord, give us this day our daily portion of Christ." I like to pray in this way. Often I say, "Lord, I

thank You for another new day. I ask You to give me this day's portion of grace." Every day we need a particular portion of grace, of Christ as our life supply. We also need the Spirit as the living water. We have both the heavenly Christ and the life-giving Spirit. The heavenly Christ is our manna to satisfy our hunger, and the Spirit is the living water to quench our thirst. Do you enjoy this manna and living water day by day? I can testify that today I have enjoyed my portion of Christ, and I have drunk a good deal of the living water. Therefore, I am not subdued by the flesh. My hunger has been satisfied, and my thirst has been quenched. Thus, I have something to share with the saints. Living water can flow out from my inner being to quench the thirst of others.

Even though we partake of Christ as the heavenly manna and drink of the Spirit as the living water, Amalek is at hand to fight against us. We need to be mindful of the fact that Amalek, the flesh, is always with us. Immediately after we enjoy the Lord in morning watch, something may happen, perhaps at the breakfast table, to provoke the flesh. The flesh is envious of our enjoyment of Christ. Hence, Satan stirs up the flesh to fight against us in order to frustrate us from following the Lord.

The only reason for Amalek's attack was his envy of God's people. He did not want to see that a people could be so radiant and victorious. The children of Israel had been satisfied by the heavenly manna, and they were drinking of the wonderful living water. In the words of Paul, the rock flowing with living water was following them (1 Cor. 10:4). The children of Israel must have been happy with the manna and the living water. Would you not have been happy had you been there? There was no need for them to worry about food. They had the daily supply of heavenly manna. Furthermore, they could drink of the water flowing from the cleft rock. What a beautiful scene! Suppose, however, that the children of Israel had neither manna nor living water. In such a case, the people would no doubt have quarreled with one another and even fought with one

another. Such a situation would not have made the enemy jealous. But Amalek was provoked to jealousy by hearing of a people who were radiant, happy, and victorious. Motivated by envy, he fought against them with the intention of destroying them.

Much attention is given in Scripture to the warfare between the flesh and the Spirit. This battle is recorded not only in Exodus 17, but also in 1 Samuel 15. The Bible has much to say about Amalek. The reason for this is that in the history of Christian experience, the flesh occupies much space. If you were to write a biography of any believer, you would have to devote considerable attention to the flesh. On the negative side, the Christian life is a history, a record, of the flesh. Daily in our Christian walk we are troubled by the flesh. Perhaps even as you sit in the church meetings you remember certain offenses or recall how others have mistreated you. Your thoughts concerning these offenses may be in the flesh. After the meeting, you may be strongly attacked by the flesh. Amalek may come to fight against you. On the negative side, the Christian life is mainly concerned with the flesh. In many different ways, the flesh rises up to attack us.

II. AMALEK

A. Warlike, Destroying, Disturbing

The name Amalek means warlike. The flesh enjoys fighting and never wants to keep the peace. Furthermore, the flesh is very destructive. The greatest destroyer of the Christian life is the flesh. The flesh destroys our married life, family life, and church life. It seeks to destroy everything positive. Consider how much the flesh has destroyed since you became a Christian.

The flesh is not only warlike and destructive, but also extremely disturbing. If you read Romans 7, you will see what disturbance is caused by the flesh. According to that chapter, Paul was so disturbed that he even cried out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the

body of this death?" (v. 24). Apparently this disturbance was caused by sin. Actually it was caused by the flesh. How warlike, destructive, and disturbing the flesh is!

B. A Descendant of Esau

Amalek was a descendant of Esau (Gen. 36:12), Jacob's twin brother. Esau and Jacob were very close. This indicates that the flesh, signified by Esau, is close to our regenerated being, signified by Jacob, who became Israel. Esau was born first, then Jacob. This indicates that the flesh belongs to the first man, and our regenerated being, to the second.

The Bible speaks of two different Amaleks. The Amalek mentioned in Genesis 14:7 is different from the Amalek who was the descendant of Esau. However, some Bible students, not aware of this distinction, think of these two Amaleks as one and the same. We need to be clear, therefore, that the Bible tells us about two different Amaleks. The Amalek in Exodus 17 descended from Esau. Hence, it was the second Amalek, who descended from Esau, who troubled God's people. Our concern is with this Amalek. Our flesh is the descendant of Esau. This means that the flesh is of the first man, that is, the old man. The flesh is the issue, the coming forth, of the first man.

C. Close to Jacob

We have pointed out that just as Esau was close to Jacob, the flesh is close to our regenerated being. The Bible nowhere tells us that the descendants of Esau ceased to exist. On the contrary, the Edomites, descendants of Esau, were continually a problem to the Israelites.

D. Fighting Against Israel

We have seen that Amalek, one of the descendants of Esau, was the first to fight against the children of Israel. This fighting is a picture of the flesh fighting against the believers. Peter refers to this fighting: "Beloved, I entreat

you as sojourners and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11).

E. The First Enemy on Israel's Way to the Good Land

Amalek was the first enemy the children of Israel encountered on the way to the good land (Deut. 25:17-18; 1 Sam. 15:2). This indicates that our flesh is the first among all our enemies. It takes the lead over sin, the world, and Satan to fight against us. The flesh, sin, the world, and Satan are all related to one another. These four things are interwoven. The most prominent among them in fighting against believers is the flesh. Satan, sin, and the world are all subordinate to the flesh. When in our practical Christian experience the flesh is put to death, the world cannot hold us, sin cannot operate in us, and Satan is powerless to work upon us. The reason the world is prevailing, sin is strong, and Satan is active is that we are still in the flesh. These three enemies are all dependent on the flesh. Hence, the flesh is our foremost enemy. For this reason, the Bible gives a complete picture of Amalek as the first enemy to fight against the children of Israel. Many of us can testify that from the time we first began to seek the Lord and to walk in His way, the flesh has been fighting against us. The flesh is the leading enemy in frustrating us from going on with the Lord.

Under God's guidance, the children of Israel had a goal. This goal was to enter the good land. Amalek's purpose in attacking God's people was to frustrate them from entering the land. We also have the goal of entering into the all-inclusive Christ as our good land and possessing Him as this land. We have been saved, we have made a wonderful exodus out of Egypt, we have crossed the Red Sea, and we have journeyed through the wilderness, where we have had a number of marvelous experiences. Nevertheless, we have not yet reached the goal. We have not yet entered into the all-inclusive Christ. Knowing that this goal is ahead of

us, the enemy, Amalek, endeavors to hinder us from reaching this goal. It is crucial for us to recognize that Satan's aim in stirring up our flesh to fight against us is to keep us from the full enjoyment of Christ. The purpose of the flesh in warring against us is to frustrate us from entering into Christ as the all-inclusive land. We must admit that not many Christians, even among us, have entered in a complete way into the full enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ. Mainly we have been frustrated by the flesh. Although we may enjoy the Lord in morning watch, the flesh often attacks us soon afterward. This attack may keep us from the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ during the day. As a result, throughout the day we have little enjoyment of Christ. The purpose of the flesh in fighting against us, therefore, is to keep us from the full enjoyment of Christ.

III. THE DEFEAT OF AMALEK

A. By Weak Men

In defeating Amalek the Lord used weak men (Exo. 17:9; Rom. 7:24). In 17:9 Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek." The Hebrew word for men in this verse denotes those who are weak. In the eyes of God, the children of Israel were weak men. The same is true of believers today. You may think that a certain brother is very strong; however, in the eyes of God he is actually weak. Our weakness is proved by the fact that we can be easily defeated, even by our children or grandchildren. A brother may even be defeated by an unhappy expression on his wife's face. We should not consider ourselves strong. No, we are weak. God, however, does not use the strong to fight against Amalek. Joshua was told to choose weak men for the battle. We would choose strong ones, but God chose those who are weak. The victors over Amalek are weak men.

B. With Moses Lifting Up His Hand on the Mountaintop

Apparently the battle against Amalek was fought by

weak men. Actually it was fought by God Himself. This is proved by the fact that victory or defeat was decided by the lifting of Moses' hand. Exodus 17:11 says, "And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." Moses lifting up his hand on the mountaintop typifies the ascended Christ interceding in the heavens (Rom. 8:34b; Heb. 7:25). The question of victory or defeat did not depend on the fighting of the weak men. Although they had to fight, victory did not depend on them. It depended on the lifting up of Moses' hand with the rod of God. Although it is necessary for us to fight against Amalek, we should not think that by our fighting we can be victorious. On the contrary, we are qualified only for defeat. In our fighting we must recognize the need not to fight in ourselves, but to fight by means of Moses and Joshua.

C. With Joshua Fighting for the People

On the one hand, Moses lifted up his hand on the mountaintop; on the other hand, Joshua was fighting for the people (17:10a, 13). We have seen that manna typifies Christ and that the living water typifies the Spirit. Now we must go on to point out that Moses typifies the heavenly Christ, and Joshua, the indwelling Spirit fighting against the flesh (Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 8:13). Many Christians realize that in typology Joshua signifies Jesus. In fact, the Greek word Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua. Although Joshua typifies Jesus, in Exodus 17 Joshua typifies the Spirit. According to the picture in Exodus 17, the heavenly Christ, typified by Moses, is interceding, and the indwelling Christ, typified by Joshua, is slaying the enemy. The manna, the living water, Moses, and Joshua all typify Christ. Christ is the life supply, the living water, the One interceding in the heavens, and the indwelling One fighting against the enemy. In brief, Christ is all. The picture in Exodus is very clear concerning this.

It is no coincidence that Christ is typified in Exodus in all these ways. In His sovereign wisdom God prepared

these types and arranged them in a marvelous sequence. First we have the manna and the living water; then we have Moses on the mountaintop and Joshua fighting the battle. We all must come to know Christ as the heavenly manna, the living water, the interceding Moses, and the fighting Joshua. We also need to experience Christ in the aspect of manna, living water, the interceding One, and the fighting One. As the indwelling Spirit, Christ is our present, practical Joshua fighting against the flesh and putting it to death. In this battle we need to cooperate with Him. When He fights, we should fight also. However, our fighting in itself does not count for anything. Nevertheless, Christ still desires that we fight together with Him. This is the way to defeat Amalek, the way to defeat the flesh.

IV. THE DESTINY OF AMALEK

A. The Remembrance of Him to Be Blotted Out from under Heaven

The destiny of Amalek, in the first place, is to have the remembrance of him blotted out from under heaven. In 17:14 the Lord said unto Moses, "I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (Heb.). No matter how strong, stubborn, or prevailing the flesh may be, its remembrance will be blotted out. This indicates God's hatred of the flesh. According to Romans 8:7 and 8, the flesh is an enemy of God. It has neither the intention nor the ability to obey God. Hence, the destiny of the flesh is to be blotted out.

In Exodus, however, Amalek was not blotted out. In 1 Samuel 15 we see that the Amalekites were still in existence and were quite prevailing. Nevertheless, God has decided that the flesh must be blotted out. This will take place during the kingdom age in the millennium. Today is still the time for us to fight against the flesh. But when the kingdom comes, the flesh will be blotted out from under heaven.

B. God to Have War with Amalek from Generation to Generation

God is so strong against the flesh because with Amalek there is a hand against the throne of the Lord. Exodus 17:16 says, "For he said, Because there is a hand against the throne of Jehovah, Jehovah will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Heb.). The flesh is a hand against the throne, against the government of God. Because the flesh opposes the throne of the Lord, the Lord must fight against it. The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

The flesh is in rebellion against God and against His throne. The flesh is most ugly simply because it is against the throne, administration, and plan of God. This is a matter of great significance. However, not many believers realize that the flesh is so evil. The flesh does not simply commit minor wrongdoings. It is a hand against the very throne of God. Because the flesh is a hand against God's throne, God has decided to war against it. Amalek, the flesh, is still a hand against the administration of God. This means that our flesh is in rebellion against God's governmental administration. Whatever God does governmentally, the flesh opposes it. For example, among many Christians the flesh is strongly opposed to the church, for the church is God's administration. The church is mocked, and many blasphemous words are spoken concerning it. This is an indication that the flesh in the eyes of God is rebellious. Truly the flesh is a hand against the throne of the Lord. Therefore, the Lord will fight against this rebel and blot out its remembrance.

C. The Name of Jehovah-nissi Called at the Altar as a Memorial

In 17:15 we are told that "Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi." The name Jehovah-nissi means "Jehovah my banner." For Jehovah to be our banner means that Jehovah God is our victory. Moses built an altar

and then called the name of it Jehovah-nissi. The altar signifies the cross, which deals with our flesh (Gal. 5:24). On the one hand, our flesh must be blotted out; on the other hand, the cross must be a memorial. By the cross we enjoy the victory of the Lord. This means that by the altar we enjoy Jehovah-nissi.

The altar built and named by Moses in Exodus 17 signifies that the cross of Christ is a memorial of our victory. By the cross we experience the Lord as our banner. We enjoy Him as our victor, and we enjoy victory through the cross of the Lord. According to the book of Galatians, the flesh must be set aside, but the cross must become our boast. Paul declares that he did not boast in circumcision, but boasted in the cross of Christ. The remembrance of the flesh must be blotted out, and a memorial of the cross must be built up. We need to remember the cross of Christ through which we enjoy the Lord as our banner, our victory. This cross is the memorial that the flesh has been blotted out.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FORTY-SEVEN

THE CONTINUAL FIGHTING AGAINST AMALEK

Scripture Reading: Exo. 17:9-16; 1 Sam. 15:1-33; Rom. 8:7-8, 13; Gal. 5:17, 24

Chapters one through seventeen of Exodus form a complete section. In this section we have a full picture of God's salvation, a picture that includes both the dealing with the world and the dealing with the flesh. God's chosen people were in bondage in Egypt, which signifies the world. Then God came in to deal with the world, to accomplish redemption, and to deliver His people from the world. Afterward, they enjoyed the supply of the heavenly manna and the living water. Then, in Exodus 17, God dealt with Amalek, that is, with the flesh.

If we have a bird's-eye view of the first seventeen chapters of Exodus, we shall see a picture of God's salvation which begins with the dealing with the world and concludes with the dealing with the flesh. This picture enables us to realize that, as God's chosen people, we once were under the tyranny of the world. But after we were redeemed, saved, and delivered, we began to enjoy the divine provision of manna and living water. One day, however, we had to face a very subjective enemy—the flesh. This enemy seeks to trouble us, to occupy us, and even to destroy us.

The next section of the book, chapters eighteen through forty, is a long section related to the kingdom. This indicates that after we have been delivered out of the world, have enjoyed the divine provision, and have dealt with the flesh, we shall be in the kingdom. What good news this is!

Perhaps you have never realized that these chapters are related to the kingdom. Your only realization may have been that these chapters cover the building up of the tabernacle as God's dwelling place. It is crucial to realize, however, that apart from the kingdom there is no possibility for God's house to come into existence. Only when we defeat the enemy, overcome the world, and deal thoroughly with the flesh shall we be in the kingdom. In the kingdom it is possible for us to build up the tabernacle as God's dwelling place. The principle is the same with the building of the temple. After David fought the battle against the enemies and gained the victory, Solomon enjoyed the kingdom. In this enjoyment the temple was built. In the second section of Exodus, chapters eighteen through forty, we see that God's redeemed people were in the enjoyment of the kingdom. Having been delivered from the world and having dealt with the flesh, they were able to build the tabernacle as God's dwelling place.

According to the New Testament, the Devil, the world, and the flesh are called the enemies of God (Matt. 13:25, 39; Rom. 8:7-8; James 4:4). In Exodus Satan is signified by Pharaoh, the world is signified by Egypt, and the flesh is signified by Amalek. After these three enemies have been dealt with, the kingdom of God comes in.

I. AMALEK—THE FLESH FULL OF ENMITY AGAINST GOD

In the Old Testament no enemy is dealt with more thoroughly than Amalek, because Amalek is a type of the flesh, which is the last enemy against God's kingdom. The flesh is what keeps the church from being built up adequately. As long as the flesh remains a problem, the kingdom cannot come. The kingdom comes in only after the flesh has been dealt with. For the sake of the church life, we need to deal with our flesh. If the flesh is not dealt with, there can be no kingdom of God. Then without the kingship of Christ, His headship, there is no way for the Body to be built up. This is the reason that, during the past

nineteen hundred years, there has been very little building of the church. The confusions and divisions among Christians today are primarily due to the flesh, to Amalek. Among Christians Amalek is prevailing. Because of this, we do not have the kingdom of God in a practical way. Without the kingdom, it is impossible to have the building. Among the vast majority of Christians, it is not possible even to speak about the building of the church.

We thank the Lord that by His mercy and grace we in His recovery have learned something of the importance of dealing with the flesh. Although the flesh remains a problem, we dare not let our flesh be unrestrained. We simply do not have the boldness to stay in the flesh. However, many Christians are extremely bold to be in the flesh. How strong is Amalek today! Because Amalek prevails, there is no kingdom and no building.

In his writings Paul thoroughly deals with the flesh. He uses certain expressions to show that the flesh is enmity against God. For example, in Romans 8:7 he says that "the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." The flesh is ugly for the simple reason that it is not subject to the law of God. From God's point of view, the flesh is lawless. Lawlessness prevails among many Christians today. The flesh is lawless in its inability to be subject to God.

In 8:8 Paul goes on to say, "And those who are in the flesh cannot please God." The flesh is not subject to the law of God, it cannot be subject to the law of God, and it cannot please God. Therefore, in the eyes of God there is no place for the flesh. It must be terminated.

The flesh denotes the totality of the fallen old man. Hence, the flesh does not refer simply to part of our being, but to our entire fallen being. According to Romans 6:6, the old man has been crucified with Christ. Because the old man is hopeless, God put it on the cross and crucified it with Christ. As we shall see, we need to cooperate with God in what He has done by crucifying the flesh (Gal. 5:24).

The destiny of the flesh is to be put to death. No matter how the flesh may appear to us, in God's eyes it is rebellious and despicable. For this reason, God has decided to blot out the name of Amalek.

II. JEHOVAH HAVING WAR WITH AMALEK FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

God also determined to have war with Amalek from generation to generation. In many places in the Old Testament we see that God's people fought against Amalek. We see this in Judges 3:13-15; 5:14; 6:3; 7:12-14; 1 Samuel 15:2-9, 32-33; 27:8; 30:1-17; 2 Samuel 8:12; 1 Chronicles 4:42-43. We see the war with Amalek even in the book of Esther (3:1-6; 9:7-10), where we are told that Haman was an Agagite, a descendant of Agag, the king of Amalek who was cut in pieces by Samuel (1 Sam. 15:33). Although Agag was slain, certain of his descendants survived. Haman was a late descendant of Agag. God hates the flesh signified by Haman. According to the book of Esther, the flesh works in a hidden way to undermine God's people and even to kill them. Today Haman, the flesh, tries to work in the church. Haman's plot to annihilate the children of Israel was eventually exposed and thwarted. Esther was exercised to deal with Haman, the hidden flesh. Through her help, Haman was put to death. Thus we see that the book of Esther is a story of God's war with Amalek, the continuation of the warfare with Amalek from generation to generation.

III. HOW TO FIGHT AGAINST AMALEK

A. By Praying with the Interceding Christ

We come now to the important matter of how to fight against Amalek. In the first place, we fight by praying with the interceding Christ (Exo. 17:11). Moses lifting up his hand on the mountaintop typifies the interceding Christ in the heavens. We are told in 17:12 that when Moses' hands were heavy, "Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other side; and

his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." What is the significance of this? We have pointed out that Moses here is a type of Christ interceding for us in the heavens. But we cannot say that Christ's hands are heavy, can we? Surely Christ does not need anyone to stay up His hands. There is no Aaron or Hur in the heavens helping Christ with His intercession. It seems, then, that the type is not altogether fitting. However, since the Bible was inspired by God, there must be something here related to our spiritual experience.

If we consider these verses in the light of our experience, we shall understand that to deal with the flesh we not only need Christ's intercession for us in the heavens, but we ourselves also need to pray. Some Christian teachers emphasize the objective work of Christ in the heavens. They point out that Christ is in the heavens now interceding for us. Others devote a great deal of attention to the importance of fasting and praying. If one is troubled by the flesh in a certain aspect, they would advise him to fast and pray. For our experience we need both the objective aspect and the subjective aspect. As we have pointed out, Moses praying on the mountaintop typifies Christ interceding for us in the heavens. But the fact that Moses needed Aaron and Hur to stay up his hands signifies our need to pray. While Christ is praying in the heavens, we must pray here on earth. When we pray, we are one with Moses on the mountaintop. But when we put the flesh to death, we are one with Joshua fighting in the valley.

Although the interceding Christ does not need anyone to support His hands, we need our praying hands to be stayed up. It is easy for them to become heavy. We know that to deal with the flesh we need to pray. But often our hands become heavy. Thus, we need the help of Aaron and Hur.

Aaron, the high priest, signifies the priesthood, and Hur, who was of the tribe of Judah, signifies the kingship. The grandson of Hur, Bezaleel, was given the ability to work on the fixtures for the tabernacle (31:2-5). As we

shall see when we consider the later chapters of Exodus, the tabernacle, God's building, was constructed by the priesthood and the kingship. Our prayer needs to be sustained by the priesthood and the kingship. Sometimes our praying hands become heavy not because we lack the desire to pray, but because we are lacking in incentive and encouragement. This means that we may be in need of Aaron and Hur, in need of the priesthood and the kingship.

The priesthood is related to the Holy of Holies. In our experience, the Holy of Holies is always related to our spirit. Hence, to be heavy in prayer indicates a problem or shortage in our spirit. For some reason, our spirit is not keen, active, or positive with the Lord. This causes our prayer to become heavy. Our experience confirms this. At such times of heaviness, we should not deal with our prayer by trying to pray more. Instead, we should deal with our spirit. In our spirit there is the shortage of the priesthood. We need Aaron, the high priest, to strengthen our spirit.

Another reason for heaviness in prayer is rebellion against the kingship. If you say that you are not rebellious, then I would inquire about the matter of disobedience. Can you say that you are never disobedient toward the Lord? For example, a sister may sense a restraining of the Lord keeping her from going to a department store, but she may disobey this restraint and go anyway. In the course of a single day we may disobey the Lord many times. We go against the authority, the kingship, within us. Therefore, due to the shortage of the kingship, we easily become heavy in prayer.

Our prayer also becomes heavy when we do not care for the building up of the tabernacle. Hur is related to the building. In fact, the direction of the book of Exodus is toward the building of the tabernacle. We have pointed out that Bezaleel, the grandson of Hur, was granted the gift by God to become skilled in working on various aspects of the tabernacle. This indicates that our prayer needs to be with a view to the building of the church. What God is doing today is toward this goal. If our prayer life does not have

in view the building of the church, our prayer will not last very long. But if we have the priesthood and the kingship and care for the building up of the tabernacle, the church, our prayer life will not become heavy. Rather, it will be supported by the priesthood and the kingship, and it will have the building of the church in view. Then we shall be able to fight against the flesh, Amalek, by means of our prayer.

In our prayer we should be one with Christ in the heavens. We need to join Christ and be one with Him in His intercession. We should make His prayer our prayer, His intercession our instant prayer. Supported by the priesthood and the kingship, that is, stirred up in our spirit and subdued under God's authority, we need to pray with Him on the throne in the heavens. Furthermore, the direction of our prayer must be toward the goal of the building of God's house. If we have these factors—the priesthood, the kingship, and God's building in view—I do not believe our prayer can be stopped. The picture of Aaron and Hur holding up Moses' hands is a portrait of the union in prayer between Christ and us. When Christ intercedes, we pray. We join with Him in His intercession. This is the proper way for us to pray in dealing with the flesh.

Dealing with the flesh is not a shallow matter, for our entire fallen being is the flesh. In a sense, the flesh is just we ourselves. To deal with the flesh is much more difficult than to deal with the world or with sin. In order to deal with the totality of our fallen being, we need much prayer in union with the intercession of the heavenly Christ. To pray in this way, we must be identified with Christ and one with Him. As He prays in the heavens, we pray together with Him. If we would pray in this way, we need to be stirred in our spirit by the priesthood and subdued by the kingship. We also need to care for God's building. Then we shall have the necessary support to sustain our prayer life.

In 17:12 we are told that Aaron and Hur took a stone and put it under Moses, and he sat on it. This indicates that

our prayer life must have a solid base. When I was young, I learned to pray, but my prayer did not have a solid base. This is also true of many Christians today. They have learned to pray, but they lack a solid base for their prayer life. I do not believe that, according to the context of Exodus 17, the strong base for our prayer life is Christ directly. Instead, I believe that the stone used as the strong base refers to our realization that in ourselves we are not able to sustain a prayer life. It is the recognition of the fact that we need support. In our natural life we, like Moses, are not able to persevere in prayer. We simply cannot continue our prayer all day long. Thus, we need to realize our weakness. This realization gives us the strong base we need for our prayer life.

When you are about to pray, you need to realize that in yourself you are not able to pray. Every praying person can testify that it is not possible to have a prayer life without a strong base. We need something solid to uphold our life of prayer. Whenever you pray, tell the Lord, "Lord, I am not able to continue in prayer. I need a solid base for my prayer, and I take You as such a base."

We are told that Moses prayed until sunset. We may have a good time of prayer early in the morning, but we usually cannot continue until noon, much less until the end of the day. Are you able to keep yourself in the spirit of prayer from early morning until noon? Probably few among us are able to do this. Moses was able to pray until sunset because he had a rock, a solid base, to sit on, and because he had Aaron and Hur supporting him. Be encouraged to tell the Lord, "Lord, I am not able to pray without ceasing. It is easy for me to lose my temper or to gossip. But I cannot pray continually. Lord, I can pray for a short time, but I can't pray all day long." If you say this to the Lord, you will find that you are sitting on a rock. You will then have a solid base for your prayer life.

I am burdened to share this point because I realize that one of the biggest problems we face is that of our prayer life. If we want our prayer life to be preserved, we need to take

care of four matters: the solid base, the priesthood, the kingship, and the building of the tabernacle. Then our prayer life will be upheld.

Verse 11 says, "And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." This indicates that whenever our prayer life becomes heavy, our flesh will prevail. We know this from our experience. Only a proper prayer life can defeat our flesh. Do not think that because you have been saved a long time and have had certain spiritual experiences, your flesh can no longer become prevailing. It is a fact that if our prayer ceases, our flesh will spontaneously show itself to be the same as that of unbelievers. No matter how rich our spiritual experience may be, this experience will not cause our flesh to improve. Our flesh will not even be influenced by it. The flesh cannot be influenced, changed, or improved, even after you have been a Christian for many decades. If your prayer ceases, your flesh will be the same today as it was before you were saved. Because the flesh does not change or improve, we need to pray without ceasing.

We have seen that genuine prayer causes us to be identified with the heavenly Christ. The experience of identification with Christ in the heavens takes place through a proper prayer life. Whenever we pray in a genuine way, we enjoy a heavenly union with Christ. This prayer, however, depends on a solid base, on the priesthood, the kingship, and the goal of God's building.

B. By Putting the Flesh to Death with the Fighting Spirit

We also fight against Amalek by putting the flesh to death with the fighting Spirit (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:17, 24). Romans 6:6 says that our old man has been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, in Romans 8:13, we see that we still must by the Spirit put to death the practices of the body. Furthermore, in Galatians 5:24 Paul tells us that those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh. If we do not

believe that our old man has been crucified with Christ on the cross, we shall not be able to deal with our flesh. Based upon the fact that our old man has already been crucified, we have the boldness and encouragement to put the flesh to death.

According to Romans 8:13, when we put to death the practices of the body, the Spirit works with us. This means that how much the Spirit works depends on how much we are willing to do. If we crucify the flesh, the Spirit immediately works together with us. We all appreciate the work of the Spirit. However, the Spirit does not work unless we work. The Spirit helps those who help themselves. However, it is a fact that even when we endeavor to help ourselves, we are still not able to accomplish anything. We need the Spirit, and the Spirit needs our cooperation. He waits for us to help ourselves. As soon as we do this, He comes in to do everything for us. By the Spirit who dwells in us, we thus put to death the practices of the body.

In principle, the matter is the same in Galatians 5. According to the context of this chapter, the Spirit and the flesh are fighting against each other. However, those who are Christ's must still crucify the flesh. As the Spirit fights against the flesh, we crucify the flesh. This is accomplished by our cooperation with the work of the Spirit.

On the one hand, we must pray with Christ; on the other hand, we must slay the flesh with the fighting Spirit. Today Christ is both in the heavens and within us as the fighting Spirit. In the heavens He is the interceding Moses, and in us He is the fighting Joshua. We need to be in union with the heavenly Christ in order to cooperate with the indwelling Christ. Then in a very practical way the flesh will be put to death.

C. By Putting to Death All Good or Bad That Is of the Flesh

If we would fight against Amalek, we must put to death all that is of the flesh, whether good or bad. Actually,

nothing of the flesh is good. But to our eyes certain aspects of the flesh seem to be good.

In 1 Samuel 15:3 the Lord charged Saul to "go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Although Saul utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword, he "spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and of the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly" (1 Sam. 15:9). Saul excused this by saying that "the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord" (1 Sam. 15:15). It is difficult to say whether or not Saul was lying. He may have kept the best of the sheep and oxen for his own use, not to sacrifice to the Lord. According to 1 Samuel 15:12 (ASV), Saul set up a monument, perhaps to commemorate his victory over Amalek. This indicates that he did not care for God's word or intention, but cared for his enjoyment and glory. When Samuel confronted Saul about what he had done, Saul continued to excuse himself by saying that he had obeyed the voice of the Lord, but "the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord" (v. 21). This indicates that the evil flesh was destroyed, whereas the seemingly good aspect of the flesh was allowed to remain.

Often we destroy the evil flesh, but we preserve the choice flesh, the good flesh. We all have certain good points, certain matters in which we think we are better than others. These aspects of the flesh are the "bleating sheep" and "lowing oxen." Whenever we claim to be better than others, we allow the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen to be heard. Saul claimed to have performed the commandment of the Lord. However, Samuel said, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (v. 14). When Saul claimed that these were kept to be given in sacrifice to the Lord, Samuel

replied, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offering and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (vv. 22-23). Preachers often speak on these verses. Nevertheless, instead of obedience and hearkening, among today's Christians there is much bleating of the sheep and lowing of the oxen. If we would deal with our flesh, we must deal with it thoroughly, utterly putting to death all that is good or bad. As long as something is of the flesh, it must be dealt with.

D. By Obedience to the Lord's Word

Fighting against Amalek also requires obedience to the Lord's word (1 Sam. 15:22-23). At the time of Saul, obedience was only to the word in an outward way. Today we must obey the inner anointing. Whenever we disobey the anointing within, the flesh immediately becomes prevailing. But if we always obey the inner anointing, we shall pray with Christ and cooperate with the indwelling Spirit. This will enable us to overcome the flesh and put it to death. This is the way to fight against the flesh.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FORTY-EIGHT

AMALEK VERSUS KINGSHIP

Scripture Reading: Exo. 17:12, 16; 1 Sam. 15:2-3, 7-9, 10-29

A basic principle in the Bible is that the spiritual things revealed in the New Testament are portrayed by the pictures, or types, in the Old Testament. This is true in the case of the flesh, typified by Amalek. In his writings, Paul dealt with the flesh in a thorough way. In the entire Bible there are no stronger words concerning the flesh than those used by Paul in Romans 8. In verse 7 Paul says that "the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God" and that it is "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." In the following verse he goes on to say that "those who are in the flesh cannot please God." In Galatians 5 Paul also speaks strongly and emphatically about the flesh. However, if we had only Romans 8 and Galatians 5, we would still find it difficult to have an adequate understanding of what the flesh is, because in the Bible the term "flesh" is used in several different ways with many different meanings. Thus, it is difficult to know the flesh and to deal with it.

I. ISHMAEL, THE ISSUE OF THE FLESH, VERSUS ISAAC, THE ISSUE OF GRACE

We thank the Lord for the pictures of the flesh provided in the Old Testament. One such picture is that of Ishmael in the book of Genesis. After man had fallen again and again until, at Babel, he reached the lowest point, God came in to call out Abraham and promised to do certain things for him. In His contact with Abraham, God did not require Abraham to do anything other than to leave his

father's country. Students of the Bible realize that God's contact with Abraham was related to the promise He made to Abraham. In Genesis 12 we have the promise, and in Genesis 15, the promise ratified to become a covenant. In Genesis 17 circumcision became the sign, or seal, of the covenant ratified in Genesis 15. God's promise to Abraham was repeated to his son, Isaac, and to his grandson, Jacob. God had promised that He would do something for Abraham which would cause all the nations on earth to be blessed. What a great promise this was!

The nature of God's promise to Abraham was grace. This means that God did not want Abraham to do anything to fulfill this promise. Instead, God wanted to do everything for him. Like Abraham, whatever we are and have is of the flesh. Furthermore, whatever we are capable of doing is according to the flesh. For us to do something to fulfill God's promise means that we exercise our flesh in some way. This was the reason that God did not require Abraham to do anything to fulfill the promise. God wanted to do everything. This is grace.

However, Abraham acted upon Sarah's proposal to produce a seed by Hagar. In doing this, Abraham exercised his flesh, and the result, the issue, produced was Ishmael. God wanted Abraham to be terminated. But, at the age of eighty-six, Abraham took Hagar and produced Ishmael by her. For the next thirteen years, God did not appear to him. Then, when Abraham was ninety-nine, God came to rebuke him and to reaffirm the promise He had made to him. At that time Abraham realized that he had been wrong.

The result of the exercise of the flesh is Ishmael. Ishmael is versus Isaac, who is the result, the issue, of grace. Grace is God becoming everything to us. In particular, grace is God as our strength and enjoyment. God had promised Abraham that He would give him a son. But God did not want Abraham to produce the seed. Therefore, God waited until Abraham regarded himself as dead, totally without ability to beget a child. Then, when in the eyes of both Abraham

and Sarah it was impossible for them to have a son, God came in to enable them to have a child. According to the record in Genesis, the birth of Isaac was the coming of the Lord. When Isaac was born, God came. This, of course, does not mean that Isaac was the Son of God. It means that Isaac was born not through the exercise of man's flesh, but according to God's grace, according to God's visitation. Isaac, therefore, is the issue of grace. Ishmael, the issue of man's flesh, is versus Isaac.

Isaac was a person produced out of God's grace to fulfill God's eternal purpose. This is a matter of great significance. Thus, it is a very serious thing to be versus Isaac. For Ishmael, the issue of the flesh, to be versus Isaac, the issue of God's grace, is rebellion, a great rebellion against God's eternal purpose.

It is very difficult to define adequately what the flesh is. In this message I would like to set forth a particular definition of the flesh: the flesh denotes anything that does not work by grace. Grace is the Triune God becoming everything to us and doing everything for us. The New Testament reveals that grace does not refer to material blessings. According to the New Testament, grace is God Himself not only being our enjoyment, but also doing everything for us. Whatever we do is of the flesh, but whatever God does for us is grace. If I speak in myself without depending on God, my speaking is of the flesh, even if the subject is the Bible or spiritual doctrine. This indicates that even in speaking about spiritual things or scriptural things, we may be of the flesh. Whatever we do, good or evil, apart from grace is the flesh. For example, if a brother loves his wife by the self rather than by grace, his love is of the flesh.

In a sense the so-called good flesh is more hateful to God than the evil flesh. In 1 Samuel 15 we see that God hated the good aspects of Amalek. Therefore, whatever we do without depending on God and trusting in Him is of the flesh, no matter how good that thing may be. Anything that is not done by God is of the flesh. If I visit you in myself

and not by God, that is of the flesh. If I pray for others without depending on God, but instead pray in the self, that prayer is of the flesh. Do not think that the flesh refers only to evil matters or to lust. It is obvious that such things are of the flesh. The flesh also includes good things. Notice the words "best" and "choice" in 1 Samuel 15. Saul spared the best cattle and the choice spoil. Related to the flesh are things which are the "best" and which are "choice." Therefore, we say once again that whatever we do without the Spirit, without depending on God and trusting Him, no matter how good it may seem, is of the flesh. Whatever has its source in ourselves is an Ishmael.

Isaac typifies Christ. Hence, the issue of the flesh, typified by Ishmael, is versus Christ. God's intention is to work Christ into us. But the flesh works in a way that is versus Christ. The result, the issue, of the flesh is versus Isaac. Whenever we exercise our flesh, we produce an Ishmael, and this Ishmael is invariably versus Christ. Ishmael cuts us off from grace and keeps us from Christ. For this reason, in John 15 the Lord Jesus said that apart from Him we can do nothing. However, we have done a great many things apart from Christ. But all the good we have done apart from Christ is an Ishmael who is versus Christ.

Ishmael keeps us from fulfilling God's eternal purpose. We cannot fulfill God's purpose as long as we exercise our flesh and do not trust in God, depend on Him, or live in oneness with Him.

We are accustomed to do so many things apart from Christ. We all condemn sinful things. But not many condemn good things, even those seemingly spiritual things, which are done apart from Christ. Have you ever condemned yourself because you prayed for a certain thing in the flesh? The issue of praying in the flesh will also be an Ishmael of some kind. This Ishmael is versus Christ and frustrates us from enjoying the grace of God for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

Man's flesh is versus God's grace. This means that

whatever man does apart from God Himself is a frustration to God's purpose. This is a serious matter. We must admit that we still do many things through the exercise of our flesh. Some, however, may deny that they exercise the flesh. Yet they do not depend on the Lord either. As long as we fail to rely on the Lord, we are in the flesh and are exercising the flesh. Simply by not trusting in the Lord, we are spontaneously living in the flesh.

We need to learn not to do anything by the exercise of our flesh. Sometimes when my flesh has been strong, I did not even dare to speak to a brother. I realized that anything I would say would be of the flesh. Thus, the best thing to do was not to do anything. At such times I can only say, "Lord, forgive me. I cannot do anything. Because I dare not bring forth an Ishmael, I do not have the boldness to do anything."

II. AMALEK VERSUS KINGSHIP

The second picture of the flesh is that of Amalek in the book of Exodus. In this picture we see how to deal with the flesh, a subject we covered in the foregoing message. If we would deal with the flesh, typified by Amalek, we must be identified with the interceding Christ in the heavens and join ourselves to the fighting Spirit within us. In this message we need to see that the flesh is not only versus grace, but that it is also versus kingship. For this reason, the flesh must be thoroughly dealt with before the kingdom of God can come. Where the flesh is, there can be no kingdom of God. Only when the flesh is dealt with is it possible for the kingdom to come.

In Romans 8:7 Paul says that it is not possible for the flesh to be subject to God. The kingdom of God denotes the authority of God by which all things are made subject to God. But it is not possible for the flesh to be subject to God. It is utterly opposed to God's throne.

A. A Hand against the Throne of Jehovah

In Exodus 17:16 we see that Amalek is a hand against

the throne of Jehovah. In the eyes of God, Amalek was considered a hand against God's throne. This indicates that Amalek tried to overthrow God's throne, just as Satan once tried to do. Exodus 17:16 says that because there is such a hand against the throne of Jehovah, God will have war with Amalek from generation to generation (Heb.). By this we see that Amalek is versus God's authority.

Every aspect of our flesh, whether good or evil, is an enemy of God's authority. The flesh does not care for God or for His authority. Whenever we are in the flesh, we regard ourselves as individuals who are not obligated to submit to God's throne. We think that we have a position and rights of our own. Such a rebellious attitude has its source in Satan. Satan, however, is one with our flesh. Satan's principle is not to come to us directly, but to come through others or through something in ourselves. For example, Satan came to Eve in the form of a serpent. In Matthew 16, Peter, a disciple who loved the Lord Jesus very much, was utilized by Satan. Satan came to the Lord in Peter and through him. Often our flesh serves as a cloak for Satan. Whenever we exercise our flesh, Satan is hidden within us. Therefore, like Satan himself, the flesh is against God's authority. According to the portrait in Exodus 17, Amalek is a hand against the throne of God.

B. Hur of the Tribe of Judah Staying Up Moses' Praying Hand against Amalek

When Moses' praying hand became heavy, there was the need of the support by the priesthood, represented by Aaron, and by the kingship, represented by Hur, who was of the tribe of Judah. Because Amalek is a hand against God's throne, there is the need for the praying hand to be supported by the kingship in the warfare against Amalek. The kingship is a support to our prayer life. If we are not under God's authority, but are rebellious, our prayer life is finished. But the more we are subject to God and His authority, the greater will be our desire to pray. When we rebel against God and reject His authority, our appetite for

prayer disappears. Suppose concerning a certain matter you disobey the inner anointing. As a result, for a period of time, perhaps several days, you have no desire to pray. Thus, it is crucial for us to learn to honor God's kingship, to honor God's authority. Our attitude should be to say, "Lord, I don't want to do anything without You. I need You as my grace. The flesh is simply myself doing things apart from You. I don't want to live without You as my grace." We all need to pray with such a spirit.

We should also pray, "Lord, help me to honor Your authority, Your kingship, and to always be subject to You. Lord, You have the authority. I need to obey You and be subject to You." If we maintain such an attitude, our appetite and desire to pray will increase. If, for example, we are led of the Lord to go shopping, we shall be filled with prayer as we go shopping. Whereas rebellion kills our appetite for prayer, obedience increases the desire for prayer.

Because Amalek is involved with God's kingdom, we need the support of both the priesthood and the kingship in order to fight against Amalek. If we try to deal with the flesh without caring for God's authority, we are wrong. In principle, we ourselves are against God's kingdom. We need the support of the kingship, of Hur, in our prayer life. Continually we should look to the Lord for grace to be subject to His authority. In this way we honor God's authority and strengthen the kingship in our experience.

C. The Kingdom Coming after the War against Amalek

In Exodus 18 we have a type, a portrait, of the kingdom of God. The fact that this portrait is presented after the war against Amalek indicates that when Amalek is dealt with, the kingdom with the kingship immediately comes in. This also indicates that Amalek is versus kingship.

D. King Saul Losing His Kingship

In 1 Samuel 15, another portion of the Word concerning Amalek, we see how King Saul lost his kingship.

Although Saul was properly anointed to be king, he lost the kingship because of the way he dealt with Amalek. From this we should learn to be careful in dealing with the flesh. We may deal with it in such a way that we shall lose our kingship.

According to Revelation 5:10, we Christians have been saved to be not only priests, but also kings. We are today's Aarons and Hurs. We have been born into a royal family, a kingly family. Peter says that we are a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9). However, not many Christians realize that they are kings by birth. Those who have some realization of this fact may pay little attention to it. Since we are kings, we should conduct ourselves like kings.

When we contact certain Christians, we sense that they bear the kingship, the authority. But when we contact other believers, we sense that they are lacking in the kingship. They are very far below the level of kingship. Since we have been born kings and shall be kings in the future, it is important for us to exercise our kingship today.

1. Not Utterly Destroying Amalek

Saul lost the kingship because he did not utterly destroy Amalek. According to 1 Samuel 15:3, Saul had been charged to "go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Whatever belonged to Amalek was to be destroyed utterly. Nothing was to be spared. Although Saul did destroy the Amalekites, he did not do so in an absolute way.

2. Sparing Agag, the King of the Amalekites, and the Best of the Cattle

First Samuel 15:9 says, "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was

vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly." Saul spared the best of the sheep and the "choice of the things which should have been utterly destroyed" (v. 21, Heb.). This portrays the fact that, experientially, we treasure the good aspects of our natural life, our natural virtue, for example, and do not wish to destroy them. We all treasure the good points of our flesh. All of us are Sauls. When we are charged by God to destroy the flesh, we destroy the negative things, such as our temper. But few are willing to destroy the good aspects of the natural life. No matter what kind of persons we may be, we all treasure the choice parts of our natural being. However, we should be encouraged by the fact that the Lord is still working on us and within us. From the New Testament we can see that Paul and John were delivered from their flesh. They utterly destroyed Amalek.

We need an intense light to shine upon us to show us that whatever we are in the natural life is Amalek. The Amalek within us must be utterly destroyed. We should not take any excuse for sparing any aspect of the Amalek within us.

Saul tried to excuse his failure to utterly destroy Amalek. First, he claimed that "the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen" (v. 15). I cannot find a verse in 1 Samuel 15 which tells us that Saul wanted to kill all the cattle, but the people refused to do so. I believe that Saul was lying in blaming the people for this. Saul must have been very pleased about his victory over Amalek. He even set up a pillar, a monument, for himself to serve as a memorial of his achievement (v. 12, ASV).

Second, Saul told Samuel that the best of the sheep and oxen had been spared for the purpose of offering sacrifice to God (vv. 15, 21). I do not believe, however, that Saul had such a heart for the Lord. Instead, I believe that he was lying to Samuel about the purpose of sparing the best sheep and oxen.

As I read 1 Samuel 15, I have no trust that in myself I am any better than Saul. I recognize that the picture of

Saul portrays what is in me. In the matter of making excuses, we may be even worse than Saul. Every excuse is a lie. This is also true with us. Never try to excuse yourself to the Lord. No excuse can stand before Him.

Do not excuse your failure to utterly destroy the flesh. Do not say that you have a particular habit and cannot do anything about it. The claim that you cannot destroy it is a lie. If we review our past, we shall see how many times we have failed to utterly destroy the flesh. We did not obey God's commandment to utterly destroy Amalek. Very few among the Lord's people are absolute in destroying the flesh. This is the reason that in our practical daily life we do not have much sense of the kingship. Because we have not utterly destroyed Amalek, in our experience the kingdom has not come in full.

Recently in a particular meeting I pointed out that we all have peculiar traits which hinder us from enjoying Christ. Another thing that damages our spiritual life is our habits, which preserve the good aspects of the flesh. We are in the habit of destroying the evil aspects of the flesh and preserving the good aspects. Not many among us truly hate the "good flesh." Nevertheless, we must come to hate every aspect of the flesh, because it is versus grace and keeps us from enjoying Christ. We must also hate the flesh because it is versus the kingship.

Sparing the good aspects of the flesh causes a definite shortage of spiritual authority. Many believers lack the weight of spiritual authority simply because they have not utterly dealt with their peculiarities. Culture, opinions, peculiarities, and habits are all hiding places of the flesh, and these damage our spiritual life. Because we spare the good aspects of the flesh, these aspects consume our kingship, our authority. As those who have been in the Lord for many years and who love Him and seek Him, we should have considerable spiritual weight. We should be filled with the kingship, with divine authority. But in many cases the opposite is true. Because they have not destroyed the "Agag" within them and the best cattle of Amalek, many

saints are lacking in authority, in kingship, in spiritual weight.

3. Evil in the Sight of Jehovah to Spare the Best of the Cattle for Sacrifice unto Him

God would not accept Saul's excuse that the people had spared the best of the cattle and oxen to offer as a sacrifice unto the Lord. God had commanded Saul to utterly destroy everything belonging to Amalek, and Saul was without excuse. God did not want the best of the cattle to be used as a sacrifice for Him. In His eyes, such a thing was evil (1 Sam. 15:19). This indicates that we may regard a certain thing as suitable to be offered to the Lord. But to Him it is evil to present that thing as a sacrifice. Consider as an illustration the case of Cain, whose sacrifice was evil in God's eyes. Many of today's Christians are offering things which God regards as evil. They claim to be engaged in spiritual service, but God says that their offering is evil because it has its source in the flesh. Anything presented and sacrificed to God that has its source in the flesh is evil in His sight.

4. Committing a Presumptuous Sin by Offering Sacrifices to God according to Man's Will

By offering sacrifices to God according to man's will, Saul committed a presumptuous sin. Samuel said to him, "Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22, Heb.). To offer something to God according to our own will is presumptuous. Even if we present something good, we are still committing a presumptuous sin. God did not command Saul to spare the choice cattle and present them to Him as a sacrifice. Saul was presumptuous to do this. This is sinful.

5. Committing Rebellion as the Sin of Witchcraft and Stubbornness as Iniquity and Idolatry

In 1 Samuel 15:23 Samuel went on to say, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." Witchcraft involves contact with demons. Samuel's word to Saul indicates that sparing our flesh is an act of rebellion which brings us into contact with demons. To offer sacrifice in the way Saul did is not actually to offer sacrifice to God; it is to come in contact with demons. Such rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft.

Furthermore, Saul's stubbornness was like iniquity and idolatry. The Hebrew word rendered iniquity in 1 Samuel 15:23 means idols of vanity. Saul's stubbornness was like the worship of a vain idol. He was not truly worshipping the Lord, but was worshipping an idol of vanity. Saul may have thought that he was worshipping the true God, but actually he was serving an idol. Samuel's word to Saul means that, because of his rebellion, Saul had become involved with demons and with the idols of vanity.

If instead of utterly destroying our flesh, we spare certain good aspects of the flesh, we also shall become involved with demons. Sparing the good flesh and then offering it to God is hateful to Him because in such a practice demons are involved. The idols of vanity are involved also. If we would follow the Lord's word to utterly destroy the flesh, we shall have the kingship and shall be in God's kingdom. But if we fail to carry out His word to destroy Amalek, we shall cut ourselves off from God's authority and become joined to the demons and to the idols of vanity.

It is crucial for us to see what the flesh is and how the flesh is versus grace and God's kingship. If we are careless in dealing with the flesh, we, like Saul, shall lose our kingship. Then we shall spontaneously join ourselves to the power of darkness. Apparently we are God's people, but actually we shall be worshipping the idol of vanity. How serious this is! Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and

stubbornness is as the idol of vanity. May the Lord have mercy on us that we learn what the flesh is and how to deal with it utterly.

The record in the Bible concerning Amalek teaches us that we must be in fear and trembling before God in doing good things. We all are afraid of doing evil. But we may not have any fear in doing good. The portrait of Amalek in the Old Testament shows us that to do good according to our own choices is even worse than doing evil because it is against the very throne of God. Cain's sacrifice seemed good, but it was actually an act of rebellion against God's throne and against His economy. Likewise, Saul spared the choice of the cattle of Amalek with the intention of offering it to God as a sacrifice. This was rebellion, which is related to witchcraft, to the contact with demons. Much of what is done by today's Christians supposedly for God is actually rebellion against God's economy and involves contact with demons.

Without 1 Samuel 15:22 and 23, we would not realize that Saul's deed was an act of rebellion related to demons. But Samuel's word exposed the nature of what Saul had done. Apparently Saul intended to offer sacrifice to God. Actually his sacrifice was related to demons. This reveals the importance of realizing that whatever we do apart from God's grace and apart from depending on Him and trusting in Him is of the flesh. And whatever is of the flesh is against God's throne. It will be used by the subtle one, the enemy of God, to hinder God's purpose.

Many of today's Christians spare the best aspects of the flesh and offer them to God. Believers are even encouraged to offer the best of the natural life to God. In presenting such offerings, God's redeemed people do not reject the flesh and they do not depend on God. On the contrary, among many Christians today, the activities of the flesh are encouraged. Only the Lord knows how much of Christian activity today is related to demons and is thus a hindrance to God's purpose.

Under the light of God's Word, we must learn that in

serving God we need to be in fear and trembling lest we fail to trust in God or to depend on His grace. We should be fearful of doing even the best things in ourselves or according to our own will. We need to trust in the Lord and depend on His grace. We should be even more fearful in doing good than in doing evil. We all know that God condemns evil. Now we must learn that even in doing good, we may give opportunity to the flesh to produce an Ishmael. We may also give ground to Agag, king of Amalek.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FORTY-NINE

A TYPE OF THE KINGDOM

Scripture Reading: Exo. 18; Deut. 1:9-18

Apparently Exodus 18 is not a difficult chapter. However, it is actually the most difficult chapter in the book of Exodus to understand. To understand this chapter, we need to realize that, in principle, Exodus is a picture of God's full salvation. Every case and story recorded in this book is part of this portrait. In this message we shall consider what part of God's salvation is portrayed in chapter eighteen.

Some readers of the Bible may wonder why chapter eighteen is included in the book of Exodus. They may think that it would be better to go directly from chapter seventeen to chapter nineteen, from the defeat of the Amalekites to the mountain of God, where the people received the heavenly vision. Chapter eighteen seems to stand alone, having no connection with either chapter seventeen or nineteen. However, if we care for the principle that Exodus is a picture book portraying God's full salvation, we shall want to know the significance of Exodus 18 with respect to this portrait. What is the meaning, the significance, of this chapter in God's salvation?

I. HISTORY

If we read carefully the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, we shall find that what is recorded in Exodus 18 was not written according to the sequence of history. The events in Exodus 18 did not take place immediately after the events recorded in Exodus 17. Actually, the events in chapter eighteen took place after the building of the tabernacle

and not long before the children of Israel began their journey with the tabernacle toward the good land. Therefore, according to historical sequence, chapter eighteen should come after chapter forty. Deuteronomy 1:6-18 proves this. The time to which Moses refers in Deuteronomy 1:9 was the time the children of Israel were about to begin their journey with the tabernacle to the good land. At that time, Moses told the people that he alone could not bear their weariness, burden, and strife (Deut. 1:12, Heb.). That was the time captains were appointed over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

II. DOCTRINE

Since these things took place after Exodus 40, why are they recorded in Exodus 18 and inserted between chapters seventeen and nineteen? To answer this question we need to recognize another important principle: the Bible was written mainly to give us a complete revelation of God's economy. For this reason, sometimes the biblical record is not according to the sequence of history, but is instead according to doctrine. The Gospel of Matthew, for example, was not written according to the sequence of history; rather, it was written according to a particular doctrinal arrangement. The Gospel of Mark, on the contrary, was written according to the sequence of historical events. Matthew arranged the events according to doctrinal significance. This principle applies to the placement of Exodus 18.

To be sure, the book of Exodus does not record everything that happened to the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt and spent the first period of time in the wilderness. The same principle applies in the four Gospels. The Gospels do not include everything the Lord Jesus did in His life on earth. The writers of the Gospels selected certain things and put them together for the purpose of presenting a view of the divine revelation. Exodus was written in the same principle and for the same purpose. The purpose of Exodus is not to give us a detailed history of everything that happened

to the children of Israel; it was written to present a complete view of God's full salvation.

In Exodus 17 Amalek is defeated. This signifies the subduing of the flesh, which frustrates God's people from going on with Him. After the defeat of Amalek, there is the need of something to portray the kingdom of God. Under divine inspiration, Moses inserted an event which occurred later in order to fill the gap between chapters seventeen and nineteen and to show us that in God's full salvation the kingdom comes after the defeat and subduing of the flesh. After the defeat of Amalek, the kingdom is needed for the building up of God's dwelling on earth.

We have pointed out again and again that Amalek signifies the flesh, God's enemy within man. Satan is God's enemy. Through the fall of man, Satan has brought forth another enemy of God. This enemy, man's flesh, is God's enemy within man. In the eyes of God, the two greatest enemies of God are Satan and the flesh. In a sense, Satan also is in fallen man. But the actual subjective enemy of God in man is the flesh. For this reason, God hates man's flesh.

According to the New Testament, when man's flesh is defeated and subdued, the kingdom of God immediately comes in. This point is clearly indicated in Galatians 5:17-25. Galatians 5:17 says, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these oppose each other." Verse 21 tells us that those who practice the things of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God. Verse 24, using the phrase, "have crucified the flesh," refers to the cross. When the flesh is crossed out, the kingdom is present with us. This is confirmed by our experience. The Spirit is versus the flesh. In the Spirit there is the power to cross out the flesh. When the Spirit with the power of the cross defeats our flesh and causes it to be subdued, the kingdom of God is with us.

Four crucial words in Galatians 5:17-25 are flesh, Spirit, crucified (referring to the cross), and kingdom. Each of these four terms may be signified by a color: the

flesh by black, the Spirit by green, the cross by red, and the kingdom by blue. It may even be helpful to mark these words in our Bibles with these colors. The flesh certainly is black, whereas the Spirit is green, full of life. The red cross deals with the black flesh. This brings in the kingdom, signified by blue, the color of the sky. If we focus our attention on these four terms, we shall be enlightened. In our experience today we have the black of the flesh, the green of the Spirit, the red of the cross, and the blue of the kingdom.

The book of Exodus is composed of two main sections. Chapters one through seventeen make up the first section, and chapters nineteen through forty, the second section. In the first section we see that we, who were fallen, have been redeemed, saved, and delivered. Furthermore, we see that we have passed through the Red Sea and have entered into the wilderness, where we enjoy God's provision and defeat the flesh. What a wonderful salvation this is!

In the second section, chapters nineteen through forty, we have a revelation of the building up of God's dwelling place on earth. Several chapters in this section are concerned with the law. However, this fact should not keep us from having a complete view of the book of Exodus. The purpose of this book is to show God's full salvation for the building up of His dwelling place. In the first chapter we see God's chosen people in a fallen condition in Egypt, but in the last chapter we see the tabernacle as God's dwelling place. What a contrast! God's chosen people are saved all the way from their fallen condition into God's dwelling place.

At the beginning of the book of Exodus, the children of Israel, God's chosen people, are under the tyranny of the world. God saved them, delivered them, rescued them, and made them His dwelling place on earth. Thus, the focal point of the book of Exodus is not the giving of the law. Yes, this book definitely records the decree of the law. But if we only pay attention to this, we shall not see that the complete view of the book of Exodus encompasses God's

salvation for the building of His dwelling place. In the first seventeen chapters of this book we have a portrait of how God saved His people, delivered them, rescued them, and provided for them in the wilderness. Then He brought them to Mount Sinai to give them the vision of the building of His dwelling place so that they might build it according to this vision.

If we read the book of Exodus according to the natural concept, we shall emphasize the giving of the law. To us, the book of Exodus will primarily be a record of how God gave commandments, ordinances, and statutes through Moses. However, if we have a divine, spiritual viewpoint in reading this book, we shall realize that Exodus is not primarily a story of the giving of the law, but is an account of how God saved His chosen people and gave them a heavenly vision so that they could build His dwelling place on earth.

Even though we may pay attention both to the decree of the law and to the pattern of the tabernacle, deep within, our concept may be that Exodus is primarily for the decree of the law. We may pay far more attention to the law than to the tabernacle.

Between the two main sections of Exodus, the section on God's salvation and on God's building, there is the need for the kingdom. Without the kingdom, there is no result, no issue, of God's salvation. This is exactly the situation among many Christians today. Because few Christians deal with the flesh thoroughly, there is not found among them the proper result of God's salvation, that is, the kingdom. A certain Christian may be fundamental, scriptural, and ethical. Nevertheless, he may be altogether in the flesh. He may love others and be quite humble. But his love and humility may be of the flesh. Even his work of gospel preaching may be carried out in the flesh. In our preaching of the gospel we may be nice, pleasant, and humble, always talking kindly to others and never arguing with them. But all this seemingly good behavior may be of the flesh. It is one thing to preach the gospel in the Spirit and another

thing to preach the gospel in the flesh. God does not first care for what we do; He cares for the means by which we do things, for whether we do them by the Spirit or by the flesh.

There are many Christians who are not able to understand such a word about the flesh. They enjoy God's salvation to a certain extent, but in their enjoyment there is no proper result. If we enjoy God's salvation to the extent of defeating Amalek, of dealing with God's enemy within us, we shall have the kingdom of God as the issue, the result, of God's salvation. Throughout all my years in the ministry, I have never seen a group of Christians who know the flesh as thoroughly and who have such a proper fear of acting in the flesh as the saints in the Lord's recovery today. For this reason, we have the kingdom as the result of God's salvation.

When we are in the flesh, we are easily offended by others. But when we are in the Spirit, the opposite is true. It is very difficult for anyone to offend us. Furthermore, the flesh has its own preference, its own taste in doing things. For example, many Christians like to make a display of how much money they donate to some cause. They expect to receive public recognition for this. This is of the flesh. So much of what Christians do today is done in the flesh.

Certain ones who criticize the Lord's recovery have said that we are all under someone's control. However, it is a fact that we are not under the control of anyone or anything. I do not control others, and others do not control me. Furthermore, the elders do not control the saints. But we are all under the control of the living Spirit with the operating cross. This kills the flesh. I can testify that the Spirit with the cross keeps me from arguing with my wife. Sometimes a negative word has been on the tip of my tongue, but the living Spirit with the operating cross came in to subdue the flesh. Because both my wife and I experience the killing of the flesh, we have a peaceful married life. If this is our experience at home and in the church life, we are living in the kingdom.

Instead of explaining the kingdom, the book of Exodus gives us a picture of the kingdom. Exodus is a book of pictures, not a book of explanations or definitions. For example, Exodus does not attempt to define God's redemption. Instead, it presents the picture of the Passover. In this book there are no doctrinal definitions, but a full picture of God's economy. In chapter eighteen there is no mention of the word kingdom, but there is a clear picture of the kingdom. If we read this chapter with the proper realization, we shall see that it is a portrait of the kingdom of God.

III. THE PORTRAIT OF THE KINGDOM

A. The Israel of God Having Defeated God's Enemy

Now we shall consider the portrait of the kingdom in Exodus 18. As we have indicated, the kingdom comes in after God's enemy, Amalek, which typifies the flesh, has been defeated (17:13-16). The New Testament reveals that the kingdom comes when God's chosen people have defeated His enemy. Before the kingdom is presented in Exodus 18, God's enemy within us, typified by Amalek, is defeated in chapter seventeen.

B. The Gentiles Coming to Praise God and Worship Him

The Bible also indicates that when the kingdom comes as a result of the defeat of God's enemy, the Gentiles who are seeking God will come to worship Him. These Gentiles are represented by Jethro (18:1, 5, 10-12). Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was a priest of Midian. According to Judges 6:3, the Midianites were close to the Amalekites. The Midianites and the Amalekites were somewhat mixed together. After the Amalekites were defeated, certain of the Midianites came to God's people in a very godly way. Jethro was a priest not of idols, but of the true God. He praised God, worshipped God, and offered sacrifices to God. Therefore,

Jethro represents the Gentiles who turn to God and become seekers of God in the kingdom.

C. The Church Participating in the Kingdom

When the kingdom comes, the church participates in the kingdom. In fact, the church will be the ruling authority in the kingdom. In chapter eighteen the church is represented by Zipporah, the wife of Moses secured by him during his rejection by Israel (2:13-22). A number of Bible students realize that Zipporah typifies the Gentile church gained by Christ during the time of His rejection by the children of Israel. Even today Christ is still rejected by the Jews. During this period of rejection, Christ gains the Gentile church, taken out from the Gentile world, just as Moses gained a Gentile wife.

Thus far in chapter eighteen we have three main points: the defeat of the enemy, the coming of the Gentiles to worship God, and the church represented by Zipporah. Putting these points together, we have a picture of the kingdom. Some may disagree with the claim that the kingdom is portrayed in chapter eighteen. However, we are not going too far when we make this claim. If Paul had not told us that the Passover was a portrait of Christ, who would have had the boldness to say this? The Apostle Paul took the lead to allegorize the book of Exodus when he told us that Christ is our Passover. Furthermore, the manna and the smitten rock are also types of Christ, and the water from the rock is a type of the Spirit. We have also pointed out that in chapter seventeen Amalek signifies the flesh, Moses signifies the ascended Christ interceding for us, and Joshua typifies the indwelling Spirit fighting for us. With all this as the background, it is proper to say that Jethro and Zipporah in chapter eighteen also have a typical significance. Are Jethro and Zipporah merely historical figures? Certainly not. To say this is to fail to realize that Exodus is a book of pictures. As Pharaoh represents Satan and Egypt represents the world, so Jethro signifies the Gentiles, and Zipporah, the Gentile church. According to the principle

that all the items in Exodus are figures, the matters in chapter eighteen should not be considered as exceptions. We know that chapter eighteen portrays the kingdom because here we see that after God's people had defeated His enemy, the godly Gentiles turned to God's people to praise God, worship Him, and offer sacrifice to Him. We also see that the Gentile church is prevailing. When these three things all happen together, there is the kingdom of God.

We may apply the picture of Exodus 18 to our situation as Christians today. We know from our experience that when our flesh is defeated, the unbelievers will turn to us. It is good that all the churches are actively preaching the gospel. However, if we live in the flesh and fail to defeat Amalek, we may labor a great deal in preaching the gospel, but not many unbelievers will turn. But if we first defeat and subdue our flesh and then go forth to contact people and preach the gospel to them, Jethro will come to us. This means that the unbelievers will turn this way. When we preach the gospel by the living Spirit through the operating cross, killing the flesh, people will turn to us wherever we go. Furthermore, the church, signified by Zipporah, will become prevailing. Thus, the proper gospel preaching must be the kingdom. In the words of Matthew 24:14, the gospel of the kingdom must be preached to the whole inhabited earth.

The gospel must be the kingdom. If we live in the flesh, others will not turn to God through us, no matter how hard we work in preaching the gospel. We must be those who defeat Amalek. Then Jethro, representing the Gentiles, will turn to God through us, and the church will become prevailing.

D. The Authority and Order of the Kingdom

In 18:13-27 we have a picture of the authority and order of the kingdom. Christ, signified by Moses, is the Head of authority, and under the headship of Christ is the order of authority.

Some Bible teachers say that Jethro's proposal to Moses was according to the human way of organization. C. I. Scofield says that this organizational way was rejected by God in Numbers 11:11-17, 24-30. However, if we study carefully Exodus 18, Deuteronomy 1, and Numbers 11, we shall see that these portions of the Word are concerned with two different events and that the latter does not abolish the former. On the contrary, it strengthens the former. Whereas Numbers 11 speaks of seventy elders, there is no mention of elders in Exodus 18 or Deuteronomy 1. Instead, in these chapters we read of captains. Since the children of Israel must have been at least two million in number, the captains of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens must have numbered in the thousands. These captains are to be distinguished from the seventy elders.

If we compare Exodus 18 and Deuteronomy 1 with Numbers 11, we shall see that Numbers 11 covers a different subject from that covered in Exodus 18 and Deuteronomy 1. In these two chapters we read of the people's weariness, burden, and strife. But Numbers 11 describes the people's rebellion against God. Because of this rebellion, Moses complained to the Lord: "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me" (Num. 11:14). Then the Lord told Moses to gather seventy men of the elders of Israel (v. 16). The rebellion in Numbers 11 is very different from the weariness, burdens, and strife referred to in Exodus 18 and Deuteronomy 1. The purpose of the record of Exodus 18 and Deuteronomy 1 is to maintain a good order among God's people in His kingdom, whereas that in Numbers 11 is to take care of the relationship between God's people and God. Daily perhaps hundreds of problems were brought to Moses. This caused Jethro to propose that Moses appoint captains of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens to help him. The problems dealt with in Exodus 18 and Deuteronomy 1 were relatively minor, but Numbers 11 deals with the serious issue of our proper relationship with God. This was the reason that the Spirit of God came upon the seventy elders who became prophets. These seventy did

not replace the captains of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

My purpose in pointing out this matter is to help us see that Jethro's proposal was very positive. It depicts the order under divine authority in the kingdom of God. It helps us to see that in God's kingdom there is no disorder. Rather, under the headship of Christ, represented by Moses, everything is orderly. Under Christ's headship everything and everyone is in order.

If in a local church all matters, great and small, are referred to the elders, that church is weak. It is not the kingdom of God in a practical way. If a local church is truly the kingdom of God, there will be not only the elders, but also the captains. We have seen that in the picture in Exodus 18 Zipporah represents the church. What then do the captains represent? They represent the keeping of things in good order. Just as there was no need for everything to be referred to Moses, so there is no need in the church today for everything to be referred to the elders. Instead, there should be captains in the church life who, under Christ's headship, work out problems and maintain order.

Suppose two brothers have a problem with each other. If there is the need to call in the elders, the kingdom of God is not present in the church in a practical way. There is a definite lack of life and authority. Even among a small number of brothers and sisters, there should be a captain, someone who can remind others about the Spirit and the cross. If there is a captain to do this, the problem between the brothers will be solved, and the order will be maintained. The presence of the captains in the church life is a sign of the kingdom. It is an indication that we have Christ, signified by Moses, as our Head and that we are all under His headship.

In this message we have pointed out repeatedly that Exodus 18 presents a picture of the kingdom. In this chapter we see four aspects of this picture: the defeat of Amalek, the flesh, by God's people; the coming of the godly Gentiles

to seek God; the prevailing of the Gentile church; and the maintaining of a proper order. When these four matters are put together, we have the kingdom of God as the issue of the enjoyment of God's salvation and provision.

In the first seventeen chapters of Exodus, God's chosen people enjoyed His salvation and provision. Now in chapter eighteen we have the issue of this enjoyment—the kingdom as the sphere, the environment, where God's people may receive the vision of the pattern of God's dwelling and build the tabernacle according to this pattern. Because the kingdom is necessary for the building of God's dwelling place, Moses, under divine inspiration, inserted an event from Deuteronomy 1 between chapters seventeen and nineteen of Exodus in order to complete the picture of God's full salvation. According to our experience, we can testify that after we enjoy God's salvation and provision, we are brought into the kingdom of God, where everything is in order. How we praise the Lord for this! The presence of the kingdom enables us to build the tabernacle as God's dwelling place.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIFTY

BROUGHT INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND INTO THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM

Scripture Reading: Exo. 19:1-25; 3:1, 12; 5:1, 3a

If we read the book of Exodus in the spirit with much prayer and thereby enter into the spiritual significance of this book, we shall see that it portrays God's salvation from the beginning to its consummation. Exodus is composed of two main sections, chapters one through eighteen and chapters nineteen through forty. In the first section we see God's salvation, God's provision, the victory over the flesh, and, in chapter eighteen, a portrait of the kingdom of God. After God's chosen and called people had been brought into the kingdom, they were ready to accomplish God's purpose to build His dwelling place on earth. In this message we come to the second section of Exodus, which is concerned with God's dwelling place.

The main point in chapters nineteen through forty is that God's saved people are brought into the presence of God and into the knowledge of God. Using New Testament terms, the people are brought into fellowship with God.

There is no indication in the first eighteen chapters of Exodus that the children of Israel had been brought into fellowship with God. Although God's people had experienced God's salvation, had enjoyed God's provision, and had been brought into God's kingdom, they had not yet been brought into such fellowship. However, beginning in chapter nineteen, they are brought into fellowship with Him.

Exodus 3:1 speaks of the mountain of God, Horeb. In 3:12 the Lord said to Moses, "When thou hast brought forth

the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." In chapter nineteen we see the children of Israel at the mountain of God, Mount Sinai, the place where God could contact His people. In 3:12 God said that His people would serve Him on the mountain of God. It is a very significant thing to serve God. In 5:1 Moses told Pharaoh to let the people go so that they might hold a feast unto the Lord in the wilderness. According to 5:3, the people were to make a journey of three days into the desert and there sacrifice unto the Lord. To sacrifice unto God is to offer something to Him, and to hold a feast unto God is to enjoy with God what is offered to Him. Up to the end of chapter eighteen, we have not yet seen the service, the sacrifice, or the feast. Although God's people had many experiences and much enjoyment, they had not yet begun to serve Him.

We have seen that in chapters twelve through fourteen God's people experienced His redemption and salvation. In chapters fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen they enjoyed God's provision. The bitter water was made sweet, the people enjoyed the twelve springs and seventy palms at Elim, and they partook of the manna and of the living water from the smitten rock. Through God's salvation and provision, His people were brought into a position of being in the kingdom of God. In the foregoing message we saw that chapter eighteen is a picture, a type, of the kingdom. We thank the Lord for the light He has shown us from this chapter.

In the early years of my ministry, I gave a number of messages on Exodus 19. Most of those messages, however, were on the negative points. In these messages, I prefer to stay away from the negative points and emphasize the positive ones. We need to have a positive impression of Exodus 19 and 20. Many Christian teachers emphasize the negative aspects of these chapters by pointing out that the law is good and spiritual, but we are fleshly, and the law cannot help us. Chapter nineteen of Exodus is actually very positive, for here God's chosen people are brought into fellowship with Him.

The distance between Egypt and Mount Sinai was a journey of about three days. I believe this was the reason Moses told Pharaoh that the children of Israel had to take a journey of three days into the wilderness. Furthermore, 4:27 indicates that Aaron was charged by God to meet his brother, Moses, at the mount of God in the wilderness. Although the distance from Egypt to Mount Sinai could be traveled in three days, it took the children of Israel more than two months. Although we could have entered into fellowship with God immediately after we were saved, in our experience most of us travel, journey, wander, instead. But in our wandering we enjoy God's provision. Even though our journey may be under God's care and according to His leading, we are not yet in fellowship with Him. But in Exodus 19 we have a very precious point—that God now brings His redeemed people into His presence. Prior to that time, they had heard about God. However, they had not heard God's voice directly. The same is true among many Christians today. Although they have heard about God, they have not experienced God's direct speaking. Before they came to the mountain of God, the children of Israel heard about God through Moses' preaching and teaching. But here God brought them directly into His presence. He came down upon the mountain, appeared to the people, and spoke to them. Thus, they heard the voice of God directly and personally, not indirectly through a mediator. In the presence of God they heard His direct speaking.

We should not read the book of Exodus simply according to the letters in black and white. Rather, we should regard everything in every chapter of this book as a picture. We have pointed out that every item in Exodus is a picture. Egypt is a picture of the world, and Pharaoh is a picture of Satan. Likewise, the Passover lamb, the crossing of the Red Sea, the manna, the living water from the cleft rock, and Amalek are also pictures. Moreover, Zipporah, Jethro, and the captains in chapter eighteen are pictures related to the kingdom. Now in chapter nineteen we have a portrait of

the fellowship between God's redeemed people and God Himself. Here His people are brought into the presence of God and into the knowledge of Him. They are brought into the fellowship of God and with God. According to the portrait presented in this chapter, God is present on earth, on the mountaintop, and the people are gathered around the mountain. What a marvelous sight!

I. HAVING EXPERIENCED GOD'S FULL SALVATION

If we would enter into fellowship with God, we need to experience His full salvation. We need to be saved from the condemnation of sin, the world, and Satan, as seen in chapters one through fourteen. Then we need to enjoy God's rich provision (15:1—17:7), conquer the flesh (17:8-16), and be brought into the kingdom of God (18:1-27). If we do not have such an experience and enjoyment, we shall not be able to have fellowship with God.

Our spiritual experience matches the experience of the children of Israel. First we are saved from sin, the world, and Satan. Then we enjoy God's provision. The bitter water is changed into sweet, and we eat of manna, the heavenly food, and drink the living water flowing from the smitten rock. Through the enjoyment of these divine provisions, we are equipped to conquer the flesh and subdue it. We should not excuse ourselves by saying that we are weak. If we make such an excuse for ourselves, we shall not come to God's mountain. The more excuses we make, the more we shall be kept away from the mountain of God. We need to say, "Yes, I am weak, but the Lord is not weak. I have Moses, the heavenly Christ, interceding for me, and I have Joshua, Christ as the life-giving Spirit, dwelling in me and fighting for me." We have the living Spirit with the cross operating to deal with our flesh. Once the flesh is slain, we are immediately in the kingdom. Then, in the kingdom, we are ushered into God's presence to enjoy fellowship with Him. Exodus certainly is a portrait of our spiritual experience. If we consider our experience, we shall realize that it corresponds to the record in this book.

II. BROUGHT INTO THE PRESENCE OF GOD

A. At Mount Sinai

The children of Israel were brought into the presence of God at Mount Sinai (19:11). The significance of Mount Sinai is that it is the place for God to speak. On Mount Sinai God did not perform miracles. Rather, He simply spoke. With God's speaking, there is also the heavenly vision. Therefore, the spiritual significance of the mountain of God is that it is the place of God's speaking with God's vision. First, the children of Israel heard God speaking, then they saw the vision. This vision was of the pattern for God's dwelling place on earth.

As we gather together in the meetings of the church, we should have God's speaking with His vision. In many of the so-called religious services today, there is no speaking of God and no vision from God. What an enjoyment to hear God's direct speaking and to see God's vision in the church meetings! Meeting after meeting, we may have God's speaking and see more of God's vision. It is a very great matter to hear God's speaking and to see His vision, especially the vision concerning His dwelling place. It is of vital importance that we go to the genuine mountain of God, to God's mountain on earth today.

According to the record in the Bible, God often spoke from a mountain. The Lord Jesus delivered the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens while on a mountain with His disciples (Matt. 5:1-2). It was also on a mountain that He uttered the prophecy concerning the end of the age (Matt. 24:3). God the Father spoke to Peter and the other disciples while they were on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-2, 5). John was carried away to a high mountain to see the vision of the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem. Thus, in our experience we need to come out of Egypt, cross the Red Sea, and journey through the wilderness until we arrive at the mountain of God. At this mountain we are brought into God's presence. Without His presence, what we say or do means nothing. His

presence is everything to us. Many of us can testify that whenever we gather together into the Lord's name, we enjoy His presence. We hear His speaking, and we see His vision at the mountain of God.

B. Through Sanctification

We are brought into the presence of God through sanctification. Exodus 19:10 says, "And Jehovah said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes" (Heb.). Verses 14 and 22 also speak of sanctification. To be sanctified is to be separated from the world unto God. When the children of Israel were assembled around Mount Sinai, they were far removed from Egypt. They had been separated from the world. At Mount Sinai they were living in God's presence, having been sanctified, separated, unto God in an absolute way. When we gather together in the church meetings, we should also be separated from the world unto God. Praise the Lord that we are a sanctified people!

C. In Resurrection

Exodus 19:11 says, "And be ready against the third day: for the third day Jehovah will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai" (Heb.). It is significant that this verse does not speak of the second day or the fourth day, but speaks of the third day. In the Scriptures the third day signifies resurrection. To be in resurrection means that the old has passed away and that we are altogether in a new position and situation.

Before God spoke to the people, the people prepared themselves. If God had come to speak to them on the first day, they would not have been ready. Suppose you had been among the children of Israel during those days of preparation. What would you have done? Certainly you would not have wasted time in idle conversation. Instead, you would have prayed, "Lord, show me anything that separates me from You. Lord, I don't want to have anything

between You and me." You would have used your time to get ready to meet with God. You would drop one thing after another until you were in resurrection, ready to meet the Lord. Instead of indulging in criticism, gossip, or complaining, you would pray until you were in resurrection, until the old things had passed away and you were altogether in a new position.

D. To Hear the Speaking of God

Having been brought into the presence of God, God's people heard His speaking (v. 9). This is fellowship. To have God's speaking is to be in God's presence.

III. BROUGHT INTO THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Whenever we are brought into the presence of God and enter into fellowship with God, we are spontaneously brought into the knowledge of God. Before we come into fellowship with God, we are ignorant of many things. We know neither the world nor God's building. We do not know the altar, the lampstand, the showbread table, or the ark. Everything revealed in chapters twenty-five through forty corresponds to what Paul describes as the full knowledge of God. Many Christians today are ignorant of what the church is. They do not know the ground of the church, the content of the church, or the function of the church. Before the children of Israel were brought into the presence of God, what did they know about the outer court, the holy place, or the Holy of Holies? Did they know anything about the ark made of acacia wood overlaid with gold? Certainly not! They were ignorant concerning these things.

When we come to chapter twenty, we shall see that the law is a revelation and description of God Himself. The law shows what kind of God He is. Before the children of Israel were brought into the presence of God, they did not have this knowledge of God, even though they had experienced His salvation, had enjoyed His provision, had defeated Amalek, and had been brought into the kingdom.

A. To Know the Grace of God

In the fellowship of God we first come to know the grace of God. In 19:4 the Lord said, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." This is grace. Isaiah 40:31 says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." Those who trust in the Lord will be carried on eagles' wings. Experientially, this is what Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 15:10: "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace unto me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." All that we experience of the Lord's salvation and provision is an experience of the wings of the great eagle. Perhaps you have been saved for many years without realizing that God has borne you on eagles' wings. You have been carried by the grace of God, and this grace has been doing everything for you. First, Christ is our Passover lamb; then He is an eagle.

Whenever I recall my years with the Lord, I am filled with gratitude. For more than fifty years, I have been the object of His mercy and grace. Throughout the course of these years, I have been carried by the wings of a great eagle. Many things which have taken place have been not at all according to my expectation. I thank the Lord that so many things did not work out according to my way, but according to His way. He always knows what I need. I never expected to come to this country, but the Lord has brought me here. Have you ever dreamed that you would be where you are today? In the words of a hymn written by Charles Wesley,

> 'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
> For, O my God, it found out me.

What a mercy to be carried on the wings of a great eagle! At the mountain of God, the children of Israel could say, "Lord, we are not here of ourselves. Your strong wings have brought us out of Egypt and carried us through the wilderness to this place, where we are here with You."

As we hear the Lord's voice and receive His revelation, we know His grace. The longer we remain in His fellowship, the more we know His grace and realize that we owe everything to it. Year after year, we have been carried on by the grace of God. Every morning I pray, "Lord, thank You for another new day to live You. Lord, I ask You to make this day full of Yourself. Please give me this day's portion of grace. Grant me grace today that I may live You and practice being one spirit with You."

B. To Know the Holiness of God

In the fellowship with the Lord we also begin to know the holiness of God (19:10-24). Exodus 19 shows the seriousness of honoring God's holiness. We must sanctify ourselves because God Himself is holy, and the place where He dwells is a holy place. In Exodus 19 Mount Sinai was a holy mountain because God had descended upon it. Because the mountain was holy, a boundary was set which the children of Israel were not permitted to cross. In verse 21 the Lord said unto Moses, "Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto Jehovah to gaze, and many of them perish" (Heb.). Moses answered, "The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it" (v. 23). To this, the Lord replied, "Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee" (v. 24). Only Moses and Aaron were privileged to cross the border. To be sure, they knew that their God was a holy God. Elsewhere the Lord charges the people, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). Because God is holy, the people had to sanctify themselves. To serve a holy God they had to be a holy people.

We should not take this word about God's holiness as a mere doctrine. If you consider your experience, you will see that in fellowship with the Lord you are first grateful to Him for His mercy and grace. Then you come to realize the need of holiness. In God's presence we must be holy. If we

would remain in fellowship with Him, we must sanctify ourselves and everything related to us. We must not cross the border of God's holiness. This is a very important lesson found in Exodus 19.

Because this chapter presents the details of fellowship with God, I appreciate it very much. I can testify that what it records corresponds to my experience. After I know the Lord's grace, I sense the need of holiness, of sanctification. Sanctification is the experiential aspect of holiness. When God's holiness becomes our experience, that is sanctification. We need to be separated from the world unto God. This is to honor the boundary of God's holiness. However, we all can testify that we lose the fellowship with God whenever we violate the boundary of His holiness. Only when we maintain holiness will our fellowship with God continue.

C. To Be God's Personal Possession and Peculiar Treasure

In fellowship with God we become God's personal possession and peculiar treasure (19:5). The Hebrew expression in verse 5 has a double meaning; it means both personal possession and peculiar treasure. For example, a sister may possess a very precious ring. That ring is her personal possession and also her peculiar treasure. She would not trade it for anything. Likewise, when God's redeemed people were brought into God's presence, they became His personal possession and peculiar treasure. Oh, we can become God's personal possession! We can become so dear and precious to Him that we become His peculiar treasure. This shows what intimate affection exists in our fellowship with God. Our fellowship with the Lord must reach the point that we enjoy such intimate affection with Him and He with us that God would say that we are His peculiar treasure, His personal possession. How intimate, dear, and precious! When we enter into such fellowship with God, He considers us as such a treasure and possession.

D. To Be a Kingdom of Priests unto God

According to 19:6, the children of Israel were to be unto the Lord a kingdom of priests. As we stay in the Lord's presence, we become a kingdom of priests to Him. What is portrayed concerning this in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament. We, the believers, are a kingdom of priests unto God (Rev. 1:6). As priests, we live in God's presence, enjoying Him as our portion, even as He enjoys us as His treasure. This is a mutual enjoyment. If such a thing could exist in Old Testament times, how much more should it be our experience in the New Testament age! What is depicted in the Old Testament is merely a picture; in the New Testament we have the reality. Praise the Lord that we are God's peculiar treasure and priests enjoying Him as everything to us!

E. To Be a Holy Nation

Eventually, we become a holy nation (19:6). The mutual enjoyment between God and His people separates them unto Himself. Nothing so separates us unto God as this mutual enjoyment. When God enjoys us as His peculiar treasure and we enjoy Him as everything to us, we are absolutely separated from everything other than God unto God Himself. As a result, we become a holy nation.

Exodus 19 is a precious chapter. Yes, it does speak of thunder, cloud, and smoke. If we do not care for the holiness of God, we shall experience these things. However, Moses and Aaron were not afraid of the thunder. They realized that the thunder, cloud, and smoke were not for them. Their portion was God's presence with His speaking and enjoyment. We need not be afraid of God, for He treasures us as His personal possession. We are priests unto Him and a holy nation. What need have we to be afraid?

What a tremendous difference there is between Exodus 1 and Exodus 19! In chapter one God's people were in Egypt under the tyranny of Pharaoh. But in chapter nineteen they are at the mountain of God, having become God's peculiar

treasure. Here they enjoy God to the uttermost and they are separated unto Him. Although we thank the Lord for this picture, we thank Him all the more that we today may enjoy the reality, the fulfillment.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIFTY-ONE

THE TESTIMONY OF GOD REVEALING HIM TO HIS PEOPLE

Scripture Reading: Exo. 20:1-17; 16:34; 25:16; 27:21; 31:18; 25:21-22; 26:33-34; 38:21; 34:28; Num. 1:50, 53; Deut. 4:13; Psa. 19:7

In chapter nineteen the children of Israel were brought into God's presence and began to have fellowship with Him at His mountain. In the foregoing message we pointed out that in this fellowship with God His people came to know God's grace and holiness. During the course of this fellowship, the law was given (20:1-17).

I. THE LAW AS THE TESTIMONY OF GOD

Exodus 20 has not been properly and adequately understood by many readers. It is commonly thought that this chapter tells us how the law was given. This is correct, but it is not the basic, primary concept. The basic concept in this chapter is that God reveals Himself to His people and thus enables them to know what kind of God He is. He wanted the children of Israel to know what kind of God they were approaching, what kind of God with whom they were having fellowship. It was important for the children of Israel not only to know such divine attributes as grace and holiness, but also to know God Himself.

In 20:4 the words image and likeness are used. Genesis 1:26, a verse which speaks of the creation of man, also uses the words image and likeness. God created man in His image and according to His likeness. As used in Genesis 1:26, the words image and likeness refer to God's Person, to God Himself and to what He is. Hence, man was made according to what God is. In 20:4, however, these words are

used in a warning: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." In verse 3 the Lord says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The word "before" here actually means besides, in addition to. Thus, the Lord seemed to be saying, "I am the unique One. Before Me, in addition to Me, you should not have any other god. You should not have any other image or likeness. The only image and likeness you should have should be Mine. I am unique and jealous. Do not make for yourselves an image or a likeness of anything." These verses indicate that the Ten Commandments first speak of God's image and likeness. In other words, these commandments refer us to God Himself. This indicates that the law does not merely consist of commandments for us to keep. Primarily, the law is a testimony which reveals what kind of God the Lord is.

Concerning the matter of law, there is an important principle: the kind of law a person makes expresses the kind of person that one is. For example, if criminals could make laws, they would legalize crime. Furthermore, a backward country would have rather barbaric laws, whereas a highly cultured society would have highly cultured laws. This principle applies also to God Himself. God is a Law-giver. In giving the law, He would never legalize crime or sin. He would not legalize theft or adultery, for He is not that kind of God. Only the god of witchcraft would legalize such things. A law is always a revelation of what kind of person has enacted that law.

The first function of the law is not to expose us; it is to reveal God to us. Years ago, I emphasized the fact that the law's function was to expose us. In this message, however, I wish to emphasize the point that the primary function of the law is to reveal God to us. After God brought His people into His presence to have fellowship with Him, to serve Him, to contact Him, to worship Him, and even to feast with Him, He made Himself known to them. Prior to this time, God had not revealed to His people what kind of God He is. Yes,

in Genesis 17 God did tell Abraham that He was perfect, almighty, and all-sufficient. However, that was not an adequate revelation of God Himself. Only when we come to Exodus 20 do we have a revelation of what kind of God our God is.

This revelation, however, is not given directly. Rather, it is given indirectly through the giving of the law. Apparently Exodus 20 is concerned with the giving of the law. Actually this chapter is concerned with the unveiling of God Himself. In decreeing the law, God made Himself known to His people. Through the law, they were able to understand what kind of God He is. The divine legislation is a revelation of God Himself. If we would understand this portion of the Word adequately, we must keep this concept firmly in mind.

Deuteronomy 4:13 speaks of "ten commandments," whereas Exodus 34:28 speaks of "ten words" (Heb.). The expression "ten words" is significant. God regards the Ten Commandments, the ten laws, as ten words. This expression is a further indication that the law is God's revelation of Himself, since the words a person speaks are a revelation of that person.

Exodus 20 does not clearly say which commandment is the first, which is the second, and so on. Although the fourth through the tenth commandments are clearly identified, it is difficult to determine which are the first, second, and third. The Jews understand this in one way, the Catholics in another way, and the Protestants in still another way. In order to have the proper understanding of the Ten Commandments, we should see that they actually begin with verse 2. Verse 1 is the introduction, and then verses 2 and 3 continue, "I am Jehovah thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Heb.). Verses 2 and 3 comprise the first commandment. Notice that in the first commandment the title "Jehovah thy God" is used. The same is true in each of the next four commandments. However, although the expression "Jehovah thy God" is used in

each of the first five commandments, it is not used in any of the last five. The use of the title Jehovah in verses 2 through 11 gives us reason to join verse 3 with verse 2 and thus consider verse 2 as part of the first commandment. The second commandment is found in verses 4 through 6. Here we are commanded not to make a graven image or likeness of any thing in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, nor to bow down to them, for the Lord is a jealous God. The third commandment, concerning not taking the Lord's name in vain, is found in verse 7; and the fourth, regarding the Sabbath day, is recorded in verses 8 through 11. The fifth commandment (v. 12) is about honoring our father and mother. The remaining five commandments are found in verses 13 through 17.

If we read carefully the record of the Ten Commandments, we shall see that they are divided into two groups of five. As we have indicated, in the first group the sacred title "Jehovah thy God" is used with respect to each commandment. But with the second group of five, the name of Jehovah is not mentioned even once. Hence, the use of the Lord's name is a determining factor in reckoning the arrangement of the Ten Commandments.

The arrangement of the Ten Commandments may be understood according to the Jewish way, the Catholic way, the Protestant way, or the biblical way. According to the Jewish way, verse 2 is regarded as the first commandment, and verses 3 through 6 as the second. According to the Catholic way, verse 2 is not regarded as part of the first commandment, only verses 3 through 6. Furthermore, verse 17 is reckoned as two distinct commandments. According to the way followed by most Protestants, which is close to the biblical way, verse 3 is considered the first commandment, and verses 4 through 6, the second. Then verse 17 is regarded as the tenth commandment. However, as we have pointed out, verse 2 must be included with verse 3 as part of the first commandment. This is necessary to have the sacred title, Jehovah, included in each of the first five commandments. According to the biblical way, the first commandment

includes verses 2 and 3; the second, verses 4 through 6; the third, verse 7; the fourth, verses 8 through 11; the fifth, verse 12; and the sixth through tenth, verses 13 through 17 respectively.

The Bible tells us clearly that the Ten Commandments were written on two stone tablets by God Himself. The first four commandments are related to God, whereas the last six are related to man. Some readers of Exodus may think that the first four commandments, the commandments concerning God, would have been inscribed on one tablet of stone, whereas the last six, the commandments concerning man, would have been written on the second tablet. However, the Ten Commandments had to be divided into two groups of five. This indicates that the fifth commandment, concerning the honoring of parents, is ranked with the first four commandments, related to God Himself.

For years I was unsuccessful in my efforts to find a reason for this. Eventually I came to see that the reason is related to our source as human beings. In Luke 3 the human generations are traced all the way back to Adam, and then to God. This indicates that when we honor our parents, we honor our source, which, ultimately, is God Himself.

Proof that God intended to rank the fifth commandment with the first four commandments rests in the fact that the sacred title "Jehovah thy God" is used in this commandment, but not in any of the following five commandments. There must be a reason the divine name is mentioned in each of the four commandments concerning God and the first commandment concerning man, but not in any of the other five commandments concerning man. The reason is that by honoring our parents we remember our source. A number of times I have asked unbelievers who their father is. Then I have asked them to trace back further and further until they had to trace their source to God Himself. Our human fathers remind us of God, refer us to God, and bring us back to God as our source. Therefore, it is a very serious thing for a person to

despise his parents. To despise our parents is to despise our source, our origin, especially when we realize that our origin is not actually our human father, but is God Himself.

Our source as human beings is God. Those who do not believe in God should ask themselves where they came from. They should trace their origin until they find their source. Those who do this honestly will realize that ultimately their source is God. To honor our parents is to remember our source. I believe this is the reason the fifth commandment was inscribed on the same tablet as the first four commandments concerning God Himself. I believe that it is also the reason that it includes the name "Jehovah thy God."

I can testify to the blessing we receive from honoring our parents. In Ephesians 6:2 and 3 Paul pointed out that the commandment about honoring our father and mother is the first commandment with a promise. According to Exodus 20:12, if we honor our parents, our days will be long upon the earth. This refers to the blessing of long life. The blessing of longevity is related to God as our source, for only He, the source of life, can grant us a long life. This is another reason the fifth commandment is related to the first four commandments regarding God. This commandment refers us to God and indicates that He is the source of life. If we keep this commandment, God will surely give us a long life. If we want our family and our country to be blessed by God, we must honor our parents and thereby remember God Himself as our source.

I hope that all the young people in the Lord's recovery will honor their parents and not offend them. This does not mean, however, that they should follow their parents if their parents require them to deny the Lord or to worship idols. The Word of God must be our standard. As long as their parents do not require anything that is contrary to the standard of the Bible, the young people should obey them. According to Paul's word in Ephesians 6, this is the way to enjoy the blessing of long life.

II. A REVELATION OF WHAT GOD IS

We have seen that in 34:28 the Ten Commandments are called the ten words of God. According to the Bible, words denotes expression. The words spoken by a particular person are the expression of that person. If a person is silent, he will be mysterious. There is no way to know what is within him. The more we speak, the more we are expressed, and what is within us is exposed. This applies to the Ten Commandments as the ten words of God. The commandments are not merely laws; they are also God's expression. Through these ten words, God has revealed Himself to us.

A. Jealous

When I was very young, I thought that God was broad-minded. When I read in the Bible that He is a jealous God, I was bothered. To me, jealousy was not a positive thing. I certainly would not want to be thought of as a jealous person. I would much rather be regarded as kind, broad-minded, and all-embracing. Many who have such a concept of God think that all religions are the same. They do not like to hear in our gospel preaching that Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are in error. Such people prefer to think that God is broad-minded and not in the least jealous. But, as the Ten Commandments reveal, God is jealous, and He will not tolerate idols. Apart from the Ten Commandments, there would be no way for us to realize that God is narrow, or jealous, in this way. God wants us to love Him and Him alone. If we love someone or something in place of Him, He will be jealous. Thus, the Ten Commandments first reveal God's jealousy, even His hatred (Rom. 9:13). Jealousy results in hatred. The Bible says not only that God is love, but also that He is jealous. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul refers to the jealousy of God. The ten words, the expression of God, reveal that God is unique. He is a jealous God, and He will not give place to any other god. Do not allow

anything else to be your god. Do not take education or wealth as your god. God alone must be your God.

B. Holy

The Ten Commandments also reveal that God is holy. The fourth commandment, which concerns keeping the Sabbath, is related to God's holiness, to His being separate from all things. According to Genesis 2, God sanctified the seventh day, or made it holy. Thus, the Sabbath as the seventh day is a sign of God's holiness, of His separation. Although many Jews and Seventh-Day Adventists keep the Sabbath, not many know the true significance of keeping a day unto the Lord. Not many realize that the Sabbath is a sign of God's holiness. Although the Gentiles are common, God's people have been separated unto Him. As a mark of separation, one day is set apart unto Him. The keeping of this day identifies them as God's holy and separated people. Furthermore, this reveals that the very God whom we worship is holy, separate. As His people, we must have a mark, a sign, of our separation from everything other than God Himself. This reveals that our God is holy.

C. Loving

Verses 12 through 14 reveal that God is a God of love. If we do not honor our parents, it means that we do not love them. Likewise, if we love others, we shall not steal from them. In Matthew 22:37-40 the Lord Jesus answered His opposers by implying that the whole law is fulfilled in loving God and man. We must not only love the Lord with our whole being, but we must also love others as we love ourselves. In Galatians 5:14 Paul says, "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." If we consider the Ten Commandments in depth, we shall see that God's love is revealed in them.

Exodus 20:5 and 6 say that God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him, but He shows mercy unto

thousands of generations who love Him and keep His commandments. God's love is revealed in these verses also. God will charge iniquity as far as the third or fourth generation, but to those who love Him, He will show mercy for a thousand generations. In this we see God's lovingkindness. If you hate God, He will visit your family for three or four generations. This means that He will charge you with hatred toward Him for this number of generations. But if we love God, His mercy will be upon us for a thousand generations. In the Bible, a thousand denotes fullness. For example, the psalmist said that a day in the Lord's courts is better than a thousand (Psa. 84:10). To enjoy God's mercy to the fullest is to enjoy it for eternity. His mercy is endless. Although God's anger can be counted, His mercy is beyond counting.

D. Righteous

The Ten Commandments also reveal that our God is righteous. Because He is righteous, He will visit those who hate Him for three or four generations. If He failed to do this, He would not be a righteous God. He must act in this way in order to indicate that He is righteous. If you hate Him, He will deal with you according to His righteousness. At the same time, however, He is merciful and loving.

E. Truthful

Exodus 20:16 says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." This commandment reveals that God is truthful. To refrain from bearing false witness means that we must speak the truth and not lie. This commandment is concerned with lies that damage others. It indicates that we must be honest and truthful.

Those who tell lies are in darkness, but those who speak the truth are in light. As the truthful God, God is the God of light. We are even told that He Himself is light and that with Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). This means that with God there is no falsehood. Satan, on the contrary, is the father of lies (John 8:44). As such, he is the

god of darkness and the power of darkness. With Satan there is no truthfulness. Therefore, Satan is of darkness. But with our God there is both faithfulness and truthfulness. Because He is light, He cannot lie. Light is the source of truth.

If we dig into the depths of these verses, we shall see that light is implied with the Ten Commandments. Actually, these ten words are words of light. This divine law is full of light. The same is true even of man-made laws. If in a city or country there were no laws, that city or country would be in darkness. But where there is law, there is light. Law always enlightens. It makes a person's situation clear. God's ten words, the Ten Commandments, are words of light, and they imply that our God is a God of light. With Him there is no falsehood and there are no shadows. In every respect He is truthful, for He is light. If sinners would come to the ten words of God recorded in Exodus 20, they would see light and be enlightened. Suppose a certain person has stolen a number of items. When such a one reads the commandment about stealing, he will be enlightened. The divine law will shine upon him. The ten words enlighten us with the light which comes from God. Oh, the Ten Commandments are certainly a revelation of our God! When we get into the depths of these ten words, we see that God is jealous, holy, loving, righteous, and truthful.

F. Pure

These words also reveal that God is pure. His purity touches our inner being. Whereas the first nine commandments are related to outward conduct, the tenth is related to the sin hidden within us, mainly in our thoughts. Actually, the first commandment is also related to our inward condition. To have another God besides the true God is primarily an inward matter. However, to make an image or likeness of something is an outward deed. Hence, the first commandment touches our inward condition, and the commandment about coveting likewise touches our inward

condition. The first and the last commandment together expose the idolatry and covetousness within us. Inwardly we are filled with idols and coveting. Colossians 3:5 says that covetousness is idolatry. Paul refers to covetousness in Romans 7. The more he tried to stop coveting, the more covetousness was awakened within him. Thus, in Romans 7 Paul was not concerned with outward deeds, but with the inward problem of covetousness.

The fact that we are covetous indicates that we are not pure. Only God is pure, for those who are pure do not covet. We covet because we are impure and unclean. If our heart, desire, and intention were pure in every way, we would not be covetous.

The commandment about coveting reveals God's purity. Under the light of this commandment, we all need to see that inwardly we are not pure. We all have a certain amount of covetousness. But because God is pure, with Him there is no covetousness.

Because the law is a revelation of God, it is God's testimony. According to 31:18, the two tables of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written are called the "two tables of testimony." This indicates that the law was God's testimony. When the tables of the law were put into the ark, the testimony was put in the ark. Furthermore, the manna in the golden pot was placed in front of the tables of the law. However, we are told in 16:34 that it was "laid up before the Testimony to be kept." This proves that the law was the testimony. Psalms 19:7 is a further indication of this. Here, in the parallelism often found in Hebrew poetry, we are told, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." The law of the Lord is thus the testimony of the Lord. As the Lord's testimony, the law testifies of what kind of God our Lord is. Because the law, God's testimony, was placed in the ark, the ark was called the ark of testimony (25:21-22; 26:33-34); and because the ark was in the tabernacle, the tabernacle was called the tabernacle of the testimony (38:21; Num. 1:50, 53). The law was the testimony, the ark

was the ark of testimony, and the tabernacle was the tabernacle of testimony.

The law is a type, a figure, of Christ who speaks God, describes God, and expresses God. The law is, therefore, a type of Christ as God's testimony. It is crucial for us to see that the law is a testimony which reveals God to us. As a type of Christ, it typifies Christ as God's testimony, the One who describes God and expresses Him in a full and adequate way. As the law is the ten words of God which reveal God to His people, so Christ is the Word of God revealing God to us.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIFTY-TWO

THE LAW BEING THE LIVING WORD OF GOD INFUSING HIS SUBSTANCE INTO HIS LOVING SEEKERS

Scripture Reading: Exo. 20:1-17; 34:28; 31:18; Deut. 4:13; Psa. 19:7-8

As we consider the giving of the law recorded in 20:1-17, we need to realize that this event took place on the mountain of God, where God's people had been brought to have fellowship with Him.

I. THE LAW

When I was young, I was influenced by certain books of systematic theology to consider the law as something negative. Concerning the law, a negative impression was made not only on my mind but on my whole being. For many years thereafter, I thought of the law in a negative way. As a person under God's grace, not under the law, I did not care for the law. As far as I was concerned, the law in the Bible was not positive. However, I gradually came to realize, especially from reading the book of Exodus, that nothing that is of God or from God could ever be negative. On the contrary, everything that comes out from God must be positive. This is true, then, of the Ten Commandments recorded in 20:1-17.

If we consider the law only according to our mental knowledge, we shall view it in a negative way. But if we realize that the law was given in a positive situation, we shall see that the law is the living word of God which infuses His substance into His loving seekers. Paul says that the law was ordained through angels (Gal. 3:19). However, there is no mention of angels in Exodus 20. According to this chapter, the law was given directly by God Himself.

Concerning the giving of the law, verse 1 of Exodus 20 is of great significance: "And God spake all these words." The conjunction "and" joins chapter twenty with chapter nineteen. We have seen that in Exodus 19 God brought His people to His mountain to have fellowship with Him. God had brought the people out of Egypt and had gathered them unto Himself at His mountain. This means that God came down from heaven to earth to have fellowship with His people. It was, of course, impossible for man to ascend to heaven, where God was. But in Exodus 19 God descended to a particular mountain, where He could meet with His people. At the very place where God was meeting with His people and where they were contacting Him in fellowship, the law was given. Some theologians may neglect such a picture of the giving of the law. They may have the tendency to exclude God and to concentrate on the law in a negative way. This was the reason that, as a youth, I was given the impression that God in heaven gave the law through the angels to His people on earth. According to this concept, God was far away from His people when the law was given, and they had no way to come into contact with Him. According to this view, the law-giving God did not contact the people, and the law-receiving people did not meet with God.

When I was young, I also was taught, according to John 1, that the law was given through Moses, but that God did not come to man until the time of Christ's incarnation. However, in Exodus 19 and 20, we see that God did come down to meet with His people before Christ's incarnation. Even prior to the time of Exodus 20, God had appeared to Abraham. But that appearing was on a very small scale. In Exodus 19 and 20, more than two million people were gathered at the mountain of God when God came down to visit them and to give them His law.

After God had brought the people out of Egypt to the mountain of God, He began to have fellowship with them and to speak with them. Exodus 31:18 indicates that He communed with them. There, at the mountain of God,

God was talking, conversing, having communion, with man. According to 19:4-6, God said that He had borne them on eagles' wings and had brought them to Himself. He also said that they would be His personal possession, His peculiar treasure, and would be unto Him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These words were part of the very positive conversation between God and His people. Such a conversation was not the decree of certain laws; it was a time of fellowship in which God spoke to His people.

As 20:1 indicates, the giving of the Ten Commandments was the continuation of this conversation in fellowship. This verse does not say, "And God gave commandments to the people." It says, "And God spake all these words." What we have in chapter twenty is not merely a list of commandments. The fact that 20:1 says that "God spake all these words" shows that the Ten Commandments are God's words. In 34:28 the commandments are even called "the ten words" (Heb.). According to 2 Timothy 3:16, all Scripture is God-breathed. This indicates that the Scriptures are God's breath. God's speaking is His breathing. Whenever God speaks, His breath conveys His element into the ones who receive His word.

The conjunction "and" at the beginning of 20:1 is very important, for it connects chapter twenty to chapter nineteen. Chapter twenty is thus the continuation of God's speaking in chapter nineteen. As we have seen, the Ten Commandments are God's words and are even called the words of God. Have you ever heard that the Ten Commandments are the ten words? There is a big difference between words and commandments. Commandments are requirements that we must keep and fulfill. God's words, however, are His breath, for God's speaking is His breathing. By speaking, He breathes something out of Himself and into those who hear His word. The fact that the Ten Commandments are called ten words means that they are not simply laws for us to obey. These commandments are not just so many decrees of divine legislation. God did not merely give His people ten laws, ten commandments; in fellowship with

them He uttered the ten words. If the commandments were nothing more than laws, God's people could do nothing more than try their best to keep them. But since the Ten Commandments are also God's words, the very breathing of God, it is possible for those who seek God in love to receive these words into them as God's very breath.

In the light of this, I would ask you to consider Moses' experience of spending forty days in communion with God on the mountain. When he came down from the mountain, he had something more than ten commandments inscribed on two tablets of stone. He was a man who had been thoroughly infused with God's element. During those days of communion on the mountain Moses experienced a divine infusion, the infusion of God's substance into his very being. However, this matter is not given its rightful place by Christians, who mainly say that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and that when Moses saw the children of Israel worshipping idols, he threw down the tables of stone in anger and broke them. The Bible indicates that Moses had received not only two tables of stone, but that the very element of God had been infused into him and caused his face to shine. Although Moses could cast down the two tablets and break them, he could not get rid of the transfusion he had received during his time of fellowship with God on the mountain.

In principle, this is also true in our experience with the Lord. Although we may not be able to keep the commandments, we cannot get rid of what is transfused into us when we hear God's words in times of communion with Him.

In my ministry I have often told people that if we abide in the Lord according to John 15, we shall spontaneously live out the life of the vine tree. Certainly there is no need for the branches of a vine to strive to keep any commandments. They simply abide in the vine and live out the life of the vine. Although I have ministered along this line, I have wondered about John 14:21 and 23, two verses which seem very much like the commandments in Exodus 20. John 14:21 says, "He who has My commandments and keeps

them, he it is who loves Me," and verse 23 says, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word." To a certain extent at least, these words of the Lord Jesus seem to be a repetition of the word in Exodus 20. The reason for this is that, as far as the basic principle of life is concerned, the Old Testament and the New Testament are the same. In ourselves, we are not able to keep the commandments of God in the Old Testament or of the Lord in the New. Regarding this matter, Paul said in Romans 7 that it is not possible for us to keep the law. In particular, Paul deals with the commandment concerning covetousness, a commandment which concerns not only our outward behavior, but also our inward condition. Although we in ourselves are not able to fulfill all the commandments, we can abide in the Lord and experience Him abiding in us that we may be infused with Him. Consider once again Moses' experience on the mountain. Because he had received a marvelous transfusion from God, he could abide in God, and God could abide in him. As a result of such an infusion and mutual abiding, Moses could keep God's commandments, not by his own efforts, but by the substance of God which had been infused into him.

At this point, I would like to call your attention to the title of this message: "The Law Being the Living Word of God Infusing His Substance into His Loving Seekers." The law is not only a list of divine commandments; it is the living word of God which infuses God's substance into those who lovingly seek Him. If we consider the Ten Commandments only as laws and then try to keep them, we are not proper in our approach to the law. We should not apply the Ten Commandments in this way. On the contrary, we should be those who love God and seek Him. In this matter, we should be like Paul in Philippians 3, one who was pursuing Christ out of love and even running after Him. Out of love for the Lord, we should pursue Him, contact Him, and abide in His presence, dwelling together with Him. If we do this, day by day we shall be infused with God. Then automatically we shall walk according to God's law. We shall keep the requirements of the law, not by our own efforts, but

with what has been infused into us of the Lord through our contact with Him. Once we have been thoroughly infused with God's substance, He Himself from within us will keep His own law. We should remember that the law was given on the mountain of God, the place where God's people could be infused with His substance. Thus, we should not regard the law simply as His commandments, but as the word of God and the testimony of God, which not only express Him, but also infuse His substance into those who seek Him in love.

II. TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE DEALING WITH THE LAW

A. The Loving Seekers of God

Let us now go on to see how two different kinds of people dealt with the law. These two kinds of people are the loving seekers of God (Matt. 22:36-38) and the letter-keepers of the law, the Judaizers. Of those who lovingly sought God, let us consider the experience of the psalmists in the Old Testament and that of Simeon and Anna in the New Testament.

1. The Psalmists

According to the book of Psalms, the psalmists loved the law to the uttermost. Some may teach that the law is something negative, but the psalmists treasured the law. For years I was bothered by this fact. I even somewhat belittled the law in the book *Christ and the Church Revealed and Typified in the Psalms,* where I pointed out the contrast between the law in Psalm 1 and Christ in Psalm 2. I still believe that it is correct to make a contrast between the law in letters and Christ. If we love the law apart from Christ, we have missed the mark. However, it is right to love the law as a testimony of God and as a type of Christ. Let us now consider a number of passages from the Psalms which indicate how the psalmists dealt with God's law.

a. Loving God

The psalmists loved God. Psalm 18:1 says, "I will love thee,

O Lord, my strength." In 73:25 we have the testimony of one who loved God absolutely: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." The writer of this psalm loved God to such an extent that neither in heaven nor on earth did he have anyone besides God Himself.

b. Seeking God

The psalmists were also those who sought God. Psalm 42:1 and 2 say, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" The writer of this psalm was thirsty for God, seeking Him as a hart panting for water. Psalm 43:4 shows how the psalmist sought God as his exceeding joy, and 119:2 and 10, how he sought God with his whole heart.

c. Dwelling with God

In Psalm 27:4 we see the psalmist's desire to dwell with God: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." The psalmist longed to dwell in God's house all his life. A similar desire is expressed in 84:1-7. Those who read these verses are sure to be impressed by the sweetness of dwelling with God. Psalm 90:1 declares, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Once again, we see the psalmist's desire to dwell with God and even in God. The same desire is expressed in 91:1, where the psalmist declares, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." We see in these verses something beyond caring for the letter of the law. The psalmist aspired to dwell in the secret place of God's presence. Those who have such an aspiration will certainly be infused with the element of God.

d Beholding His Beauty

Psalm 27:4 also expresses the longing of the psalmists to

behold the Lord's beauty. To behold the Lord's beauty is to see Him face to face. The same longing is found in 105:4: "Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore."

e. Infused with the Riches of God

In their experience, the psalmists were also infused with the riches of God. Psalm 52:8 says, "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever." As a tree absorbs riches from the soil, the psalmists absorbed the riches of God. They were like olive trees planted in the house of God, and they were being infused with God's riches so that they could grow spiritually. Like olive trees, they grew with the riches that had been infused into them.

Psalm 92:13 and 14 also reveal that the psalmists were infused with God's riches: "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and green" (Heb.). Here we see four aspects of being infused with God's riches: planted in the house, flourishing, bringing forth fruit, and being full of sap and green. What we have here is not teaching or theology, but the experience of the living God as the life supply. The psalmists were not merely law-keepers; they were those who sought God and were infused with His riches. Therefore, they were planted, they flourished, they brought forth fruit, and they were full of sap and green. Through such an infusion from God, they spontaneously were strengthened to keep the law and to live out the law.

The experience of the psalmists was the same in principle as that revealed in the New Testament. According to the Gospel of John, when we abide in the Lord, He infuses us with His element, and we absorb the life juice of the vine into us. Then we shall bring forth fruit. This is not a matter of keeping the law; it is a matter of living out the law.

Psalm 92:10 says, "But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a wild ox: I shall be mingled with fresh oil" (Heb.). In the Old Testament oil is a type of the Triune God as the Spirit.

To be mingled with fresh oil is thus to be mingled with the fresh Spirit. This is not merely to learn the law or to strive to keep it. It is to seek God in order to be fully mingled with the fresh Spirit so that we spontaneously may live Him and have a daily walk that corresponds to what He is. To repeat, this is not to keep the law; it is to live out God and thereby to have a daily living that corresponds to God's law. Instead of trying to keep the law, we should live the law by being infused with God's riches.

f. Enjoying the Riches of Life

The psalmists also enjoyed the riches of life. Psalm 36:8 and 9 say, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." These verses sound very much like a portion from the New Testament. In principle, the psalmists enjoyed the Triune God the same as we do today. To be satisfied with the fatness of God's house and to drink of the rivers of His pleasures are to enjoy the Triune God. To say that with Him is the fountain of life means that with Him is the source of life supply. Once again we see that the psalmists were not trying to keep the requirements of the law, but were seeking after God. In their pursuit of God, they were infused with Him. Spontaneously they lived not only according to the law given by God, but also according to God's nature. Their living automatically corresponded to God's law, which was an expression of God's nature. Hence, they lived God's nature. Their living was an expression of His nature. Instead of being those who endeavored to keep the law, they were those who lived the law. We thank the Lord for showing us this important matter.

g. Supplied with God to Keep His Word

Furthermore, the psalmists were supplied with God to keep His word, the law. Psalm 119:57 says, "Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words." When the two points in this verse are put together, we see that the

psalmists were supplied with God as their portion and were thereby enabled to keep His words. The use of the word "portion" reminds us of Colossians 1:12, where Paul tells us that Christ is the portion of the saints. Because God was the portion of the psalmists, the psalmists could keep God's word, by which they meant the law.

In order to keep God's word, the word of the law, the psalmists took God as their portion. We should not think that in ourselves we are able to keep God's law. To keep the commandments of the law is a great matter, and we are not sufficient for this. If we would keep the law, we need God to be our portion. Only when we enjoy Him and are supplied with Him shall we be able to keep the law. Again we see that in principle the experience of the psalmists in the Old Testament was the same as our experience today.

h. Treasuring the Law of God

As those who lovingly sought God, the psalmists treasured the law of God. Psalm 119:14 says, "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches." The psalmists treasured God's testimony as their wealth. Psalm 119:72 continues, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." Then in 119:127 the psalmist goes on to say, "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold." These verses reveal that the psalmists not only loved God, but also treasured His law, which was to them the word of God and the testimony of God. They valued God's law more than silver and gold. They treasured the word of God.

i. Tasting the Sweetness of the Law

Psalm 119:103 says, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." This verse indicates that the psalmists tasted the sweetness of the law. How precious to them was the sweet taste of the word of God!

j. Hoping in the Word of God and Dwelling on It

The psalmists also hoped in the word of God, the law, and

dwelt on it. Psalm 119:147 and 148 indicate this: "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word. Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word." Early in the morning, before dawn, the psalmists would hope in God's word and dwell on it. By this we see that the psalmists enjoyed God's word in the morning watch.

All these verses show that the psalmists were loving seekers of God. Spontaneously they were infused with God and lived out the law of God. The same should be true of us today. If we are infused with Christ, we shall live Christ. As the law was God's word, so Christ, typified by the law, is the Word of God. As the psalmists loved God's law, treasured it, tasted it, hoped in it, and meditated on it, so we today should love Christ, treasure Him, taste Him, hope in Him, and dwell on Him and even in Him. Far from being negative, the law as the living word of God is very positive.

2. Simeon and Anna

Simeon and Anna were also among those who lovingly sought God. As they waited for Christ, the Holy Spirit was upon them (Luke 2:25). They also had the revelation of the Holy Spirit (Luke 2:26) and walked by the Spirit (Luke 2:27). Dwelling in the temple, they served God with fastings and prayers (Luke 2:37). They thus enjoyed God and received His infusion. Like the psalmists, they spontaneously lived the law of God, and their living corresponded to God's expression. Because they had been infused with the substance of God, they could live a life which corresponded to the law as God's expression.

B. The Letter-Keepers of the Law

1. The Judaizers

Now we come to an altogether different category of people who dealt with God's law, the Judaizers. When the law was in the hand of the psalmists, it was lovable. But when it was in the hand of the Judaizers, it became something negative. According to Matthew 15:8, the Judaizers

did not have a heart for God. According to Galatians 6:12-13, they were legal and dogmatic in the letters of the law. How different they were from the psalmists, who loved God and had a heart for God! Because the psalmists were living and rich in the experience of God, they were not legal or dogmatic, as the Judaizers were.

2. Saul of Tarsus

Before he was saved, Saul of Tarsus was zealous for the law (Phil. 3:5-6). As a Judaizer, he was even a blasphemer of God and a persecutor of man (1 Tim. 1:13). When he was Saul the Judaizer, he did not truly love God. Instead, he was zealous for the law according to religious tradition. For this reason, when Saul was converted to Christ, he repudiated the law. Therefore Paul belittled the law misused by the Judaizers.

III. THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS OF GOD

As we contrast the situation of the loving seekers of God with that of the letter-keepers of the law, we see that in this matter the principle is the same both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. If we love the Lord, seek Him with our whole heart, dwell with Him, and enjoy His riches, His substance will be infused into us. Spontaneously He Himself will become our living. Thus, what is lived out of us will be the expression of God. This kind of living corresponds to the law of God. As a result, we become true worshippers of God. True worshippers of God are those who are according to what God is, who correspond to what God is, and who reflect what God is. To keep the law cannot make anyone a true worshipper; a true worshipper is one who is infused with God and lives out God, who thereby becomes a person according to what God is and corresponding to what He is. The living of such a person corresponds to God's living and reflects what He is. This is the living testimony of Jesus.

We have pointed out repeatedly that, in principle, the enjoyment of the Old Testament saints was the same as that

of the New Testament saints. We have seen that if we abide with God and are infused with Him, we shall automatically live Him out. Our living will then correspond to God's law, for we shall be one with Him and shall live Him. Therefore, in our experience the law, God, and Christ will be one.

If we read Exodus 20 in this light, this chapter will be altogether new. We shall see that the Ten Commandments, given to God's people on the mountain when they were communing with God, are words received in fellowship with God. These words bring the transfusion of God's element, which enables His people to have a living that corresponds to what He is.

A crucial difference between the psalmists and the Judaizers was that the psalmists sought the law with God, whereas the Judaizers pursued the law utterly apart from God. The situation is the same today in the way different Christians use the Bible. If we are today's psalmists, we shall seek the Bible, the Word of God, out of love for the Lord and for His word. However, it is possible for students of the Word to read the Bible without truly having a heart for the Lord. Their intention may be to gain knowledge with which to formulate a systematic theology. Therefore, students of the Scriptures may become today's Judaizers.

When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, the Judaizers were not willing to contact Him in a positive way. They wanted to know the Bible, but they were seeking the knowledge of the Scriptures apart from Christ. For this reason, the Lord Jesus said to them, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is these that testify concerning Me; and you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40). We also may be those who seek the knowledge of the Bible apart from the Lord Himself. It is definitely possible to read the Bible apart from Christ. But if we pray-read the Word, we shall be in contact with the Lord as we read the Word. This is the reason we treasure pray-reading.

If we see that the law is God's word and if we realize that the word of God is His breath, then we shall see that the law

is God's expression of Himself. The law typifies Christ, for He is the One who truly expresses God. Some students of the Word have not seen that the law is the word of God and that the word is the breath of God. Actually, the law, the word, the breath, and God are one. Christ Himself is God's living law. To us, Christ is the real law, word of God, expression of God, and breath of God. We may be regulated by Him and live according to Him. In the heart of God the law is actually Christ Himself. God does not give us a law that is separate from Christ. The law He gives is Christ as His expression and His very breath. Therefore, Christ is our law, the very Christ who is the Word of God, the breath of God, and the expression of God.

It is a dreadful mistake to pursue the study of systematic theology in such a way as to separate the Bible or the revelation of God from God Himself! Today we must heed the warning not to separate the Word of God from Christ. God's word is His breath, and His word is something out of Himself which not only expresses Himself, but also imparts Himself to us so that we may receive Him. If we take God's word only as dead letters, we shall become today's Judaizers, those who are zealous for the knowledge of the law, but who are not truly seeking God out of a loving heart. But if we take the Word as God's breath and are thereby infused with His substance, we shall become today's psalmists, His loving seekers.

As we read 20:1-17, we should pay attention to the fact that the last five commandments are given in a way different from that of the first five. In the case of the last five, we are simply told not to murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, or covet. The first five commandments, however, are given in an atmosphere full of love, even of intimacy. In verses 2 and 3 the Lord does not say, "The first commandment is that you must not have any god besides Me." On the contrary, the Lord presents Himself to His people in a very special way: "I am Jehovah thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Heb.).

This is a word of love. In reminding the people that He saved them and delivered them from bondage, God speaks to them as if He were a young man courting a maiden. His words are words of love.

The word love in verse 6 is very important. In verses 5 and 6 the Lord speaks of love and hate. If we hate the Lord, He will visit our iniquities until the third and fourth generation. But if we love the Lord, He will extend mercy for a thousand generations. Such a word was spoken in an atmosphere of love and intimacy. The Lord wanted to know whether His people would love Him or hate Him. Even the commandments regarding not taking the Lord's name in vain and keeping the Sabbath day were uttered in an atmosphere of love.

Many Christians neglect this aspect of the giving of the Ten Commandments. They have not seen the fact that the first five commandments, which refer to God Himself, were given in an atmosphere of love and intimacy. Instead, in speaking of the law, most students of the Word pay their full attention to the letter of the law and altogether ignore the loving atmosphere in which the law was decreed. They do not realize that the law itself is God's expression.

We have seen that the word of the Lord Jesus in John 14:21 and 23 is similar to that uttered by the Lord in 20:4-6. In 20:4-6 the Lord said that if we love Him, He will show mercy unto a thousand generations. In John 14 the Lord Jesus said that if we love Him and keep His word, He and the Father will love us and make Their abode with us. In both cases the words uttered are words of love. It is not too much to say that the whole Bible was written in an atmosphere of love and intimacy. The Bible may even be regarded as the story of God's courtship of man. Song of Songs is a superb illustration of this. This book, written in an atmosphere full of intimacy, is a book of love. If we love the Lord, we shall surely treasure His word and want to keep it. Then the Lord will show mercy unto a thousand generations.

The law is the word of God, and the word of God is God's breath. Through His words, God breathes Himself into us, infusing us with His substance to make us His expression.

With the divine substance infused into us, we automatically live a life that corresponds to what God is. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament speak of this.

We have seen that Christ Himself is the real law, word, breath, and expression of God. Today we should regard the Bible as God's breath. By pray-reading the Word, we breathe God's element into us. In this way we are infused with what God is, and spontaneously we begin to live Christ. Our living will then correspond to what God is. In this way we become the living expression of God, His living law.

If we pray-read 20:1-17 adequately, these verses will bring us into God and will transfuse the substance of God into us. The more we contact God in this way, the more we shall be saturated with Him. Consequently, we shall spontaneously live in a way that corresponds to the law of God. Instead of trying to keep the law, we shall live out the law. Far from being Judaizers, we shall become today's psalmists, those who seek the Lord lovingly. The key here is our love for the Lord and for His word. If we love Him and keep His word, He will come to us and make His abode with us. How wonderful! The Bible truly is a book of love.

In conclusion, let me repeat, the law as the word of God is God's breath for us to breathe in God, that we may have the strength of life to live out the law, which corresponds to God's nature and expression.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIFTY-THREE

GOD SEEKING LOVERS IN GIVING HIS LAW TO HIS PEOPLE

Scripture Reading: Exo. 20:1-12; 3:14-15; Jer. 31:3, 32; 2:2; Hosea 2:19-20; Isa. 54:5; Ezek. 16:8; John 14:21, 23

In the foregoing message we saw that the law is the living word of God which infuses His substance into His loving seekers. This is a fresh viewpoint concerning the law. Those who seek God will love His law as His living word. Through such a love for God and His word, they will be infused with God's substance and live in a way which corresponds to what He is. In this message we shall go on to cover a matter which may seem even more unusual. This is the fact that God was seeking lovers when He gave His law to His people in the Old Testament. God's intention in giving the law to His chosen people was that they become those who love Him.

Four prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea—spoke of God as the Husband of the children of Israel and of God's people as His spouse, His wife. Even though these four prophets lived at different times and in different places, they all had the same concept concerning this matter. To those who are religious, it may sound very strange, even offensive, to say that God has a wife. Nevertheless, the Bible clearly speaks of God as a Husband. How can God be a Husband unless He has a wife? All believers know that God is the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Savior, but many do not realize that God is also a Husband and that His people are His wife. God and His people are a wonderful, universal couple. This is revealed both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Addressing the

church in Corinth, Paul says, "I betrothed you to one Husband, to present a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). According to the New Testament, the church composed of all the believers is the wife of Christ. Likewise, Israel in the Old Testament was espoused to God, betrothed to Him. Jeremiah 2:2 speaks of "the love of thy betrothals" (Heb.). Hosea 2:19 and 20 say, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord."

We need to go on to ask when, where, and how God betrothed Israel unto Himself. We find a hint in Jeremiah 2:2, where the Lord says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothals, how thou followedst after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Heb.). The word kindness here means being kind, nice, courteous. This affectionate feeling and attitude toward God in Israel's early days was a memorial to God. The "love of thy betrothals" is a particular kind of love. There are a number of different kinds of love. The love of parents for their children is different from that of children for their parents. The love friends have for one another is yet another kind of love. The love in Jeremiah 2:2 is like that between a man and a woman who are about to be married. This kind of love is very different from that of parents for children, of children for parents, and of a person for his friends. The word love in Jeremiah 2:2 refers to the love shown in courtship, a romantic love. In particular, it refers to the woman's reflection of the love of the man who is courting her. God told Israel that He remembered this response to His courting love in her youth.

In Jeremiah 2:2 the Lord specifically mentions "the love of thy betrothals." This expression denotes the love of Israel at the time of her engagement to the Lord. In this verse the Lord seems to be saying to Israel, "I betrothed you unto Me, and you and I were engaged. From the time of our

engagement, you had a special love for Me. I could never forget the love of your youth, when you became engaged to Me and followed after Me in the wilderness." Here the Lord speaks of four things He remembers: His people, the kindness of their youth, the love of their betrothals, and how they followed after Him in the wilderness. Jeremiah 2:2, therefore, clearly speaks of Israel's engagement to God.

Where and when did this engagement take place? Ezekiel 16:8 says, "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." According to the context of the chapter, this verse refers to the exodus and the time thereafter. Out of a deep love for the people, the Lord entered into a covenant with them. This covenant was enacted at the mountain of God, through the giving of the law (Exo. 20:1-12). Have you ever realized that the giving of the law was a transaction in which God's people became engaged to Him?

As we shall see, the law is an engagement covenant, an engagement paper. Jeremiah 31:32 indicates this: "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord." The covenant here is that mentioned in Ezekiel 16:8, made at the mountain of God, after God had brought the people out of the land of Egypt. Notice that in Jeremiah 31:32 God speaks of Himself as a Husband taking them by the hand. This indicates that when God gave the law, He was courting His people. We have seen that both Ezekiel 16:8 and Jeremiah 31:32 use the word covenant, a word which refers to the law given in Exodus 20. The law was an engagement paper, an engagement covenant. When God gave the law, He betrothed Israel unto Himself, and Israel became engaged to Him. By means of the law as an engagement

paper, God officially betrothed the children of Israel to Himself and became their Husband, as indicated in Jeremiah 31:32.

I doubt that very many Christians think of the law as an engagement paper. In the western world, a ring is used as the sign of engagement. But in the Orient it is common for both parties to sign an engagement paper, an engagement agreement. The signing of such a paper shows the importance of engagement and serves as proof that a certain man and woman are engaged to be married. In Genesis 24 Abraham's servant arranged for the engagement of Rebekah to Isaac. That engagement was a betrothal, an espousal. The betrothal of Israel to God took place at the mountain of God in Exodus 20, and the law was the official paper stating the conditions for this engagement.

The law gave the terms for the engagement between God and His people. The conditions for God's engagement with Israel were the Ten Commandments. If we do not interpret the giving of the Ten Commandments in this way, how shall we expound Jeremiah 2:2, which speaks of the kindness of Israel's youth and the love of her betrothals? No doubt the time following the exodus from Egypt was the period of Israel's youth. We may say that the first nineteen chapters of Exodus are chapters in which God was courting, wooing, even "dating" His people. He wanted to be their unique Beloved. His desire was that the people would love Him and Him alone. Thus, God was the loving One seeking His people's love. God was to be Israel's Beloved, and the people were to be His love.

As we consider the Ten Commandments given in Exodus 20, we see that the last five commandments were given in a simple, direct manner. God commanded the people not to kill, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to bear false witness, and not to covet (20:13-17). However, the first five commandments were given in an atmosphere of intimacy. Verse 2 says, "I am Jehovah thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." This is not a word of legality; it is a word of love.

Speaking intimately to His people, the Lord says, "I am Jehovah thy God." The Lord is the One who was, who is, and who will be forever. As such a One, He brought His people out of bondage. In verse 3 the Lord continues, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Here the Lord is telling the people that they should not have any other beloved in addition to Him. He must be their unique Beloved. This was the first condition of the engagement between God and His people. Any man who betroths a woman to himself should require that she not love any man besides him. He should insist on being her only beloved one. To be sure, the word about having no other gods besides the Lord is a commandment. This commandment, however, is also a loving condition of the engagement of God's people to Him. If we compare this commandment to the last five commandments, we shall see that it is spoken in love as a condition of engagement.

In verse 4 the Lord goes on to say, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." Here we find another condition for this engagement. God did not want His people to make an image of anything. In like manner, when a young man becomes engaged to a young lady, he does not want her to have photographs of any other men. He wants her to have pictures only of him. Otherwise, he will be offended. The commandment about not having images is also a condition of engagement.

Verse 5 continues, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God" (Heb.). A jealous Husband, the Lord wanted His people to serve Him and Him alone. This is also true of human engagement. Every engaged man is jealous over his fiancée.

In verses 5 and 6 the Lord said that He would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them who hate Him and show mercy unto a thousand generations of them who love Him

and keep His commandments. This also is a word spoken as God was courting His people, seeking a people to love Him. From the creation of the world until the time of Exodus 20, God was alone. In a sense, He was lonely, a "bachelor." In giving the law to His people, He was courting them, telling them that if they would love Him, He would show mercy unto their descendants for a thousand generations, a time span that will lead into eternity.

In 20:7 the Lord declares this condition of engagement: "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain: for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Heb.). The Lord did not want His people to use His name in an improper way. As their Beloved, He wanted them to honor His name and use it lovingly. Likewise, a young man wants the woman engaged to him to honor his name and speak it in a proper way, full of love and appreciation.

Verses 8 through 11 say, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of Jehovah thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and made it holy" (Heb.). Just as a woman wears a ring as a sign of her engagement, the keeping of the Sabbath day was to be a sign that God's people were engaged to Him. A young man who gives an engagement ring to the one he loves wants her to wear it as a sign that she is engaged to him. He would be very displeased if she did not bear such a sign.

In 20:11 we are told that God "blessed the sabbath day, and made it holy." This means that the Sabbath day was sanctified, set apart. This was the reason that keeping the Sabbath could be a sign of engagement. Every woman who is engaged to be married is "sanctified"; she is marked out, separated, to a certain man. She is the only one who has

the right to wear her beloved's engagement ring. This separates her from all other women. In Ephesians 1:13 we are told that when we were saved, we received the seal of the Spirit. This seal is our engagement ring, a sign of our separation and sanctification. In Exodus 20, the Sabbath day was to be the mark of the separation of God's people unto Him. As a condition of engagement, He required His people to bear a sign that they belonged to Him and that they were absolutely for Him. The Sabbath was a symbol which declared that God's people belonged to Him alone. The Seventh-Day Adventists, in their legality and dogmatism concerning the Sabbath, ignore the true significance of the Sabbath day as a symbol that God's people belong to Him as their Beloved, their Husband. We praise the Lord for showing us that the law is an engagement paper. When the law was decreed at Mount Sinai, the terms of the engagement of God's people to Him were given.

Yet another term of engagement is mentioned in verse 12: "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee" (Heb.). In a previous message we pointed out that to honor our parents is to trace our origin back to its source. Ultimately, our source is God Himself. In betrothing the children of Israel to Himself, God wanted them to remember Him as their source.

The first five commandments were given in an intimate way as terms of the engagement of God and His people. Each commandment uses the expression "Jehovah thy God," an expression uttered intimately again and again as God lovingly courted His people. He had been lonely for a long time, and now He was seeking their love. In Exodus 20 God was not seeking friends—He was seeking lovers. In giving His law to the people, He was seeking those who would love Him. After uttering the first five commandments in such a loving way, God proceeded to decree another five commandments, charging them with five "don'ts." A man may also charge his fiancée with certain

"don'ts." In betrothing His people to Himself, God set a marvelous example of the way an engagement should take place. The young brothers among us may learn of God in this matter. We thank the Lord that the Bible affords us such a wonderful example of engagement.

I. GOD DESIRING TO EXPRESS HIMSELF THROUGH A PEOPLE

God's desire is to express Himself through a people. He wants to make this people His dwelling. Furthermore, this people must become God's expression corresponding to His law. Since God's law is the expression of what God is, to correspond to the law is to correspond to God. God's people can have such a correspondence only by loving Him and being infused with His substance.

II. GOD HAVING SOUGHT HIS PEOPLE AS THE BELOVED SEEKING LOVE

According to Song of Songs, the man is the beloved, and the woman, the one who lovingly seeks him, is his love (1:13-16). Thus, the beloved is the husband, whereas his love is the wife. The Bible reveals that in the Old Testament God sought His people as the Beloved seeking someone to be His love, His spouse. If you read Exodus 1 through 20 in this light, you will see that in these chapters God came a number of times to woo His people. After wooing them, He became engaged to them at Mount Sinai.

A. Having Revealed Himself to Them as Jehovah Their God, the Great I Am

In Exodus 3:14-15, the Lord revealed Himself to His people as Jehovah their God, the great I Am, the One who was, who is, and who will be forever. The One who so revealed Himself to the people was the One who was seeking lovers.

B. Loving Them with Everlasting Love

In Jeremiah 31:3 the Lord told His people, "Yea, I have

loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Elsewhere we are told that God loved Jacob, but hated Esau (Rom. 9:13). There seems to be no reason for God's love for His people; He just loved them, almost as if He were blinded by love. He continued to love His people even when they were not faithful to Him. Love blinds people. The best love is this kind of blind love. If you are not blind, you will not be able to love properly. If your eyes are open to all the faults of the one you love, you may want a separation, or even a divorce. But if you love blindly, you will consider your husband or wife to be the best. In loving His people, God seemed to close His eyes and to love them blindly. In the matter of love, do not be wiser than God. Follow Him to love your spouse blindly.

When I was young, I wondered if God had been mistaken in loving Israel. Even though Jacob was a supplanter, God loved Him. God still loves Israel with an everlasting love, just as He did when He uttered the words of love in Jeremiah 31:3. Many nations may rise up against Israel, but God continues to love His people with an everlasting love.

C. Dealing with Them as His Spouse

Because God was the Beloved seeking His people to be His love, He dealt with them as His spouse. This is indicated clearly in Jeremiah 2:2; Hosea 2:19-20; Isaiah 54:5; and Ezekiel 16:8.

D. Revealing to Them What He Is By Giving Them His Law in a Courting Way

We have pointed out again and again that God's law was given in a courting way. By giving His people the law in such a way, God made known to them what kind of God He is. In each of the first five commandments, He referred to Himself intimately as "Jehovah thy God." Revealing Himself as a jealous God, He requested that they have no other god, no other beloved, besides Him. He was seeking their

love so that they would keep His commandments to express Him. The same concept is found in John 14:21 and 23. Verse 21 says, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." As in Exodus 20:1-12, here we see the Lord's love in courting us and in seeking a people to love Him. In John 14:23 the Lord continues, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." In the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament, God is courting man. The commandments in 20:1-12 were given not in a legal way, but in a courting way. In giving the law to His people, God wanted them to become His lovers.

If we do not love God, we shall not be able to keep His commandments, and thus we shall not be able to express Him. The goal of engagement is to bring two people into oneness. In marriage a man and his wife become one flesh. In like manner, God and His chosen people became one through the engagement which took place in Exodus 20. This oneness both between God and His people and between husband and wife is a basic principle in the Scriptures. However, many Bible teachers neglect this aspect of the giving of the Ten Commandments. Instead, they emphasize the distance between God and His people and the fact that God wanted them to keep the commandments. But we cannot deny the fact that the Ten Commandments served as an engagement paper and that the engagement of God and His people brought them into oneness.

In a proper marriage, a man and his wife become more and more one as the years go by. Gradually they become one in habit, characteristics, and expression. Likewise, eventually God's chosen people will become the same as He is and thus will truly express Him. We need to be infused with the Lord as our Husband, becoming more and more like Him. Then we shall become His expression. According to the Bible, this basic principle applies both to human

marriage and to the love relationship between God and His people.

The function of an engagement paper is to make the two parties, the man and the woman, one. In the same principle, the function of the Word of God is to make us one with God. For God to say that He betrothed Israel unto Himself means that He has caused His people to become one with Him as a wife is one with her husband. God's words cause His spouse to be one with Him. The highest function of the law is to bring God's chosen people into oneness with Him. The Ten Commandments are not simply regulations decreed by God as the highest authority in the universe. The law is an engagement paper which brings us to God and makes us one with Him. This is also true of the Bible. The primary function of the Bible is to bring us to God and make us one with Him. Because we love God, we also love His word. As His words infuse Himself into us, we become one with Him in life, nature, and expression. This understanding of the law as God's living word and of the Bible shows forth the intrinsic function of the law and of the Bible, the Word of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIFTY-FOUR

KEEPING THE LAW OF GOD BY LOVING HIM AND HIS WORD AND BECOMING ONE WITH HIM

(1)

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26; Jer. 31:3, 32; 2:2; John 3:29; Matt. 9:15; Eph. 5:25-27; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7; John 21:15-17; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; John 14:21, 23; S. S. 1:2-4

In this message we shall continue our consideration of God's giving His law to the people in Exodus 20. As all students of the Bible realize, the law is a very important subject both in the Old Testament and in the New.

If we would have a proper understanding of God's giving of the law in the Scriptures, we need to know how this matter is related to the main subject of the Bible as a whole. To understand any book, or even part of a book, we must first learn what is the main subject of the book. Suppose the subject of a certain book is love. But in that book suppose there also are a number of references to the subject of law. If a reader of the book takes these references out of context and gives them an improper emphasis, he will change the subject of the book from love to law. In seeking to understand the place of God's law in the Scriptures many Christians have done this very thing. Failing to understand the law in the light of the main subject of the Bible as a whole, they do not have a proper, balanced view of the law.

We have pointed out a number of times that virtually everything in the universe has two sides, or two aspects. For example, during a regular twenty-four hour period, we have both day and night. Would it not be absurd for

someone to insist that there is only day or only night? As sure as night falls, a new day dawns. We can neither prolong the day nor extend the night. This illustration of day and night may be applied to God's giving of the law. Concerning the law, there are two aspects, two sides: the aspect of "night," the dark side, and the aspect of "day," the bright side. In these messages we are covering the "day" aspect, not the "night" aspect, which we shall cover later. We need to give the proper emphasis to both aspects. Now that we are covering the "day" aspect of the law, we are pointing out what is clear and bright. But when we turn to the "night" aspect, we shall point out what is dark. I do not intend to cheat the Lord's people by failing to point out both aspects. In considering the two aspects of God's giving of the law, I am not contradictory. To the contrary, I am simply presenting both sides of the truth.

Concerning God's giving the law to His people, the main aspect is not the "night" aspect. God did not create the universe so that there could be night. Night is necessary, but it is not God's goal. God's goal is to have an eternal day. A verse which speaks of New Jerusalem in eternity, Revelation 21:25, says, "Night shall not be there." Furthermore, Revelation 22:5 declares, "Night shall be no more." When God's purpose has reached its ultimate fulfillment in the New Jerusalem, there will be no night in that eternal city. By this we see that God's goal is to have day, not night.

As Paul says, we are "of the day," even "sons of the day" (1 Thes. 5:8, 5). However, in discussing the giving of God's law, many Christian teachers place too great an emphasis on the aspect of "night." I am by no means asserting that they pay no attention at all to the "day" side. I am simply pointing out the fact that their emphasis is on the aspect of "night." Thus, there certainly is the need for us to cover the "day" side of the law as well as the "night" side.

If we would have the proper realization of what God's law is, we need to know what God's eternal purpose is.

God's eternal purpose is to have a people to express Him. In order for this purpose to be fulfilled, God must impart Himself into His chosen people and work Himself into them. This is the reason that, according to Genesis 1:26, God created man in a very particular way—in His own image and according to His likeness. God created man in His own image and according to His likeness so that man could take God in and contain Him. God wants man to be His container. This is the reason the Bible speaks of man as a vessel, a vessel of honor and of glory (Rom. 9:23). Man is a vessel to contain God.

The New Testament clearly and emphatically reveals that in Christ and through Christ God has come to us to dispense Himself into us. God does not simply come to visit us. He desires to make His abode with us. The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him" (John 14:23). In Colossians 1:27 Paul speaks of "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Other verses also indicate definitely that Christ is in us (Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; 4:19). We know from Ephesians 4:6 that the Father is in us and from John 14:17 and Romans 8:11 that the Spirit dwells in us. First John 4:12 says, "God abides in us." Verse 15 of the same chapter declares, "Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." This matter of dwelling in God and God dwelling in us is repeated several times in 1 John. Again and again, the New Testament points out that God dwells in us. We are even called God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19) and His dwelling place, His house (Eph. 2:22; 1 Tim. 3:15). God houses Himself in us. Ephesians 3:17 indicates that Christ is making His home in our hearts. Only when God works Himself into our being are we able to express Him.

Many Christians today neglect this crucial matter of God dispensing Himself into us and working Himself into us. When we expound this point and emphasize its importance, we are accused by some of teaching pantheism or

even "evolution into God." What blindness! Yes, we teach that God desires to work Himself into man, but we certainly do not teach that man is evolving into the Godhead or that man will ever attain to the status of deity. Those who accuse us of holding such a doctrine are in darkness. Time and time again we must emphasize the basic matter that, according to the divine revelation in the Scriptures, God desires to be one with His people and to make them one with Him. We do not have the full understanding of how intensely God longs to be one with us and to make us one with Him. Those who think this is "evolution into God" are grossly ignorant of God's economy revealed in the New Testament. In the light of God's Word, we see that He wants to come into us and dwell in us and cause us to dwell in Him. In this way, He and we, we and He, become one.

I. TO KEEP THE LAW OF GOD BY LOVING HIM

Although God is divine and we are human, it is still possible for us to be one with Him. But in order for God to be one with us and for us to be one with Him, there must be love between us and God. Unless there is mutual love, it is not possible for a man and woman to live together as husband and wife and remain truly one. The genuine oneness between a man and his wife is wholly a matter of love. Love is the motive and incentive for such a oneness. If I did not love my wife, I could not live with her in oneness. For two persons to be one, they must love each other. This is also true of the relationship between God and His people.

Without God, we are empty, and everything is vain. If we did not have God, we would have to say with the writer of Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (1:2). But since we have God, we have reality.

Our need for God can be compared to the need a woman has for a husband. Moreover, God needs us as a man needs a wife. No love is sweeter than that between a man and his wife. This kind of love is necessary for keeping the law of God. We keep God's law by loving Him and His Word and by becoming one with Him.

The love we should have for God is not the love parents have for their children, the honoring love children have for their parents, the love friends have for each other, nor the pitying love a rich person has toward the poor. The love we need to have for the Lord is affectionate love like that between a man and his wife. Our love for the Lord should be that which is expressed in Song of Songs, where we have a beautiful and touching description of the deep and tender affectionate love between the beloved (the Lord) and the one he loves (His love, His loving seeker). This love is so sweet and intimate that it is beyond our capacity to describe it adequately.

Christians often say that the Bible is a book of love. They may quote John 3:16, concerning God's love for the world, 1 John 3:1 concerning God the Father's love for His children, or Ephesians 5:25, concerning Christ's love for the church. However, believers may not realize that the love in these verses is not only the love of God for the world, or the love of God the Father for His children, but also the love of Christ the Husband for His wife, the affectionate love revealed in Song of Songs. The love between God and His people unfolded in the Bible is mainly the affectionate love between man and woman.

A. God's Love for His People

1. Courting Them

According to the Old Testament, God loved Israel with such an affectionate love. In Jeremiah 31:3 the Lord said to His chosen people, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." What we have here is not the love between friends, nor the love of a rich person toward the poor; it is a courting love, a love which leads to engagement and marriage. Because the Lord had such a love for His people, He "took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (Jer. 31:32). This is also the love in Jeremiah 2:2, a verse which speaks of the love of Israel's betrothals. Mainly, the love revealed

in the Bible is this love in courtship, engagement, and marriage.

As we pointed out in the foregoing message, in bringing His people out of Egypt and giving His law to them, God was courting them, wooing them, and seeking to win their affection. As strange as it may sound at first, God actually courts His people. Because He has courted us, we are in the church life today. Not only is our God the processed God, the Triune God who has passed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension in order to come into us as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit; He is also the courting God, the God who comes to us and woos us, seeking to win our affection. This kind of love was displayed in Exodus 20 when God came to His people and gave His law to them.

When we come to the divine revelation in the Bible, we should not be occupied by anything that would blind us to the Lord's light. Rather, we need to open our whole inner being to the Lord. Years ago, I did not see as clearly as I do today that in the Old Testament God came to His people in the way of a suitor courting a young lady. But recently in my reading of Exodus 20 I opened to the Lord in a fresh way. I did not care for what I knew about this chapter. I was open to what the Lord would say to me. I can testify that after this the light came. As early as 1932, I gave messages on this chapter. Those messages, however, emphasized the "night" aspect of the giving of the law. What the Lord has shown me recently concerns the "day" side, in particular the fact that the law given in Exodus 20 functions as an engagement paper, an engagement contract.

2. A Book of Engagement

Because of the Lord's enlightening through His word, I have the confidence to say that the entire Bible is a book of engagement. In the Scriptures we have a record of how God courts His chosen people and eventually marries them. For eternity, the Triune God as the Husband will enjoy a sweet

married life with His wife, His chosen and redeemed people. New Jerusalem will even be called the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9). The conclusion of the Bible is the marriage of God and His people. Since the Bible ends in this way, it can truly be called a book of engagement. The main subject of the Scriptures is God's engagement to His people. If this were not the main subject of the Bible, the Bible would not conclude with a word concerning the universal marriage of God and His redeemed ones.

Recently I have come to see that the old covenant was a covenant in which God espoused His people to Himself. Both Ezekiel 16:8 and Jeremiah 31:32 refer to this. In Ezekiel 16:8 God said to His people, "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." The covenant here is the old covenant based on the law of God. Ezekiel 16:8 indicates that the time God entered into this covenant with His people was "the time of love." This means that God's covenant with His people was an engagement covenant, a betrothal. By entering into such a covenant with His people, God betrothed them to Himself, and He betrothed Himself to them. Jeremiah 31:32 confirms this: "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah" (Heb.). Notice that here both the words covenant and husband are used. Once again, we see that in making the old covenant with the children of Israel, God betrothed Himself to the people and became their Husband. This proves that the old covenant was an engagement paper, an engagement contract.

With the new covenant the principle is the same. Jeremiah 31 refers to the old covenant, the covenant of betrothal, and also to the new covenant which the Lord would make with His people (v. 31). Since the old covenant was a

covenant of betrothal, the new covenant must be the same in nature. Both the old covenant and the new covenant are covenants of engagement. Applying this fact to the account of the giving of the law in Exodus 20, we see that in giving His law to His people, God wanted them to become one with Him, to become His very spouse. In order for such an engagement to take place, an affectionate love like that between a man and his wife is absolutely necessary.

B. Receiving God's Life

1. The Type of Adam and Eve

When we enter into such a love relationship with the Lord, we receive His life, just as Eve received the life of Adam. If Eve had not received Adam's life, she could not have been one with him. After God created man, he brought to him "every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air … to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (Gen. 2:19). In Genesis 2:20 we are clearly told that "for Adam there was not found a help meet for him." Among the cattle, the fowl, and the beasts of the field, Adam did not find a counterpart; he did not find anything to match him. God then caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, took one of his ribs, and built the rib into a woman (Gen. 2:21-22, Heb.). When the woman was presented to Adam, he declared, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man" (v. 23). At last, Adam had found his counterpart, his match. No doubt, Adam and Eve loved each other, for Eve had received her life from Adam and even was of Adam. She and Adam had one life and one nature. Eve's every fiber, tissue, and cell had its source in Adam and was part of Adam. According to Ephesians 5, Adam and Eve depict Christ and the church. Just as Eve came out of Adam and possessed his life and nature, so the church comes out of Christ and possesses His life and nature.

2. Love and Life

Because such a relationship exists between Christ and the church, we receive the Lord's life whenever we tell Him that we love Him. From our experience we know that when we say, "Lord Jesus, I love you," we are infused with His life. Many Christians do not realize that if they love the Lord Jesus, He will come into them to be their life and their life supply. Little children often sing, "Oh, how I love Jesus!" and young people may call to the Lord, expressing their love for Him. But such expressions of love for the Lord should not be limited to children and young people. Even those who are older also need to say, "Lord Jesus, I love you." Our need to express our love for the Lord in this way may even be greater than that of the young people. More and more, we need to tell the Lord how much we love Him.

During the past several months, I have been earnestly seeking the Lord for the proper way to live Him. Day by day, I have been praying, asking Him to show me the secret of living Him. No doubt, part of the secret is telling the Lord again and again that we love Him. Whenever we tell the Lord that we love Him, He supplies us with His life. It is this life which enables us to become one with God and makes Him one with us.

3. A Process of Divine Conception

Because the truths in the Bible are so profound, we cannot understand them unless we use illustrations and parables. This is true of what the Bible says about how the life of God enters into us. God's life does not come into us like water poured into a glass. We receive God's life through a process of divine conception. The fact that we are born of God (John 1:12-13) indicates that God's life comes into us through conception. Birth always involves the conceiving of life.

I have been condemned for teaching the mingling of God with man. Let me ask, how could we be conceived of God and born of God without being mingled with God? John 3:6

says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Our physical life is a portrait of spiritual life. In principle, spiritual birth is the same as physical birth. Both kinds of birth involve the conceiving of life. Through conception and birth, we have received the life of God.

In the Lord's recovery we emphasize the subjective aspects of the truth in the Bible. Many religious ones are offended by this. Pointing to the fact that Christ is great, that He has been glorified and enthroned in the heavens, they ask how such an exalted Christ could be our food. Some even mock us, asking what is our basis for saying that Christ is edible. In their blindness, they ignore the subjective truth that Christ, the bread of life, is indeed edible. He Himself said, "He who eats Me shall also live because of Me" (John 6:57). Eating Christ and living because of Him certainly are very subjective matters.

C. Two Illustrations of Oneness

1. Grafting

We have seen that it is God's life which makes us one with God. This oneness in life can be illustrated by the grafting of a branch from one tree into another tree. Grafting involves a metabolic process. Dead sticks can be nailed together, glued together, or tied together, but they cannot be grafted together. Only living things can be grafted.

Two substances that are to be grafted together must be similar in life. We know that our natural human life is not the same as the divine life. It is a principle according to Genesis 1 that each life is according to its kind. But even though the human life is not the divine life, it was created according to the divine life, for man was made in God's image and according to His likeness. Only the human life, not any other kind of life, was made according to God. Because the human life and the divine life are similar in certain respects, they can be grafted together. Once this grafting takes place, the life juice of the divine life flows into the human life and produces a marvelous oneness

between God and man. How, then, can we be one with God and God one with us? This oneness comes by the grafting of the human life into the divine life and the divine life to the human life. John 15 says clearly that we are branches in Christ, who is the vine. According to the illustration used by Paul in Romans 11, we are branches grafted into Christ. Now as we abide in Christ and He abides in us, we and He, He and we, share one life and one living. This oneness in life and living makes us truly one.

2. Husband and Wife

Our oneness with the Lord is also illustrated in Scripture by the oneness between a man and his wife. A husband and his wife are one both in nature and in life. Eventually, after many years, a man and woman who have enjoyed a genuine married life will become one even in expression. During the honeymoon, a husband and wife are one in love. With more time, they become one in life. But ultimately those who develop a proper married life become one in expression. This is a picture of our relationship with the Lord. First we are one with Him in love; then we become one with Him in life and nature; and finally we shall be one with Him in expression. When we are one with Him in love, we experience His life and enjoy His nature. When we live His life and walk according to His nature, we become His expression.

We pointed out in a foregoing message that the law is a description of what God is. This means that the law is the expression of God. If we become one with God in love, life, nature, and expression, we shall automatically keep His law. There will be no need for us to make up our mind to keep it, for we shall spontaneously live according to God's law.

D. The Law Uplifted, Not Changed

It is important to see that in the New Testament the Ten Commandments are repeated, developed, and uplifted. In fact, the teaching in the New Testament goes

beyond the Ten Commandments. Anyone who rejects God's law must also reject the entire New Testament, which reiterates in an expanded way the law decreed in the Old Testament. In Matthew 5 the Lord Jesus complemented the law and uplifted it. More than once He said, "You have heard that it was said…but I say to you…" (Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 43-44). The Lord Jesus came with no intention of abolishing the law. He Himself said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). Concerning the law, the teaching of the New Testament is thus essentially the same as that of the Ten Commandments.

When some read this, they may wonder about the fourth commandment, concerning keeping the Sabbath. Even with respect to the Sabbath, the New Testament does not change in principle. In the Old Testament, the seventh day was a memorial, a mark of God's creation. But because we, the saints in the church, have been regenerated in Christ's resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3), we are not merely of God's creation, but also of His re-creation. Unlike Adam, we are not those living in God's creation; we are the ones living in Christ's resurrection. Hence, our memorial day is no longer the seventh day; it is the eighth day, the first day of the week, the day of resurrection. According to Acts 20:7, the disciples came together on this day, not on the seventh day, to have the Lord's table. According to 1 Corinthians 16:2, also on this day material things were set apart for God's use. Furthermore, in Revelation 1:10 John says that he was in spirit on the Lord's day, which was the first day of the week. Since there is a memorial day both in the Old Testament and in the New, it is correct to say that concerning the fourth commandment there is no change in principle. Because the Old Testament saints lived in God's creation, their memorial day was the seventh day. But because we, the New Testament saints, are in resurrection, our memorial day is the eighth day. The actual day has changed from the seventh day to the eighth day. However, God has not

annulled the principle of setting apart a day unto the Lord. Again we see that, in principle, the whole Bible, the Old Testament as well as the New, is the same concerning the law.

E. God's Ultimate Goal

God's ultimate goal is to make us one with Him. The way for us to become one with Him is by love, life, nature, and expression. Our love for God should be like that of a woman for her husband, the very love portrayed in Song of Songs. Loving the Lord in this way, we receive His life supply. We have given a number of messages on life and building based on Song of Songs (see *Life and Building in the Song of Songs).* Through our affectionate love for the Lord Jesus, we are supplied with life. As this life grows, the building takes place. Actually, the growth of life is the building. Loving the Lord as our Husband and experiencing and enjoying His life and nature, we shall become His expression. Song of Songs depicts this sequence. Eventually, in a very real sense, the seeking one in Song of Songs becomes her beloved. The two, the man and the woman, become one absolutely, even in expression, living as if they were one person.

In the oneness between man and wife we see the proper way to keep the law. We do not keep the law through the exercise of our mind and will. We keep it by loving the Lord as our Husband. We all need such a sweet, intimate, affectionate love between us and the Lord. We should love Him as a woman loves her husband. We all, young and old alike, need this kind of love. The more we love the Lord in this way, the more we shall partake of His life and spontaneously live Him in accordance with His nature. Then our living will automatically become the keeping of His law. What we live out will be according to the law as His description, definition, and expression.

As we shall see in a later message, if we try to keep God's law without having such an affectionate love for Him, we shall be in darkness, condemned, exposed, and even

slain by the law of God. That is the dark aspect of the law, the "night" aspect. In this message our concern has been to consider the bright aspect, the "day" aspect. Considering this aspect, we see that we can keep the law of God only by loving Him and becoming one with Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIFTY-FIVE

KEEPING THE LAW OF GOD BY LOVING HIM AND HIS WORD AND BECOMING ONE WITH HIM

(2)

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26; Jer. 31:3, 32; 2:2; John 3:29; Matt. 9:15; Eph. 5:25-27; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7; John 21:15-17; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; John 14:21, 23; S. S. 1:2-4

This message is a continuation of the foregoing message.

II. GOD'S ROMANCE WITH MAN

A. Creating Man with the Purpose of Having a Counterpart

Throughout the centuries, God has had a romance with man. God created man with the purpose of having a counterpart (Gen. 1:26). His intention in creating man was not mainly to have servants. If we read the Bible in a pure way, without any preoccupations, we shall realize that God's purpose in creating man was to gain a counterpart. God is not a fighter; He is a lover. He created man in the image of Himself as a lover. This means that He created man so that man would love Him. In eternity God was alone; we may even say that He was lonely. His desire for love could not be fulfilled by angels. Therefore, God created man according to His own being. God is loving, and He wants man to love Him. In this way there will be a mutual relationship of love between God and mankind, those created to be His counterpart.

B. Choosing Israel to Be His Spouse

The Old Testament indicates clearly that God came in to choose Israel to be His spouse. In Jeremiah 31:3 the Lord says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." When God appeared to His people, He "dated" them and later even courted them. According to Ezekiel 16, God loved Israel when He saw her in the wilderness. Verse 8 describes this love: "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." By entering into a covenant with Israel, God betrothed her to Himself. Jeremiah 2:2 also speaks of this covenant, this engagement: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothals, how thou followedst after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Heb.). This verse indicates that the covenant was enacted in the wilderness after God had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. Chapters one through nineteen of Exodus were the time of Israel's youth. The Lord remembered the kindness of Israel's youth and the love of her betrothals. I have wondered how much Israel actually loved God in this way. Perhaps in this verse the Lord was comforting Himself as does a young man who tries to encourage himself when the one he loves fails to respond to his wooing. Such a young man might be encouraged if the one he loves even looks at him. Where in the first nineteen chapters of Exodus do we see the love of Israel's betrothals to God? Where do we find such an espousing love? Although it is difficult for us to find, Jeremiah 2:2 nonetheless tells us that the Lord remembers the love of Israel's betrothals and the kindness of her youth. It seems to me that Israel was not so kind, polite, or courteous to the Lord. Yet Jeremiah tells us that He remembered the kindness of Israel's youth. The expressions used in Jeremiah 2:2 reveal how much God loved the children of Israel. In a sense, we might say that

God was blinded by His love for His people. After creating man, He chose a people, the children of Israel, to be His spouse.

C. Coming to Be the Bridegroom for the Bride

When the Lord Jesus came, He came as the Bridegroom for the bride. Many Christians are familiar with John the Baptist's declaration: "Behold, the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). However, not so many realize that John also referred to the Lord Jesus as the Bridegroom. In John 3:29 he says, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom." This word is included in a chapter on regeneration (John 3:3-6). The goal of regeneration is to produce and prepare the bride for the Bridegroom. Since Christ is the One who will have the bride, He is the Bridegroom. As God incarnate, Christ came not only to be our Redeemer and Savior; He also came to be our Bridegroom.

In Matthew 9:15 the Lord Jesus referred to Himself as the Bridegroom. To the blind religionists who were asking Him about fasting, the Lord said, "Can the sons of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." In dealing with the question raised by the disciples of John, the Lord revealed Himself as the Bridegroom coming to receive the bride. In their blindness, the religionists could not see that Christ was the Bridegroom. It is crucial that our eyes be opened to see the Lord as our Bridegroom.

D. Regenerating the Church to Be His Bride

The Lord Jesus regenerates the church so that the church may be His bride (John 3:3, 5, 29-30). The Lord is the Bridegroom with the divine life and the divine nature. If we would become His bride, we must also have the divine life and the divine nature. For this, regeneration is necessary. Apart from possessing this life and nature, we could never become Christ's counterpart. In John 3 we see that regeneration qualifies us to be Christ's bride. Only after we

have been regenerated with the divine life and have thereby received the divine nature can we, sinners, be taken by Christ to be His love. He is so high, possessing the divine life and nature, and we are so low. How can we become His counterpart? This is possible only by regeneration. Through regeneration we receive another life, the divine life. In this life and by this life we are qualified to become Christ's counterpart and to match Him.

E. Marrying His Redeemed as His Wife

At the end of this age, Christ will come to marry His redeemed and to take her as His wife (Rev. 19:7). The present age is an age of "dating," courtship, and engagement between God and His people. At the end of this dispensation, there will be a glorious wedding day, at which time Christ will marry His redeemed ones. This revelation of the marriage between Christ and His redeemed ones is a major revelation in the Bible.

F. Enjoying a Married Life for Eternity

At the very end of the Bible we see that God will enjoy a married life with His people in eternity and for eternity. For eternity in the new heaven and new earth, the New Jerusalem will be the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9). This is the fulfillment of God's romance revealed in the Scriptures.

III. THE WHOLE BIBLE BEING A DIVINE ROMANCE

The entire Bible is a divine romance. This means that the Bible is a very romantic book. This is true in particular of Song of Songs. Certain modernists doubt whether Song of Songs should be included in the Bible. Even some proper Christian teachers have had doubts about this book. When I was young, I also wondered why such a book is in the Bible, a book concerned with a romance between a man and a woman. This book is a portrait of the love relationship between us and Christ. According to Song of Songs, our relationship with the Lord should be very romantic. If there

is no romance between us and the Lord Jesus, then we are religious Christians, not romantic Christians. If you wish to know what I mean by romance, I would encourage you to read and pray-read Song of Songs. Pray-reading this book of romance will cause you to become romantic with the Lord. You will be beside yourself with love for Him. The Bible is a divine romance, and our relationship with the Lord should become more and more romantic.

A. Full of God's "Datings" of Man

As a divine romance, the Bible is a full record of God's wooing, even of His "dating," of man. Again and again in the Scriptures, God comes to man in this way. Two examples are God's coming to Jacob at Bethel the first time (Gen. 28:10-22) and also the second time (Gen. 35:9-15). Another example is God's coming to Moses at Mount Horeb (Exo. 3:1-17).

B. Full of God's Courting of Man

The Bible is also full of God's courting of man. As a young man wants to give constant attention to the woman he is courting, even to the point of bothering her, so the Lord "bothers" us by courting us. The Bible records God's courtship of His people. In the New Testament we see that when the Lord Jesus called His disciples, He was courting them. Again and again, the Lord Jesus bothered Peter in this courting way. It is significant that it was not Peter who came to the Lord; it was the Lord who came to Peter. In John 21 the Lord inquired of Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" (v. 15). Twice more the Lord asked him, "Do you love Me?" (vv. 16, 17). By asking these questions of Peter, the Lord Jesus was courting him. He did not want Peter to love Him as a child honoring a parent, a friend caring for another friend, or a rich person pitying a poor person. Instead, the Lord wanted Peter to love Him with an affectionate love, with a love like that of a young woman for the man who loves her.

We should not read John 21 apart from John 3. The One who was asking Peter if he loved Him was the very Bridegroom who came to have the bride. Based upon the revelation of the Lord Jesus as the Bridegroom in John 3, we see that His conversation with Peter in chapter twenty-one was conducted in the way of courtship.

The same is true of the Lord's word in John 14:21 and 23. In verse 21 the Lord says, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." This is a word spoken by the Bridegroom to His bride. It is a word of "dating" and of courtship. In verse 23 the Lord continues, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." The Father and Son making an abode with the one who loves the Lord Jesus is a reference to living together in married life. To share the same abode with the Lord Jesus is to live with Him as His spouse.

Although the Lord often spoke as a Bridegroom conversing with His bride, not many Christians have realized this aspect of His word. The tendency has been to take the Lord's word in an altogether different sense. Therefore, I hope that this word concerning God's "dating" and courting of His people will revolutionize our concept. The Lord's coming to us is His "dating" and courting of us.

C. Both the Old and New Covenants Being Espousal Covenants

In the foregoing message we pointed out that both the Old and New Covenants were espousal covenants, covenants of engagement.

1. The Entire Old Testament Spoken in This Way

As a whole, the Old Testament was spoken in the way of a covenant of engagement. This is the reason that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea all refer to God's people as

His wife. Even though His people wanted to divorce Him, the Lord would bring them back to Himself. He would betroth them to Him again. Consider how the word betroth is used in Hosea 2:19 and 20: "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know Jehovah" (Heb.). In these verses the Lord uses the word betroth three times. The future tense indicates that this refers to the second betrothal of God's people to Him, the betrothal in which the divorced wife is brought back to the Lord as her Husband. This indicates that the Old Covenant was a matter of espousal, of engagement.

2. The Law Given in This Way

As we have indicated, the law was given in the way of an engagement paper, of an engagement contract. When God gave the law to His people on the mountain, He was betrothing them to Himself. In giving them the law, He was seeking to stir them up to love Him and not to have any other beloved in addition to Him.

3. The Entire New Testament Written in This Way

The entire New Testament was written in the way of romance and courtship. The Gospel of Matthew speaks of Christ as a Bridegroom, and the book of Revelation refers to the marriage of the Lamb and concludes with a revelation of the New Jerusalem as the Lamb's wife. Furthermore, in 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul expresses the same concept when he says, "For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one Husband, to present a pure virgin to Christ." Here we see that Paul realized that he had espoused the church to Christ, her Husband. Then in Ephesians Paul refers to Christ's love for the church, charging husbands to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"

(Eph. 5:25). Hence, the whole New Testament was written in an atmosphere of romance. The Lord is the One courting us, and we are His love, His spouse. Eventually, at the end of the New Testament, we have the marriage of Christ and His people.

4. The Entire Bible Being God's Courting Word

The entire Bible is God's courting word. In the Bible we see that God is seeking our love. When the Lord asked Peter if he loved Him, He was courting Peter, seeking his affectionate love. As a whole, the Bible is a word of such divine courtship.

5. A Responsive, Affectionate Love Needed to Keep the Courting Word of God

If we would keep God's courting word, we need a responsive, affectionate love for Him. Peter was asked to love the Lord in this way, and Paul was constrained to love the Lord with such a love (2 Cor. 5:14-15). All believers need to love the Lord in this way (John 14:21, 23). As we have seen, this kind of responsive, affectionate love is depicted in Song of Songs, where we have a portrait of the love between the Beloved and His love (S. S. 1:2-4).

IV. TO KEEP THE LAW OF GOD BY BECOMING ONE WITH HIM

In the foregoing message we pointed out that we keep the law of God by loving Him. Furthermore, we keep God's law by becoming one with Him. Such oneness is related to the fact that the law was an engagement paper, a covenant of espousal. God's goal in giving the law was to make His chosen people one with Him as a wife is one with her husband. The law would then impart God's substance into them, usher them into God, and unite them with God in life and nature. This union of God with His people in life and nature is portrayed by the type of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:18-24. All this indicates that God's law can be kept only by

those who love God and are one with Him in life, nature, and expression.

The Bible truly is a book of courtship, and our God is a courting God. Some people may disagree with the statement that God is a courting God. But unless we disregard the Bible, we must admit that this is the truth. The Bible clearly reveals that God is courting man.

A number of gospel songs speak of the Lord's calling, and many preachers say that the believers are a people called by God. This, of course, is true. However, God's calling of sinners to Himself is His way of courting them. His calling is His courting of His seeking people not only to be saved, but also to be His bride loving Him in an affectionate way.

It is of the Lord's sovereignty that the Song of Songs is included in the Scriptures. However, some so-called Christians disagree with the inclusion of Song of Songs in the Bible, viewing it as a secular book, not as a sacred one. But in fact Song of Songs is the most sacred of books. In this book the seeker says, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (6:3). If we did not have Song of Songs, we probably could not have such an expression regarding our relationship with the Lord. The hymn "Loved with everlasting love" has a line in the chorus which says, "I am His, and He is mine." This is a reference to Song of Songs. To say that "I am my beloved's" does not mean that He is the Master possessing us as His servants. It means that we are His love. This relationship is not that between master and slave, but the affectionate relationship between husband and wife. Song of Songs is the most romantic book ever written. Yet this book is concerned with the loving relationship between God and His chosen people. It presents a portrait of the married life of Christ and those who love Him.

I would remind you that the subject of this message is keeping the law of God by loving Him and His word and becoming one with Him. Keeping the law of God has very much to do with loving Him as a wife loves her husband. We

have pointed out repeatedly that in giving the law God was wooing His people. Since the law was given as an engagement contract, we should not try to keep it apart from loving the Lord and being one with Him.

Some Christian teachers think that in the New Testament God has abandoned the law. This is far from the truth. The content of the law along with redemption may be considered an abstract of the entire Bible. Furthermore, concerning God's law, the content of the New Testament is essentially the same as that of the Ten Commandments. For example, throughout the Bible we are told not to have a god other than the one true God. God is a jealous God, and we should not have any god in addition to Him. Paul refers to God's jealousy in 2 Corinthians 11:2, where he indicates that we should be a chaste virgin to Christ. The Lord must be our unique Beloved. This is taught not only in the Ten Commandments, but throughout the Scriptures.

The whole Bible teaches that we should not worship idols. This charge is not limited to the Ten Commandments. Furthermore, the entire Bible teaches us to use the name of the Lord properly and never to take it in vain. Once again, this commandment is not limited to the law.

In principle, not even the fourth commandment, concerning keeping the Sabbath, is restricted to the law. Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, God's people were to have a memorial day as a sign that they belonged to the Lord. In the old creation this day was the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. But in the new creation it is the eighth day, the first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection. As those living in the new creation in resurrection, our memorial day is the eighth day, no longer the seventh. Although the day has changed for us in the new creation, the principle has not changed. During the millennium, restored humanity will continue to observe the seventh day (Isa. 66:23). Based upon this fact, the Seventh-Day Adventists argue that believers in this

age should continue to observe the Sabbath. However, in the coming millennium the Sabbath will be observed not by God's regenerated people, but by restored and preserved, yet unregenerated, mankind. Although they will be restored to man's state at the time of creation, they will not have the divine life in resurrection. Whereas they will be people of the seventh day, we are those of the eighth day. But in either case the Bible teaches that God's people are to have a particular day as a sign of their separation unto the Lord.

We have seen that the first four commandments are upheld throughout the Scriptures. The same is true of the last six commandments concerning honoring parents, not murdering, not committing adultery, not stealing, not bearing false witness, and not coveting. If we abandon the law, we lay aside the whole Bible.

Although we must not abandon the law, we should be careful not to abuse it, nor to misuse it. Both the law in particular and the Bible as a whole should be used in a proper way. If we try to keep the law without contacting God, we shall abuse it. Likewise, if we approach the Bible without touching the Lord, we shall misuse the Scriptures. The Judaizers made the mistake of trying to fulfill the law without contacting God. Thus, they did not become His counterpart, those who keep His law by loving Him and being one with Him. In principle, many Christians are making the same mistake today. Although they read and study the Bible, they do so without contacting the Lord Himself. While they teach others the knowledge of the Bible, they do not encourage them to contact the Lord in the Word. Therefore, they become today's Judaizers, abusing and misusing the Word of God.

We in the Lord's recovery appreciate pray-reading the Word. We do not want to read the Bible without contacting the Lord in a living way. We must beware of reading the Bible apart from praying and touching the Lord. If we contact the Lord in the Word, we shall be one with Him in a practical way in our experience. Then we shall become His

counterpart. By loving the Lord as our Beloved and becoming one with Him, even becoming His love, His word will become the life supply to us. The law is the condensation of His word. Whenever we contact the Lord in a direct, intimate way, becoming one with Him, His word supplies us with life. By this life we grow, become His expression, and live in a way which corresponds to what He is. Such a living corresponds to God's law and to His word. This is the proper way to use the law of God and the Word of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIFTY-SIX

HOW THE OLD TESTAMENT SEEKERS OF GOD ENJOYED HIS LAW

(1)

Scripture Reading: Psalm 119:1-2, 14-16, 20, 30, 35-36, 40, 42-43, 45, 47-48, 54, 55, 58, 66, 70, 74, 77, 80, 92, 94, 97, 103, 111-114, 117, 119, 127, 131-132, 135, 140, 147, 159, 162, 165, 167-170, 172-174; 19:10b

Psalm 119 is a psalm which dwells specifically on the law. The longest piece in the book of Psalms, this psalm was written according to the sequence of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, with each of its twenty-two sections using eight verses for each of the twenty-two Hebrew letters. Thus, this psalm of one hundred seventy-six verses has more verses than the whole book of Ephesians. Due to its length, it is difficult to cover in a brief way.

The foregoing messages on the law of God should be helpful to us in understanding Psalm 119. The psalmist did not write this psalm according to theology. Rather, it was written according to his sentiment and experience, according to the deep aspiration of his heart, and according to his enjoyment of the law. The psalmists expressed their hunger, thirst, and desire for the Lord. Like all the psalms, Psalm 119 is filled with aspiration, not with doctrine. Verse 131 says, "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments." Here the psalmist uses the word panted, a word also used in Psalm 42:1: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." The note in one version says that in Hebrew the word pant refers to the longing for a cool spring after suffering burning heat. The use of this word in Psalm

119:131 and 42:1 shows the deep sentiment and aspiration of the psalmists. The psalmists thirsted and panted after God. Hence, although Psalm 119 has much to say about the law, it does not speak about the law from the perspective of doctrine, but from the viewpoint of spiritual experience. This psalm was written by one who dealt with the law in the way of enjoyment. In this message and in the next, we shall look into Psalm 119 to consider how the Old Testament seekers of God enjoyed His law.

I. SEEKING GOD

Psalm 119:2 tells us that those who enjoyed God's law in the Old Testament were seekers of God: "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart." The writer of Psalm 119 was such a seeker. Many Christians are not familiar with the term "seekers of God," even though this concept is biblical. According to Psalm 119, seeking God is related to keeping the law. If you try to keep the law without having a heart to seek God, your efforts will be in vain. This was the serious shortcoming of the Judaizers at the time of Paul. Trying to keep the law without seeking God with their whole heart, they failed in their endeavor to fulfill the law's requirements. If we want to walk according to God's law, we must seek Him with our whole heart.

II. LOVING HIS NAME AND REMEMBERING IT

Psalm 119:132 says, "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name." This verse indicates that the psalmist loved the Lord's name. Verse 55 says, "I have remembered thy name, O Jehovah, in the night, and have kept thy law" (Heb.). When the psalmist awoke during the night, he remembered the Lord's name. What we remember in the night reveals our true interest, even the thing that occupies us. What do you think of when you wake up at night? If you are one who seeks God, you will remember His name. His name

will be your special interest. Young people, I hope that when you awake during the night, you will not dwell on worldly things, but will remember the sweet, precious name of the Lord. Like the Old Testament saints, may we all love the Lord's name and remember it, even in the middle of the night.

III. ENTREATING HIS COUNTENANCE

Psalm 119:58 says, "I entreated thy face with my whole heart" (Heb.). The King James Version uses the word favor instead of face. To seek a person's face is actually to seek his favor. If we entreat the Lord's face, His countenance, we shall receive bounty. Often little children will earnestly seek the face of their mother. To them nothing is more dear than beholding their mother's face. We also should seek the Lord in such an intimate way, entreating His countenance. The Lord's countenance brings His favor to the seeking one. For whatever the psalmist needed, he would entreat God's countenance.

Psalm 105:4 says, "Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore." According to this verse, we need to seek God's face continually. Then in Psalm 42:5 the psalmist praises God "for the help of his countenance." In a deeply personal and intimate way, the psalmist sought the help of the Lord's countenance.

IV. ASKING FOR HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON THEM

The Old Testament seekers of God also prayed that the Lord's face would shine upon them. Psalm 119:135 says, "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant." This thought is based upon the second aspect of the priests' blessing in Numbers 6:24-26: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." No doubt, this threefold blessing refers to the blessing of the Trinity: the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. With respect to the Son's blessing, there is mention of the Lord's face shining upon the people. Prayer

for the shining of God's face is also found in Psalm 4:6 and in 80:3, 7, 19, where the psalmist prays, "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine." The Old Testament seeking saints were not people who merely endeavored to keep the law in letters. They lovingly sought God in an intimate way, even asking Him to cause His face to shine upon them.

If we do not have such a heart to seek the Lord, we shall not care for the shining of His face. Even if He caused His face to shine upon us, we would not be conscious of that shining. To sense the shining of the Lord's face we need a seeking heart. If we are those who seek the Lord in an intimate way, we shall sense the shining of His face. According to 2 Corinthians 4:6, we can experience this shining: "Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts for the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Praise the Lord that we can experience the shining of His face!

V. WALKING IN HIS PRESENCE

If the Lord's face shines upon us, we shall automatically walk in His presence. In 119:168 the psalmist declares, "All my ways are before thee." This indicates that his goings were in the Lord's presence. This is a clear indication that the psalmist was one with the Lord.

Although the matter of oneness with God is revealed in a full way in the New Testament, there are also indications of this in the Old Testament. Psalm 90:1 says, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Written by Moses, this verse indicates that he experienced the Lord as his dwelling place. God was his home, his habitation. But notice that Moses speaks of "all generations." This tells us that the Old Testament saints in all generations had the experience of dwelling in God. The seekers of God in the Old Testament dwelt in Him; they were one with Him. To dwell in God is to be one with Him. How could these seekers dwell in God without being in God and one with God? If we

study the Psalms carefully, we shall see that the seekers of God in the Old Testament became one with Him through their appreciation and enjoyment of the law. They not only walked in God's presence; they dwelt in God, experiencing Him as their dwelling place.

VI. CONSIDERING GOD'S LAW TO BE HIS WORD

Time and time again the writer of Psalm 119 speaks of the law of God as the word of God. There is a significant difference between the law and the word. The law is a matter of commandments which make demands on us or require that we keep certain regulations ordained by God. Although the law demands, it cannot in itself supply life. Paul refers to this in Galatians 3:21: "For if a law was given which was able to give life, righteousness would have indeed been of the law." Although the law cannot give life, the word of God does supply us with life. The words spoken by God are His breath (2 Tim. 3:16). According to the Bible, God's word is also life, food, and water. It should be our daily life supply. However, if we treat the law only as the law and not as God's word, we shall not receive the supply of life through the law. For us, there will be no breath, food, water, or nourishment. Rather, we shall take the law in the same way the Judaizers did. But if we regard the law not only as the law but also as God's word, we shall receive life, breath, food, and living water through the law. According to the word of the Lord Jesus in John 6:63, His words are Spirit and life. At least thirty-seven times in Psalm 119 the psalmist refers to the law as God's word. Instead of simply declaring that he loved God's law, the psalmist declared that he loved God's word. This proves that he thought of God's law as His living word.

The Bible is the word of God. But if we take the Bible only as letters in black and white and do not contact the Lord directly as we read, it will become a dead book to us. Paul said, "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). The Greek word for letter in this verse is the same word used by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:15 in speaking of the holy

Scriptures. If the Bible is taken only as letters, it will kill. However, the spirit gives life. If we contact the Lord in our spirit as we read the Bible, the Word will become spirit and life to us. In our spiritual experience, it will be God's breath. Whenever we read the Word, we need to touch the source of the Word, and this source is God Himself.

We have pointed out a number of times that through the Word, which is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16), we can breathe God into us. Certain faultfinders have twisted our words, quoted us out of context, and criticized us for teaching that believers can breathe God into them. They call this blasphemy and a work of the flesh. According to the Scriptures, God's word is His breath. Oh, how God desires that we breathe Him into us! We thank Him for making this real in our experience.

A. Believing It

Considering God's law to be His word, the psalmist believed in the word: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments" (119:66). According to the New Testament, the first requirement in taking the Word of God is that we believe in it. We must believe in its genuineness, its accuracy, its authority, and its power.

B. Choosing It

Along with the Old Testament seekers of God, we should also choose God's word. Psalm 119:30 says, "I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me." Verse 173 says, "Let thine hand help me: for I have chosen thy precepts." What a marvelous choice this is! We all need to make a strong decision in favor of the word of God.

C. Lifting Up Their Hands unto It

In 119:48 we find an unusual expression: "My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments." What does it mean to lift up our hands to God's word? If we consider the way we lift

our hand to greet someone, we shall be able to understand this. To lift up our hands unto the Lord's word is to welcome it, to indicate that we receive it warmly and say "Amen" to it. Many of us have spontaneously lifted up our hands when inspired by God's word. Therefore, to lift up our hands to the word of God means to receive it gladly.

D. Loving It

The Old Testament seekers loved God's word. Eleven times the writer of Psalm 119 speaks of loving the word of God (vv. 47, 48, 97, 113, 119, 127, 140, 159, 163, 165, 167). I also can testify that I love the Word of God. No book is as lovable as the Bible.

E. Delighting in It

The psalmist also delighted himself in God's word (119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 174). He enjoyed the word and found it a source of delight. There is joy to be found in the word of God. Daily we need to take time to delight ourselves in the holy Word.

F. Tasting It

The psalmist even tasted God's word: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (v. 103). Notice that the writer does not say, "How sweet is thy law!" Instead, he declares, "How sweet is thy word!" If we regard the law as nothing more than the commandments of God, it will not be sweet to us. But if we realize that God's law is His word for our nourishment and life supply, we shall enjoy its sweet taste. According to his experience, the psalmist realized that the law was the sweet word of God. It was not just a list of commandments to regulate him; it was a word full of enjoyment and life supply, a word that, to his taste, was sweeter than honey.

G. Rejoicing in It

When we taste the word of God, we rejoice in it. The psalmist says, "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies"

(119:14), and "Thy testimonies…are the rejoicing of my heart" (v. 111). In verse 162 the psalmist testifies of his rejoicing in the word: "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil."

To rejoice is more than just to be joyful. We may be joyful silently, but we must use our voice in order to rejoice. There is a difference between making a joyful noise and having a joyful voice. When we rejoice, praising the Lord and even shouting, we make a joyful noise to Him. To certain opposers, this is bedlam. They condemn us for making a joyful noise to the Lord. Nevertheless, we must be those who rejoice in the Lord and in His word. If you have never spontaneously rejoiced in reading the Bible, perhaps you have never been fully inspired by the Word. Whenever we are helped by the Bible, in a living way, we spontaneously rejoice in the Word.

H. Singing of It

The psalmist says, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage" (119:54). The psalmist would even sing of God's word. We do not have much experience of this. We need to learn of the psalmist to sing the words of the Bible. I encourage all the saints to sing the Word of God.

I. Respecting It

Furthermore, the psalmist had respect unto all the Lord's commandments (119:6). In verse 117 he declares, "I will have respect unto thy statutes continually." If we would be genuine seekers of God, we must respect His word.

J. Having a Sound Heart in It

Psalm 119:80 says, "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes." We need to have a sound heart in the word of God. Such a heart is healthy, having no spiritual sickness related to God's word. With respect to the word of God, we should not be sick in our heart. We need to be healed of all spiritual

disease so that our heart may be pure, sound, and healthy toward the word of God.

K. Inclining Their Heart unto It

In 119:36 the Lord's seeker prayed, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." Then in verse 112 he declares, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end." We need a heart inclined to the word of God. Because our heart often has the tendency to depart from God's word, we need to pray that our heart would be called back to God's word and be inclined to it. The psalmist prayed in this way and could also testify that he himself inclined his heart toward the Lord's statutes. On the one hand, we need to pray that the Lord will incline our heart to the word; on the other hand, we need to exercise our spirit to bring our heart back to the word and to cause it to incline unto it. We need both a sound heart and a heart inclined to the word of God.

L. Seeking It, Longing for It, Hoping in It with Prayer, and Trusting in It

The Old Testament seekers of God also sought God's word (119:45, 94), longed for it (vv. 20, 40, 131), hoped in it with prayer (vv. 43, 74, 114, 147), and trusted in it (v. 42). According to our experience, these matters go along with having a sound heart in the Word and inclining our heart unto the Word. If our heart is sound in the Word and is inclined to the Word of God, we shall seek the Word. Many people read the Bible and get nothing from it because their heart is not right. A certain scholar admired the Chinese version of the Bible and sometimes quoted from it. Nevertheless, he did not receive help from reading the Word, and he died an unsaved man. Even Christians may study the Bible and teach it without being helped by the Word themselves. The reason for this lack is that they have a problem in their heart. Their heart either is not sound or is not truly

inclined to the Word of God. But if our heart is right, we shall not only seek the Word; we shall also long for it, hope in it, and trust in it.

Because Psalm 119 is filled with aspiration, inspiration, enlightenment, and nourishment, it helps us to realize the "day" side of the law, and it teaches us how to enjoy the law of God as His living word. The writer of this psalm was neither a theologian nor a Bible teacher; he was one who wrote to express his experience and enjoyment of the law of God. As we read Psalm 119, we see that what we have pointed out in the foregoing messages concerning the "day" aspect of the law is right.

The mountain where the law was given is called both Mount Horeb and Mount Sinai. Mount Horeb has a special reference to the "day" aspect of giving the law, whereas Mount Sinai has a particular application to the "night" aspect. Furthermore, when the law was given, there were two classes of people. Moses and his helpers were of one class, the ones on the mountain experiencing God's presence. But those at the foot of the mountain were of another class, the ones trembling in darkness at the giving of the law. To Moses and those with him, the mountain was the Mount of God, but to the remainder of the people, it was Mount Sinai. In these messages we are not at the foot of the mountain; we are on the top of the mountain receiving the Lord's infusion. In their experience, the psalmists and all the other Old Testament seekers of God were on the mountain and received a divine transfusion. Because they were infused with God, the psalmists used marvelous, wonderful, and even exciting expressions to speak of their experience of God and of their enjoyment of His word.

Psalm 1 indicates that the law, when taken in a proper way as God's word, can minister life to us. Those who delight in the law of the Lord and who muse on it day and night are like trees planted by the rivers of water (vv. 2-3). As we shall point out in the next message, the Hebrew word translated meditate means to muse upon. This Hebrew

word implies worship and prayer. If we contact the law of God by musing upon God's word in worship and prayer, in our experience the law will become a river of water, and we shall be trees planted by the water. This is the indication in Psalm 1 that the law can supply us and water us.

As we have pointed out, in 2 Corinthians 3:6 Paul says that the letter kills. Whether the law kills us or supplies us with life depends on how we deal with it. If we regard the law as the living word of God through which we contact the Lord and abide with Him, the law will become a channel for the supply of life. The source of life is the Lord Himself. The law in itself is not such a source, but it is a channel through which the divine life and substance are conveyed to us for supply and nourishment. What a blessing it is to receive the law in this way!

In the Bible, those who lovingly sought God were not the only ones who handled the law of God. The Pharisees, scribes, and Judaizers also handled the law. In the four Gospels we see a portrait of those who were zealous for the law and for the traditional exposition of the law. To them, the law was not a channel of life; it was dead letters which brought them into death. By contrast, the aged Simeon and Anna were nourished and watered by the law. It is hard to say where Gamaliel fits in. A famous teacher of the law, he may have been neither in the "day" nor in the "night." Perhaps he was in the "evening." Simeon and Anna are representatives of the "day" people; the Pharisees and Judaizers, of the "night" people; and Gamaliel, of those in the "evening."

In our approach to the Bible today, we may be either in the "day" or in the "night." By the Lord's mercy, we can testify that concerning the Bible we in the Lord's recovery are in the "day." As we read the Word of God, we experience sunrise, not sunset. But when many read the Bible, they are in the "night." As Paul said of the Jews, there is a veil upon their heart in the reading of the Scriptures (2 Cor. 3:14). They are veiled by their tradition and by their natural concepts. In their experience the Bible thus becomes a book of

dead letters. Like the ancient Pharisees, scribes, and Judaizers, they handle the Word without directly contacting the Lord. Instead of exercising their spirit, they rely on their natural understanding. Furthermore, they are often zealous to maintain their religious tradition. But whenever we come to the Word, we need to contact the Lord. As we come to the Lord in the Word, we need to hunger and thirst for Him and seek to enjoy Him. This seeking after the Lord is well expressed in the lines of a hymn:

I come to Thee, dear Lord,
My heart doth thirst for Thee;
Of Thee I'd eat, of Thee I'd drink,
Enjoy Thee thoroughly.

Just to behold Thy face,
For this my heart doth cry;
I deeply long to drink of Thee
My thirst to satisfy.

Hymns, #812

In our reading and pray-reading of the Word, we should seek the Lord's glorious, radiant face. Then in our experience the Word of God will be a source of life supply and nourishment, and we shall be in the "day," not in the "night."

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIFTY-SEVEN

HOW THE OLD TESTAMENT SEEKERS OF GOD ENJOYED HIS LAW

(2)

Scripture Reading: Psalm 119:1, 11, 14-16, 31-32, 34-35, 48, 51-52, 59, 72-73, 87, 95, 99, 102, 106, 111, 127-128, 130, 148, 157, 161-162, 166, 176

If we read Psalm 119 carefully, we shall see that the psalmist considered the law of God as God's word. Like all the other psalms, this psalm was not written according to doctrine or theology, but according to the deep sentiment and aspiration of the psalmist.

The writer of Psalm 119 uses many different terms to express how he enjoyed God's law as His living word and how he handled it as God's word. In the foregoing message we pointed out that the psalmist inclined his heart unto it (v. 36), sought it (v. 45), and longed for it (v. 20). In verse 74 he declared, "I have hoped in thy word." To hope in something is to wait for it. When the psalmist said that he hoped in God's word, he meant that he was waiting on the word of God and waiting for it. He was waiting on God for a word. Furthermore, he put his trust in God's word (v. 42). When we put all these matters together, we find that they correspond to our spiritual experience. Having a heart inclined unto the Word of God, we seek the Word, long for it, and hope in it. Then we place our trust in the word we have received of God.

M. Musing upon It

In a number of verses the psalmist says that he mused upon God's word (15, 23, 48, 78, 99, 148, Heb.). In each of

these verses the King James Version uses the word meditate. However, in Psalm 55:17, the King James Version translates the same Hebrew word as pray. This Hebrew word is also used in Genesis 24:63, where we are told that Isaac went out in the field to meditate, or, as the margin says, to pray. Psalm 143:5 also uses this word: "I remember the days of old; I ponder all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands" (Heb.). Rich in meaning, the Hebrew word for muse, or meditate, implies to bow down, to converse with oneself, and to utter. According to the Old Testament, to meditate on the Word of God is to enjoy it by musing upon it.

To muse upon the Word is to "chew the cud," like a cow eating grass (Lev. 11:3). As we muse upon the Word of God, we should "chew the cud." If we take in the Word too quickly, we shall not have very much enjoyment. But if we "chew the cud" as we take in the Word, our enjoyment will increase.

When we muse upon the Word of God, enjoying it and even chewing it as a cow chews the cud, we shall spontaneously pray. Prayer is also included in musing upon the Word. Furthermore, we may converse with ourselves or begin to praise the Lord. We may be so inspired by the Word that we want to shout our praises to the Lord.

Usually musing upon the Word will be slower and finer than pray-reading the Word. For example, in our musing upon Exodus 20:2 we may say to ourselves, "Remember that Jehovah is your Lord. He has brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Now you are out. Amen! O Lord, I worship You for bringing me out of bondage!" In all our musing upon God's Word, talking to the Lord or conversing with ourselves, we should be spontaneous and full of enjoyment. We may bow down to worship the Lord, ponder the Word, remember, or give ourselves a rebuke. All this is included in the practice of musing upon the Word of God. Any genuine seeker of the Lord who muses upon the Ten Commandments in a living way will enjoy the Lord, worship Him, pray, converse with

himself in the Lord's presence, and also praise the Lord. Surely one who takes the law of God in such a way will not apply it as dead letters, but will take it as God's living word.

To muse upon the Word of God is to enjoy His Word as His breath. It is to contact God in the Word and to have fellowship with Him, to worship Him, and to pray to Him through and with the Word. By musing upon the Word of God in this way, we shall be infused by God, breathe Him into us, and receive spiritual nourishment.

Concerning musing upon the Word, verse 147 says, "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word." Here we see that the psalmist rose up before dawn, cried out, and hoped in God's word. Verse 148 goes on to say, "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might muse upon thy word" (Heb.). The psalmist woke up during the night to muse upon God's word. Musing upon the Word involves more than just meditating on it. We muse upon the Word by talking to God, worshipping Him, enjoying Him, receiving grace from Him, and conversing with ourselves in the Lord's presence. We cannot describe adequately the practice of musing on the Word of God and the enjoyment this affords us.

The seekers of God in the Old Testament mused upon His living word. Their way of handling the Word of God was different from that followed by many today who mainly exercise their mind to study the Word in letter. As the psalmists mused upon the Word of God, they spoke to God, prayed, worshipped Him, and even bowed down to Him. In the presence of God, they spoke to themselves of His mercy, salvation, and gracious supply. Musing upon the Word in this way is even richer, broader, and more inclusive than pray-reading, for it includes prayer, worship, enjoyment, conversation, bowing down, and even lifting up our hands to receive God's word. It also includes rejoicing, praising, shouting, and even weeping before the Lord. In *Pilgrim's Progress* there is a place where the pilgrim reads the Bible and weeps, shouts, and repents. This indicates that he not

only read the Scriptures, but also mused upon them. If we muse upon the Word of God, we shall delight ourselves in the Word. Sometimes we may weep before the Lord or sing hymns of praise to Him.

The psalmist waited for the Lord's word, hoped in it, and arose before dawn to cry out to the Lord that he needed His word. Then he mused upon the Word, worshipping the Lord, praying to Him, and receiving His supply. He also spoke to himself and instructed himself with the Word of God. All this is part of musing upon the Word of God.

N. Considering It

In addition to musing upon the Word of God, the psalmist also considered it (119:95). In our spiritual experience we also consider the Word of God. Throughout the day we may consider what we enjoyed in our musing upon the Word in the morning. By recalling our enjoyment of the Lord in the Word, we receive further nourishment from the Word.

O. Esteeming It Right concerning All Things

The psalmist also esteemed God's Word right concerning all things (v. 128). The word "right" here does not mean right as opposed to wrong. It means upright, straight, strict in all things. When we muse upon the Word and consider it, we shall regard it upright in all things.

P. Entering into It

Verse 130 says, "The entrance of thy words giveth light." When we enter into God's Word, we see light. The Hebrew word for entrance means an opening, a gate, and it implies entering in. God's Word has an entrance through which we may get into it. Let us learn to enter into the Word of God. Light is not outside the Word; it is in the Word. When we enter into the Word of God, we shall be in the light that shines there.

Q. Learning It

After we enter into the Word, we learn the Word. Verse 73 indicates that God has created us in such a way that we may have understanding of His Word and learn His commandments. Verse 71 says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." This verse indicates that God raises up circumstances to discipline us so that we may learn the Word. Through suffering and affliction we learn His law. Inwardly we have faculties created by God by which we can understand His Word, and outwardly we have the environment and the circumstances by which we are disciplined. God allows us to be afflicted so that we may learn the Word of God.

R. Treasuring It

The psalmist also treasured the Word of God. He treasured it as great spoil (v. 162), as all riches (v. 14), above thousands of gold and silver (vv. 72, 127), and as a heritage forever (v. 111). Spoil refers to valuables taken away from an enemy. If we muse upon the Word, the enemy will be defeated, and we shall gather much spoil. Then we shall become rich and possess gold and silver, which will become our heritage. In ancient times, when a king conquered his enemies, he seized the gold and silver. Likewise, when we enjoy the Word and defeat the enemy through the Word, we shall gain spoil from the conquered enemy. Then we shall have the riches, the gold and silver, and the heritage.

Some may complain that what I have said about treasuring the Word of God is too experiential. If we do not understand the matter in this way, how should we treasure the Word as our spoil? We need to muse upon the Word and experience victory over the enemy through the Word. Then we shall have the spoil, the spoil will be our riches, the riches will be our gold and silver, and this will become our inheritance. I can testify that, for the most part, my inheritance has come to me in this way. When the enemy is defeated through the Word, I gain gold and silver as my heritage.

S. Hiding It in Their Heart

Verse 11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Treasure should be hidden. However, many people like to display their wealth instead of concealing it. This way is not the biblical way. According to the Bible, we should hide our treasure. We should treasure God's Word and hide it in our heart.

T. Remembering It and Not Forgetting It

Verse 52 indicates that the writer of Psalm 119 remembered God's Word. If we hide the Word in our heart, we shall remember it. To remember the Word is to call back, to recall, our enjoyment of it. The psalmists certainly were busy in handling the Word of God. They mused upon it, considered it, hid it in their heart, and remembered it.

In verse 16 the psalmist declares, "I will not forget thy word," and in verse 93 he says, "I will never forget thy precepts." We need to exercise ourselves not to forget the Word of God. It is difficult to remember the Word, but it is easy to forget it. We may hear many rich messages from the Word and in a very short period of time forget them all. Therefore, we need to exercise ourselves to remember God's Word and not forget it.

U. Standing in Awe of It

In verse 161 the psalmist says, "My heart standeth in awe of thy word." We also should stand in awe of the Word of God. Concerning it, we should be in fear and trembling (v. 120). Paul used such an expression both in 1 Corinthians 2:3 and in Philippians 2:12.

V. Cleaving to It

Verse 31 says, "I cleave unto thy testimonies" (Heb.). The King James Version uses the word stuck. We need to stick ourselves to the Word of God, to cleave to it.

W. Not Forsaking It, Not Swerving from It, Not Turning Aside from It, and Not Going Astray from It

With the psalmist, we should not forsake God's Word (v. 87), not swerve from it (vv. 51, 157, Heb.), not turn aside from it (v. 102), and not go astray from it (v. 110, Heb.). Swerving from the Word is different from turning aside from it. To turn is to go in another specific direction, but to swerve is to veer off without direction, regulation, or control. On occasion, certain things will happen to cause us to swerve away from the Word of God. But we should not swerve from the Word, turn aside from it, or go astray from it.

X. Turning Their Feet unto It

Verse 59 says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Instead of turning aside from the Word, we should turn our feet unto it.

Y. Keeping, Observing, Practicing, and Doing It

At least twenty-eight times in Psalm 119 we are encouraged to keep, observe, practice, and do the Word of God. For example, verse 33 says, "Teach me, O Jehovah, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end" (Heb.). In verse 69 the psalmist says, "I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart." The psalmist used all these different verbs to show how he handled the Word of God.

Z. Walking in It and Running the Way of It

Verse 1 says, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of Jehovah" (Heb.), and verse 32 says, "I will run the way of thy commandments." The psalmist walked in the Word and ran the way of the Word. This indicates that he lived according to the Word of God.

I am very fond of verse 48: "My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will muse upon thy statutes" (Heb.). Here we see that first the

psalmist loved the Word; second, that he welcomed the Word; and third, that he enjoyed it and mused upon it. We also need to love the Word of God, receive it with warmth, and muse upon it and enjoy it. Through such an enjoyment of the Word, we shall worship God, talk to Him, pray to Him, and converse with ourselves before Him. Sometimes we may shout or cry; at other times we may delight ourselves in the Word or give ourselves a command. We shall enjoy the Word of God not only in the Lord's presence, but also with His presence. We should never separate the Lord's Word from the Lord Himself. As we muse upon His Word, we enjoy the Lord and have fellowship with Him. We speak to Him, and He speaks with us. Thus, there is spiritual traffic between us and the Lord.

Those who seek the Lord and become one with Him by enjoying His Word will automatically have a life that corresponds to the law, as God's testimony, for they will be infused with the Lawgiver. The one who gives the law will become their living.

We have seen that God's intention in the book of Exodus was to bring His people into such an enjoyment of Himself and to such a condition before Him. God brought them to the Mount of God so that they could receive His word. Having received the word, they could then muse upon it, pray to the Lord, worship Him, and have fellowship with Him. God gave the law to His people in such an intimate way, again and again referring to Himself as "Jehovah your God." Therefore, as we consider the "day" aspect of the law, we see that God gave the law to His people in the way of enjoyment. Because it is God's word, it is God's breath. Those who receive the law of God in this way breathe God into them by musing upon His Word.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIFTY-EIGHT

THE FUNCTION OF GOD'S LAW AS HIS LIVING WORD TO HIS LOVING SEEKERS

Scripture Reading: Psa. 119:11, 25, 28, 41, 49-50, 57-58, 65-66, 76, 98-101, 103, 105, 114, 116-117, 133, 135, 165, 175b; Psa. 19:7-8; Eph. 6:17-18a; 5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17

In this message, another message on the "day" aspect of the law, we shall consider the function of God's law as His living word to His loving seekers. If we would know how God's law functions in this way, we must consider the law not only as regulations and commandments given by God, but even more as the word out of God's mouth. Psalm 119:13 speaks of "the judgments of thy mouth," verse 72 of "the law of thy mouth," and verse 88 of "the testimony of thy mouth." These verses indicate that the law came out of the mouth of God. As God's living word, the law is the divine breath, the very breath of God.

Furthermore, if we would enjoy the function of God's law as His living word, we need to be God's loving seekers, those who seek Him out of love. If we do not regard God's law as His breath and if we do not lovingly seek Him, we shall not experience the positive function of the law. We may read the words of the law, but we shall not be supplied with what God is by the law, and the law will not operate in us in a positive way. In other words, we shall not experience the function of God's law as His living word.

Suppose you want to use a certain electrically powered machine. If the machine is to function, it must be plugged into an electrical outlet. It would be foolish to expect a machine to run if it has not been plugged in. When electricity flows into the machine, the machine will operate. Moreover, you need to be alert and pay attention to the

machine. You should not turn it on and then go to sleep, expecting it to run on its own. In like manner, if we want the Word of God to function properly in our experience, we need to be "plugged in" to the divine current whenever we read it. We do this by taking the Word into us as the very breath of God. Also, we should not be sleepy or indifferent. We must be God's genuine seekers. Then in our experience we shall have the functions of the Word of God.

When we speak of the function of the law as the living word of God, we are actually speaking of the function or operation of God Himself. The function of the Word of God is the operation of God. Because the Word of God is the breath of God, it is one with God. Just as it is not possible to separate the breath of a living person from the person himself, so we should not separate the Word of God from God Himself. This is the error made by many Jews in reading the Old Testament and by many Christians in reading the Bible as a whole. They read the Scriptures and study them, but in so doing they do not have direct contact with God. The result is that in their hands the Bible becomes a book of dead letters.

In John 5:39 and 40 the Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is these that testify concerning Me; and you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." Although the ancient religionists researched the Scriptures, they separated them from the Lord Himself and would not come to Him to receive eternal life. Eternal life is in Christ. If we read the Bible without contacting Him, we shall not receive life. Then in our experience the Bible will be a book of dead letters. Life is a living Person, Christ Himself. We should not separate the Scriptures from this living Person. The functions of the law as God's living word are actually the moving and working of God Himself.

As God's living word, the law gives man light (Psa. 119:105). Only God is light (1 John 1:5). In themselves the printed letters of the Bible are not light and cannot give us light. At most, the Bible in letters can give us knowledge.

Light comes only from God Himself. Thus, if we would receive light from the Word of God, we must contact God as we read it. This indicates that the function of the Word of God is the function of God Himself, God's own working. For this reason, we do not want to use the Bible to form a systematic theology. Our aim is to enjoy the Word with its living functions.

There is no doubt that in reading the Bible we need to exercise our mind to understand the words and terms of Scripture. Using reference books and concordances, we may spend hours to study a single word. From experience I can testify that such study is exhausting to the soul. Sometimes it even suppresses the spirit. However, this kind of study of the Word of God is useful if our aim is to experience and enjoy the living functions of the Word. On the one hand, we need to be exercised to study the Scriptures. On the other hand, there is a time to forget studying and exercise our spirit to pray with the Word and over the Word, seeking to contact the Lord in and through the Word. If we contact the Lord by praying with the Word, we shall receive life from the Word. Then the Word will not be dead letters, for through the exercise of our spirit we shall touch the living One in the Word.

Before I come to minister the Word to the saints, I need to spend a good period of time contacting the Lord in this way. Otherwise, I shall not have anything of life to share. I get ready for a message not only by studying the Word, but especially by breathing in the Lord and by praying, praising, and thanking the Lord. In my prayer to the Lord, I do not care about language, grammar, or composition. My only desire is to utter something to the Lord that I may contact Him in a living way. If we are concerned about composing our prayer, our spirit will be weakened. But if we forget composition and exercise our spirit in prayer, we shall contact the living One.

Again and again we need to come to the Word for the purpose of receiving nourishment and refreshment. This approach to the Bible is well expressed in a hymn on feeding on the Word:

My heart is hungry, my spirit doth thirst;
I come to Thee, Lord, to seek Thy supply;
All that I need is none other but Thee,
Thou canst my hunger and thirst satisfy.

Feed me, Lord Jesus, give me to drink,
Fill all my hunger, quench all my thirst;
Flood me with joy, be the strength of my life,
Fill all my hunger, quench all my thirst.

Hymns, #811

If we come to the Bible in the spirit expressed in this hymn, we shall be nourished and refreshed. However, many times we do not come to the Word in this way. We neither pray nor aspire to contact the Lord. Instead, we just read the words of the Bible with our eyes and try to understand them with our mind. We have no heart or spirit to contact the Lord. In such a case, the more we read the Word, the more exhausted we become. We need to exercise our spirit in reading the Word, and we need to aspire to contact the Lord. Psalm 119 is filled with such an aspiration. This was the reason that to the psalmist the law was God's living word. His way to contact the Word of God and God Himself was to exercise his whole being as an expression of his intimate sentiment and deep aspiration. As he read the Word, he cried out to God, earnestly seeking Him.

As we read the Word of God, we should not only pray, but also sing to the Lord. This is to read the Word by psalming. (In ancient times the Psalms were sung and not merely read or spoken.) Praying requires more exercise of the spirit than speaking, and singing requires even more exercise than praying. By singing we can truly get into our spirit. We need more singing both in the meetings and in our daily life.

The chorus of the well-known hymn "Blessed Assurance" says:

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Many Christians have sung this hymn, but not many praise their Savior all the day long. What do you think would happen if we praised the Lord all day long? No doubt, we would be utterly immersed in the Lord.

Ephesians 6:17 and 18 say, "And receive the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit." Here Paul is not telling us to do two things—to receive the word of God and also to pray. Rather, as the grammatical construction clearly indicates, he is charging us to receive the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition. These verses refer to pray-reading, to the practice of taking the Word of God by means of prayer. How could we receive the Word by means of prayer if we did not pray with the Word and over it? To receive the Word by prayer obviously requires that we pray the Word.

Although we have often spoken about pray-reading, we have not emphasized adequately the matter of praying at every time in spirit. First Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Unceasingly pray." We need to pray at every time, even when we are tempted to become angry with our wife or husband or to gossip about the saints. If we pray at such times, our prayer will kill these negative things. Praying is the best way to stop our gossiping tongue.

In Ephesians 6:18 Paul speaks of both prayer and petition. Prayer is general, whereas petition is particular. Not only should we have set times of prayer, but we should pray at every time. Are you tempted to quarrel with your wife or husband? Pray! Are you in danger of losing your temper? Pray! Are you about to criticize someone? Pray! Pray at every time. Pray no matter where you are or what you are doing. Praying at every time in spirit will kill all the "germs" and "pests" and bring in the rich supply of divine nourishment. It is crucial that we receive the Word by means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit.

In Ephesians 5:18 and 19 Paul charges us to "be filled in spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the

Lord." We should not only pray, but also sing and psalm. The Christians at the time of Paul probably sang the Old Testament psalms, perhaps using certain Jewish melodies. We today should pray-read, sing-read, and even psalm-read. We should psalm the verses of the Bible. Singing the Word is more inspiring than merely reading it. Psalming is a type of singing that includes musing. Singing itself does not include much musing, but in psalming we muse upon the Word. At such times we may worship the Lord, have fellowship with Him, or even converse with ourselves in the Lord's presence. This is the way to receive nourishment from the Word. By taking the Bible in this way we receive the riches of God through the Word. The written Word then becomes the channel through which God's riches are conveyed to us. But if we would receive these riches, we must have a living, organic, dynamic contact with God whenever we touch the Word of God.

If we are filled in spirit, we shall give thanks to the Lord and do everything in His name. For years, I could not understand what it meant to do everything in the name of the Lord. Of course, I was taught that this meant to do all things in oneness with Him. This, however, was mainly a doctrine, not an actual practice. Now I see that when we contact the Word in a living way, praying, singing, psalming, and thanking, we shall be saturated with the Lord and become one with Him. Then whatever we do in our daily living will be in the Lord's name.

According to Ephesians 5, a wife's submission to her husband and a husband's love for his wife are the overflow of being filled in spirit. There is no need for a wife to strive to submit to her husband or for a husband to exert himself to love his wife. In ourselves we are not able to fulfill these requirements. If the wives are to submit to their husbands and if the husbands are to love their wives, they must be filled in spirit, singing, psalming and giving thanks to the Lord. If a brother does this, he will be saturated with the Lord and will automatically love his wife, no matter how she may treat him.

In the years 1969 to 1971 many of the saints in Elden Hall

in Los Angeles practiced singing and praising the Lord in their daily life. In those days many families lived near the meeting hall, and often the sounds of singing, pray-reading, and praising could be heard coming from the dwellings of the saints. This singing and praising carried over into the meetings. Long before the scheduled time, the meetings would begin. Many times a meeting began on the street with the singing and praising of the saints as they walked to the meeting hall. Actually, the meetings began early in the day, as the saints contacted the Lord by singing, pray-reading, and praising. In recent years our tendency has been to drift back toward the habits of traditional religion. We may read the Word and pray at certain times and then come to the meeting at the scheduled time, but we lack a spontaneous daily life in spirit. But in those years in Elden Hall the saints had such a daily life.

Ephesians 5:20 speaks of giving thanks at all times, and 6:18, of praying at every time. We should pray not only at certain set times, but at every time. Furthermore, we should give thanks to God at all times and for all things. This is the way to receive the Word of God.

The Word of God is not merely letters in black and white; it is the very breath of God, even God's breathing. Only when we have continual, personal, living, and intimate contact with the Lord all day long do we truly live by breathing Him. Our physical life depends on breathing. When a person stops breathing, he dies. Likewise, we live Christ by breathing Him.

But where is Christ that we may breathe Him in? He is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is embodied in the Word. Whenever we come to the Word in a living way, in the way of breathing the Lord and not just of studying the Bible in letters, we become organically connected to Him. Then all that He is. His life and His riches, will be channeled into us. As a result, in our daily living we are saturated with Him, and He and we become one. Because we are one with Him in such a way, whatever we do, we shall do in Him.

My burden in this message is related to the crucial matter that in handling the law of God the psalmists opened

themselves to the Lord, considered the law as the living word of God, and contacted God Himself. The psalms are full of the spirit of prayer, full of aspiration and cries to God. In their praying and psalming, the psalmists mused upon the Word of God. Automatically God's element was transfused into them, and they were saturated and permeated with it. To them, the law was not just a number of requirements, commandments, and regulations, but a means by which they could receive the divine life supply. Because the psalmists were loving seekers of the Lord, they were saturated with the divine Person. Then everything they did was done in the name of God. Through their dealing with the Word of God, they became one with God and experienced the functions of His Word.

All the various functions of the Word are the actions of a living Person. For example, the Word comforts us, strengthens us, and upholds us. These are the actions of God Himself as He upholds, comforts, strengthens, and fills us. All the functions of the law as God's living word as revealed in Psalm 119 are the acts and activities of a living Person. But if we fail to contact the Lord as we read the Word, the Word will not function this way in our experience. Actually, it is not the Word that has these functions; it is God Himself who operates in certain ways. We contact this living One through the Word and are infused with Him and saturated with Him so that He becomes our life and our very being. In our experience He functions to give us life and light and to uphold us, strengthen us, and comfort us.

The church meetings should be a continuation of our daily life. We should sing and praise in our daily life and then continue our singing and praising in the meetings. But if we praise the Lord in the meetings without praising Him in our daily life, our meetings will be a performance, and we shall be actors. We should come to the meetings not to perform, but to express what we are in our daily life.

Recently we pointed out that to live Christ day by day we need to pray in all that we do. To pray without ceasing means to breathe in the Lord continually. In everything we

do—in eating, clothing ourselves, talking to others, and all the details of our daily living—we need to pray. According to Ephesians, we need to give thanks at all times and to pray at every time. Then we shall do everything in the name of the Lord. This is to live Christ. Colossians 3:17 says, "And in everything, whatever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." In order to do everything in the name of the Lord we need to be those who are continually singing, psalming, praising, and thanking.

We also need to be those who join ourselves to the Triune God through the Word. The Word is a means through which we can contact the Lord and receive His supply. Without using the Word, you may find it difficult to compose a prayer or praise. But it is easy to pray and praise when we use the Bible. Use the verses of Scripture as material for your praying, praising, singing, and psalming. By means of such an exercise with the Word, you will be saturated with the Triune God. Then you will do everything in the Lord's name. As we sing and psalm the Word, the Triune God is brought into us, and we are ushered into Him. This is the way to allow the Word to function in our experience.

Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." The Greek word rendered dwell means to inhabit. In order for the word of Christ to inhabit us, the word must be a Person. It is not possible for something that is not living to inhabit us. Only a living organism can dwell in us. For the word of Christ to inhabit us richly means that it permeates us and is assimilated into our inner being.

In Colossians 3:16 the word richly modifies dwell, or inhabit. When the word of Christ inhabits us richly, it permeates, saturates, and sustains every part of our inner being. Christ is unsearchably rich, and His riches are embodied in His Word. Thus, when His Word inhabits us, lives in us, and moves in us, it causes us to be saturated with His riches.

The way to let the word of Christ inhabit us richly is "in

all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace" in our hearts to God (Col. 3:16). We should be those who not only read the Bible, but who also pray, sing, and psalm the Bible and even give thanks to God with the words of the Bible. As we take the Word of God in this way, God will operate through the Word.

GIVING LIGHT AND LIFE

In Psalms 119 and 19 we see at least twenty-six functions of God's law as His living word to those who lovingly seek Him. We have already indicated that the Word of God gives us light. It also gives life (119:25, 50, 107, 154). If you read Psalm 119 carefully, you will notice that the word quicken is used a number of times. The Hebrew word rendered quicken, like the Greek word, means to give life. The Word of God gives us light; then it quickens us, enlivens us, gives us life. Therefore, we live by the living Word; that is, we live by God Himself.

RESTORING THE SOUL AND REJOICING THE HEART

Another function of the Word of God is to restore man's soul and rejoice man's heart (Psa. 19:7-8). We need to be not only quickened by the Word, but also restored by it, especially when we are depressed, suppressed, or oppressed. After working all day at your job, you may be under the oppression of Satan and may be in need of restoration. On your way home from work, take time to read, pray, and sing the Word. You will find that the Word will restore your soul and cause your heart to rejoice.

BRINGING SALVATION

The Word of God also brings us salvation (Psa. 119:41, 170). We need salvation every day, even every moment. The living Word of God brings us God's instant and constant salvation.

STRENGTHENING, COMFORTING, NOURISHING

The Word of God strengthens us (v. 28), comforts us (v. 76),

and nourishes us (v. 103). The psalmist said that God's word was sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey to his mouth. This indicates that he was nourished by the Word.

UPHOLDING, KEEPING SAFE, CAUSING HOPE

As the Word of God nourishes us, it upholds us. The Word holds us up. It also keeps us safe and causes us to hope (vv. 116-117, 49). When we experience the function of the living Word, we shall not be without hope. Rather, we shall be hopeful in all things. In Philippians 1:20 Paul could speak of his earnest expectation and hope.

CAUSING US TO ENJOY GOD AS OUR PORTION

The Word of God also causes us to enjoy God as our portion (v. 57). If we would enjoy Christ as our portion in the Word, we should not only study the Word, but receive the Word in a living way by praying, singing, psalming, and thanking.

CAUSING US TO ENJOY GOD'S COUNTENANCE

Through the Word we enjoy God's countenance (v. 58) and the shining of His face (v. 135). While the children of Israel were in fear and trembling at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses was on the mountaintop enjoying the shining of the Lord's countenance. Our situation should be that of Moses on the mountaintop, not that of the children of Israel at the foot of the mountain. We should be on the mountaintop under the shining of the face of God.

CAUSING US TO ENJOY GOD AS OUR HIDING PLACE AND SHIELD AND TO ENJOY GOD'S HELP AND WELL-DEALING

Through the Word we may enjoy God as our hiding place and shield (v. 114) and also enjoy God's help and well-dealing (vv. 175, 65). In every way God deals well with us. His care is comprehensive; He meets our every need. Even His rebuke is an aspect of His well-dealing. If we get into His Word in a living way, we shall enjoy His well-dealing.

MAKING WISE AND GIVING UNDERSTANDING

Psalm 119:98 says, "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies," and verse 99 says, "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my musing" (Heb.). These verses indicate that the Word of God makes us wise. The more we get into the Word, the wiser we become.

GIVING DISCERNMENT AND KNOWLEDGE

The Word of God also gives us good discernment and knowledge (v. 66, Heb.). Many Christians today are short of discernment. They are like those who cannot discern between their thumb and their fingers. We need to be very discerning. The Word of God gives us the needed discernment and knowledge.

KEEPING US FROM SINNING AND FROM EVERY EVIL WAY

Verse 11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." According to this verse, the Word of God keeps us from sinning. The Word also keeps our feet from every evil way (v. 101).

KEEPING US FROM STUMBLING, ESTABLISHING OUR FOOTSTEPS, AND CAUSING US TO OVERCOME INIQUITY

The Word of God also keeps us from stumbling (v. 165), establishes our footsteps, and causes us to overcome iniquity (v. 133). No iniquity will have dominion over us. Instead, we shall conquer all evil things, for the Word of God will make us conquerors, overcomers.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE FIFTY-NINE

THE BLESSING RECEIVED BY THE LOVING SEEKERS OF GOD THROUGH HIS LAW AS HIS LIVING WORD

(1)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 119:130, 105; 19:8b; 119:25, 50; 1:1a, 2-3; 19:7a; 119:41, 110, 170, 28, 76, 103, 116-117

The law as the living word of God has many functions. To the loving seekers of God these functions are the blessing received through God's law as His living word. In this message and in the message following we shall consider the blessing we may receive from the living Word of God.

Although the loving seekers of God receive blessing from His Word, it is possible to come to the Word of God and not receive anything. I know of many who have read the Bible and even studied it without receiving anything from it. This is the situation among many Christians today. When they read the Scriptures, many Christians do not receive any blessing. The only thing they get is vain knowledge. Using the knowledge they gain from reading the Bible, they engage in controversies over matters in the Bible. Instead of being truly helped by reading the Bible, they argue about the Word of God. As a result, first they themselves are killed by their kind of Bible knowledge, and then they use this knowledge to kill others. To them, the Bible is not a book that gives life; it is a book that kills.

Throughout the centuries, many have been killed by taking the Bible as nothing more than a book of knowledge. Perhaps the most striking example of those killed through Bible knowledge is the so-called higher critics of the Scriptures in the nineteenth century. In their study

of the Bible, these higher critics exercised their mind to an extreme. Consequently, they did not receive any blessing from their study of the Word of God.

If our condition is normal, we should be helped and very much blessed whenever we come to the Word of God. If we do not receive any blessing, there must be something wrong with us. All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16); therefore, the words of the Bible are God's breath. Furthermore, as the embodiment of God (Col. 2:9), the Lord Jesus is Himself called the Word (John 1:1, 14; Rev. 19:13). Thus, coming to the Word should be the equivalent of coming to God. Because the Word is the embodiment of God, it contains the riches of God. The Word of God contains all that God is. This is the reason the Word of God is so rich, substantial, living, and enlightening. All that God can be to us, the Word can be also. Provided we have no problems within us which cause a hindrance, we should receive blessing whenever we come to the Word of God.

PROBLEMS OF THE HEART

No Exercise of Heart

If you fail to receive help when you come to the Word, there is probably a problem of some kind in your heart. Your heart is not right. It may be that you have no genuine exercise of heart in coming to the Word. You read the Bible, but you have no heart for the Word. In human life it is possible to do many things out of necessity without having a heart for those things. For example, a young person may be forced to attend school, but he may have no heart for education. He goes to school only because he is compelled to do so. Likewise, although we may read the Word of God, perhaps out of a sense of duty, we may not have a heart for the Word.

A Divided Heart

Another problem you may have in your heart is the problem of a divided heart. It is possible that your heart is

divided into two or three parts, perhaps even more. This may especially be true of young people. A young person may love many different things. This causes the heart to be divided. One thing occupies one part of the heart, and something else occupies another part. Suppose a young man has a heart for his studies, but also has a heart for a particular form of worldly entertainment. This will cause his heart to be divided.

If a person's heart is divided into two parts, one part for something good and another part for something evil, the evil tendency will always prevail. This seems to be a natural law or principle. In his heart a person may have two opposite intentions; he may intend both to lie and to tell the truth. The evil intention, that of telling a lie, will prevail over the good intention, that of telling the truth. Whenever our heart is divided, reading the Word of God will not help us. If we come to the Bible halfheartedly or with a divided heart, we shall not receive blessing from the Word. Whenever we come to the Bible, we must come with a whole heart and with a single heart. It is not profitable to read the Word of God in a halfhearted way.

A Lack of Heart

Another problem of the heart in relation to the Word is that of not having any heart at all for the Word. We have pointed out the problem of not using or exercising our heart in reading the Word. However, there is a difference between this and not having a heart for the Word. There are some people who seem to have no heart at all. Inwardly, they are like dead wood. No matter how much such a person may read the Bible, he will not receive any blessing from his reading, for he lacks the function through which to comprehend what the Bible is saying. He simply has no function of heart in reading the Word. This is a very serious problem. When many Christians come to the Bible, they are like dead wood, without a heart.

Coverings, Hindrances, and Frustrations

Another problem with the heart is related to things that cover you, separate you from the Lord, or frustrate your contact with the Lord. In reading the Word of God, you may cry out to the Lord and be desperate to receive something from the Lord. However, there may be hindrances or frustrations within you. There may be a certain sin that besets, captures, and possesses you. On the one hand, you love the Word of God. On the other hand, a certain sin may lie hidden in your heart, and you may not be willing for the Lord to deal with it. Such a hidden sin will prevent you from receiving blessing from the Word. Suppose, for example, someone has offended you, and you are not willing to forgive this offense. You may not consider that your unwillingness to forgive is a sin, but it is in fact a sin. You may hide this sin, or other kinds of sins, from man, and you may even attempt to conceal it from the Lord. If you come to the Bible with such a sin hidden within you, you will not be able to receive anything from the Word, even though you have a heart for the Word. If you have a tendency toward something which does not please the Lord and at the same time desire to come to the Word, you will not be blessed by reading the Word of God.

We know from our experience that at times we struggle with the Lord, perhaps over the issue of consecration. We may not be willing to consecrate ourselves, to be subdued by the Lord, or to be convinced by Him. We may insist on holding to our opinion regarding a particular matter. Even though the Lord speaks to us again and again, we still are not willing to be convinced, because His speaking is contrary to our opinion. We cling to our concept and insist on it. Such an insistence is a veil that covers our heart. Do you think that you can receive help from the Word if your heart is covered in this way? To be sure, reading the Word when you are in such a condition will not be a help to you.

If we want to receive blessing from the Word of God, we must first deal with our heart and turn to the Lord absolutely and with our whole heart. We also need to deal with

anything in our heart that is negative or that causes separation between us and the Lord. If we deal with our heart and with the negative things between us and the Lord, our condition is likely to be normal. Then it is very possible that we shall receive help from the Word.

Even if we deal with our heart and with the negative things in our heart, we may still have some complications. All of us, young and old alike, are complicated. Within us there are a number of factors which cause complications. These complications also make it difficult for us to receive blessing from the Word.

As we read Psalm 119, we see that the psalmist was right with the Lord. There was nothing between him and the Lord. I appreciate the line in the hymn, "Nothing between, Lord, nothing between." However, it is one thing to sing this hymn, but it is another thing to practice having nothing between us and the Lord. How much we shall receive from the living Word if there is nothing between the Lord and us!

If a person studies diligently for a number of years, he may receive a Ph.D. in a certain field, perhaps in nuclear physics. Although I have known a number of young people who have earned a Ph.D., I do not know many who have attained a comparable measure of understanding in spiritual matters. Some have had the Bible, a book of heavenly, divine, and spiritual science, in their hands for decades, but still they have only an elementary understanding of it. This indicates that although they have acquired a certain amount of knowledge, they have not been blessed through their reading of the Word. Earning a Ph.D. degree requires much study, but it does not require that you deal with your heart. For example, does refusing to forgive someone hinder you from earning a doctoral degree? Of course not! But such a thing can keep you from receiving blessing from the Word of God. A sister, Margaret E. Barber, used to say that even a small leaf can hide a bright star. Likewise, even a small matter can keep us from receiving blessing from the Bible.

THE NEED TO HUMBLE OURSELVES

The Bible requires more of us than any other book. The Bible demands that we humble ourselves and put aside our self-confidence and self-assurance. In coming to the Word, we need to pray that the Lord will have mercy on us. If we do not receive the Lord's mercy, something within us unconsciously may continue to cover us and keep us from the Lord's Word. Let us learn to pray, "Lord, have mercy on me. I don't want to be covered by anything, and I don't want to have anything between You and me. Lord, grant that there will be nothing between us." This should be not only our prayer, but also our attitude toward the Lord.

In coming to the Word we should not have any self-confidence. We should not presume to have the assurance that there are no problems between us and the Lord. We simply do not have the ground for this kind of assurance. Although we may not realize it, there may be still a number of problems between us and Him. Therefore, we need to humble ourselves before the Lord. The Bible says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). If we do not humble ourselves in coming to the Word, we shall be greatly hindered in receiving help from the Word.

Some may think that as long as we love the Lord, everything will be all right. However, loving the Lord is somewhat general. We may love Him without ever having humbled ourselves before Him. Realizing that there are still apt to be negative things within us, we need to humble ourselves. If it is difficult to clean our physical surroundings in an absolute way, how much more difficult it is to clean our heart! Can you say that in cleaning your house you clean thoroughly? It is very difficult for anyone to say this. Years ago, when our youngest daughter needed minor surgery, the physician told us that he could not perform the surgery in his office. To us, the office seemed very clean. But the doctor realized that because the ceiling of his office could not be thoroughly cleansed, his office was not a proper place for surgery to be performed. When he said

this, I thought that this is also true of the "ceiling" of our inward being. Because our inward ceiling is not absolutely clean, it is difficult for surgery to be performed within us. Therefore, we should have no confidence in ourselves, but humbly look to the Lord for mercy.

Recently, some of the young people have completed a special training. Although they have passed through a very good training, they should not think that everything is right between them and the Lord. They should not assume that everything has been rectified or sanctified. They still may have many problems in their heart. If we realize this about ourselves, we shall not be so confident as to think that in everything we are right with the Lord. Instead, we shall humble ourselves before the Lord and ask Him for mercy.

ENLIGHTENED BY THE WORD

If we have a humble attitude when we come to the Word, not having any trust in ourselves, we shall be enlightened. To have no trust in ourselves means that we have no reservations. Nothing remains as a problem between us and the Lord. However, if instead of having a humble attitude we still have confidence in ourselves, we shall have serious problems in receiving blessing from the Word. Perhaps you are wondering why you do not receive light from the Word, even though you have been reading the Bible regularly for a long time. The reason may be that you have too much confidence in yourself. Again I say, we must let go of our confidence, humble ourselves before the Lord, and pray that He will have mercy on us. We should say, "Lord, I do not have any confidence in myself, and I do not insist on anything. Lord, I open to You, and I ask You to have mercy on me." If this is your attitude in coming to the Bible, you will receive blessing from the Word, no matter what portion of the Word you read. Even the first seventeen verses of the Gospel of Matthew will have something as a help for you. The crucial matter is that you humble yourself before the Lord.

A REALM OF LIGHT

Often saints testify that they see light in reading the Word. This is true. Through the Word we do receive light. But in my experience I have found that whenever I humble myself, do not insist on any opinion, and ask the Lord for His mercy, I have the sense that I come into a realm of light whenever I come to the Word. Even if I do not receive any particular light, I have the consciousness that I am in the light.

Whenever we come to the Word, we come to the light, because the Word is the embodiment of God, and God is light (1 John 1:5). When you stand under the light of the sun, you do not need to receive light, for you are already in the light. Likewise, when we come to the Word with a proper attitude, we have the sense that we are in the light and under the light and are not merely receiving light. Then, the whole Bible in our experience becomes a book of light. No matter where we may be in our reading, we sense that the Bible is a shining light.

As the embodiment of God, the unique light, the Word of God is a shining light. This light is actually God Himself in the Word. Because the Word is the condensation of the divine light, we enter into an atmosphere of light whenever we come to the Word. This is like entering into a lighted room. When we are in a lighted room, we do not simply receive light, but we are in a realm of light.

Whether or not the Bible is shining in our experience depends on our attitude and condition. If we are humble and ask the Lord for mercy, the Bible will be to us a book of light. After reading a portion of the Word, you may not have much understanding, but you have the sense that you are in light. This proves that the Bible is the divine Word. You do not have the sense that you are in light when you read a newspaper or magazine. But if you read the Word or pray-read some verses of the Scriptures with a sincere heart and in an attitude of humility, you will be conscious of having been brought into light. Whenever we come to the Word in a proper way, we have the conviction that we have come into

the light and are in a sphere of light. Then spontaneously we receive light, and we become people who are absolutely in light.

The Entrance of the Word Giving Light

In 119:130 the psalmist says, "The entrance of thy words giveth light." The Word has an entrance. This means that the Bible has an opening, a gate. According to my experience, the bar to this gate is not on the inside, but on the outside. It is on our side of the gate. This means that if the gate is closed, we are the ones who have closed it. Whether the Word is open to us or not depends on how we deal with it. Sometimes we pray that the Lord would open the Word to us. However, when we pray in this way, the Lord may tell us that, on His side, He has already opened His Word. Now we, on our side, need to open the gate of the Word. Our experience testifies that if we have no problems with the Lord when we come to the Word, the Word will be open to us. But if we come to the Word when we have problems with the Lord, the door will be shut. This indicates that the bar to the gate is on our side. When we come to the Word and open it, then in our spiritual experience, the Word will have an entrance, an opening.

I wish to emphasize the fact that whether the gate of the Word is open or closed depends on us. We need to thank the Lord that the Word has an entrance, a gate, and that the bar of the gate is on our side. We should say, "Lord, thank You for the entrance, the opening, to Your Word." Often in our experience we sense that, because we come to the Word in the right way, the Word has an opening. This opening seems to depend on the Lord and come from Him. However, it actually depends on us and comes from approaching the Word in a proper way.

A Lamp unto Our Feet

In verse 105 the psalmist says a practical word about light: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my

path." This is not a matter of doctrine or teaching, but of experience in the daily life of the psalmist. Step after step in his daily life, the Word was his light.

In ancient times, there were, of course, no street lights. Those who traveled at night needed a lamp, lantern, or torch to light their way. This is what the psalmist has in mind when he refers to the Word as a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path. The Word was a lamp that enlightened his footsteps. In a very practical way, to the psalmist the Word of God was such a lamp casting light on his pathway.

Enlightening the Eyes

Psalm 19:8b says, "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." This verse indicates that God's living Word enlightens our eyes. If we do not sense that we are in light when we come to the Word, this is a sign that our condition is not right. It is not adequate simply to pray that the Lord will give us light. We need to humble ourselves, have a thorough dealing with the Lord, and ask Him to have mercy on us. The knowledge many Christians gain from reading the Bible actually becomes a veil or covering that keeps them in darkness. Those who have such a knowledge of the Scriptures need to humble themselves before the Lord so that the coverings may be removed. If we humble ourselves and receive the Lord's mercy, the Bible will no longer be mere knowledge to us—it will be light to our eyes.

It is important to differentiate between knowledge and light. We may have the Bible just in the way of knowledge, or in our experience the Word may be the shining of the divine light.

RECEIVING THE SUPPLY OF LIFE THROUGH THE WORD

Light Becoming Life

The loving seekers of God also receive the life supply, the enlivening, the quickening, through His living Word (119:25, 50). In our spiritual experience we first have light.

But then the light must become life. Life is deeper than light. Whenever light comes, life should come also. In fact, life is the container of light. John 1:4 says, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." It is difficult to determine which comes first, life or light. As a rule, light comes before life. According to Genesis 1, we first have light, then the various aspects of life.

In our experience it is possible to have light without life. Light is mainly in the realm of the soul, especially in the sphere of the understanding. Life, to be sure, is in our spirit. Although it is good to have light, the light must penetrate deeper until it becomes life.

We have pointed out that if our condition is proper or normal when we come to the Word, we have the sense that we are in the light. Whatever we read in the Bible thus becomes light to us. Then as we exercise ourselves to pray, we shall spontaneously exercise our spirit and go deeper into the Word. Through this exercise of spirit in prayer, the light will enter into our spirit and become life. In our understanding in the realm of the soul, the Word is light, but when the Word goes deeper, into our spirit, it becomes life.

Our experience indicates that the life supply does not come before the light. Light comes first. But whenever through our prayer this light goes deeper, reaching into our spirit, it becomes life, and we receive the life supply. This shows us the necessity of praying when we read the Word. It makes no difference whether we read first and then pray, or pray and then read. The point is that we need to pray as well as read.

Exercising Our Whole Being

When we come to the Word of God, we need to open our entire being. We need to use our whole being, our body, soul, and spirit. We use our eyes to read the words and our mouth to sound out the words. We also use our mind, the main part of the soul, to understand what we read. We may

need to use lexicons, concordances, and different versions and translations. God created us with a mind, and we need to use it in understanding the Word of God. The study of the Bible also requires the exercise of our emotion to love the Word and the exercise of our will to take God's way in His Word. This exercise of the mind, emotion, and will is the exercise of the soul. But we also need to exercise our spirit. Primarily this is to pray so that our inner man may be strengthened. If we use our whole being in contacting the Word, we shall receive light and life supply.

WATERED BY THE WORD

From our experience we know that the life supply we receive causes us to be watered. First we have enlightenment; second, life supply; and third, watering. The psalmist also experienced this.

According to Psalm 1, those who muse upon the Word of God are like trees planted by a river of water. In order for a tree to grow, it must have roots, and on these roots there must be tiny root hairs to absorb the water. In reading the Bible, many Christians are like trees planted by the river. Some, however, do not have proper roots, whereas others have roots, but no root hairs.

Perhaps you are wondering what, experientially, I mean by root hairs. To have root hairs requires that we go deeper into the Word in a very fine way. Often we fail to receive the life supply because we are too rough. Lacking fineness, we are short of the tiny, delicate root hairs. Because we care only for the big roots, not for the root hairs, we are not able to receive the life supply, which always comes through the fine contact of the root hairs with the water. If we would be watered through the Word, we need to contact the Word not in a rough way, but in a very fine way.

What does it mean to contact the Word in a rough way? It means that you simply read it with your eyes and utter something with your mouth, not even caring for a proper understanding of the Word. Rough people are shallow. Although they may be trees planted by the river, they do

not have proper roots. I am afraid that some of the saints in the Lord's recovery are like this. Yes, they are trees planted by the river, but they are too rough. With them everything is outward, a matter of what they see with their physical eyes and utter with their mouths. Their knowledge of the Bible goes no deeper than what they see and speak. Because those who are rough in coming to the Word do not have proper roots, they do not grow in life.

As we have pointed out, some Christians have roots, but they do not have any fine root hairs. We need to let the Word go deeper in us in a fine way, and we must also allow our being to sink deeper into the Word, also in a fine way. When we go along with the Word and the Word comes into our spirit, in our experience we shall have the root hairs. These root hairs will then absorb the life supply. Our experience testifies that when we go deeper into the Word and the Word enters deeper into us, into our spirit, we have a finer contact with the Word and receive life.

When we are in the spirit, we are very fine, not at all coarse or rough. It is not possible to be rough and still be in spirit. Everyone who enters into the spirit becomes a very fine person. If someone is rough, he is surely in the flesh. If he is somewhat fine, he is in the soul. But if he is very fine, he has entered into the spirit. The root hairs which absorb the life supply are found only in our spirit.

Through the root hairs we absorb the life supply, which is food in the form of water. Even in eating our physical food we need water. We cannot masticate our food and swallow it without water. In spiritual experience, the food supply is in the water. The trees planted by the river receive nourishment from the water. All the nourishment is contained in the water. The tiny root hairs absorb the water and thereby absorb the nourishment that is in the water.

The word of the Bible must enter into our spirit and become the water containing all the elements of nourishing food. This water is not in our mouth, nor in our mind, but

only in our spirit. The water of the life supply always goes down to our spirit.

When we read the Bible only with our eyes and mouth, we are rough. When we try to understand the Word by exercising our mind, by loving it, and taking it with our will, we exercise our soul. This is somewhat fine. But when we exercise our spirit to pray, our whole being is brought into the spirit, and the Word enters into our spirit also. Actually, we bring the Word with ourselves into the spirit, and there we find the water.

The Spirit of God does not inhabit our mind; He dwells in our spirit. In the Bible the Word is likened to food, whereas the Spirit is likened to water. The Word as food may remain in our mind, but in order for it to become the Spirit as water, it must enter into our spirit. When the Word becomes water in our spirit, we receive its nourishing elements. Then we have the enlightenment, the life supply, and the watering.

OTHER BLESSINGS THAT COME THROUGH THE WORD

When we experience the enlightenment, the life supply, and the watering, we shall have other blessings through the Word: restoration (19:7a), deliverance (119:41, 170), strength (119:28), comfort (119:76), nourishment (119:103), upholding (119:117), and safeguard. The reference to strength in 119:28 refers not to something doctrinal, but to something that fills us inwardly and energizes us. This must denote an organic element, for only something organic can enter our being to strengthen us. The fact that the Word of God strengthens us indicates that it imparts an organic element into us.

As we are strengthened by the Word, we are comforted, nourished, and upheld by it. In ourselves we can easily be shaken: it is very easy for us to fall. In order to stand, we need a living support. The living support by which we stand is the Word of God which upholds us continually. Furthermore, the Word of God is our safeguard and protection.

CARING FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN THE WORD

The living Word is not a systematic theology; it is God Himself. From experience I have learned to care for the real enjoyment of the living God in His living Word. I do not care for theology—I value the genuine experience of God through the Word.

If we consider all the matters we have covered in this message in the light of our experience, we shall be able to testify that through the Word we receive enlightenment, quickening, and watering. By the living Word of God we are restored, strengthened, delivered, comforted, nourished, upheld, and safeguarded. May we all be encouraged to be in a proper condition whenever we contact the Word, so that the Word may come into our mind and then pass through our mind into our spirit, where it becomes the life supply. If the Word becomes life in our spirit, then we shall enjoy all the other blessings afforded to God's loving seekers through His living Word.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIXTY

THE BLESSING RECEIVED BY THE LOVING SEEKERS OF GOD THROUGH HIS LAW AS HIS LIVING WORD

(2)

Scripture Reading: Psa. 119:11, 57-58, 65, 98-101, 114, 133, 135, 169, 175; 19:7b

This message continues the "day" aspect of the law. In fact, we may even say that we have come to the "noontime," for, as we shall see, through the law as God's living word we have the enjoyment of God Himself as our portion. To be sure, this is the highlight of all the blessings we receive through the living Word of God.

In Psalm 119 the psalmist uses different expressions to refer to the law. One of these terms is the testimony, or the testimonies (vv. 88, 24). The law is God's testimony. As the testimony of God, the law describes God and presents a picture of what He is like. A law is always a testimony, or expression, of the person who makes the law. For example, if bank robbers could make laws, they would no doubt legalize the robbing of banks. A law is always the expression of the legislator. In like manner, the law given by God on Mount Horeb is the testimony of God as the divine Law-giver. God's law is His portrait. As the expression of God, the law shows us what kind of God He is. This is the reason the word testimony is used in the Old Testament with respect to the law. The Ten Commandments inscribed on two stone tablets were called the testimony (Exo. 34:29; 31:18; 32:15). Because these tablets were placed in the ark, the ark was called the ark of testimony (Exo. 25:22; 30:6). Furthermore, the tabernacle in which the ark was located was called the tabernacle of testimony (Exo. 38:21).

Other terms for the law in Psalm 119 are statutes, ordinances, precepts, and judgments. The law truly judges us. Apart from God's law, there is no yardstick of judgment. The law tells what is right and what is wrong, what is of God and what is not of God, what is for God and what is not for God. As the law judges, it measures and exposes. It also accuses and excuses, justifies and condemns. For all these reasons, the law is called God's judgments.

According to verse 91, the law is also called God's ordinances. Ordinances are regulations or rules. For example, in the city where you live there are ordinances about where you may park your car and where parking is prohibited. Every city has its own ordinances. Likewise, the law is the divine ordinances.

In Psalm 119 the law is also called God's statutes (v. 12). Each of the commandments is a statute.

The psalmist also referred to the law as God's precepts (v. 4). A precept is instruction given as a proverb in which people are taught concerning their behavior.

In the foregoing message we covered ten aspects of the blessing received by the loving seekers of God through His law as His living word: enlightenment, life supply, watering, restoration, deliverance, strength, comfort, nourishment, upholding, and safeguard. The first blessing we receive is that of enlightenment (119:130, 105; 19:8b). If our condition is right when we come to the Word of God, we shall enter into a realm of light and thus be enlightened. Then we shall receive the life supply and experience the watering. These three items go together and bring in restoration, deliverance, strength, comfort, nourishment, upholding, and safeguard. This sequence is according to spiritual experience, not according to doctrine.

We praise the Lord that the word spoken by God has been written and printed. The invention of the printing press was for the distribution of the Word of God. Millions of copies of the Scriptures have been printed and circulated around the world. Although the Bible is so available, whether or not we receive blessing from it depends on our

condition. As we have pointed out, we need a proper heart. If our heart is proper when we come to the Word, we shall enter into the realm of light. God is light (1 John 1:5), and this light is consolidated in the Word. This means that the Word of God is the embodiment of God as the divine light. This is the reason verse 130 says, "The entrance of thy words giveth light." Because the Word of God is light, the entrance, the opening, of the Word gives light. Actually, there should be no need for us to say that we receive light from the Bible concerning certain points. We should enter into a sphere of light and not just receive a particular kind of light.

Light brings in life. However, it is also true that life brings light. It is difficult to say which comes first, life or light. According to the Old Testament, light comes before life (Gen. 1:3). But according to the New Testament, life precedes light (John 1:4). Although we may not be able to say accurately which comes first in our experience, we know that as long as we have the one, we also have the other. We have light and life, and then the life supply becomes water. As we have seen, light, life, and watering bring in many other blessings.

THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD AS OUR PORTION

These ten blessings will lead us to the highest blessing of all—the enjoyment of God Himself as our portion. In 119:57 the psalmist declares, "Thou art my portion, O Jehovah" (Heb.). When we have God as our portion, we have not only light, life, water, and all the benefits these bring us, but we have the very God Himself. Some may think that the Old Testament saints did not enjoy God as their portion. But the writer of Psalm 119 says definitely that the Lord was his portion. Because the psalmist kept God's word, God could be his portion. It is a very great matter to have God as our portion.

God can be our portion because He is real and not a superstition. If God had not been a reality to him, the

psalmist could not have testified that the Lord was his portion. Everything superstitious is vain, unreal, and not at all substantial. How could something vain and unreal be our portion? It would be impossible. When the psalmist declared that God was his portion, he was enjoying and touching something very real.

In order for God to be our portion, He must also be very practical, present, enjoyable, and available. How could something become our portion if it were not near and available? And how could something be our portion if it were not enjoyable and practical? For many Jews, Moslems, and even Christians, God is far away. To them, God is not practical, present, enjoyable, and available. In their experience, they do not have Him as their portion.

I can testify from personal experience that my God truly has become my portion. I have never seen Him with my eyes or touched Him with my hands, but in my inner being I enjoy Him all day long. Some may claim that this is merely a psychological phenomenon. However, psychological phenomena usually do not last very long; yet the enjoyment of God as our portion is long-lasting. God is ever the same; He does not change. This One who is real, practical, present, enjoyable, and available is my portion. I am sure that you also have had some experience of God as your portion. Even though your experience may be limited, you cannot deny that to you God is real, practical, present, enjoyable, and available. He truly is our portion.

We all face problems in life. From years of experience I have found that there is just one antidote to our problems. This antidote is all-inclusive and very effective—it is God Himself. He alone is the answer to our problems and the cure for all our troubles. If we do not allow God to come into our situation, life will be nothing more than an empty dream. Without God, all our dreams first become problems, then troubles, and ultimately turn into death. But if we take the Lord and apply Him to our situation, things will be different. We shall be able to testify that our portion is not this matter or that thing. Our portion is not a good

marriage, a high position, a large bank account, or a piece of real estate. Our portion is the Lord Himself. Because He is living, real, and practical, we can taste Him and enjoy Him.

We enjoy God as our portion through the Word and by the Spirit. We may compare the Word and the Spirit to an antenna and a ground wire which are the means for divine "electricity" to be conveyed to us. When we come to the Word with the Spirit, we receive God. Yes, we enjoy light, life, and watering. However, it is actually God Himself who is light, life, and living water to us in our experience. He is even our restoration, deliverance, strength, comfort, nourishment, upholding, and safeguard. By contacting the Word in a proper way, we receive the Lord Himself. We do not receive light, life, or water as things apart from Him. No, the light, life, and living water we enjoy are actually God Himself. God is also our salvation, food, drink, comfort, and protection. Every aspect of the first ten blessings we receive through the living Word is God Himself.

The declaration in Psalm 119 that the Lord is our portion is extremely crucial. We can receive light because God is our portion. We can have life and living water also because He is our portion. All the different blessings come to us through the Word because the Lord is our portion. As long as we have Him, we have everything. I repeat, the blessings we receive through the living Word are not things apart from God Himself. They are different attributes or virtues of the living God as our portion. In all kinds of situations, we may have deliverance and salvation because God is our portion. All the blessings we receive from the living Word of God bring us to the Lord Himself. The testimony of the psalmist was that the Lord was his portion because he kept His word. By keeping God's word, he participated in God Himself and enjoyed Him. When we keep the Lord's words, we also enjoy Him as our portion.

Only of the Bible can it be said that the author of the book is the portion of those who read it. Many Chinese have studied the writings of Confucius, but Confucius has

not become their portion. Likewise, students do not experience the authors of their textbooks as their portion. But there is one book—the Word of God—whose Author eventually becomes our portion. The more we come to the Bible in the right way, the more the Author of this book, God Himself, becomes our portion.

THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD'S COUNTENANCE AND OF THE SHINING OF HIS FACE

As we enjoy God Himself, we also enjoy His countenance. Immediately after speaking of God as his portion, the psalmist says, "I entreated thy countenance with my whole heart" (v. 58, Heb.). It is also true in our spiritual experience that when we enjoy God, we desire to see His face. According to verse 58, the psalmist entreated the Lord's countenance. This expression is rather unusual. Have you ever heard of someone praying by entreating the Lord's countenance? If you consider your experience, you will realize that out of love for the Lord, there have been times when you longed to see His face. You wanted to be under the shining of His countenance. His countenance was all-important to you, and you wanted nothing else but to remain under His countenance and enjoy it. In verse 135 the psalmist prayed, "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant." This indicates that the psalmist also enjoyed the shining of God's face.

The utterances of the psalmist about the Lord's countenance and the shining of His face are not doctrinal teachings; rather, they are words of experience. The psalmist was not just taught about these things; he experienced them. I also can testify that although I was never taught to seek the Lord's countenance or the shining of His face, from my experience I have learned how marvelous and wonderful it is to enjoy the Lord Himself, His countenance, and the shining of His face. In seeking the Lord's countenance, I experience the shining of His face.

In his book *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Brother Lawrence emphasizes the presence of God. However, I do

not recall that he said much, if anything, about the shining of the Lord's face. The psalmist's expression regarding the shining of the Lord's face is very sweet, more dear and intimate than Brother Lawrence's words about God's presence. We should pray, "O Lord, cause Your face to shine upon me. Lord, I long to enjoy Your shining countenance." To enjoy the shining of the Lord's face is richer and more satisfying than simply experiencing His presence.

If you are faithful in contacting the Lord through the Word, you also will experience the shining of His countenance. Your desire will be to remain under this pleasant, delightful shining. Such an experience and enjoyment prove that our God is real, present, practical, and available. What we have is not merely doctrine, but the genuine enjoyment of Him.

Some say that they find it difficult to believe in God. But because I have tasted Him and enjoyed so much of Him, I find it even more difficult to deny that God exists. When I was a child, my mother loved me very much. But she could not give me the kind of enjoyment I have in the Lord. Only God Himself affords the supreme enjoyment. I do not have the words to utter how wonderful is the enjoyment of the shining of the Lord's countenance.

To experience the shining of the Lord's face is even easier than to experience the shining of light by turning on the switch. When I was a child, we did not have electricity in our house. We used old-fashioned oil lamps. It was my responsibility to keep the lamps clean and supplied with oil, a task I disliked very much. How happy I was when electricity was installed! No longer did I need to clean the lamps and fill them with oil. To get light in a room, all I had to do was turn on the switch. Enjoying God is even easier than this. Because we have been regenerated, God is now in our spirit. He is the light, and our spirit is the switch. If we want to experience Him and enjoy His shining, we simply need to turn on the switch by exercising our spirit.

Once God comes into us, He never leaves us. This fact, however, is not realized by all Christians. Many years ago, a certain booklet on the Spirit put out by a German mission was popular in China. In this booklet there was a picture of a dove, which represented the Spirit. According to the picture in this booklet, if we are good, the dove stays with us. But if we offend the Spirit, the dove flies away. At first, I appreciated this book and valued it highly. However, Watchman Nee wrote articles in protest to the teaching that the Holy Spirit leaves us. The dove of the Spirit never flies away. He always remains with us; we cannot chase Him away. At most, we can cause Him to be unhappy. In Paul's words, we may grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). If the Spirit fled from us whenever we displeased Him, it would not be possible to grieve the Spirit. The fact that we can grieve Him proves that He never leaves us. God is with us even when we lose our temper. However, when we are tempted to be angry and lose our temper, we should call on the Lord. Then the One who is always with us will rescue us from our anger. How real, available, and practical He is! With the ancient psalmists, we who believe in Christ can testify from our experience, not from mere doctrine, that the Lord is real and that we enjoy Him.

THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD AS THE HIDING PLACE AND SHIELD

Another blessing received by the loving seekers of God through the living Word is that of enjoying God as their hiding place and shield. The psalmist declared, "Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word" (v. 114). When we enjoy God as our portion and experience the shining of His countenance, He becomes our covering and hiding place. From every direction—top and bottom, front and back, right and left—He covers us and hides us. Because of our commission to bear the Lord's testimony, we face opposition and attack. But we have a hiding place, and

this hiding place is God Himself. Nearly every day in my prayer I tell the Lord that I take Him as my hiding place. Often I say, "Lord, You are a high tower to me. Teach me to hide in You."

As the hiding place, the Lord is for our rest and our living, but as the shield, He is for our protection in fighting. When a soldier goes forth to battle, he cannot bring his house with him. In order to fight, he must come out of the house. But he still has a shield to protect him from the enemy. Likewise, whenever we must face the enemy, God will be a shield to protect us. Because we are here living and fighting, we need both a hiding place and a shield. For our living, God is our hiding place; for our fighting, He is our shield.

THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD'S HELP AND WELL-DEALING

The psalmist also enjoyed God's help (v. 175b) and well-dealing (v. 65). God's well-dealing is His dealing with us in a way that fits His purpose and our need. God is never wrong in the way He deals with us. His intention is always good, and His motive is always pure. Because God is sovereign, He cannot be wrong. He has a purpose concerning us, and we ourselves have a need. As God deals with us, He cares both for His purpose and our need.

We all have complained to God at times. If we do not complain openly, we at least complain inwardly. Sometimes when I have been tempted to question the Lord's dealing with me, I have had to stop short. I realized that God's dealing was His well-dealing.

A brother may be tempted to complain to the Lord about his wife, or a sister about her husband. But God gave you a particular wife or husband according to His well-dealing. Again I say, God cannot be wrong. His intention is good, His motive is pure, and His way is right. Therefore, His dealing with us is always His well-dealing.

KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM, UNDERSTANDING, AND DISCERNMENT

Through the living Word of God we may also enjoy God as our wisdom, understanding, discernment, and knowledge (Psa. 119:66, 98-100, 169; 19:7b). Those who enjoy God have understanding. The less we enjoy Him, the less understanding we have. Lacking understanding, we may conduct ourselves in a foolish manner. But the more we enjoy the Lord, the more understanding we receive.

It is rather easy to define knowledge, but it is difficult to define wisdom, understanding, and discernment. Knowledge is a matter of knowing things. Compared to wisdom, understanding, and discernment, knowledge is superficial. I may know a certain brother and his wife by name. This is knowledge.

I would not try to define wisdom, understanding, or discernment, but from my experience I can say something about them. Whereas knowledge is related to things we have learned, wisdom is not a matter of learning. It consists of something deep within us, mainly in our spirit. Wisdom is both deeper and higher than knowledge. Understanding involves both wisdom and knowledge. If you have knowledge but not wisdom, you cannot have genuine understanding. Discernment requires all three—knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. According to spiritual mathematics, if we add together knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, we shall have discernment. However, the matter becomes much simpler when we realize that as long as we experience the Lord and enjoy Him, we have knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and discernment. Out of his experience, the psalmist could say that because he enjoyed God Himself, he was wiser than his enemies and understood more than the ancients and all his teachers. Enjoying God through the Word, he gained knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and discernment. In fact, God was all these things to him.

I believe the young people can testify that when they are far from the Lord in their experience, they often act in a

foolish way and are short of understanding. But when they turn to the Lord and experience Him, even a little, they immediately have wisdom and understanding. This understanding comes not from education or training; it comes from loving the Lord, contacting Him, and inwardly turning to Him. Knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and discernment issue from our enjoyment of the Lord.

PRESERVING, ESTABLISHING, AND OVERCOMING

Through the living Word of God the loving seekers of the Lord are also preserved from sin (v. 11), from stumbling (v. 165, Heb.), and from every evil way (v. 101). It is very easy to sin, go astray, or be stumbled. Many Christians are bothered by these three things. But if we enjoy the Word and daily get into it, we shall be preserved from sinning, from going astray, and from being stumbled. Our footsteps will be established, and we shall be overcomers (v. 133). No iniquity will have dominion over us. All negative things will be under our feet. This also is a result of enjoying God through His living Word.

If our contact with the Bible does not bring in the harvest of blessings covered in this message and in the foregoing message, our contact with the Word must be wrong in some way. The proper approach to the Word of God should issue in all these blessings. If we come to the Word in a right way, we shall enjoy the Lord's enlightenment, life, watering, restoring, and delivering. Ultimately, we shall enjoy God Himself as our portion. Then we shall have knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and discernment; we shall be preserved from every evil way; we shall be established; and we shall be overcomers, those who are above every negative thing.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIXTY-ONE

THE NEGATIVE ASPECT OF THE GIVING OF THE LAW AND OF ITS FUNCTION

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 19:1-25; 20:18-22; 24:1-18; 32:1-35; 33:1-6; 34:1-4, 29-35; 3:1, 12; 4:27; 18:5; Gal. 4:24-25; Heb. 12:18-21

After several messages on the "day" aspect of the law, we come in this message to the "night" aspect. According to the divine revelation in the Bible, whenever God comes to have contact with man, there are always two aspects of this contact. The reason for this is that such contact involves both God and man. Before the fall of man in Genesis 3, man was wholly on God's side. He had been created in God's image and after God's likeness. In Genesis 1 we see that God created the plants and animals each according to its own kind. Although man, of course, is not divine, he was created according to God's kind, not according to his own kind, as was the case with everything else. Man was made in the image of God and after the likeness of God. This indicates that man was created according to God's kind. Therefore, at the time of creation, man was on God's side and was one with Him. Concerning God and man at the time of creation, there were not two kinds. Because man was made according to God's kind, there was just one kind, and that was God's kind.

In Genesis 3 we see that in his subtlety the serpent injected his evil thought into the mind of the woman. The question he asked her and the words he spoke to her were the embodiment of the Devil's thought. When Eve spoke to the serpent and responded to his question, she received

devilish concepts into her mind. This means that before she ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, satanic thoughts had already been planted into her. Man's fall took place first through the acceptance of devilish thoughts, then through the physical act of eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. First the human mind took sides with the Devil; then man acted according to the Devil's thought and word by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. As a result, the nature of the Devil entered into man's flesh. The consequence of this was that the devilish thought and nature separated man from God so that man was no longer on God's side or after His kind. As the Bible indicates, every sinner is a serpent, the very offspring of vipers (Matt. 23:33). In 1 John 3:10 we are even told that fallen people are children of the Devil. Fallen man has become a creature after the Devil's kind. He is no longer after God's kind. For this reason, in rebuking Peter the Lord Jesus called him Satan. Furthermore, one day the Lord Jesus plainly said that Judas, the one who would betray Him, was a devil (John 6:70). The fact that the Lord could call one of His intimate disciples Satan and refer to a false disciple as a devil indicates that fallen man is now according to Satan's kind. The fall has caused man to become another kind of creature, a creature no longer according to God's kind.

At the time God brought the children of Israel to Mount Sinai, were they after God's kind or after Satan's kind? We should be careful in answering this question. In Exodus 19:3 God refers to both the house of Jacob and the children of Israel. The house of Jacob and the children of Israel are two different kinds of people. (This distinction cannot be explained away as an instance of the parallelism common to Hebrew poetry.) In the eyes of God the house of Jacob is different from the children of Israel. According to whose kind was Jacob? Was he according to God's kind? Surely Jacob, a supplanter, was according to the Devil's kind, for he was a fallen person. Like us, Jacob was after the Devil's kind. Hence, the expression "the house of Jacob" is the title

of the people who are after the Devil's kind. The expression "the children of Israel" denotes a people who are according to God's kind. They are descendants of Israel, the prince of God. Now we can see that when God brought the Israelites to Mount Sinai, they were in His eyes two peoples: the house of Jacob according to Satan's kind and the children of Israel according to God's kind.

It is rather difficult to say how many were among the house of Jacob and how many belonged to the children of Israel. Moses, no doubt, was among the children of Israel, for he was according to God's kind. It is not easy to say where Aaron was. Aaron seemed to be among both the house of Jacob and the children of Israel. Our experience is often the same. In the morning, we may be numbered among the children of Israel, but at the end of a day's work, we may act like a Jacob. According to 24:1, Aaron, along with Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, was told to come up unto the Lord. However, Aaron later showed that he did not have the ability to overcome the opinion of the religious congregation when they said to him, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us" (32:1). The congregation is rightly called a religious congregation because they had the intention to worship something, even though that thing was an idol. Aaron knew that the people's request was sinful, but he was too timid to withstand them. In a very real sense, Aaron was on both sides, sometimes on God's side and at other times, on the side of the religious congregation.

Like Moses, Joshua belonged absolutely on God's side. He was very faithful and stood with God as a person after His kind. However, it is difficult to locate where Joshua was physically with respect to Moses at the time the law was decreed on the mount. No clear word is given regarding Joshua's whereabouts.

From the time of the fall, man's condition determines whether or not God's contact with him will be in the "day" or in the "night." The deciding factor is on man's side, not on God's side. On God's side there is no night, for God is

light (1 John 1:5). It is impossible for there to be night with God. Genesis 1 speaks first of evening and then of morning. Night is referred to first because of the fall of the original creation in the age before Adam when Satan and certain angels and other creatures rebelled against God. This fall brought in night (Gen. 1:2). When God came in to restore the fallen creation, His work of restoration brought in day once again. The fact that Genesis 1 speaks of evening and morning indicates that night is related to the original fall in the universe, whereas day is related to God's work of restoration. Therefore, in the restored universe day follows night.

Our Christian experience also goes from night to day. We were brought out of the night and entered into the day. Because of our fallen condition, we were in the night. But God's salvation has brought us a new day. When we received this salvation, we entered into day.

Many Christians have a hope that their spiritual experience will be an everlasting day. But not until we are in the New Jerusalem will there be no more night, only day. Concerning the New Jerusalem it is said, "Night shall not be there" (Rev. 21:25). In our present experience, our night is usually longer than our day. In other words, we may be "down" more than we are "up." In our experience night and day will continue until we enter the New Jerusalem, which will be illumined by the glory of God and where there will be no more night.

To repeat, whether God's contact with us is in the "day" aspect or in the "night" aspect depends on our condition. With Moses, there was no darkness. Therefore, in his case the giving of the law was wholly a matter in the "day." The same was true concerning the function of the law. However, for those in the house of Jacob, both the giving of the law and the function of the law were in the negative aspect, in the aspect of "night."

In giving us the holy Word, the Bible, God did not intend for there to be a "night" side as well as a "day" side. His intention was strictly related to the "day" side. However,

the majority of genuine blood-washed, Spirit-regenerated Christians, even those who are seeking God, are in the "night" in their reading of the Scriptures. Although they are genuine believers in Christ, they remain in their fallen condition and status. This is a very serious matter. Whenever we come to the Bible, we must drop everything related to our negative background. This means that we must set aside our fallen background, our natural background, and our religious background. All Christians have such a threefold background. After we were saved and began to seek the Lord, we were still under the influence of this threefold background when we came to the Bible. This is the reason that most Christians are in the "night" when they read the Word. They are like the house of Jacob, for whom the giving of the law was an experience in the "night," rather than being like Moses, for whom it was an experience in the "day." For some Christians, the Bible is a book of "day," but for many more, it is a book of "night." The factor that determines whether the Word of God is in our experience "day" or "night" is our condition in coming to it. Years ago, I loved the Bible very much, but for me there was nearly no "day" in it, mainly "night." But through the years, the Bible has become to me a book wholly of the "day." By the Lord's mercy, I have been rescued from my threefold background.

We need to realize the crucial importance of our condition when we come to the Word and seek the Lord's countenance. We may make our contact with God a "day" or turn it into a "night." It all depends on our condition, status, standing, and situation. For the house of Jacob at the bottom of the mountain, the giving of the law was in the "night." But for Moses on the mountaintop, it was in the "day." It is a basic principle of spiritual experience that our condition determines whether our contact with God is in the "day" or in the "night."

The principle is the same with listening to messages. Whether a message is "day" or "night" to you depends not on the speaker, but on you. If you are in the "night," the

message will be "night" to you. But if you are in the "day," for you the message will be full of light.

According to Exodus 3, Moses was on the mountain of God, Mount Horeb, when God called him (v. 1, 4). God said to him, "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (v. 12). This word in the "day" was altogether fulfilled when God brought the people out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the wilderness to Mount Horeb, which is also Mount Sinai. There on the mountain God uttered more words in the "day": "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be my personal possession above all peoples: for all the earth is mine" (19:4-5, Heb.). These words are filled with bright light. In 19:6 we see God's intention in bringing the people out of Egypt: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." Clearly it was not God's intention to come to people in the "night." He came to them in the "day" and spoke words full of light. He told the children of Israel that He carried them on eagles' wings, brought them to Himself, took them as His personal possession, and wanted to make them a kingdom of priests. How wonderful!

In 19:7 Moses called for the elders of the people and presented to them all the words the Lord had spoken to him. Verse 8 says, "And all the people answered together, and said, All that Jehovah has spoken we will do" (Heb.). It seems that this was a very positive response. However, it was offensive to God, for it indicated that the people did not know themselves. They did not know what they were, and they did not take the proper standing before the Lord. Thus, when "Moses returned the words of the people unto Jehovah" (v. 8, Heb.), the Lord said that He would come in a thick cloud. The atmosphere changed from "day" to "night." Verse 16 shows clearly this change of atmosphere:

"And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled." In the first part of chapter nineteen there was no smoke, fire, or trembling. Everything was pleasant, and God spoke to the people in a pleasant way of grace. However, because the people answered in a way that indicated that they did not know themselves, God was offended. They presumed that they could do whatever God required. They did not know that they were unable to fulfill His commandments and that they stood in need of His mercy. The people should have said, "O Lord, have mercy on us. You know we are a rebellious people. Lord, we thank You for bringing us to Yourself on the wings of a great eagle. We also thank You for Your selection. You have chosen us to be Your personal possession. But, Lord, we don't trust in ourselves. We are not able to keep Your commandments. We look to You, Lord, for mercy." If this had been the attitude of the people, the "day" would have been prolonged. But because they did not know themselves and responded in a foolish way, their "day" was changed to "night."

Even before the decree of the law had been completed, the people fell into the sin of idolatry. They broke at least the first two commandments. When Moses was on the mountaintop with the Lord, the people were proved, tested, by Him (20:20). Exodus 32:1 says, "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him" (Heb.). No doubt, the fire must still have been burning on the mountaintop. However, the people probably grew accustomed to it. The sight of the fire had become common. After a period of weeks, they told Aaron to make gods for them. Aaron should have rebuked them severely. Instead, Aaron said, "Break off the golden

earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me" (32:2). Then we are told that Aaron received the gold from the people and "fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (v. 4). Aaron then built an altar before it and proclaimed that the next day would be a feast to the Lord (v. 5). We are told that the people "rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings" (v. 6). They brought sacrifices to the golden calf Aaron had made. The people presented the right kind of sacrifices, but they offered them to an idol. What a mixture! The way to worship may have been right, but the object of worship was wrong. Such a mixture can be found among Christians today. Certain Christian leaders make "calves" and cause others to worship them.

Knowing the situation of the people at the bottom of the mountain, the Lord told Moses, "Go, get thee down; for thy people, which *thou* broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves" (32:7). Here the Lord says that Moses was the one who brought the people out of Egypt. The Lord also told Moses that He would consume the people and make of Moses a great nation (v. 10). The Lord could destroy the people and still fulfill His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because Moses was one of their descendants. Moses, however, argued with the Lord and said, "Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which *thou* hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?" (v. 11). Moses continued his conversation with the Lord by saying, "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people" (v. 12).

At the Lord's word, Moses went down the mountain with the two tables of the testimony in his hand (v. 15). When

Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he thought it was "a noise of war in the camp" (v. 17). But Moses said, "It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the noise of them that sing do I hear" (v. 18). When Moses came into the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his "anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount" (v. 19). The breaking of the tables of the testimony indicates that the law had been broken. Before the decree of the law had been finished, the law had already been broken.

When Moses asked Aaron what he had done, Aaron told him a bold-faced lie. Aaron said that he cast the gold into the fire and "there came out this calf" (v. 24). Since the people, including Aaron, were in such a pitiful condition, how could the decree of the law have been anything other than a "night" to them? They were absolutely in the "night." They did not know God, and they did not know God's gracious dealing or mercy. Once again we see that although the giving of the law was in the "day" for Moses, it was in the "night" for those in the house of Jacob.

I. THE TWOFOLD SIGNIFICANCE OF MOUNT HOREB

A. The Mountain of God

Mount Horeb, where the law was given, has a twofold significance. First, it is the mountain of God (3:1, 12; 4:27; 18:5; 24:13; Num. 10:33; 1 Kings 19:8). This mountain was the place for God's people to meet with one another. At Mount Horeb Aaron met Moses (4:27). Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, also met him on this mountain (18:5).

God's people should always meet together in the "day" of His Word. If we all come to the Bible in the "day," we shall be brought together at Mount Horeb. However, if some are in the "day" in coming to the Word and others are in the "night," there will be disputing, fighting. The same Bible is to some believers a book of "day," and to others, a book of

"night." For centuries Christians have been fighting over the Bible. The Bible, of course, is not to blame. The responsibility rests with the spiritual condition of those who read the Word. When the readers are in the "night," they cause the Bible to become in their experience a book of "night."

Those who falsely accuse us of teaching heresy are in the "night." Some claim that we teach "evolution into God," that we teach that believers are deified and become God Himself. What gross darkness! Others deny the fact that we can abide in God and have Him abide in us. They argue that it is not possible for sinners to dwell in God or have the almighty, holy God dwell in them. They actually insist that it is heresy to say that we can be one with God. They claim that it is impossible for sinners to become one with God. Those who make such accusations are altogether in a religious "night." They are also in the "night" of the natural man. They have not entered into the "day" of God's revelation. I wonder how they would explain the fact that we are sons of God? The Bible clearly reveals that, as children of God, we have been born of Him and possess His life and nature. According to 2 Peter 1:4, we are partakers of the divine nature. All those who accuse us of heresy need to put forth their interpretation of this verse. Surely to partake of the divine nature implies enjoying it. Such an understanding is in the "day." However, for those who are in the "night," what we teach and preach is heresy. Some have even gone so far as to claim that it is blasphemy to teach that we can be one spirit with God and thus be what God is (1 Cor. 6:17).

When Moses was on the mountain with God, he was infused with God. Although Moses did not realize it, this infusion caused his face to shine with divine light. The same light which was a terrifying, consuming fire to the house of Jacob was a delightful, infusing light to Moses. This is a further indication that whether the fire consumes us or infuses us depends on our standing and condition. If we are with those who make idols and offer sacrifices to them, the fire will be terrifying to us. But if we stand with

Moses, the fire will be enjoyable and infusing. The fire will then shine not upon us, nor even just through us, but it will shine by mingling with us.

If iron is placed in fire, the iron will eventually begin to glow. The glowing of the iron is caused by the mingling of the fire with the iron. When the iron is put into the fire and the fire penetrates the iron, the fire and the iron become one. However, this mingling of the fire and the iron does not produce a third substance. Likewise, to say that man is mingled with God does not mean that this mingling produces a third entity, an entity which is neither God nor man. Those who make such an unfounded accusation concerning our teaching about mingling are in the "night." To us, the truth of mingling is a marvelous aspect of the "day." But to those who are in the "night," it is nothing but heresy. By the Lord's mercy we are people of the "day." We have seen certain things in the Word, and we are enjoying them. In particular, we are enjoying the Lord's infusion. As we abide under the shining of the Lord's face, we are infused with His element. Furthermore, because the Bible is in our experience Mount Horeb, the mountain of God, we meet together at this mountain and are truly one.

As the mountain of God, Mount Horeb is also the place for God's seekers to meet with God (24:13, 15-18; 1 Kings 19:8), to serve God (Exo. 3:12), and to receive God's revelation and vision (3:1-3; 24:12-13; 1 Kings 19:8-9).

B. Mount Sinai

Since Mount Horeb has a twofold significance, it may also be Mount Sinai (Exo. 19:11, 18, 20-24; 34:2-4; Gal. 4:24-25; Heb. 12:18-21). Although we meet together at the mountain of God where we serve God and receive His revelation and vision, for many other Christians this mountain is Mount Sinai. At Mount Sinai the sinfulness of God's people is exposed, and there is revealed the boundary which God has forbidden them to cross. At Mount Sinai people cannot see God, and they cannot receive revelation

or vision from God. Instead, they themselves are exposed and come to see the boundary God has set. Unlike Moses, they must stay far away.

C. Different People at Different Distances with Respect to Mount Horeb

In Exodus we see at least three different classes of people who stood at different distances in relation to Mount Horeb. Moses, perhaps accompanied by Joshua, was on the mountaintop being infused with God (Exo. 24:13; 34:29). Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders were on the mountain worshipping afar off and watching (24:1, 9). The children of Israel were at the bottom of the mountain standing afar off and trembling (20:18, 21). Moses was being infused, others were at a distance worshipping and watching, and the majority were at the bottom of the mountain trembling. Where are you in your experience? Are you being infused, are you watching, or are you trembling? Where you are depends on your standing and on your condition.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIXTY-TWO

THE NEGATIVE ASPECT OF THE GIVING OF THE LAW AND OF ITS FUNCTION

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 19:10-24; 20:19-21; 32:1; Rom. 5:13, 20; 4:15; 7:7-8, 13; Gal. 3:19; Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:23-24

Not many Christians realize that concerning both the giving of the law and the function of the law, there are two aspects, the "day" aspect and the "night" aspect. Nevertheless, such a truth lies hidden in the Bible. If we get into the depths of the truth in the Bible and consider it in the light of our spiritual experience, we shall see that there are these two aspects related to the giving of the law and its function.

Christians should never have the attitude that the law of God is not good. In Romans 7:12 Paul says, "So that the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." In Romans 7:14 he goes so far as to say, "The law is spiritual." The law is both good and also spiritual.

Paul's use of the adjective "spiritual" with respect to the law indicates that the law is related to God the Spirit. Because the law is something of God and out of God and because it belongs to God, who is Spirit (John 4:24), the law is the same as God in essence and in nature. Whatever proceeds out from God must be the same in substance as He is. The word "spiritual" in Romans 7:14 points to this substance. Certain things are very good, but because their substance is not of the Spirit, they cannot be called spiritual. Because the law comes out of God and is the same as God in substance, it is both good and also spiritual.

Because God is both the source of the law and its substance, the law is very uplifted in its nature. We should never regard the law as something that is not good or spiritual. In speaking of the law in Romans 7, Paul was careful. He emphatically declared that the law is holy and also spiritual. The law remains good and spiritual no matter whether we are good or evil, spiritual or unspiritual. If we are evil, the law is still good. If we are not spiritual, the law is nonetheless spiritual. No matter what we are, the law is good and also spiritual.

Although in itself the law is always good and spiritual, to us the decree of the law may be either positive or negative, either "day" or "night," depending on our spiritual condition. To one kind of person, the decree of the law may be very negative. But to another kind of person, it may be altogether positive.

These two aspects of the decree of the law, the "day" aspect and the "night" aspect can be seen on the same occasion—the giving of the law on the mountain. The mountain where the law was given was called both Mount Horeb and Mount Sinai. To Moses on the mountaintop, the mountain was Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. But to the people at the bottom of the mountain, it was Mount Sinai.

I am sure Moses never forgot that wonderful experience with the Lord on the mountaintop. When Peter, James, and John were with the Lord Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, they saw the Lord transfigured, but they were not transfigured themselves. But when Moses was on the mountaintop with the Lord, he himself was actually transfigured. When he came down after spending forty days with God on the mountain, the skin of his face was shining with the element of God which had been transfused into him. The light that radiated from Moses' face was in fact the light of God Himself. If this light was not God's light, then what other kind of light was it? For Moses, the mountain on which the law was given was not Mount Sinai; it was Mount Horeb, the mountain of God.

When Moses was on the mountaintop being infused with God, he was mingled with God. Just as Peter did not forget his experience on the mount of transfiguration but referred to it when he was old (2 Pet. 1:17), so Moses could not forget his experience on the mountain of God, where he beheld the Lord, was infused with His element, and was mingled with Him. In their ignorance and blindness, some people today oppose the truth that believers can be mingled with God. According to them, the teaching that we can be mingled with God is heretical. But if Moses had not been mingled with God, how shall we account for the shining of his face? What caused his face to shine so that the people could not bear to look at it? Moses was infused with God Himself and experienced a kind of transfiguration.

In the Bible we are told of only two people whose faces shone: Christ on the mount of transfiguration and Moses when he came down from Mount Horeb. When Christ was on the mount of transfiguration, His face was shining like the sun (Matt. 17:2). As we have pointed out, when Moses came down from the mountain after beholding the Lord for so many days, the skin of his face also was shining. Eventually, the believers will shine as the sun. In Matthew 13:43 the Lord Jesus said that "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." If we wish to be those who shine as the sun, we need to be a Moses on the mountaintop beholding the Lord and being infused with Him.

Whether in our experience the decree of the law is positive or negative, "day" or "night," depends on our condition, not on the law itself. If we are a Moses on the mountaintop, the decree of the law for us will be a wonderful experience. But if we are like the people trembling at the bottom of the mountain, the decree of the law in our experience will be dreadful and terrifying.

At the time the law was given, three categories of people were involved: Moses, and perhaps Joshua also, on the mountaintop, the people at the foot of the mountain, and those who were on the mountain worshipping afar off. As

one on the mountaintop, Moses experienced God's transfusion and infusion. The ones who were on the mountain, neither at the top or the bottom, worshipped afar off, and those at the foot of the mountain trembled. Where are you in your experience? Are you at the bottom of the mountain trembling, on the mountain worshipping afar off, or on the top of the mountain being infused with the element of God?

To Moses and possibly to Joshua as well, the decree of the law was a wonderful experience. But to those at the bottom of the mountain, it was very frightening. This was the reason they trembled with fear. The vital point here is that whether the giving of the law is positive or negative, "day" or "night," to us is determined by our condition, not by the law. If our condition is positive, the giving of the law will also be positive. But if our condition is negative, the decree of the law will be negative.

The same principle applies in reading the Bible. In our experience, the Bible may be either a book of "day" or of "night." Many hold to the superstition that the Bible affords only good things for those who read it. According to this superstitious belief, whenever a person comes to the Scriptures, he will receive something positive. However, many come to the Bible and do not receive any benefit whatever. Furthermore, both believers and unbelievers alike have actually been slain spiritually by the Bible. Those who take the Bible as a book of dead letters will be killed by it. This has been the experience of many Christians, including a good number of pastors and Bible students. People are slain by the Word not because there is anything wrong with the Bible, but because there is something wrong with those who read it. Like the law, the Bible is good and also spiritual. As a gift from God, the Bible cannot be wrong in any way. However, to those whose spiritual condition is a "night" the Bible becomes a book of "night." Once again we see that whether the Bible is a book of "day" or "night" to us in our experience is not determined by the Bible itself: it is determined by our spiritual condition.

From the very beginning, it was not God's intention to give man commandments to keep or to have man do things for Him. God's eternal intention is to work Himself into us. When He comes to us and speaks with us, He does not do so with the intention of giving us a certain number of commandments for us to learn and keep. On the contrary, His desire is simply to be with us in order to infuse Himself into us. The longer we stay in God's presence, the more we are infused with Him.

In north China where I was born, it is very cold in the winter. Years ago, we used a coal-burning stove to heat the room. On days when it was especially cold, I enjoyed standing close to the stove and absorbing the heat. When I went into another room after spending time by the stove, others could feel the heat coming out through my clothing. By standing near the stove I had been infused with the heat from the stove. This is an illustration of how we are infused with God by spending time with Him. God's intention is to have a people who stay close to Him that He may transfuse His element into them.

When Moses was in Egypt, he saw how the children of Israel were mistreated by the Egyptians. Hence, he decided that he would do something to deliver God's people from bondage in Egypt. Whether Moses was right or wrong in attempting to deliver the people, it is certain that he acted in a foolish way. When God later delivered the people out of Egypt, His intention was not merely to release them from captivity. If we have the heavenly vision, we shall see that God's intention was to bring the people who had been separated from Him back to Himself so that they could be with Him.

After trying to rescue the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt, Moses fled to the wilderness. He was deeply disappointed and discouraged. During his years in the wilderness, Moses was forced to give up the prospect of a great career. No matter what kind of ambition or intention a person may have, after forty years in the wilderness every trace of ambition will surely disappear. Moses was forty

when he attempted to rescue the children of Israel. At the end of the next forty years, when he was eighty, he considered himself ready for death. According to Moses' word in Psalm 90, even those who are strong should not expect to live beyond the age of eighty. By the time he reached the age of eighty and thought of himself as good for nothing but death, Moses had lost every trace of ambition. Every bit of his intention was gone. As far as he was concerned, he was finished. He may have said to the flock while he was shepherding them, "I am dying, flock, and I don't know how much longer I'll be here with you. Perhaps after a few days, I'll be gone." Suddenly one day Moses beheld a burning bush, a bush that burned without being consumed. When he turned aside to "see this great sight" and learn why the bush was not burnt (3:3), God called to him out of the midst of the bush (v. 4). No wonder that Moses later spoke of God as the One who dwelt in the bush (Deut. 33:16). God wanted Moses to forget about his own doing. Furthermore, God did not want Moses to be disappointed or discouraged. He had come to call him and to send him back to Egypt that he might bring the people out of bondage and lead them to the very place where God was. In 3:12 the Lord said to Moses, "When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." As this word indicates, God's intention was not just to rescue the people from persecution in Egypt; it was to bring them to Himself on the mountain of God. It is important that we see this positive aspect of God's salvation.

Not many Christians see God's intention in His salvation. To them, salvation consists only in being delivered from hell. However, the Bible emphasizes the positive matter that God's salvation is to bring His people back to Himself. According to the New Testament, in His salvation God brings His people not only to Himself, but also into Himself. Thus, God's intention in His salvation is to bring His chosen people to Himself and even into Himself.

According to the picture in the book of Exodus, God did

everything to bring His people out of bondage in Egypt and to lead them to Himself on the mountain of God in the wilderness. He brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the wilderness, where He provided water for drinking and food for eating. Eventually, God brought the children of Israel to the very place where He had appeared to Moses and called him. In 5:1 the Lord said to Pharaoh through Moses and Aaron, "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." In 10:9 Moses once again told Pharaoh, "We must hold a feast unto Jehovah" (lit.). God wanted His people to come to His mountain to feast with Him and unto Him. God did not say to Moses, "There are many things for the children of Israel to do. I want you to rescue them from Egypt so that they may do a great work for Me." On the contrary, God told Moses to lead the people out of Egypt so that they could hold a feast unto Him. Eventually, in fulfillment of His word, God brought the people to His mountain.

II. THE NEGATIVE ASPECT OF THE GIVING OF THE LAW

In bringing the people to the mountain of God, it was not God's intention to give them commandments to keep. When God first spoke to the people in chapter nineteen, there was no thunder, darkness, or sound of a trumpet. There at the mountain the atmosphere was pleasant and quiet. Verse 4 says, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." The people had walked out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and to the mountain of God. But from God's point of view, He had carried them to Himself on the wings of an eagle. After likening Himself to a great eagle, the Lord went on to say that the people would be His personal possession and that they would be unto Him "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (vv. 5-6, lit.). Is this a word of law or a word of grace? It is a word of grace, not of law. Actually it is a word of love expressed by grace.

A. To Bring the Children of Israel into a Position to Know Themselves

If the people had been enlightened concerning God and themselves, they would have said, "Lord, we thank You for Your mercy. We are not worthy of it. We don't deserve it. All we can do is thank You for it." However, when the children of Israel heard the words God spoke to Moses, they answered, "All that Jehovah has spoken we will do" (v. 8, lit.). This indicates that the people did not have a heart for God and that they did not know Him. Even Aaron was at least somewhat ignorant. Otherwise, how could he have been persuaded to make a golden calf for the people to worship? The response of the people and Aaron's deed in shaping a calf out of gold prove that the children of Israel did not know God and that they did not truly have a heart for Him.

B. To Put the Children of Israel to a Test

Because the people knew neither God nor themselves, God changed His attitude toward them and also caused a change in the atmosphere. He told Moses that He would come in a thick cloud (v. 9). He also charged the people to sanctify themselves, to wash their clothes, and to observe the boundary. Exodus 19:12 says, "Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death." In verse 16 we see how dreadful and terrifying the atmosphere became: "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled."

It was not God's original intention to create such a terrifying atmosphere. But only Moses knew what God's intention was. He realized that God did not intend to make the people afraid. This was the reason he said to the people

in 20:20, "Fear not: for God is come to prove you." Moses knew that God was proving the people, that He was testing them. He realized that it was not God's intention to have thunder, darkness, lightning, and the terrifying blast of a trumpet. Among all the children of Israel, Moses was the only one who knew the desire of God's heart.

At the word of the Lord, Moses went up to the top of the mountain and stayed there with God for a period of forty days. Years ago, I thought these forty days were meant to be a trial to the children of Israel. Yes, these days were a time of testing to them. However, these forty days were not primarily intended to be a test of the children of Israel; they were designed to give Moses an opportunity to be infused with God. The longer I stayed by that coal stove in my house, the more heat I absorbed. Likewise, the longer Moses stayed with God on the mountaintop, the more he was infused with God.

Concerning most of these forty days, there is no record that either Moses or God did anything. It was not until the end of these days that God began to speak to Moses. God was happy simply to have one of His people stay with Him. Would you have been content to stay with God those forty days and not do anything? Suppose a brother would invite you to his living room and ask you to sit down with him. Then for twelve hours he simply sits with you and looks at you, not saying a word. Would you be able to endure this? I do not think anyone, especially one of a quick disposition, could tolerate such a situation. But Moses stayed on the mountain with God for forty days without eating, drinking, or sleeping. There was no indication that any kind of business was transacted between him and God. The only thing that happened was that Moses received a divine transfusion. God's very element was infused into him.

Certain of my small grandchildren are fond of visiting my wife and me. One child in particular comes over mainly for the purpose of getting something good to eat. However, when she has another source for these things, we do not see very much of her. But when she has no other source, she

comes to see us. But she does not stay very long. It is not her intention to stay with us; it is to get something from us and then to go her way. We, on the contrary, enjoy her presence and would like her to stay with us longer. The behavior of my grandchild is a picture of the way we often relate to the Lord. We come to Him not simply to be with Him, but to get something good from Him. As soon as we receive it, we go away. Thus, we may pray to the Lord and even meet with Him in fellowship in order to get something from Him that is a benefit to us.

God knows how difficult it is for us to stay in His presence without doing anything. In sympathy with our weakness, He may tell us to do certain things. But it is not His intention to require us to do things. It is to keep us with Him that we may be infused with Him. But according to our natural concept, we consider that God is placing demands on us and making requirements of us. Oh, that we might see that God's intention is to infuse us with what He is and with what He has! In order for this infusion to take place, we need to be with Him.

After spending forty days on the mountaintop being infused with God, Moses was shining with God's light. Notice that God did not ask Moses to do anything. Rather, He transfused Himself into Moses until Moses began to shine with Him. This was the reason that when Moses came down from the mountain, the skin of his face was shining. The highest profession on earth is to spend time being infused with God that we may shine forth God. This is far greater than doing anything for God. If we would shine forth God, we need to spend time with Him, not to do something but to have Him transfused into our being.

My burden in this message is to point out that God's intention in bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt was to lead them to His mountain so that He could infuse them with Himself. He wanted them to be infused with Him even as that burning bush had been infused. The bush which burned without being consumed had been fully infused with God. God was in the bush and spoke from the midst of

it. God wanted all His people to be brought to the place where He could infuse them with Himself. Therefore, He told them that He brought them on eagles' wings and that He would make them His personal treasure and a kingdom of priests.

When the people heard those words, they should have bowed down and confessed, "O God, we cannot make ourselves a treasure for You. We are not precious. There is no way for us to become Your personal treasure." If this had been their attitude, God would have said, "I will make you a personal treasure to Me. Stay with Me, and I will infuse you with what I am. Eventually, you all will become precious in My sight." Imagine what the situation would have been like if all two million Israelites had been infused with God and had begun to shine forth God. Their glory might have been like the glory of the New Jerusalem.

God's people did not understand His intention. Their concept was that they should do certain things for God. Furthermore, they wanted to do these things and thought they were able to do them. They had seen what God had done for them, and now they wanted to do something for Him. This concept caused them to fall.

Have you ever asked yourself why God gave us such a big book as the Bible? In the hundreds of chapters in the Bible, there are a great many commandments for us to keep. Certain of these commandments are repeated again and again. The reason for this repetition is that God's desire is to keep us with Him through the Word. In order to stay with God, we need to stay in the Word. However, often when we come to the Bible, we have no consciousness of coming to God. Moreover, when we dwell with the Bible, we do not have the sense that we are staying with God. How we need a change of concept! Whenever we come to the Bible, we should come to God and stay with Him. Yes, the Bible shows us many things God wants us to do. But all these things are secondary. The primary matter is that through the Word we stay with God and are infused with Him. Unfortunately, we are easily distracted from Him by

other things. There are not many like Moses who stay with God according to the desire of His heart. Once again, I wish to point out that during those forty days Moses was with God on the mountaintop, he did not do anything. It was not God's intention for Moses to do certain things; it was for him to be infused with God Himself.

In the Bible we can find out what God says to us and what He wants us to do. However, the primary matter is that we stay with God through the Word. But this is not easy for us to do. Our tendency is to come to the Bible simply to find out what it says about different things. As we read the Word, we may decide that we shall do whatever the Bible says. Little do we realize that in making such a decision we actually set God aside. Those who come to the Word in this way are not truly blessed by God. If we would be blessed by Him through the Word, we need to see that both what God wants us to do and what He says to us are secondary. What is primary is that we stay with God to be infused with Him. The reason God speaks to us and tells us to do certain things is that He wants us to be with Him.

Why do we need to read the Bible? When I was young, I was told that as a Christian I must read the Bible to find out what God wants me to do. Yes, by reading the Bible we find out a great many things God wants us to do, perhaps hundreds or even thousands of things. The problem is that we are not able to do them. Nevertheless, in our natural concept, we desire to find out what God wants us to do and then set out to do it. Our attitude is that we must do and want to do whatever God speaks. Therefore, we make up our mind to do these things and in practice we set God aside. Instead of making up our mind to do what the Bible says, we should say, "Lord, I love You, I love Your word, and I love everything You say to me." If we speak this way to the Lord, He will answer, "Very good! Now you need to know that whatever I want you to do, I will do for you and through you."

In a song about saying amen to the Word of God, there is a line I appreciate very much:

What I never could do God is doing in me.
By saying Amen to His Word.

Hymns, #1219

What we are not able to do ourselves God desires to do in us. For example, a husband should say to the Lord, "Lord, You ask me to love my wife. Lord, I love You, but I must tell You that I cannot love my wife." Then the Lord will say, "Right, you can't love your wife, but I will love her through you. What you cannot do, I will do in you." Concerning the commandments to love the brothers and to love our neighbor as ourselves, we should also say, "Lord, I love You, but I must be honest with You. I cannot love the brothers, and I cannot love others as myself. I have many neighbors and relatives, but I simply am not able to love them. Lord, I love You and I love Your Word, but I simply am not able to love them. Lord, I love You and I love Your Word, but I cannot love other people." Once again the Lord will tell us that what we are not able to do He will do from within us. This is God's economy both in the Old Testament and in the New.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIXTY-THREE

THE NEGATIVE ASPECT OF THE GIVING OF THE LAW AND OF ITS FUNCTION

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 19:10-24; 20:19-21; 32:1; Rom. 5:13, 20; 7:7-8, 13; Gal. 3:19; Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:23-24

In my experience with the Lord I have learned a particular secret, and I would like to share it with you. The secret is whenever you find that the Bible tells you to do a certain thing, do not say, "Lord, I'll do this. I just ask You to help me do it." Instead, tell Him that you love Him, but that you are not able to fulfill His requirements. For instance, a young person may say, "Lord, I love you. The Bible tells me to honor my parents. Lord, I must confess that I cannot honor them. But I do love You and Your Word. I want to stay with You according to Your Word. Lord, I just want to be here with You." Then the Lord will assure that young person that although he cannot honor his parents, He Himself will do this in him. We should simply say amen to the Word of God. Then the Lord will do in us what we could never do ourselves. How marvelous!

This matter of telling the Lord that we love Him and His Word, but that we are not able to do what the Bible says surely is not a natural concept or a religious concept. However, it is according to God's economy. Should the Lord require you to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the uttermost part of the earth, you should say, "Lord, I love You, and I love the Word. But I must tell You, Lord, that I am not able to preach the gospel to the person next door, much less to the uttermost part of the earth. But, Lord, I love You, and I want to stay with You." If you say this to the

Lord, you will have the conviction deep within that even though you cannot fulfill this requirement, the Lord will do it in you and through you. As long as you love the Lord and His Word and as long as you stay with Him, He will do in you what you cannot do yourself.

When I read the Bible many years ago, I said, "Amen! I'll do whatever the Bible says." Now when I read the Word, I say, "Lord, I love the Word and I love You. But, Lord, You know that I can't do what the Bible says. Now I know that whatever You tell me to do, You will do for me. I know what is on Your heart. You have no intention for me to do anything. Although You tell me to do certain things, Your desire is that You do these things in me. You simply want me to love You and to stay with You. The more I stay with You, love You, and tell You that I cannot do anything, the happier You are."

The Lord likes us to tell Him again and again that we cannot do what the Word tells us to do. He wants to keep us with Him. The more we stay with Him and tell Him that we are not able to do anything, the happier He is. God wants us to stay with Him so that we, like Moses on the mountaintop, may be infused with Himself. This is what God desires today.

God has not only given us the Ten Commandments and certain ordinances and precepts; He has given us the entire Bible. Shall we presume to think that we can do all the Bible says? Certainly not. Instead, we should stay with the Lord and tell Him again and again that we love Him and His Word, but that we cannot do what the Bible says. The Lord is eager to do for us and in us what we cannot do ourselves.

We have pointed out that the decree of the law differs according to the different categories of people. When the law was given, Moses was on the mountaintop experiencing the divine infusion, some were on the mountain afar off worshipping, and the majority were at the bottom of the mountain trembling. Neither those who worshipped afar off nor those at the foot of the mountain could fulfill God's

purpose. God's purpose could be fulfilled only through Moses, the one who experienced His infusion. Only he could fulfill the desire of God's heart.

Because Moses was infused with God, he became a man of God, even a God-man. Just as iron can be infused with fire and mingled with it, so Moses was infused with God and mingled with Him. We are like the iron, and God is like the fire. Just as iron can be burned by fire until it glows, God wants us to be burned by Him, infused and mingled with Him, until we shine with Him. This is God's intention.

No matter where we may be reading in the Bible, we need to say, "Lord, I love You, and I want to stay with You. Lord, I receive whatever You say. But, Lord, I cannot do it. However, now I know Your strategy. You will do everything for me and in me." If a brother tries in himself to love his wife, he will not be able to do so. But if, instead of trying to love her, he stays with the Lord and is infused with Him, he will love his wife automatically. She may be greatly surprised at the love her husband has for her.

I can testify that many times I have made up my mind to do certain things, only to fail miserably. But at other times I simply opened to the Lord to be infused with Him. Then I found that the Lord would do in me what I was not able to do myself. This is what God is seeking today.

III. THE NEGATIVE ASPECT OF THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW

A. To Expose Sin

At this point we need to say a word concerning the function of the law on the negative side. The law exposes our sinfulness (Rom. 5:13, 20; 4:15; 7:7-8, 11, 13; Gal. 3:19). The Bible also has the function of exposing our condition. Apart from the law, we cannot know sin. But when the law comes, sin is exposed.

B. To Subdue Sinners

If we are right with God, the law will not only expose us,

but will also subdue us (Rom. 3:19). When we are exposed and subdued, we shall become humble before God. We shall say to Him, "Lord, I am sinful and unclean. How I thank You, Lord, for Your redemption. I love You, and I thank You for the blood which cleanses me and for Your Spirit which purifies me." By nature we all are proud. If we did not have the law, we would never realize how sinful we are, and we would never be subdued. We are proud before others and even before God. But the law, and the Bible as well, shuts our mouths. We have no way to justify ourselves or to vindicate ourselves.

C. To Guard God's Chosen People and Bring Them to Christ

According to Galatians 3:23-24, the law also functions to guard God's chosen people and to bring them to Christ. Once we have been brought to Christ, we shall receive the blessing. After we have been enlightened, subdued, guarded, and brought to Christ, we may receive Christ as our life. Then if we stay with Christ, we may enjoy Him as our person.

Christ is the embodiment of God. When we have Him, we have God. When we stay with Him, we stay with God. When we are one with Him, we are one with God. If we remain one with Christ, spontaneously we shall live Christ. We shall be able to say with Paul, "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). This living of Christ is equal to shining forth God as a result of being infused with Him. When the element of God is transfused into us, our face shines with God, and when we stay with Christ, we spontaneously live Him.

It is not God's intention in giving commandments that we should do things for Him. The concept of doing things for God is a fallen human concept. It is also a religious concept. After God created man, God did not charge him to do many things for Him. Instead, He gave man a commandment related to his eating. God placed the man created by

Him in front of the tree of life and warned him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God's intention was that man would eat of the tree of life and thereby receive God into him.

The Bible reveals that God created man as a vessel to contain Him. God did not ask this vessel to do anything for Him. Who would make a vessel and then expect it to do things? A vessel is a container. The Bible says that we are vessels of honor unto glory (Rom. 9:21, 23). Since God alone is honor and glory, to be a vessel of honor and glory is actually to contain God. Man was created by God to take God in and to contain Him. God did not create man with the intention of having man do things for Him.

To contain God is to express Him. If a glass jar is filled with red liquid, it will express the redness of that liquid. A clear glass container will always be the expression of its contents. This is a basic and crucial principle in the Scriptures. If as vessels we contain God, we shall automatically express Him.

After the fall of man, God came again and again to do things for man. When God appeared to Adam after the fall, it was not for the purpose of telling him what to do. Instead, according to Genesis 3:15 the Lord prophesied and said to the serpent, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The Lord promised that one called the seed of woman would come to bruise the serpent's head. After speaking further to the man and the woman, the Lord God made "coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). Because man had fallen, he needed a covering. The coats of skins with which God covered Adam and Eve point to Christ as the real covering. This covering was a sign that one day God would put fallen man into Christ. According to the New Testament, when we are baptized into the name of Jesus Christ, we are placed into the very Person of Christ (Gal. 3:27). The point here is that in the book of Genesis God did not appear for the purpose of telling man what to do. Instead, God came

again and again to make promises, promises which indicate that God's intention was to do everything for man. On our part we should simply turn to Him, seek Him, love Him, be one with Him, and stand with Him in His interest. Then He will do everything for us. This was the situation with Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. These men received God's promise and they experienced Him coming to do things for them. God's intention is to do everything for His people.

In the first nineteen chapters of Exodus, we see God coming to fulfill the promises He made in Genesis. We have pointed out that in 19:4-6 God spoke a sweet word of grace to the people, telling them that He had borne them on eagles' wings and had brought them to Himself, that they would be His personal possession, and that He would make them a kingdom of priests. However, the children of Israel did not know the desire of God's heart and declared that they would do whatever God required. This made it necessary for God to give certain commandments to them.

Many Christians have the concept that the Old Testament is a book of commandments, but the New Testament is not a book of commandments. Actually there are strong commandments in the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament. Consider how many commandments are found in chapters five, six, and seven of the Gospel of Matthew. The commandments given by the Lord in His message on the mountain are both deeper and higher than those found in the Old Testament. These commandments are so strict that no human being can possibly fulfill them. In the Epistles more commandments are given. If we read the New Testament carefully, we shall see that the commandments given through Moses are repeated in the Epistles. This is true, at least in principle, even of the commandment about keeping the Sabbath day. The book of Hebrews speaks of the coming Sabbath rest. Thus, the commandment about keeping the Sabbath is repeated not in the old way, but in a new, deeper way.

From the time of Exodus 19 onward, the Bible became a book full of commandments. Again and again, God comes to command and to make requirements. What is God's purpose in doing this? His purpose is that we take Him into us. God has called us with the intention of infusing Himself into us. However, fallen man does not have this concept. The natural concept of fallen man is that of doing things for God. Since this is man's concept, it is necessary for God to show us how high His requirements are. His standard reaches to heaven. There is utterly no way for us to fulfill it. When we consider God's standard and then look at ourselves, we shall be subdued and say, "Lord, I cannot do it." When we say this, the Lord will answer, "I realize that You cannot do it. Let Me come in to fulfill My requirements for you and in you. I am willing to do everything for you, but you must allow Me to come in. If you close the door to Me, there is no way for Me to do anything in you to fulfill My commandments. In order for Me to do these things for you, I must be in you." Eventually, we are constrained to open ourselves to the Lord and to receive Him.

As an example of the Lord's requirements, consider His word in Matthew 5:48: "You, therefore, shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Are you able to fulfill this word? We can only say, "Lord, I am fallen and sinful. How could I ever be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect? This is absolutely impossible for me. I just cannot do it. But, Lord, I love You, and I love Your Word." If this is our attitude toward the Lord, the Lord will have a way to come into us and to fulfill this requirement for us and in us. Our responsibility is to love Him, receive Him, stay with Him, and spend time with Him so that He can infuse Himself into us. Do not worry about fulfilling God's requirement. Simply open and receive Him.

Because they are blinded with pride, many Christians today do not see God's intention. Instead, they have a religion of work and self-effort. In fact, all religions instruct people concerning how to do things, how to work, how to

behave, and how to improve themselves. The emphasis in the Bible, however, is that we need God to come into us and do everything in us and for us. If we read the Epistles in this light, we shall have a much better understanding of them. For instance, in Philippians 2:12 and 13 Paul says, "So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not only as in my presence, but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." In verse 12 Paul charges us to work out our own salvation. The standard of this salvation is Christ, the One who emptied Himself, humbled Himself, was obedient unto death, and who has been exalted to the third heaven. Are you able to work out such a salvation? We must admit that it is impossible for any of us to do this. We may receive God's salvation, but we are not able to work out our own salvation. This is the reason Paul says that God operates in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure. In ourselves we are not able to work out our own salvation. But God is operating in us. We need to open to Him, cooperate with Him, and work with Him. On the one hand, in the Epistles there are many commandments. On the other hand, God's desire is to come into us and fulfill all the requirements He makes upon us.

In a very real sense, Paul was a greater lawgiver than Moses. The commandments given by Moses are not as deep and demanding as those given by Paul. For example, did Moses require a husband to love his wife, or a wife to submit to her husband? Moses gave no such commandments, but Paul issued them. A Pharisee could mistreat his wife and still boast that he had kept the commandments given through Moses, for Moses did not explicitly command a husband to love his wife. Likewise, a woman could insist that she kept the law in the Old Testament even if she refused to submit to her own husband. This indicates that Paul's commandments are more difficult to keep than those given through Moses. When we read all these commandments in

the New Testament, we need to open to the Lord, receive Him into us, and allow Him to do everything in us and for us. Let us learn to listen to the Lord's word and then say, "Lord, I love You, but I simply cannot fulfill this word. I would like to do it, but I can't." Then the Lord will say, "I only ask that you open to Me so that I can come into you and do this for you." The truth of God coming into us to do everything for us and in us is the central concept in the Bible concerning the giving of commandments.

I am very grateful to the Lord for the picture of the giving of the law in the book of Exodus. In this picture we see one, Moses, called by God to receive His law. However, God did not first give Moses the law. Rather, He first spent time to infuse Moses with Himself. Day after day for a period of forty days, Moses was infused with God. Before God gave the law to Moses, God gave Himself to him. This clearly portrays God's intention. God does not want us to be like the children of Israel trembling in darkness at the bottom of the mountain. Although they were religious, they did not know God or have a heart for Him. Eventually they asked Aaron to make idols of gold for them to worship. God's intention is that we be on the mountaintop experiencing His infusion. The more we are infused with Him, the more He will have a way to do everything in us and for us to fulfill the commandments He gives to us.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIXTY-FOUR

APART FROM THE LIVING GOD
THE LAW BECOMING KILLING LETTERS

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 3:6; Rom. 7:8-14; 10:5; Lev. 18:5; Gal. 3:21; John 5:39-40; Ezek. 36:26-27; Gal. 3:2-5; 5:2, 4, 6; 6:15

God's eternal purpose is to work Himself into us as our life so that we may take Him as our person, live Him, and express Him. This is the desire of God's heart; it is also the focal point of the Bible. In order to fulfill this purpose, God created man in His image and after His likeness. God's intention in creating man was that man would receive God into him and take Him as his life and everything to him. For this reason, after God created man, He placed him in front of the tree of life. This indicates that God wanted man to eat of this tree, which is a symbol of God Himself as life. To eat of the tree of life is to take God into us as our life and life supply.

The tree of life is seen both in Genesis 2 and Revelation 22. From eternity to eternity, God's intention is for man to partake of this tree. Our destiny in eternity future is to eat the tree of life and thereby to live God and express Him. This is God's eternal intention.

In Genesis 3 the serpent tempted man to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. As a result of eating of this tree, man became fallen. Instead of partaking of the tree of life, man ate of the tree of knowledge.

The principle of life is dependence, whereas the principle of knowledge is independence. For example, after a student of mathematics learns all his instructor has to teach him, he can be independent of his teacher. Because the student knows mathematics for himself, it is no longer

necessary for him to depend on this teacher. Knowledge leads to independence, but life requires constant dependence. We can never afford to become independent with respect to the means of life. In fact, the more life we have, the more dependent we are. To maintain our physical life we must breathe, drink, and eat. If we want to stay alive, we cannot graduate from breathing, drinking, and eating.

If man had not fallen, man's living would not be independent from God, but man would continually take God in and live by Him. Man would depend on God, and there would be no separation between God and man. Man would be able to receive God directly as life, live by Him, and even live Him. What a wonderful situation that would be!

At the time of man's fall a wedge was driven between man and God, a wedge that caused a separation between them. The knowledge of good and evil made man independent from God.

Another consequence of eating of the tree of knowledge is that man tries to do things for God on his own. In a sense, man realizes that he has displeased God. Because of this realization, he makes up his mind to do something to please God. With fallen human beings, therefore, there are two striking characteristics: independence and efforts on his own to please God.

God is not willing to give up His original purpose for man. In order to deal with man in his fallen situation, God gives commandments to him. By giving man commandments, God seems to be saying, "You want to do something to please Me, but you don't realize how fallen you are, how incapable you are, and how far you are from Me. The very fact that you try to please Me proves that you don't know where you are. Let Me now give you some commandments to test you, to prove whether or not you can fulfill them."

The law decreed by God functions in at least three ways. First, the law portrays God and defines Him. As God's testimony, the law is actually a portrait of God; it

shows us what He is like. All the commandments given by God both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament reveal who God is and what He is. Leviticus 19:2 gives this commandment: "Ye shall be holy: for I Jehovah your God am holy" (lit.). The Lord Jesus issued an even higher commandment: "You, therefore, shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). In both cases the principle is the same: the law presents a picture of God. According to the law He has given, God is perfect, holy, and righteous; He is a God of love and of light. His law presents a picture of what He is.

The second function of the law is that of exposing us. This function is presented in a full way in Romans 7. In Romans 7:7 Paul declares, "But I had not known sin except through the law; for I had not known coveting except the law had said, You shall not covet." Until the law came, sin was dormant. In Romans 7:8 Paul says that "without law sin is dead." Then in the next verse he goes on to say that "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Using the law as a knife, sin put Paul to death. In verse 11 Paul tells us that sin killed him by taking occasion through the commandment. Thus, in his experience Paul found that the commandment was death unto him. God used the law to expose him.

A third function of the law is the function of subduing us. After we are exposed, we need to be subdued. Once the law has subdued us, it can then bring us to God.

The rich young man in Matthew 19 was defeated in his contact with the Lord; however, he was not subdued. This was the reason he went away sorrowful. If he had been subdued and had said, "Lord Jesus, I cannot fulfill Your requirement to sell all I have and give to the poor," the Lord would have told him, "Since you cannot do it, simply let Me fulfill this requirement for you." The Lord wants to come into us, be our life, and fulfill every requirement for us.

In Philippians 2:12 Paul says, "So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not only as in my

presence, but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." We need to be subdued by Paul's word and admit that we simply cannot work out our own salvation. Then we shall appreciate Paul's word in the following verse: "For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." Although we cannot work out our own salvation, God is operating in us both the willing and the working. This enables us to work out our salvation according to God's operating within us.

After we have been subdued by the law and tell the Lord that we cannot fulfill His requirements, that we simply cannot be holy as God is or perfect as the Father is, the Lord will say, "Simply open and receive Me. Let Me come into you and fulfill these requirements for you. I want to be your holiness and your perfection." We cannot be holy, but we can be sanctified. Likewise, we cannot be perfect, but we can be perfected. God's desire is to come into us to be our life and our person. In this way, He becomes one with us, and we become one with Him. Then as He lives in us, we live Him. This is the basic principle of the divine revelation in the Bible.

It is true that both in the Old Testament and in the New, God commands His people to do many things. In addition to the Ten Commandments, there are numerous precepts, ordinances, and regulations. Chapters twenty-one through twenty-three of Exodus are filled with such ordinances, precepts, and regulations. All these are used by God to expose and subdue the children of Israel. His intention is to use the law to portray Himself and then to expose us and subdue us so that we may open to Him and allow Him to come into us to be our life and everything to us. Then He will live in us, and we shall live Him.

We have seen that with the giving of the law there are two sides, the "day" side and the "night" side. If we think that we are able to fulfill the requirements of the law and then try to do so, we shall find ourselves in the "night." We shall make the commandments of the law separate from

God, who is the fountain of life. As a result, the commandments will become killing letters to us. But if we let the law do its work to portray God, expose us, and subdue us, and if we tell the Lord that we are not able to fulfill His requirements, but that we put our full trust in Him, we shall be in the "day." Then the Law-giver, the fountain of life, will enter into us to be our life, live in us, and do everything for us. Eventually, the result will be even better and higher than the requirements of the law.

When the law was given, Moses was on the mountaintop being infused with God. The law could only give a picture of God, but the infusion Moses received on the mountaintop actually made him one with God. God is holy, and as a result of that infusion Moses became holy also. God is perfect, and through the divine infusion Moses also was perfected. When he came down from the mountain, the skin of his face shone. Moses' shining face portrayed much more than the law portrayed. Moses was not striving or working to fulfill the requirements of the law. He was infused with God and reflected Him. His glowing face was simply a reflection of what God is. Which do you prefer, the Ten Commandments or the glowing on the face of Moses? I definitely prefer the glowing. The commandments are words, but the glowing face of Moses is a living picture. God does not want a people who strive to keep the law; He wants a glowing people to express His glory.

The more we try in ourselves to keep the law, the more pitiful we shall become. I can testify of this from my own experience. When I was young, I often fought with my older brothers. After I was saved and began to read the Bible, I discovered the Lord's new commandment to love one another. I received that word and made up my mind that from that time onward I would love not only my brothers but everyone. However, the more I tried to love others, the less loving I became. I became more critical instead of more loving. Have you not had similar experiences? Are you able to fulfill the Lord's commandment to love others? Although in ourselves we cannot fulfill the

Lord's new commandment, this commandment can perform a wonderful work to describe the Lord and expose us. It proves to us that we are not able to love others. Furthermore, this commandment subdues us. If we love the Lord and are subdued by this word, we shall say, "Lord, I love You, but I cannot fulfill Your commandment to love others. I need You, Lord, and I am wholly dependent on You." This is what the Lord wants to hear from us. If we would speak to Him in this way, He would reply, "I have been waiting for you to say this. You cannot fulfill My requirement, but I can do it in you and for you. Open to Me and let Me come into you to live in you." Then the Lord Himself within us will fulfill the requirement to love others.

Moses on the mountaintop received the infusion from without, but we today can receive a marvelous infusion from within. If we are right with the Lord, we shall be continually under His infusion. The more we are infused, the more we glow. Because the Lord lives within us, moving, working, and operating in us, it is easy for us to be infused with Him and to glow with the divine element which has been infused into us. As we are infused with the Lord, we shall shine spontaneously. We shall not work or strive; we shall simply glow.

I. THE LAW AS THE WORD OF GOD BEING SPIRITUAL, HOLY, JUST, AND GOOD

In Romans 7:12 and 14 Paul uses four words to describe the law: spiritual, holy, just, and good. The word spiritual denotes the nature of the law. The law of God is the same in nature as God. God is Spirit (John 4:24); therefore, the law of God is spiritual. Moreover, just as God is holy in His expression, so the law also is holy. The word "just" denotes relationships. In relation to everything and everyone, God is just. The same is true of the law. Finally, as a whole, the law is good. As a portrait of God, the law is spiritual, holy, just, and good.

We have pointed out that the law has a threefold function: to testify of God, to expose us, and to subdue us. When Paul was Saul of Tarsus, he was exposed by the law. Paul says, "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am fleshly, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). Paul came to see that the law is holy, but he was common and defiled; that the law is just, but he was unjust; that the law is good, but he was evil. He was the opposite of all that is portrayed by the law. Because the law is so high, it not only exposes us, but also subdues us. We are exposed and subdued by the law as the word of God in that it is spiritual, holy, just, and good.

II. THE LAW INTENDED UNTO LIFE BUT NOT ABLE TO GIVE LIFE OF ITSELF

Romans 7:10 says, "And the commandment which was unto life, this was found to me to be unto death." This verse indicates that the law was intended to be unto life. The word "unto" here means resulting in. Although the law was intended to result in life, it is not able to give life of itself (Gal. 3:21). However, there is no contradiction between Romans 7:10, which says that the law was unto life, and Galatians 3:21, which indicates that the law cannot give life. In nature the law itself does not have life. Thus, it cannot give us life. Nevertheless, the intent of the law is to result in life. Paul's word in Romans 7:10 is based on Leviticus 18:5, a verse which says that those who do God's commandments will live in them. This indicates that the law was meant to result in life. If we keep it, we shall have life.

However, in Romans 7 Paul makes it very clear that although the law was intended to result in life, he could not fulfill the requirements of the law. Therefore, what was supposed to result in life actually resulted in death. Because we cannot keep the law, in our experience the law results in death. But it was given with the intention that it result in life. However, it cannot give life. To give life is one thing, and to result in life is another.

We need to be impressed that the law is spiritual, holy,

just, and good, that the law was given with the intention that it result in life, and that the law cannot give life by itself. What then should be our attitude toward the law? By no means should we despise it. Rather, we should be thankful to the law for exposing us, subduing us, and bringing us to the Lord as the source of life. We should say, "Law, I wish to thank you for exposing me and subduing me and bringing me to the One who can give me life. I wish to thank you for leading me to the Life-giver."

Instead of thanking the law for its function, many Christians today are still trying to keep it. They are at one extreme, using the law in an improper way. At the other extreme are those who actually despise the law. In presenting a full picture of both the "day" aspect and the "night" aspect of the law, Paul used some negative terms to describe the law. In Galatians he even regards the law as Hagar, a concubine, and says it produces slaves (Gal. 4:21-25). Those who read Paul's Epistles without a full understanding may come to despise the law and think that it is not good. This should not be our attitude. In Galatians, the very book where Paul regards the law as a concubine and speaks of slaves, Paul also uses positive terms to describe the law. For example, he speaks of the law as a child-conductor: "So the law has become our child-conductor unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). The law guards us, keeps us safe, and eventually conducts us to Christ. On the one hand, the law is a concubine; on the other hand, it is a guardian and a child-conductor unto Christ. Although the law brings us unto Christ that we may be justified by faith and have life, the law in itself is not able to give us life.

III. SEPARATED FROM THE LIVING GOD AS THE SOURCE OF LIFE, THE LAW BECOMING THE CONDEMNING AND KILLING ELEMENT TO A SINFUL PERSON

Whenever the law is separated from the living God as the source of life, it becomes the condemning and killing

element to sinful people (Rom. 7:13, 11). To separate the law from God Himself is to be in the "night" with respect to the law. If we rise up to attempt to keep the law of God, we shall automatically separate the law from God Himself. Then in our efforts to keep the law, we ourselves shall be separated from Him. As a result, the law will become letters which kill us. We shall be like the children of Israel at the bottom of Mount Sinai. Simply by saying they would do whatever the Lord required, they separated themselves from God, the source of life. Then the law became in their experience a killing element.

IV. THE CASE OF THE JUDAIZERS

The case of the Judaizers exemplifies the fact that the law becomes killing letters when it is separated from the living God. The Judaizers loved the law and were zealous to keep it. But their love and zeal were apart from God. In John 5:39 and 40 the Lord Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is these that testify concerning Me; and you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." The Judaizers thought that there was life in the black and white letters of the Scriptures. However, to come to the Scriptures without coming to the Lord Himself may even be superstitious.

Many Christians use the Bible in a superstitious way, thinking that the Scriptures can actually protect them. Feeling that something evil may happen during the night, some put a Bible underneath their pillow. This is superstitious. Others think that if a person places his hand on the Bible when taking an oath, it will not be possible for him to lie. This also is superstitious.

In the black and white letters of the Bible there is no life. We cannot receive life from the Word if we come to it without coming to the Lord. In order to receive life from the Word, we must contact the Lord as we read it. Life actually is not in the Bible itself; it is in Christ. For this reason, we

should never separate the Bible from the Lord Himself. The Bible is intended to be the tree of life. But if we separate it from the Lord as the fountain of life, it will become to us the tree of knowledge. Whether the Bible is the tree of life or the tree of knowledge to us depends on our condition and our standing. If we stand one with the Lord, the Bible will be life to us. But if we separate ourselves from the Lord and still attempt to use the Bible, it will become the tree of knowledge to us. Whenever we stand apart from the Lord in using the Word, the Bible becomes killing letters. Thus, if we stand with the Lord in reading the Word, we shall be in the "day." But if we stand apart from Him, we shall be in the "night."

V. THE NEED OF A NEW HEART, A NEW SPIRIT, AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD

God gave the law with the intention that it would result in life. However, the majority of the children of Israel did not come to God and receive Him as life. Instead, they tried in themselves to keep the law. As the history recorded in the Old Testament indicates, the result was a great failure. Eventually, in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel God came in to speak about establishing another covenant, a new covenant. In this covenant God would give the people a new heart and a new spirit. Furthermore, He would even give them His Spirit. The new heart, the new spirit, and the Spirit of God would enable them to keep all of God's commandments. This is the New Testament.

When many read Ezekiel 36:26 and 27, they have the impression that these verses teach exactly the same thing as the New Testament concerning a new heart, a new spirit, and the Spirit of God. We must admit that this is true. In these verses we see the reconstitution of our inner being. To have a new heart and a new spirit involves regeneration, reconstitution, and a rearrangement of our being. Furthermore, God's Spirit comes into us to join us with Him. Surely this is identical with Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 6:17: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." If we do not

separate ourselves from God but remain one with Him according to the new covenant, we shall automatically have the ability, strength, and power to carry out God's commandments.

When Moses was on the mountaintop experiencing a divine infusion, did he receive a new heart and a new spirit? Did he receive the Spirit of God? I have no doubt that Moses received a new heart and a new spirit and that God's Spirit was given to him. Does this mean, then, that Moses was regenerated? It is difficult to answer this question. The point here is that the principle is the same both in the Old Testament and in the New. After man's fall, God's intention is to change our heart and our spirit, and then to put Himself as the life-giving Spirit into us. Then we shall have a life with the ability to fulfill God's requirements, and we shall be able to live in a way that corresponds to what God is. I do not presume to say whether Moses was regenerated or not. But I do know from the Scriptures that God's economy is to work Himself into us, to reconstitute us by changing our heart and spirit, and to come into us as the life-giving Spirit that we may live Him.

VI. THE CASE OF THE GALATIANS

At this point, we need to look into the case of the Galatians. Their case differs from that of the Judaizers. In contrast to the Judaizers, the Galatians had received the Lord and had entered into the sphere of grace. However, they were distracted from Christ to the law. They took in the concept that since the law is good, they should try to keep it. But in striving to keep the law, they cut themselves off from Christ and fell from grace. This was the reason Paul said to them, "If you are circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" (Gal. 5:2). He went on to tell them, "You have been brought to nought from Christ, you who are justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (v. 4). By turning to the law, the Galatian believers had cut themselves off from the enjoyment of Christ and from the profit of being in Christ. The case of the Galatians shows that whenever

believers neglect their union with Christ and turn to the law and strive to keep it, they cut themselves off from Christ and from grace.

VII. FAITH NEEDED FOR AN ORGANIC UNION WITH THE LIVING GOD THAT WE MAY BE THE NEW CREATION

In dealing with the situation among the believers in Galatia, Paul found it necessary to point out that what was needed is faith for an organic union with the living God, the source of life, that we may be the new creation. Galatians 5:6 says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, but faith operating through love." It seems as if Paul was saying, "Don't go back to the law and separate yourselves from God. Instead, exercise your faith to maintain the organic union with Christ. If you preserve this union, you will enjoy life." Then in Galatians 6:15 Paul says, "For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." The new creation consists of human beings who have been constituted of the Triune God in order to live Him. To stay in the new creation is to stay in this constitution. If we exercise faith to enjoy the organic union with the living God that we may live the new creation, it will not be necessary for us to keep the law. Spontaneously we shall live a life that fulfills the requirements of the law and even surpasses them.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIXTY-FIVE

THE VEIL OVER THE GLORY OF THE MINISTRY OF CONDEMNATION AND DEATH

Scripture Reading: Exo. 34:29-35; 2 Cor. 3:7, 9a, 13-18

In this message we shall continue to consider the "night" side of the law. In 2 Corinthians 3:7 and 9 Paul used all the key words in the title of this message, "The Veil over the Glory of the Ministry of Condemnation and Death." The words glory and ministry are positive; however, the words veil, condemnation, and death are negative. In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul speaks first of the ministry of death (v. 7) and then of the ministry of condemnation (v. 9). These certainly are extraordinary expressions. Although these terms are in the Bible, not all Christians are familiar with them.

THE GLORY OF THE MINISTRY OF CONDEMNATION AND DEATH

According to Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 3, the ministry of Moses was a ministry of condemnation and death. Paul's ministry, however, was a ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit. I wonder if Moses would have been happy with the way Paul contrasted the ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit with the ministry of condemnation and death. In writing 2 Corinthians 3, Paul used "much boldness" (v. 12). He was bold to point out that his ministry was greater in glory than that of Moses. Paul says, "For if the ministry of condemnation came in glory, much rather the ministry of righteousness abounds in glory" (v 9). We know from Exodus 34:29-35 that the skin of Moses' face shone. Although Paul's face did not shine in this way,

he experienced an inward shining, a shining from within his spirit. With Moses and Paul there were two different kinds of shining: the outward shining upon the face and the inward shining from the spirit. Today all who believe in Christ may have the inward shining. But one day, at the time of the Lord's coming, we shall be transfigured and shall have the outward shining also. At that time, not only our face but also our whole body will shine.

Some systematic theologians do not appreciate the value of Moses' ministry. Even though Paul speaks of the ministry of Moses as a ministry of condemnation and death, he acknowledges that there was glory with this ministry. More than three thousand years ago, there was a man on earth whose face shone with the glory of God. This is a very significant matter, and we should never despise it. Along with Paul, we need to recognize that the ministry of condemnation and death was truly glorious. We should not dispute the fact that this glory was wonderful and excellent. It is possible to say in a rather careless way that we, the New Testament believers, have the inward glory, whereas Moses had merely the outward glory. But some Christians actually have a glory only in doctrine, not in their experience. They may claim to be New Testament believers with the inward glory, but where is this glory actually? Experientially speaking, they may have very little glory. Yes, Moses' glory was outward, but we should still appreciate it.

Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 3 may be regarded as an exposition of Exodus 34:29-35. In Exodus 34 we are simply told that the skin of Moses' face shone, not that glory was shining from the face of Moses. But in 2 Corinthians 3 Paul interprets Exodus 34 by saying that the shining on Moses' face was the glory of the ministry of condemnation and death. Apart from the interpretation set forth by Paul, we would not have the wisdom to speak of the shining face of Moses as the glory of the ministry. Furthermore, we would not have the boldness to say that the ministry of condemnation and death was glorious. But because Paul

had been enlightened of the Lord, he was bold to speak plainly of these things. The shining on Moses' face was the glory of a ministry which had been given by God and established by Him. Moses had a ministry, and that ministry was glorious.

THE VEIL OVER THE GLORY OF THE MINISTRY

At this point we need to ask why Moses' ministry of glory became a ministry of condemnation and death. In itself Moses' ministry was not a ministry of condemnation and death. It became such a ministry because the people were in darkness and because their hearts were hardened. The book of Exodus says at least thirteen times that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, or that Pharaoh hardened his heart. When the children of Israel were at the foot of the mountain of God, their hearts were the same as the heart of Pharaoh. This means that the hearts of the people had become hard.

The kind of person you are is determined by the kind of heart you have. If you have an evil heart, you are an evil person. But if you have a good heart, you are a good person. Likewise, if your heart if full of hate, you will be a hateful person. But if your heart is full of love, you will be a loving person. When they were at Mount Sinai to receive the law, the children of Israel had a hardened heart. As a result, the ministry of glory became for them a ministry of condemnation and death. It definitely was not God's intention to condemn the people or to bring them into death. But because the people were hard and blind in their heart, like Pharaoh in Egypt, the ministry of glory became a ministry of condemnation and even of death.

The principle is the same in reading the Bible. Do not think that it is impossible for the Bible to condemn you or kill you. If your heart is hard as you read the Bible, the Bible will become to you a book of condemnation and death. Do not hold the superstitious concept that people always receive blessing in reading the Bible. This simply is not

true. Whether the Bible is a ministry of life or of death, of righteousness or of condemnation, depends on our heart. If our heart is soft, the Bible will be a blessing. But if our heart is hard, the Bible will be a book of condemnation and death, even as the ministry of Moses became a ministry of condemnation and death to the children of Israel.

In the foregoing message we pointed out the aspect of the law as killing letters. In this message we are concerned with the matter of the veil over the glory of the ministry of condemnation and death. Concerning the "night" aspect of the law, the two main things are the killing and the veiling. The letters kill, and the veil covers. The law was given, but there was a veil over it. In like manner, in our experience there may also be a veil over the Bible.

When Moses came down from the mountain, he did not know that the skin of his face shone. It was the people who saw that "the skin of Moses' face shone." Eventually, Moses himself came to realize this. We are told that he later put a veil on his face. However, the strange thing is that Moses did not put this veil on until after he had finished speaking with the people (v. 33, lit.). Before he came down from the mountain to speak with the people, Moses did not have a veil on. He did not even know that his face shone. Only after he had spoken to the people did he put a veil on his face. Verse 34 says, "But when Moses went in before Jehovah to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out" (lit.). Then we read that when Moses spoke to the children of Israel, he "put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him" (v. 35). Thus, when Moses spoke with the people, he put on the veil. But when he spoke with God, he removed it.

Moses' face shone because of God's speaking with him (v. 29, lit.). The more God talked to Moses, the more his face shone. Moses did not wear a veil when he spoke to the Lord, but he did wear one when he spoke to the people. The people might have been displeased and even insulted by this. They might have said to Moses, "When you speak with God, you don't wear a veil. Why must you put on a veil

when you talk to us?" The answer to this question is that Moses covered his face with a veil because after speaking to the people, he realized that their hearts were hard. In Paul's interpretation and exposition of Exodus 34 in 2 Corinthians 3, we realize that the veil was simply the hardened heart of the children of Israel. This is the reason Paul says that when the heart turns to the Lord, the veil will be taken away (v. 16). This is also the reason Exodus 34 says the veil was on Moses' face, whereas 2 Corinthians 3:15 says that the veil is on the heart of the people. The veil was not actually the fabric used to cover Moses' face. It was the hardened heart of the people, a heart which had been turned away from the Lord.

When our heart is turned toward the Lord, there is no veil. But if our heart is turned away from Him, such a heart becomes a veil which keeps us from beholding the face of the Lord. Hence, the heart turned away from the Lord is the veil.

Moses put a veil on his face as a sign to the people. After talking with them, Moses realized that they were stiff-necked and that their hearts were hardened. They could not understand God's desire. This was the reason Moses put a veil on his face. Because the hearts of the children of Israel had become hardened, Moses' ministry of glory became a ministry of condemnation and death. However, if the hearts of the people had been soft and had been turned to the Lord, Moses' ministry would not have been a ministry of condemnation and death. But because the people were hard of heart, they were condemned and even killed by the ministry of Moses. This condemnation and death was passed to their descendants, including the Pharisees and the Judaizers. All were condemned and slain by Moses' ministry, even though it was a ministry of glory.

The principle is the same in the New Testament. We have pointed out that the ministry in the New Testament, a ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit, is more glorious than the ministry of Moses. But if our heart is hard and turned away from the Lord, in our experience even the

glorious ministry of the New Testament will become a ministry of condemnation and death to us.

According to John 12:48, the Lord Jesus told the religionists, "He who rejects Me and does not receive My words has one who judges him: the word which I spoke, that will judge him in the last day." This indicates that those who do not believe in Christ will be judged and condemned by His words. Those who perish in the future will be condemned not by the law, but by the gospel. Today the gospel is a word of righteousness, Spirit, and life. But those who harden their hearts will be condemned and sentenced to death by this very gospel. For them, the glorious ministry of the New Testament will become a ministry of condemnation and death.

THE NEED FOR A PROPER HEART

This principle applies to unbelievers and to believers as well. Paul tells us that one day we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Today every word in the New Testament is a word of blessing. But on the day we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, the words of the New Testament may become to us words of condemnation. This will be our situation if during our years as saved and regenerated people we harden our hearts and do not turn them to the Lord. Once again we see that the principle is the same both with the ministry of Moses in the Old Testament and the ministry in the New Testament. Whether the ministry is to us righteousness or condemnation, Spirit or death, depends on our heart.

We all need to be exhorted to have a proper heart whenever we listen to the word of the Lord. If our heart is right, we shall receive great blessing. But if our heart is hard, we shall not be blessed. If we are indifferent, we shall not be blessed through the ministry of God's word. Actually, indifference causes hardness of heart. If you are indifferent toward the Lord's speaking, eventually you will no longer care for His word. This indifference will become a veil between you and the Lord.

When Moses was speaking to the people, there probably were many who did not oppose him. They simply failed to receive his word with an open heart. They were indifferent to what Moses was saying. This attitude of indifference caused Moses to put a veil on his face as a sign that the people were not willing to receive the word of God. According to Exodus 34, when Moses, the servant of the Lord, spoke with the Lord, he took off the veil. Moses' heart was neither hard nor indifferent. Instead of being turned away from the Lord, it was absolutely for the Lord. This was the reason Moses did not wear a veil in speaking with God. Exodus 34 emphasizes the fact that when Moses spoke to the people, he put on the veil, but when he spoke with God, he took it off. It is a very serious matter for any servant of the Lord to be unveiled in speaking to the Lord, but veiled in speaking to the people. This would be a sign that the condition of those who hear God's word is not healthy.

I do not believe that Moses was happy when he found it necessary to put a veil on his face. But he certainly must have been happy when he could remove the veil in speaking with the Lord. At such times, he must have had a wonderful enjoyment of God. However, when he came out to speak with the people and had to put a veil on his face, his heart must have been heavy. On the one hand, he was burdened to speak to the people on behalf of the Lord; on the other hand, he could not speak with joy or happiness, but with heaviness.

This may also be the experience of faithful servants of the Lord today. When they speak to God's people, they sometimes may speak without joy. But when they go to the Lord to have fellowship with Him, they are happy. Although there is a veil when they speak to the people, there is no veil when they talk with the Lord. The veil does not exist on the side of the Lord's servants; it exists on the side of the people whose hearts are hard, indifferent, and turned away from the Lord.

We should not think that the law can be a ministry of condemnation and death and that the gospel of grace in the

New Testament cannot be such a ministry. To unbelievers and even to believers who are indifferent in heart, the gospel of grace may become a ministry of condemnation and death. This should cause us to be serious about the Lord's speaking. For God to speak to us is a very significant matter. How dreadful for our hearts to be indifferent when the Lord comes to us to have fellowship with us or to converse with us! Would you not be insulted if someone you were talking to did not care for what you were saying? We all would be deeply troubled by such an attitude. How much more serious it is for us to be indifferent toward God's speaking to us in His grace! The gracious God is the speaking God. Because He cares so much for us, He speaks to us. If we are indifferent toward His speaking, it is a sign that our heart has become hard. This will cause God to be unhappy; it will also make His servants unhappy. Before the Lord's servant came to speak with you, his face was shining. But after talking to you for a while, he became displeased because of your indifference. Immediately, you are veiled from seeing the glory of the New Testament ministry. This veil is a sign that there is some problem in your heart with the Lord. Your heart may be hard, cold, or indifferent. This is serious.

BEHOLDING THE GLORY OF THE LORD WITH AN UNVEILED FACE

In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul expounded Exodus 34 not for the sake of the children of Israel, but for our sake. In verse 18 he eventually speaks of an open face, an unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord. An open face is actually a heart that has been turned to the Lord. Verse 16 indicates that when the heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Whenever the veil is removed, the face will be open. From the context of 2 Corinthians 3, we see that the heart turned to the Lord causes us to have an unveiled face. To have an unveiled face means that there is no indifference in our heart toward the Lord or His word. As long as there is indifference in our heart, there will be a veil on our face.

But if our heart is turned to the Lord, the veil will be taken away. Then with an unveiled face we shall behold and reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord.

When you look at yourself in a mirror, the mirror reflects you. But if the mirror is covered by something, there will be a separation between you and the mirror. This would make it impossible for the mirror to reflect your image. But as soon as the covering is removed from the mirror, the mirror will reflect you once again. We need to be unveiled mirrors beholding the Lord and reflecting Him. If this is our experience, we shall truly be transformed into the same image from glory to glory.

To be transformed is to have the image of the Lord impressed into us and then reflected out from within us. Just as a mirror may be filled with a person's image and become the reflection of that image, so we need to be transformed from one degree of glory to another until we become the reflection of the Lord. According to Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 3:18, this comes from the Lord Spirit.

We have pointed out that both the ministry of Moses and the ministry in the New Testament can become in our experience ministries of death and condemnation. The crucial matter here is the veil. If we are covered by a veil, the result of both the Old Testament ministry and the New Testament ministry will be condemnation and death. For those whose hearts are hard and turned away from the Lord, even the gospel of grace will become such a ministry of condemnation and death. Whenever our heart is turned away from the Lord, our heart becomes a veil separating us from Him.

Regarding this, I am concerned not mainly for Christians in general, but particularly for us in the Lord's recovery. I am concerned for those who come to the meetings of the church, but who have a veil separating them from the Lord. Although they sit in the church meetings, they, like the children of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, are covered by a veil. What matters here is not the distance, but the covering. The children of Israel were not in

Egypt; they were at the foot of the mountain of God. Nevertheless, because they were veiled, they were separated from the Lord. We also may be close to the Lord and may attend at least some of the meetings. But the crucial question is, Where is our heart? If our heart is indifferent and turned away from the Lord, our indifferent heart will be a veil separating us from Him. Although we may be close to the Lord, our heart is indifferent and not turned to Him. Oh, may we all take this matter seriously before the Lord!

A SERIOUS WARNING

Seeing this light concerning the veil over the glory of the ministry of condemnation and death, I am deeply concerned first for myself, then for those in the Lord's recovery, and then for Christians everywhere. The Lord is still speaking, but what is the condition of our heart, and where is our heart? Is our heart turned toward the Lord or away from Him? Do we have a heart for the Lord, or is our heart cold and indifferent? Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the crucial factor is our heart.

We should not pay so much attention to objective, doctrinal teachings which say that the ministry of the law in the Old Testament was a ministry of condemnation, but the ministry in the New Testament is a ministry of grace. To be sure, we are living in the dispensation of grace. But it is still possible to be like the Pharisees and not receive grace. To many believers the Lord will say at His coming, "I never knew you; depart from Me, workers of lawlessness" (Matt. 7:23). We need to emphasize again and again the fact that the principle is the same in both the Old Testament and in the New. Whether God's speaking is life or death to us depends on our heart. It is an extremely serious matter to hear the word of God. God is gracious, and in His graciousness He comes to speak to us. But if we are impolite to Him and insult Him with our indifference, His speaking will immediately become condemnation and death to us. The same holds true in our reading of the Scripture. Whenever God speaks to us, we need to turn our heart to Him and

respond to Him in a proper way. Otherwise, even the New Testament ministry, the ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit, will become a ministry of condemnation and death. Then instead of enjoying the blessing, we shall suffer loss.

Such a warning is sounded throughout the New Testament, in the Gospels, in the Epistles, and in the book of Revelation. Toward the end of Revelation the Lord Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to render to each one according to his work" (Rev. 22:12). The reward we receive on that day has much to do with our attitude today. Whether the Lord's ministry brings justification or condemnation, life or death, depends on our heart. We all need to learn this very important lesson.

THE VEIL ON THE HEART OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Both the Old Testament and the New stress the importance of our heart. The Old Testament commands us to love the Lord our God with all our heart. In the book of Revelation we see that the decline of the church began with the loss of the first love for the Lord. This is related to the heart. As we have indicated, in 2 Corinthians 3 Paul says that the veil is not upon Moses' face, but upon the heart of the people. "But unto this day," Paul says, "whenever Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart" (v. 15). The veil on the face of Moses was actually a sign of the veil that was on the heart of the people.

In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul does say that this veil is done away in Christ. Nevertheless, it is still necessary for us to turn our hearts to the Lord. When the heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. On the one hand, the veil has been removed by the redemption of Christ. Yet, on the other hand, the veil is removed when we turn our hearts to the Lord. All genuine Christians are in Christ, and in Christ the veil has been taken away. But many of today's Christians still have a veil on their hearts. In principle, they are the same as the children of Israel, who had been redeemed, delivered out of Egypt, and brought to Mount

Sinai. Because the people had a problem in the heart, their heart became a veil separating them from the Lord. The same may be true of believers today. We have been saved, brought out of Egypt, the world, and we are now in Christ. Although the veil is done away in Christ, in our experience the veil may still exist because of problems in our heart.

Again and again in the Old Testament, the prophets spoke concerning the heart of the people, telling them that they had to deal with their heart or that their heart needed to be circumcised (Joel 2:13, Jer. 4:4). Eventually, through Ezekiel, the Lord promised to give the people a new heart (Ezek. 36:26). Quoting the word of Isaiah, the Lord Jesus said to the religious people, "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me" (Matt. 15:8). Even as they were worshipping God, their heart was far from Him.

This also is the situation today. Even Sunday morning, millions go into certain buildings to worship God. But what is the condition of their heart? What is the condition of your own heart when you come to the meetings of the church? Yes, we may come to today's mountain of God, but our heart may not be with the Lord. According to the seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3, we may have lost our first love, or we may be lukewarm. The loss of the first love and the condition of lukewarmness are both problems of the heart.

Paul says that when the Jewish people read the law, the veil remains on their heart. For this reason, they read the Old Testament, but they do not receive any light. Hence, not only are the heathen in darkness, but the Jews are in darkness also. They have the Bible, but because a veil is on their heart, they are not enlightened. The same is true of many Christians. Although they may read the Scriptures, they do not have light. Although Moses was under the Old Testament dispensation, he was under the glory. Today Christians are under the New Testament dispensation, but many of them are under a veil. In their experience they are not under the glory.

THE EXPERIENTIAL MEANING OF BEING UNDER THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

Do you know what it means experientially to be under the Old Testament? It is to receive God's word while in a condition of being veiled. From the standpoint of experience, virtually all Christians are still under the Old Testament. Yes, they receive the word of God, but they are veiled. To be under the New Testament is to receive God's word without any covering, without any veil. Then the word of God will shine not only upon the heart, but also from within the heart. In brief, to be veiled is to be in the Old Testament, but to be unveiled and under God's glory is to be in the New Testament. According to Paul's interpretation of Exodus 34 presented in 2 Corinthians 3, we are under the Old Testament as long as we have the veil covering us.

Although today's Jews live chronologically in the age of the New Testament, they are still in the Old Testament according to their spiritual condition. The principle is the same with many Christians. Just as the Jews are veiled, these Christians are veiled also. If we are honest, we shall admit that this may be our situation too. What determines whether we are in the Old Testament or in the New Testament is our heart. Although Moses was chronologically in the Old Testament age, he was in the New Testament according to his spiritual condition. The reason for this was that Moses' heart was wholly for the Lord. Whereas many of today's Christians are veiled and do not reflect God's glory, Moses could shine with the glory of God. Because he was not under the veil, he actually was not under the Old Testament.

Furthermore, Moses was on the mountain, above the cloud. The children of Israel, however, were under the cloud. This cloud is the equivalent of the veil Moses put on his face. Between God on the mountaintop and the children of Israel at the foot of the mountain, there was a cloud. The veil on Moses' face was a sign of this cloud and also of the cloudy relationship between the children of Israel and God.

They did not have a clear sky. But for Moses on the mountaintop, the sky was clear. In like manner, many Christians today are under the cloud; few are above the cloud enjoying a clear sky with the Lord. According to their spiritual condition, therefore, many Christians are actually under the Old Testament. Realizing this, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to help the believers leave the Old Testament stage and enter experientially into the New Testament stage. This is the reason Paul speaks of beholding and reflecting the Lord with an unveiled face. Many Christians today are under the cloud and under the veil. Very few are truly in the New Testament, with an unveiled face beholding and reflecting the Lord. But if we have an unveiled face to behold and reflect the Lord, we shall be under the New Testament in our spiritual experience.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIXTY-SIX

THE ORDINANCES OF THE LAW CONCERNING THE WORSHIP OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Exo. 20:22-26

The book of Genesis can be summarized by two phrases: God's creation and man's fall. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created…." Genesis concludes in the following way: "So Joseph…was put in a coffin in Egypt" (50:26). Thus, Genesis opens with a word about God's creation and concludes with a word about Joseph put in a coffin in Egypt. God's creation, of course, is very positive, but man's fall is extremely negative. Therefore, the summary of Genesis involves the positive matter of God's creation and the negative matter of man's fall.

We may say that the book of Exodus has one main point: God's redemption and salvation. Because man had fallen, God came in to redeem and save. Fallen man needs both God's redemption and His salvation. Exodus reveals the all-inclusive salvation of God, a salvation which includes God's redemption. According to the book of Exodus, God first redeemed His people and then saved them.

Christians may not realize that the entire book of Exodus concerns God's salvation. According to many, the last sixteen chapters of Exodus, chapters twenty-five through forty, are not related to God's salvation, but are concerned with the vision and the building of the tabernacle. However, the building of the tabernacle as God's dwelling place is also part of God's all-inclusive salvation. This means that the salvation of God revealed in the book of Exodus begins with redemption and continues through the building of God's habitation, the tabernacle. If we have been redeemed and experience God's salvation to a certain

extent but are not in God's building, God's dwelling place, then we have not yet participated in God's salvation in full. God's complete salvation includes the building up of His redeemed people to become His habitation on earth.

Among the millions of today's Christians, the genuinely redeemed and saved people, not many enjoy the experience of having become God's habitation. In the experience of some, the book of Exodus seems to have only twelve or fourteen chapters. They have experienced the redemption of the Passover lamb and perhaps have been delivered from Egypt, but they do not experience the building of God's dwelling place. Actually, many of today's Christians are still in Egypt, the world. Although they have experienced God's redemption, they have not crossed the Red Sea. This means that they have not been saved from the world and from enslavement to Pharaoh. Some Christians have crossed the Red Sea and have been saved from the world, but they have not progressed in their experience to the mount of God and they have not become God's tabernacle.

In Exodus, Mount Sinai is called the mount of God. Here God's redeemed people were brought into direct fellowship with Him. This is a great matter. It was not until twenty-five centuries after the creation of man that the children of Israel were brought into such fellowship with God. Prior to that time, there were no people on earth who had face-to-face fellowship with God. On the one hand, at Mount Sinai the people were brought into fellowship with God; on the other hand, God came down to speak with them. In Genesis 11 God came down not to have fellowship with the people, but to judge them. In Exodus God came down not to judge, but to have fellowship with His people. At Mount Sinai the children of Israel were feasting with God. This also is included in God's all-inclusive salvation revealed in Exodus.

At Mount Sinai God did not meet with His people merely for a day. Rather, the people remained with Him there for many months (Exo. 19:1; 40:2, 17; Num. 10:11-13).

God considered His redeemed people His "personal possession" (19:5, lit.), His precious treasure. Because His people were so precious to Him, He came down to visit them. According to the Old Testament, God's meeting with His people lasted more than a thousand years. It did not end until the glory of the Lord departed from the temple (Ezek. 10:18).

With this message we come to the ordinances of the law. The law in the Old Testament not only includes the Ten Commandments, but also includes many ordinances. These ordinances are found in the remaining chapters of Exodus, in the entire book of Leviticus, and in parts of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Many Christians think that the law includes only the Ten Commandments. This was my concept when I was young. However, I was bothered by the fact that in the Bible Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are all regarded as part of the law. Furthermore, according to Psalm 119, the law includes ordinances as well as commandments. This indicates that the law has two sections: the Ten Commandments and all the ordinances. Thus, it is a mistake to consider only the Ten Commandments to be the law. No, the law includes much more than just the Ten Commandments. If we see that the law includes the ordinances as well as the commandments, we shall then find it easy to understand Psalm 119.

The ordinances are a supplementary part of the law and add details to the Ten Commandments. It is correct to regard the Ten Commandments as the main section of the law. But this main section needs to be supplemented and spelled out in detail. In the second part of Exodus and in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy we have the supplement to the law and the details of the law. In this message, the first on the ordinances of the law, we shall consider the ordinances concerning the worship of God. In other messages we shall consider ordinances concerning the relationships between people.

In 20:22-26 God unveils to His redeemed people how they should worship Him. This had not been revealed

previously, not even to Abraham, one who was called the friend of God. Only after His people had been brought into face-to-face fellowship with Him at the mountain of God did God reveal the way for them to worship Him. If we get into the depths of these verses, we shall see that they give us the main points of how we should worship God. The revelation here is in keeping with that found not only in the rest of the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament. Here we have a revelation of the cross and of Christ. Furthermore, according to these verses, we see that both man's work and man's way are excluded. These verses even refer to idols of gold and silver.

Exodus 20:22 says, "And Jehovah said unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven" (lit.). Here we see that God spoke to His people from heaven. Even this verse is related to the worship of God, for here we have an indication that the God whom we worship is the living and the speaking God.

Verse 23 continues, "Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold." Here we have a supplement to the first two commandments and also details related to these commandments. In the first two of the commandments we are told not to have any gods other than God and also not to make idols. The phrase "with me" in verse 23 is significant. It indicates that the people were not to worship God and yet have another god with Him. This would be like a woman who had one husband, but also had another man with him. Just as a woman should have only one husband, so the children of Israel were to have only the Lord as their unique God.

Exodus 20:23 specifically mentions idols of gold and silver. Nothing is said here of idols made of wood or stone. From the book of Isaiah we know that God's people later did have idols of gold and silver (2:20; 30:22; 31:7). The first time they made an idol of gold was when Moses was on Mount Sinai with the Lord. While Moses was on the mountaintop fellowshipping with God, the people at the foot of

the mountain charged Aaron to make them a golden calf. Then they said of it, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exo. 32:4). By making a god of gold the people had another god with the true God. But God forbids His people to have another god with Him. In verse 23 it seems as if God is saying, "If you want to reject Me or forsake Me, you may do so. But don't have Me on the one hand and then make with Me gods of gold and silver on the other hand. That is fornication. You must take Me as your unique Husband. Do not have any other gods with Me."

Verse 24 is very important: "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I make my name to be remembered I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (lit.). Here we read of the altar, the sacrifices, the name of God being remembered, and God coming to visit His people and bless them. According to verses 24 and 25, an altar could be made either of earth or stone. However, the people were forbidden to build an altar of hewn stone. An altar could be erected only with materials created by God. The people were not to add their work to God's work. They could use earth or natural stone, but not hewn stone. Furthermore, we see from verse 26 that the people were not to "go up by steps" unto the Lord's altar, lest their nakedness be exposed.

Verse 24 mentions two of the five basic offerings: the burnt offering and the peace offering. There is no mention of the meal offering, the sin offering, or the trespass offering. The reason for this is that the concept here is not redemption; it is fellowship between God and His redeemed people.

Verse 24 also speaks of God's name being remembered. Whenever we meet to worship God, we must remember the name of the Lord. His name is the unique name we should remember in our gatherings for worship.

If we have the altar and the sacrifices, and if we

remember the Lord's name, we shall experience God's visitation and blessing. God Himself will come to us and bless us.

I. NO IDOLS

We have pointed out that in verse 23 the people were commanded not to make gods of silver or gold. This verse mentions only idols of gold and silver, not idols of other materials such as wood and stone. Therefore, this verse implies that we should not worship silver or gold. According to Acts 3, a lame man asked Peter and John for alms. Peter said to him, "Silver and gold I do not possess, but what I have, this I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!" (v. 6). Peter did not have silver and gold, but he had the name of Jesus Christ.

In the worship of God we should give no place to riches, no place to gold and silver. The Lord Jesus tells us that we cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24). We cannot at the same time serve God and gold and silver. In order to exist, we need money, but we must not allow money to occupy us. To be occupied with the desire for riches is to make idols of gold and silver. First Timothy 6:17 says, "Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment." Those who have gold and silver in this age should not hold on to the uncertainty of wealth. Instead, they should hold on to the living God.

It is easy for a Christian to say that he does not have any idols. However, it is not so easy for Christians to testify that they do not hold on to riches. It is not wrong to have wealth, but to hold on to wealth instead of holding on to the living God is to worship idols. If we would worship in a pure way, all idols must go, including the idolatry of laying hold on riches. From experience we know that if we hold on to riches, our worship to God will be nullified. As long as we still hold on to riches, we cannot offer God genuine and pure worship. Thus, the commandment not to make gods of

gold and silver implies that in our worship of God we should not give any place to riches.

The situation among many Christians today is degraded because of the place given to money and fund-raising. To a large extent, Christianity has become a religion characterized by the worship of the golden calf. It is common for those who make large donations to be singled out and given public honor. This is to make gods of gold and silver, and it is also the worship of the golden calf.

II. THROUGH THE ALTAR—THE CROSS

Hebrews 13:10 says, "We have an altar." The altar denotes the cross. The altar in the Old Testament was a shadow, the reality of which is the cross in the New Testament. Fallen man cannot worship God directly without an altar. The altar points to a process of death and resurrection. In such a process we have redemption and also the termination of all negative things. Thus, the word altar is rich in its implications. Related to the altar, we have death, burning, and resurrection. This involves redemption, the termination of negative things, and the resurrection of positive things. Apart from the altar, the cross, it is not possible for such a process to take place. Therefore, without an altar, fallen people have no way to worship God directly.

As we have seen, the altar was to be erected with material created by God, either earth or stone. This indicates that the cross has been prepared entirely by the work of God. The fact that hewn stone, material worked on by man, was not to be used in making the altar indicates that the cross was not prepared by man's work. God, not man, prepared the cross. If God had not worked to prepare the cross for us, there would not be anything we could do.

In these verses erecting an altar means receiving what God has prepared. God has prepared the cross for us to worship Him, and we should simply receive it, saying

"Amen" with thanksgiving to God for His work of preparation. We should say, "God, thank You for preparing the cross that I may worship You. There is no need for me to work. I simply receive the cross You have prepared."

The fact that the children of Israel could erect an altar either of earth or stone indicates that the cross is readily available. If God had commanded His people to build an altar only of stone, the children of Israel might have had difficulty finding the materials. But the earth was always available. Hence, an altar made of earth points to the availability of the cross.

Our receiving of the cross may be rather weak, like earth, or strong, like stone. In their receiving of the cross, many believers are weak. Others, however, are quite strong. How we receive the cross, in a strong way or in a weak way, depends on us. The principle here is similar to the use of animals of different sizes in the burnt offering. One person could offer an ox or a lamb, whereas another could offer doves. It was permissible to build an altar of earth or of stone, to receive the cross either in a strong way or in a weak way. In either case, the cross is still the cross, prepared by God in His work. We have no part in the preparation of the material. We simply receive what God has prepared.

In the receiving of the cross there is no place for man's work. A great heresy in Catholicism is that there is room for man's work to be added; man's working is given place in receiving the cross of Christ. But according to the Bible, the earth or the stones made by God were to be used to make an altar. If someone had regarded such an altar as too crude and wanted to hew the stones to make them more beautiful, that would have caused pollution. To add man's work to God's work of preparation is to bring in pollution.

Throughout the centuries of church history, many have tried to beautify God's work of preparation by man's work. Their attitude has been that God's work lacks beauty and needs man to add something to make it more beautiful.

Even today certain preachers do not like to speak simple words. To them, this is foolishness. Nevertheless, in 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified, to Jews an offense, and to the nations foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, God's power and God's wisdom." In Paul's preaching of the cross there was no beauty, but there was the power of God and the wisdom of God. However, in the sugar-coated sermons preached today there is beauty, but no power or wisdom. When man's beautifying work is added to God's work of preparation, the result is pollution. Oh, how much today's Christianity has polluted God's work! This pollution has come primarily through the work of man. Many Christians prefer hewn and polished stones to the natural stones created by God. Thus, they change the work of God and pollute it.

Furthermore, according to 20:26, the people were not to go up by steps unto the Lord's altar. They were not permitted to make steps for the altar. Steps refer to the man-made way. Every denomination has its own kind of steps. These steps cause man's nakedness to be exposed. The altar prepared by God is not elevated. On the contrary, it is close to the ground. This eliminates the need for steps and makes it possible for anyone to approach the altar. Praise the Lord that the cross is on our level, so available! There are no levels of man's attainments for his boasting and glorifying. Steps give place for man's attainment. Consider how many steps there are in a system with bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and a pope. But the cross of Christ has no steps; it is on our level. There is no place for human attainment or achievement, no place for man's way. We must reject every man-made way to the cross.

III. WITH THE SACRIFICES—CHRIST

We have pointed out that of the five major sacrifices, only two—the burnt offering and the peace offering—are mentioned here in Exodus 20. The burnt offering is for God's satisfaction, and the peace offering is for the people's

enjoyment with God mutually. To present a burnt offering means that we offer Christ to God for God's enjoyment and satisfaction. To present the peace offering means that we offer Christ to God for our enjoyment and satisfaction mutually with God. The proper worship of God must include the burnt offering and the peace offering, something of Christ offered to God for His enjoyment and satisfaction and something of Christ which we enjoy with God. This kind of worship cannot be found in Judaism, Islam, or degraded Christianity.

John 4:24 is a development of the word in 20:22-26. According to the Lord Jesus, we must worship the Father in spirit and in reality. This reality includes Christ as the burnt offering and the peace offering. Once again we see that, with the mention of the sacrifices, the basic principles of genuine and proper worship are revealed in 20:22-26.

IV. REMEMBERING THE NAME OF THE LORD

Exodus 20:22-26 refers to the worship of God before the children of Israel entered the good land. As they were on the way to the good land, they had to worship God according to the principles in these verses. But after they came into the land, they were to worship Him in a designated place, the place chosen by God for His habitation and the place where He would cause His name to dwell. But the principle remains the same. Whenever we meet to worship God, God's name, not any other name, must be remembered. However, with many Christians today, names such as Lutheran or Wesleyan are used in addition to the name of the Lord. The use of such names is an abomination to the Lord. On the one hand, in the proper worship of God there should not be any idols; on the other hand, there should not be any name other than the name of the Lord. When we come together to worship God, we must drop every other name and exalt the Lord's name (Deut. 12:11; Matt. 18:20). Only His name should be remembered in our worship of God.

V. GOD'S VISITING AND BLESSING

If we worship God in the proper way according to these verses, He will come to bless us. This means that if our worship is genuine, it will be an invitation to God to visit us and bless us. In order for God to do this, He must be the living and speaking God. A God who does not speak cannot bless. Remember, in verse 22 the Lord says that He spoke to the people from the heavens. Hence, He is the living and speaking God. Our worship must be of such a kind that it invites the living God to come to us and bless us. If in a certain meeting there is the proper worship of God, we must have the assurance that God has been invited to visit and bless those in that gathering. This is always the result of the proper worship of God. Praise God for His visitation and His blessing! This is proof that the God whom we worship is the living and speaking God.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIXTY-SEVEN

THE POLLUTION CAUSED BY MAN'S WORK AND THE NAKEDNESS EXPOSED THROUGH MAN'S WAY

Scripture Reading: Exo. 20:24-26; Phil. 3:2-3; 1 Cor. 1:18-25

In this message I am burdened to give a further word concerning the worship of God from 20:24-26. Worship is a very crucial matter in man's relationship with God. Throughout the thousands of years of human history, thoughtful people have considered the matter of the worship of God. When such people ponder the universe with the sun, moon, and stars, and the earth with all the plants, living creatures, and mankind, they realize that there must be a God, an almighty Being. Then they begin to wonder how this God is to be worshipped. Considerations such as these have given rise to different religions. The religions invented by man have their source in the considerations of thoughtful people. By studying nature man has discovered certain things. Furthermore, as a result of his observations and discoveries, he has made inferences. Religion is the result of a thoughtful study of nature with man's philosophical inferences.

According to the Bible, however, God does not allow man to devise his own way to worship Him. God does not give any ground to man's natural concept or thought. He does not permit fallen man to worship Him according to inferences drawn from the study of nature. God condemns man's natural inferences as related to worship. On the contrary, in the Bible God reveals how man is to worship Him.

In Genesis we do not have a clear revelation concerning the way to worship God. Exodus contains a much fuller

revelation of this. After God brought His chosen and redeemed people to His mountain, He came to have fellowship with them. We have pointed out that the decree of the law on the mountain was given in an atmosphere of courtship. This means that at Mount Sinai God was courting His people. After giving them the Ten Commandments, the governing principles of the entire law of God, God went on to issue a number of ordinances. Between the giving of the Ten Commandments and the decreeing of the ordinances, God spoke to the people concerning the way they should worship Him (20:22-26). In the short span of five verses, the main points related to the worship of God are covered. As we shall see, in 20:24-26 both man's work and man's way are utterly rejected by God.

When I was young, I regarded these verses in Exodus 20 as primitive and uncultured. It seemed to me that no skill or inventiveness was required to make an altar of earth or stone. Even a child can do this. Even the most primitive, uncultured, and uneducated people can build such an altar for the worship of God. I could not understand why God was willing to accept such a primitive altar. Man's way is not to build this kind of altar.

According to the history of civilization, man likes to build towers and skyscrapers. Those who live in New York, Paris, and Tokyo may boast respectively of the Empire State Building, the Eiffel Tower, and the Tokyo Tower. The thought of fallen man is to build up something high. The first occurrence of this was at Babel (Gen. 11), where the people sought to build not only a city, but also a tower of which they could boast. This indicates that tall buildings are constructed so that man is able to boast. The more cultured people are, the more tall buildings they build. But God's way is to have an altar without steps. Man's way is to build up something with as many steps as possible. As far as the worship of God is concerned, God gives no room for man's skill, ability, inventiveness, wisdom, labor, or power. On the contrary, the altar God requires must be something which, in the eyes of man, is primitive and uncultured.

Concerning the worship of God, the tendency of the natural man is to use his own power and wisdom. People use their wisdom to make plans and use their power, including whatever skills and abilities they possess, to carry out their plans. But according to 20:24-26, God does not recognize man's wisdom and power. Even though Moses had been educated in Egypt and was familiar with all the aspects of Egyptian culture, being "trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22), God did not allow him to use his wisdom to build an altar for the worship of God. Moses was not the only one among God's people familiar with Egyptian culture. All those who came out of Egypt with him had been born there and knew the Egyptian way of doing things. All of them had received a strong infusion of Egyptian culture. In 20:24-26 God gave them a clear word concerning worship, telling them to make an altar either of earth or of stones. They were not to use hewn stones, and they were not to build an altar so high that it required steps in order to reach it. God seemed to be saying to the people, "I do not care for human work or invention, and I do not care for man's way or concept. For the altar, you must use the materials created by Me. I care only for what I have created, not for man's work or man's way."

In theology a distinction is often made between natural religion and revealed religion. Many regard Christianity as a revealed religion, a religion which has its source in God's revelation, and regard all other religions as natural. However, it is very sad that even in Christianity today there is a great emphasis on man's work and man's way. In any Christian group it is easy to detect man's work and way, but it is difficult to find something which is purely according to God's revelation. Consider the situation in Catholicism and Protestantism. How much there is of man's invention, skill, ability, plans, ways, power, and wisdom! Even the sermons given are filled with such things. Where can you hear a sermon that is pure and limited to the revelation of the Bible? Most sermons have many elements of culture, often mixed with the truth of the

Word. A few years ago some of us heard a message given by the pope. This message was a mixture of biblical truth and human thought. Man's work, way, power, and wisdom have thoroughly saturated today's Christianity. As a result, it has become a mixture of God's revelation and natural religion.

If we read carefully 20:24-26, we shall see that God's revelation leaves no room for man's work or way. God does not give even the slightest amount of space to man's power, ability, skill, strength, wisdom, or plans. In like manner, in the Lord's recovery we do not give place to man's work or way. I have the assurance that if someone would conduct research on the recovery, he would find that we do not give ground to man's work or man's way. Some may wonder if the practice of pray-reading the Word is a way invented by man. However, pray-reading is not an invention of man; on the contrary, it is according to the Bible.

In today's Christianity it is easy to see man's work and way. This can be observed even without studying things closely. Among most Christians, man's work and man's way are very evident. Some who have been strongly influenced by man's work and way consider the meetings of the churches in the Lord's recovery to be primitive and uncultured. Their attitude toward us is that we are ignorant and have no knowledge or education. When a certain person visited me a few years ago, he asked how many among us have doctoral degrees. He boasted that among those associated with him there were more than one hundred with Ph.D. degrees. This is one illustration of the fact that in today's Christianity much attention is given to human power, ability, skill, and wisdom. The consequence of this is that God is actually set aside. People may claim to worship God, but in their worship the work and way of man have actually caused them to put God aside. When the Roman Empire embraced Christianity, many elements of culture were brought into the so-called Catholic Church. Constantine the Great opened the way for many pagan things to be brought in. This caused Christianity to

become a melting pot of different elements of man's culture. Furthermore, the Catholic Church introduced many such things into their worship. For this reason, in the worship practiced in Catholicism there are many human inventions. Catholicism is filled with human ways, works, power, and wisdom. However, it is abominable in the eyes of God to bring anything man-made into the worship of God.

At this point I would like to say a word especially to the young people. We do not know how long it will be before the Lord comes back. The recovery may need to continue for many years. When some of you begin to take the lead in the churches, you may think that the Lord's recovery was brought to this country in a very primitive way. Then you may want to use "tools" to hew stones to beautify the recovery and to lift it up. Automatically "steps" will be necessary to reach what has been built up in this way. In fact, in the past proposals were made to lift up the recovery in certain ways. Some even tried to build a pyramid related to the service groups. But by the Lord's mercy and grace, this pyramid was demolished. Every step leading to the top of the pyramid was torn down. Instead, we simply gave everyone the opportunity to serve if they so desired.

Young people, do not bring man's work or man's way into the worship of God. To bring in anything of a human source is to insult the very God whom we worship. If we study the history of religion and the present situation of Christianity, we shall see an abundance of man's work and way. But I repeat, God does not allow these things to have any place in His worship.

I. THE POLLUTION CAUSED BY MAN'S WORK

A. Fallen Man Being Sin in the Eyes of God

Exodus 20:25 says, "And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." Here we see that God does not allow man's work to have a part in the worship of God. The entire fallen man is sin—pollution—in

the eyes of God. Whether we are cultured or uncultured, educated or uneducated, we are sin before God. For this reason, no work of man is acceptable to God. Man's work can do nothing other than pollute the worship of God, for man himself is pollution. Do not add anything of man to God's worship. To add man's work to the cross is abominable to God.

A prerequisite to the worship of God is having an altar. The Bible clearly shows that if there is no altar, there can be no worship of God. Fallen man cannot worship God directly. In order to worship Him, we must pass through the altar. Many Christians realize that at the altar redemption is provided by means of sacrifices. Although this is true, the altar does more than this. The altar also terminates us. Everyone who worships God is terminated at the altar. Because we are a totality of sin, pollution, we should say when we come to worship God, "Lord, cleanse me with the precious blood and cover me with Yourself. Lord, in myself I dare not do anything. I come to worship You through Your cross. Wash me with Your redeeming blood and cover me with Yourself as my righteousness. Because I am a fallen person, I dare not do anything, plan anything, or bring anything of my own." We all need to have such a realization whenever we worship God.

Although I have the boldness to preach the word of the Bible, I do not have the boldness to make proposals concerning matters in the church life. Whenever brothers come to me with a proposal, I encourage them to pray to learn whether or not this is truly of the Lord. Anything that is of us is pollution. Nothing of fallen man, therefore, should have a part in the worship of God.

B. No Work of Man Acceptable to God

Because fallen man is pollution in the eyes of God, no work of man is acceptable to Him. Cain was condemned because he brought his own work into the worship of God. He thought that he could bring something to God of what he had acquired through his labor. But Cain did not realize

that he was totally pollution in God's sight and that whatever came from him was also pollution. Therefore, what he offered to God was not acceptable to Him. On the contrary, it was altogether abominable. Anything that originates with us, anything which comes from our labor, is pollution and is not acceptable to God.

C. The Addition of Man's Work to the Cross Abominable to God

It is an abomination to add man's work to the cross. The cross is wholly the work of God, and no human work is allowed to be added to it.

In 1 Corinthians 1:18 Paul says that "the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Why is the cross foolishness to those who perish? It is foolishness because it is something crude, primitive, and altogether without culture, beauty, or human craftsmanship. In Paul's time the cross was an instrument used to execute criminals. Nevertheless, God used such a means to save us. Hence, this was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks.

In 1 Corinthians 1:23 Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified." It is significant that here Paul does not say that he preached Christ resurrected, ascended, glorified, or enthroned. In the past I sometimes wondered why Paul did not tell the Greeks that he preached Christ ascended and exalted. Instead, Paul preached Christ crucified; he preached One who was put to death on the cross, executed as if He were a criminal. To Jews the preaching of Christ crucified is a stumbling block, and to Greeks it is foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, this Christ is "God's power and God's wisdom" (v. 24). Praise the Lord that we have been called to receive a crucified Christ! The decision to receive such a Christ did not originate with us; we have received Him because God has called us. God has predestined us to receive this Christ.

However, after receiving Christ crucified, many Christians try to beautify Him. Some have also attempted to make the church beautiful in the eyes of man. However, for us to beautify anything in the Lord's recovery is to insult God. Instead of beautifying things, we should remain in what man would consider a primitive, uncultured situation. Instead of hewn stones, we should have an altar of stones or earth created by God. Such an altar is acceptable to Him.

Because we do not add man's work to the cross, but only have an altar that is primitive, the Lord's speaking is with us. We are not more capable or more intelligent than others. Nevertheless, because we do not give place to the work of man, the Lord continues to open His Word to us and to send forth His light.

II. NAKEDNESS EXPOSED THROUGH MAN'S WAY

A. Nakedness Denoting the Shame of Fallen Man

Exodus 20:26 says, "Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon." This indicates that man's nakedness is exposed through man's way. According to Genesis 3:7, nakedness denotes the shame of fallen man. Before the fall, man was not clothed. However, even though he was unclothed, there was no nakedness because there was no shame. But immediately after the fall, Adam and Eve discovered that they were naked, and they tried to make a covering for themselves. Hence, in the Bible nakedness denotes the shame of fallen man.

B. God Preparing Christ as Our Righteousness to Cover Our Nakedness

Genesis 3:21 says, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." These coats of skins typify Christ as our righteousness to cover our shame (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). Now we are under Christ as our full covering. According to Galatians 3:27, we have put on Christ; we have clothed

ourselves with Him. This means that Christ is compared to a garment, a robe, we put on. Praise the Lord that we can boast before God that we are fully covered with Christ! God's salvation in Christ covers us with Christ and leaves no part naked.

Although God's salvation clothes us with Christ, man's way uncovers the nakedness of his fallen nature. Climbing up steps to an altar exposes one's nakedness. This indicates that man's wisdom in building an altar with steps for the worship of God causes man's nakedness to be exposed. The principle here is that man's wisdom in building steps puts Christ aside. From our experience we know that whenever we exercise our own wisdom to plan something related to the worship of God, we actually put Christ aside. Furthermore, should the elders in a church exercise their wisdom to make plans or to build something elevated with steps, Christ will be set aside. Instead of exercising our wisdom to make our plans, we should fully trust in Christ. Then we shall remain under Christ as our covering.

During my years in the Lord's ministry, I have learned that whenever I become aware of a certain need, I should bow down before the Lord and pray, "Lord, cover me. I don't know what to say to the brothers. Lord, You be everything in this situation." To pray in this way is to keep ourselves under Christ as our covering. But if we presume to advise others and tell them what to do, we shall expose our nakedness, the shame of our fallen nature.

If we remain under Christ as our covering when various situations come up or when problems arise and do not exercise our wisdom to deal with them, we shall be covered, and no one will see the shame of our fallen nature. But the more we exercise our wisdom to make plans and build "steps," the more we shall be exposed. This exposure is shameful and condemned by God. God never allows those who worship Him to be naked. The priests in the Old Testament had to wear long robes so that God could see only the garment which covered them. The long robe worn by the priest typifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our long robe.

As we worship God, we must remain in Christ and under Him as our covering. This requires that we refrain from bringing in our own wisdom or plans to build a high altar with steps.

Man's way not only uncovers the nakedness of his fallen nature; it also promotes achievement by natural ability and creates different levels of attainment. In Catholicism there is a hierarchical system with many "steps," many levels of human attainment. To be sure, man's way promotes his own achievement by natural ability and creates different levels of attainment. But just as adding man's work to the cross is abominable to God, so man's way in the worship of God is also abominable to Him.

III. THE ALTAR—THE CROSS—BEING THE TERMINATION OF FALLEN MAN WITH ALL HIS WORKS AND WAYS

Whenever we come to worship God in a proper way, we must go to the altar. The altar will terminate us with all our works and ways. As fallen people, we must pass through the altar, the cross, if we are to worship God. As we have pointed out, the cross not only provides man with Christ's redemption; it also terminates fallen man with his ability and wisdom. Fallen man cannot please God with his ability to work and his wisdom to plan. Therefore, we must identify ourselves with the sacrifice on the altar and be terminated. In the Old Testament one who offered a sacrifice placed his hand upon it when it was slain. This indicates that the one who offered the sacrifice identified himself with the sacrifice. When the sacrifice was terminated, the one who offered it was terminated in the sacrifice. Therefore, in the worship of God we must be identified with Christ as our sacrifice on the cross and be terminated.

IV. THE VIRTUE OF CHRIST AS THE BURNT OFFERING AND THE PEACE OFFERING IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD

Exodus 20:24 says, "An altar of earth thou shalt make

unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen." This verse mentions the burnt offering and the peace offering. After we have been terminated by identifying ourselves with the sacrifice on the altar, we shall worship God in the virtue of Christ as the burnt offering and the peace offering. On the one hand, a person terminated by the cross worships God in the virtue of Christ as the burnt offering for God's satisfaction. On the other hand, such a person worships God in the virtue of Christ as the peace offering for a mutual satisfaction with God and with his fellow-worshippers. This is the worship God desires, the worship He has ordained, the worship that is acceptable to Him. Therefore, let us learn not to bring our work and our way, our power and our wisdom, our ability and our plans, into the worship of God. Instead, we must reject all these things. A true worshipper of God is one who is terminated on the cross with his power and wisdom and who worships God in the virtue of Christ.

In 20:22-26 we see that the worship God desires is worship through the cross and with Christ, through the altar and with the sacrifices. The altar, typifying the cross, terminates all those who would worship God, and the sacrifices, typifying Christ, satisfy God and give us mutual satisfaction with God and other worshippers. In this we see the vital essence of the worship which is acceptable to God. We must worship God through the cross which terminates us and with Christ who brings God and all the worshippers into a mutual satisfaction.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIXTY-EIGHT

THE FIRST ORDINANCE OF THE LAW CONCERNING MAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

Scripture Reading: Exo. 21:1-6; Phil. 2:7-8; Isa. 50:4-5; Psa. 40:6-8; Matt. 20:28

In chapters twenty-one through twenty-three of Exodus many ordinances are covered. In this message we shall consider the first of the ordinances concerning man's relationship with others (21:1-6).

In the Old Testament an ordinance either adds details to the Ten Commandments or supplements them. Nearly all the ordinances in Exodus 21 through 23 are concerned with man. But, as we have pointed out, in 20:22-26 there is an ordinance concerning the worship of God. This is a special ordinance, an extraordinary ordinance, for it is concerned not with man's relationship with others, but with man's relationship with God. There is no doubt that 20:22-26 is a supplement to the second and third commandments and also adds details to these commandments. The second and third commandments do not tell us how to worship God. But in 20:22-26 we see that we must worship God through an altar and with the sacrifices. The altar typifies the cross, and the sacrifices typify Christ. Hence, we must worship God through the cross and with Christ.

The sequence of the ordinances concerning man's relationship with man is unusual in that the first ordinance concerns the relationship between a master and his slave. If we had written this part of the Bible, we probably would have put some other ordinance first, perhaps an ordinance concerning children and parents. We may have followed Paul's sequence in Ephesians and Colossians and spoken of wives, husbands, children, and parents before slaves and

masters. It is indeed strange and very significant that of all the ordinances in these three chapters the first mentioned is that related to slavery. It is important to know the reason for this.

THE SPIRIT OF THE FIRST ORDINANCE

One of the best ways to understand the Bible is to endeavor to touch the spirit of the particular portion of the Word under consideration. What, we may ask, is the spirit of this ordinance in 21:1-6? It is correct to say that the spirit of this ordinance is love and also obedience. However, something else is involved, something which is a prerequisite of both love and obedience.

How can we love and be obedient? Help in answering this question is found in Philippians 2:7 and 8. According to Paul's word here, the Lord Jesus "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." First the Lord Jesus emptied Himself and then He humbled Himself. In Philippians 2 Christ is presented to us as our pattern. As a pattern to the believers, He is a model of a proper human life. This pattern is not of one who occupies a high position in society; on the contrary, it is the pattern of one who is a slave. Even though Christ was equal with God and had the highest rank in the universe, He became a person on the lowest level of society. The very One who was equal with God not only became a man, but became a slave. In this He emptied Himself and humbled Himself. Those who would follow this pattern must also empty themselves and humble themselves.

Keeping the ordinances of the law has much to do with taking the form of a slave. There is not one nation where all the people are willing to keep the law. Instead, many try to escape the law and even hire attorneys to help them do this. Because people are not willing to keep laws, when God gave the Ten Commandments, He spoke of the people loving Him

and said that He would show mercy to those who love Him (20:6). This indicates that we cannot keep God's commandments unless we love God. In like manner, there is a prerequisite to keeping all the detailed ordinances of the law—the willingness to be a slave. The only one who can fulfill all the ordinances of the law is one who is willing to be a slave. A slave does not stand on his own rights. He only knows to serve and to sacrifice, not to care for his own interests. A slave must always be concerned for others. This slave spirit is the spirit of the ordinances in Exodus 21 through 23. Those who intend to keep the ordinances described in these chapters must first become slaves.

This principle also applies to our living as Christians today. Galatians 5:13 says that we were called to freedom, but should serve one another as slaves through love. If we would be a good husband or wife or a good parent, we must be a slave. This means that a father must be a slave in relation to his children. Only then can he be a good father.

To be a slave is to have the spirit of sacrifice. A slave is one who does not stand on his own rights; instead, he is always willing to serve others and sacrifice himself for them. If everyone in the United States had such a spirit, life in this country would be heaven on earth. There would be no need for attorneys, for no one would be fighting for his rights. The reason people fight with one another is that everyone cares for his own interests and rights. How different things would be if all men became slaves sacrificing and serving instead of fighting for their own interests!

Do you sense the spirit underlying the ordinances in these chapters? The spirit that pervades all these ordinances is the spirit of service and of sacrifice. If the Israelites did not have this kind of spirit, there would be no way for them to keep the ordinances. However, they could keep the ordinances if they were willing to empty themselves, humble themselves, lower themselves, sacrifice their rights, and serve others. Then they would live for others and not for themselves.

Both the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul emphasized

the fact that the keeping of the law is a matter of love. When the Lord was asked which commandment was the greatest, He replied, "You shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart, and from your whole soul, and from your whole mind, and from your whole strength" (Mark 12:30). In Romans 13:8 and 10 Paul says, "He who loves another has fulfilled the law," for "love is the fulfillment of the law." In Galatians 5:14 Paul declares, "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." How can we love others if we maintain our rank and fight for our rights and interests? To be like this shows that we love only ourselves. Then instead of keeping the ordinances of the law, we shall break them all. In order to keep the ordinances, we must empty ourselves, humble ourselves, take the lowest position, and regard ourselves as nothing. We must be willing to sacrifice our position, rights, and interests. This is to be a slave, a person who knows nothing except to serve others and to sacrifice himself for them.

If we discern the spirit behind all the ordinances in Exodus 21 through 23, we shall understand why at the very beginning of these chapters there is an emphasis on slavery. God's ordinances certainly are altogether different from man's laws. In human law there is no place for humility and love. But the prerequisite of fulfilling the divine ordinances is emptying ourselves, humbling ourselves, not claiming anything for ourselves, and sacrificing ourselves to serve others.

A TYPE OF CHRIST

Many Bible teachers have pointed out that the slave in 21:1-6 is a type of the Lord Jesus. I agree. The slave in these verses does typify Christ. The Lord Jesus lived on earth as a slave. Thus, as the standard of the highest human living, the Lord in His living fulfilled the requirement of the first ordinance of the law concerning our relationship with others.

With an Open Ear

According to Exodus 21, a slave who loved his master and wanted to remain in his service was brought to the doorpost, and his ear was bored through with an awl (vv. 5-6). This indicates that a slave's ear was to be opened to hear the voice of his master. Two portions in the Old Testament which speak prophetically of Christ as a slave mention the Lord's ear. In Psalm 40:6 we have the Lord's word to God: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened." Here we see that what God desires is not sacrifice or offering, but ears which are open to Him. God opened the ears of the Lord Jesus so that He could do God's will. Speaking of Christ, Isaiah 50:4 and 5 say, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear...." As a slave of God, the Lord Jesus was given the tongue not of a teacher, but of a learned one. He also said that God opened His ears that He might hear as a learned one and listen to God's word. This reveals that if we are not learned ones, we cannot speak for God. Before we can speak for Him, we must first be taught by Him.

Obedient unto Death

In John 14:31 the Lord Jesus said, "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father commanded Me, so I do." Because the Lord Jesus loved God the Father, He kept the Father's word not only as a Son, but especially as a slave. He listened to God and did God's will by keeping His word. It was the will of God that the Lord Jesus die on the cross to redeem God's chosen people. The Father gave this commandment to the Lord, and out of love for the Father the Lord obeyed Him as a slave and went to the cross. Thus, His death on the cross was an act of obedience. Paul says that Christ became "obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross"

(Phil. 2:8). Out of obedience to God, Christ died in a shameful manner. He died the death of a criminal, of a malefactor, executed by crucifixion according to the way of the Romans. Only a slave would be willing to die in this way.

Taking Christ as Our Pattern

The Bible reveals that as believers in Christ, we are not only God's creatures, but also God's sons. In the old creation we are creatures of God; in the new creation we have become sons of God. However, if we maintain our rank as creatures and sons, we shall not be able to keep God's word. To keep His word, we need to empty ourselves and humble ourselves, laying aside the rank both of a creature and of a son. Then we shall be slaves with God as our Master. According to the type in Exodus 21, Christ is the slave, and God is the Master. If we would take Christ as our pattern, we must learn to be slaves, those who sacrifice everything for others.

The Apostle Paul followed the Lord Jesus to be a slave. He opens the book of Romans with these words: "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus." In Titus 1:1 he refers to himself as "a slave of God." As a slave of Christ and of God, Paul was willing to empty himself, humble himself, and sacrifice his rank, rights, and privileges. There is no question that in this matter he walked in the steps of the Lord Jesus. The Lord was a slave of God, and Paul also was such a slave by the serving and sacrificing life of Christ.

I would again emphasize that the reason the ordinance concerning slaves comes first is that if we do not have the spirit of a slave, we cannot keep the other ordinances to have a proper human life before God. For example, 23:4 says that if an Israelite saw his enemy's ox going astray, he was to return it to him. Furthermore, if an Israelite saw an ass belonging to someone who hated him lying under his burden, he was to render help (23:5). If the Israelite had the spirit, the attitude, of a slave, he would be willing to help in this way. He would say to himself, "I am a slave

serving God my Master. I love my Master, and I love His people. Even though this Israelite hates me and is an enemy to me, he is nonetheless one of God's people. I must fulfill the duty of a slave and take care of his cattle." However, if the Israelite did not have the spirit of a slave, he might rejoice to see harm done to cattle belonging to his enemy. He may regard this as God's way to judge his enemy and punish him. Such an attitude would be far from that of a slave.

If we would keep the divine ordinances, we must be slaves. God's law requires this. Those who are not willing to be slaves cannot keep God's law. As One who Himself became a slave, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples, at the very time they were striving to be first, to take the position of a slave. He said to them, "Whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave; even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:27-28).

LOVE AS THE BASIS FOR SERVICE

According to 21:2, a Hebrew slave was to be set free after serving his master six years. If he obtained a wife and children during his years as a slave, he was to leave them as the property of his master and "go out by himself" (v. 4). However, the slave might "plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free" (v. 5). Here we see that continuing as a slave is not a legal requirement; it is a matter of love. Because the slave loved his master, his wife, and his children, he did not want to go out free. Instead, he would serve his master forever. Love is the basis of his continued service.

It is often said that love blinds people. In a very real sense, if we would love others, we should be blind toward them. Concerning ourselves, however, we must be a sacrifice. Love requires sacrifice. Without sacrifice, there can be no love. The Lord Jesus loved us by being a sacrifice for us. Ephesians 5:2 says, "Walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice

to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Christ gave Himself for us, dying a malefactor's death on the cross. This proves that love demands sacrifice.

If a brother is not willing to sacrifice himself, he cannot love his wife. Likewise, parents must be willing to sacrifice for their children if they are to love their children. There is no love without sacrifice.

According to 21:5, it was possible that a slave might not want to be free. Out of love for his master, wife, and children, he might prefer to remain under bondage as a slave. This is not a matter of legal requirement; it is motivated by voluntary love.

The Lord Jesus loves God, the church, and all His people. God is His Master, the church is His wife, and all His people are His children. The New Testament reveals this threefold love of the Lord Jesus for the Father, the church, and the saints. According to John 14:31, the Lord loves the Father; according to Ephesians 5:25, Christ loves the church; and according to Galatians 2:20 and Ephesians 5:2, Christ loves all the believers, all the saints. Motivated by such a love, He was willing to be a slave. Love is the motive and the prerequisite of being a slave.

A SLAVE'S POSITION

Exodus 21:6 speaks of the slave being brought to the door or to the doorpost. In ancient times slaves were to stand by the doorpost waiting for the master's orders. Instead of doing anything on their own, they were to act only according to the word of the master. Today our position as slaves of Christ should also be at the doorpost. Furthermore, in 21:6 we are told that the master bored his slave's ear through with an awl. This indicates that the slave's ear was opened to listen to the master.

Many Christians are serving God, but they do not stand by the doorpost, and their ear has not been bored through with an awl. They act on their own, not in accord with what they hear from the Master. They do many things according to their own concepts, desires, and intentions.

SLAVES OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH LIFE

As those who believe in Christ, we all must be His slaves. We should say, "O Lord, I love You. Even if I have the freedom to go out, I do not want to leave. I love You, I love Your church, and I love Your children." On the one hand, we may testify of how enjoyable and glorious the church life is. On the other hand, in the church life we all must become slaves. The New Testament as well as the Old indicates that God's people need the spirit of a slave.

The elders in the churches need to realize that if they are not willing to be slaves, they cannot be proper elders. Every elder must be a slave. This was the reason the Lord Jesus taught His disciples not to seek to be above others, but instead to place themselves lower than others and be their slaves. In the church life there is no rank. We are all brothers, and we all must serve as slaves.

In the past we have given hundreds of messages on life, the Spirit, Christ, and the church. However, if we would apply these messages, we must be slaves. Those who are not willing to have the spirit of a slave cannot enter into all these messages in a practical way. In the past certain ones testified that they loved the church and were willing to consecrate themselves to the church. However, eventually these very ones left the church life, and some even became opposers of the church. Deep within them they had the ambition for position. Because this ambition could not be fulfilled in the church life, they left the church. Only those who are willing to be slaves can remain permanently in the church life. No matter how I may be treated by the saints, I have no choice but to remain in the church life. The church is the home of my Father and of all His children. I am simply one of His slaves, loving Him, loving the church, and loving His children. After giving so many messages on life, the Spirit, Christ, and the church, I am glad to give this message on slavery. This word is for us all.

LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

If we have the spirit of a slave and the love of a slave, it

will be easy for us to obey. Love is always followed by obedience. This can be illustrated by the relationship between parents and their children. In a very real sense, good parents must sometimes obey their children. Often parents obey their children more quickly than the children obey the parents. The point here is that love produces obedience. Only a slave can obey. A good parent is one who has the love and obedience of a slave. Deep within, a mother who loves her children is willing to be a slave to them and do anything for them. Why do parents sometimes obey their children? They obey out of love. Love is the prerequisite of obedience.

My burden in this message has been to emphasize three matters: the spirit of a slave, the love of a slave, and the obedience of a slave. If we have a slave spirit, a slave love, and a slave obedience, we shall be able to keep the commandments. At first, this word may sound strange. But if you consider it honestly, you will see that it is true in our practical experience. Only a person with the spirit, love, and obedience of a slave can keep God's ordinances. In the New Testament economy, as well as in the Old Testament, there is the need of such a spirit, love, and obedience.

Now we can see why God puts the ordinance concerning slaves first and why the slave here is a type of Christ, the true slave. As those who believe in Christ, belong to Him, and have His life of sacrifice, we also must be slaves loving God, the church, and God's people. With such a love as our motivation, we need to be slaves sacrificing and serving.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SIXTY-NINE

SUNDRY ORDINANCES OF THE LAW

Scripture Reading: Exo. 22:28-31; 23:14-19

The Bible is a very sweet book. We have a sweet taste when we read many portions of the Word. Psalm 119:103 declares, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." However, when we read Exodus 21:7—23:19, we may not sense any sweetness. Did this portion of Exodus taste sweet to you when you read it last? If we get into the depths of these chapters and touch the spirit in which they were written, we shall realize that this part of the Word also is very sweet.

The Bible was not only inspired by the Spirit; it was also written with a particular spirit. This is especially true of the laws and ordinances in the Old Testament. Even with respect to the secular law of a country, people speak of the spirit of the law. How much more is there a certain spirit in the law and ordinances decreed by God! If we touch the depths of 21:7—23:19, we shall have a sweet taste. However, although it is easy to touch the body of the Word outwardly, it is often rather difficult to touch the spirit of the Bible inwardly. To read only the letters in black and white is to touch the body of the Word. We must exercise to go deeper and touch the spirit of the Word.

The Bible as a whole was revealed by God according to His economy. Nevertheless, especially in the Old Testament, the divine revelation is given according to the situation of the people. For example, when I read the book of Exodus as a young man, I was troubled by the fact that God in His law did not abolish slavery. I also wondered why slaves did not have rights equal to the free. I asked why the law given by God

and all the ordinances decreed by God still allowed such inequalities to exist. We are told that if an ox killed a slave, the owner had to pay a smaller amount than if the ox killed a free man (21:28-32). This indicates that a slave did not have the same rights as a free man. Some may even doubt that these ordinances were revealed by God. They may regard them simply as Moses' own ideas. However, 21:1 clearly says, "Now these are the ordinances which thou shalt set before them" (lit.). All the ordinances in chapters twenty-one through twenty-three were written by Moses according to God's dictation. Thus, they were not devised according to Moses' concept. For this reason, we cannot dismiss them by saying that they are nothing more than an ancient way of thinking. But since these ordinances were dictated by God, we may ask why something like slavery was allowed to exist. Questions like this remind us that it is not easy to understand the Bible. In order to know the Word, we need to know God's heart and also God's economy, purpose, and plan.

The laws and ordinances of God in the Bible are written in a way that is very different from the way man-made laws are written. Often men try to write something classical when they compose a law. An attorney may even try to produce a classical writing on a particular case. However, chapters twenty-one through twenty-three of Exodus were not composed in a classical way.

As we read these chapters, it may seem to us that the ordinances are arranged in a rather unusual order. For example, 21:15 says that he who smites his father or mother shall be put to death. Then verse 16 says that he who steals a person shall be put to death. But then verse 17 speaks about one cursing his father or mother and being put to death for this offense. Why are verses 15 and 17 not put together? Why does verse 16 come between them? If we had composed this chapter, we probably would have put verses 15 and 17 together, followed by verse 16. But God inserted a verse having nothing to do with parents in between verses which speak respectively of smiting one's parents and of cursing

one's parents. To be sure, the arrangement here serves a definite divine purpose.

We believe that every word of the Bible is God-breathed. If we would appreciate Exodus 21 through 23 adequately, we must touch the depth of these chapters to sense the spirit in which they were written. As we shall see, the spirit here is wonderful. No man-made laws of any nation or society have been written with the spirit found here. How sweet is the spirit in which God's ordinances were composed!

We have seen that the first six verses of chapter twenty-one, the first of the many ordinances concerning man's relationship with others, are related to slavery. The composition of these verses is not classical. Furthermore, according to the human concept, these verses are not altogether logical in their arrangement. But the spirit that pervades them is very sweet. We have pointed out that when given the opportunity to be free, a slave could say, "I love my master, my wife, and my children. I do not want to go out free." What a sweet spirit! In His Word God does not care for a classical style of writing. Instead, He cares for sweetness of spirit.

In 21:1-6 we can see the spirit of a slave, the love of a slave, the obedience of a slave, and also the life of a slave. How sweet is this ordinance concerning slavery! I do not believe that we could sense any sweetness in any man-made law we might read. However, if we consider carefully all the ordinances in chapters twenty-one through twenty-three, we shall realize that every ordinance is sweet. For example, 23:4 says, "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again." Instead of wanting to return an animal belonging to an enemy, we may be tempted to praise the Lord for exercising His judgment on our enemy and for vindicating us. But according to this ordinance, an Israelite was to return a lost ox or ass to his enemy. Furthermore, according to 23:5, if an Israelite saw a heavily laden donkey belonging to a person who hated him, the Israelite was to stop what he was doing and relieve the animal of its burden. He could

not excuse himself by saying that he was too busy. He had to lay aside his own burden to release from its burden an ass belonging to a person who hated him.

The New Testament teaches us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). But this commandment is not as sweet in spirit as the ordinances in 23:4 and 5. According to these ordinances, on the one hand an Israelite had to return an ox or ass belonging to his enemy; on the other hand, he had to work with the very one who hated him to release that one's donkey from its heavy burden. In these matters an Israelite had to face his enemy personally. I know of brothers who have given financial help to those who hated them, but they did not visit those persons. However, according to the ordinances here, an Israelite had to personally return the lost animal to his enemy. The more we consider these ordinances, the more we realize the sweetness of the spirit in which they were written. Who would ever think that the laws of any nation would be composed in such a spirit? God's laws were not written according to man's wisdom. On the contrary, they were dictated by God in His wisdom.

As we have indicated, the ordinances in chapters twenty-one through twenty-three, as well as the ordinance concerning worship at the end of chapter twenty, all provide details to the Ten Commandments. Certain details are added to each of the commandments. We have already pointed out that the ordinance concerning the worship of God in chapter twenty adds details to the second and third commandments. Furthermore, some of the ordinances are a supplement to the commandments. Let us now consider the sundry ordinances of the law in 21:7—23:19.

I. CONCERNING MAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

A. Details to the Ten Commandments

1. To the Sixth

In 21:12-14, 18-32 we have details related to the commandment forbidding murder. As we read these verses, we

should observe the principle of noting the sweet spirit in which they were written. Verse 12 says, "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death." However, according to verse 13, if a man kills another accidentally, he may flee to a place of refuge: "And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee." This provision is for one who killed another by mistake, without having any intention of killing him. Verse 13 even indicates that the slain one was delivered to the other person by God. The person was killed because of God's hand, not because a fellow Israelite intended to slay him. Therefore, God would not blame one who killed another accidentally. Rather, we know from Numbers 35 that there were cities of refuge at strategically located places in the land of Canaan to which a person could flee. In the provision made for refuge in verse 13, we surely see the sweetness of the divine law.

Verse 14 goes on to say, "But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die." This means that if an Israelite slew a person by guile, he could not find safety even if he ran to the altar and laid hold of the horns of the altar. Such a person was to be taken away from God's altar and put to death.

The ordinances in these chapters all have a spiritual significance. For instance, the city of refuge typifies Christ. In His humanity Christ became a city of refuge for us. We may flee into Him as our refuge because, in God's sight, the things we have done may be regarded as mistakes. Therefore, we have the right to flee into Christ as our city of refuge.

2. To the Fifth

In 21:15 and 17 we have details related to the fifth commandment, the commandment to honor father and mother. Verse 15 says, "He that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death." Verse 17 continues, "And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to

death." We may not have smitten our parents or cursed them; however, some may have cursed their parents inwardly, within their hearts.

3. To the Eighth

In 22:1-6 there are many details related to the eighth commandment, the commandment forbidding stealing. All these details are sweet. These verses also reveal that although God is great, He cares very much for details.

4. To the Tenth

The details to the tenth commandment, the commandment which forbids coveting, in 22:7-15 indicate that coveting is a matter of greed. It is not easy to be pure concerning valuables belonging to another which are committed to our care for a period of time. I know of a case of a person who was entrusted with the care of a diamond. He exchanged the real diamond for a synthetic diamond, kept the real diamond for himself, and gave the synthetic diamond to the owner of the real diamond. The motive for this unlawful exchange was greed. Out of greed children may switch textbooks with another at school or switch pieces of cake at home. They desire a newer book or a larger piece of cake and make the exchange without the other person knowing it. This is not only coveting; it is also stealing. Theft is motivated by greed. If there were no coveting, there would not be any stealing. In these verses stealing and coveting are mentioned together, for it is difficult to separate them. However, even in the ordinances related to theft and covetousness the spirit and taste are sweet.

5. To the Seventh

In 22:16-17, 19 we have details related to the seventh commandment, which forbids adultery.

6. To the Ninth

In 23:1-3, 6-8, we find details related to the ninth commandment, the commandment dealing with false

witness. Without these details, this commandment may not be adequately clear to us. Exodus 23:1 clearly says, "Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness."

7. To the Fourth

We may think that the ordinances in 23:12 and 13 are concerned with man's relationship with God instead of man's relationship with others. No doubt, the fourth commandment, concerning keeping the Sabbath, is related to God. But the details concerning this commandment in 23:12 and 13 are related to man. Verse 12 says, "Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed." Here we see that keeping the Sabbath day not only involves our relationship with God, but involves our relationship with others. An Israelite was to observe the Sabbath so that the son of his handmaid and the strangers might rest and be refreshed. Hence, the keeping of the Sabbath is related to the Lord and to slaves and strangers as well. Furthermore, according to this verse, God even cares that the ox and the ass have rest. Again we see the sweetness of God's ordinances! God even takes care of donkeys and oxen! Therefore, keeping the Sabbath is related both to man and beast. God cares that man and beast may rest and be refreshed.

B. Supplements to the Law

1. Concerning a Maidservant

In chapters twenty-one through twenty-three we also have supplements to the law. In 21:7-11 there is a supplementary portion concerning maidservants.

2. Concerning Stealing a Man

Exodus 21:16 says, "He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." We have pointed out that this ordinance is inserted between two verses which speak respectively of smiting

one's parents and cursing them. What is the reason for this insertion? In ancient times the purpose of kidnapping was selling into slavery. It may be that those who would steal people for the purpose of selling them were also those who did not honor their own parents. This means that someone who kidnaps a person is also one who does not honor his parents. Smiting parents, cursing parents, and stealing a person were all crimes worthy of death. The deeds differ, but the consequences are the same.

Those who smite their parents or curse them and those who kidnap people lack human affection. Why would someone smite his parents or curse them? Simply because he has no human affection for them. Likewise, a person who steals another is devoid of human affection. This is especially proved when we consider the fact that in ancient times it was mainly children who were kidnapped. Anyone who does such a thing is a person without human affection. This may be the reason that the ordinance concerning kidnapping is inserted between two ordinances related to honoring parents.

3. Concerning Damage Caused to Cattle and by Cattle

In 21:33-36 there are ordinances concerning damage caused to cattle and by cattle. For example, there is an ordinance related to an ox falling into an open pit and also about an ox that hurts another ox.

4. Concerning Strangers, Widows, Orphans, and the Poor

Exodus 22:21 says, "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." In verses 22 through 24 there is an ordinance concerning widows and orphans. Verse 22 says, "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child." According to 22:25-27, an Israelite was not to be a usurer with respect to the poor. Verse 25 says, "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as a

usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury." All these ordinances are filled with sweetness. The spirit of God's law is tender and touching, full of care for strangers, widows, orphans, and the poor. Exodus 23:9 says concerning strangers, "Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." If I had been a stranger among the children of Israel, I would have been deeply touched by such an ordinance. I may have wept out of the sense of sweetness and tenderness pervading God's law. A stranger may have said, "Even though I am far from my native land and am a stranger among these people, there is even an ordinance which cares for me. How sweet!" The ordinances concerning widows, orphans, and the poor are also deeply touching.

5. Concerning Helping the Enemy

As we have pointed out, in 23:4 and 5 there are ordinances concerning helping one's enemy. This is an especially good example of the sweetness of God's law.

6. Concerning the Keeping of the Sabbatical Year for the Good of the Poor

Exodus 23:10 and 11 say, "And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard." Here we read that there was to be a sabbatical year for the sake of the poor. In the seventh year, the children of Israel were not to work the land. They were not to plow, sow, or reap. Nevertheless, the land would still bear fruit. The produce, however, had to be for the poor. No doubt, the poor among God's people must have been deeply touched by this ordinance, perhaps touched to the point of weeping over the tenderness and sweetness of God's law.

The ordinance concerning a sabbatical year for the land

was a test to many Israelites. First, it was a test to those who ordinarily worked the land. Furthermore, it was a test to one's neighbors. Perhaps if one allowed his land to rest, his neighbor would take of the produce of the land. In his greed, the neighbor may not allow the produce to go to those who are truly poor.

In the book of Ruth we see that, according to the ordinance of the law, the poor were allowed to gather the gleanings. God commanded His people to leave the gleanings in the field at harvest time for the benefit of the poor. These gleanings are the same in principle as the crumbs under the table in Matthew 15 and the produce of the seventh year in Exodus 23. Both the crumbs and produce of the seventh year typify Christ for poor sinners.

II. CONCERNING MAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

A. Details to the Ten Commandments

According to the first and second commandments, man must not have other gods and must not serve images. In 22:18 and 20 and 23:13 details are added to these commandments. According to 22:18, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." There was to be no practice of witchcraft for contact with demons. Verse 20 continues, "He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto Jehovah only, he shall be utterly destroyed" (lit.). Sacrifices to idols were strictly forbidden. Furthermore, according to 23:13, there was not even to be the mention of the names of other gods: "And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth."

B. Supplements to the Law

1. Concerning Submission to God and to His Authority

The first supplement to the law concerning man's relationship with God is that man must submit to God and to His authority. God's people must submit to His deputy

authority, the rulers of the people. Exodus 22:28 says, "Thou shalt not revile God, nor curse the ruler of thy people" (lit.).

2. Concerning Offerings to God

According to 22:29 and 30, all the firstfruits and all the firstborn were the Lord's: "Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep."

Exodus 23:18 says, "Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning." Blood here signifies redemption. No blood was to be offered to God with leavened bread. This indicates that as redeemed ones, we should be unleavened. We should not mix Christ's redemption with leaven, with anything sinful.

Furthermore, the fat of the sacrifice was not to remain until morning. This indicates that we should not try to preserve today's spiritual enjoyment. It cannot be kept until the next day.

In 23:19 we read this commandment: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." This ordinance shows that God is tender and kind. To seethe a kid in its mother's milk is cruel. God's law forbids this. This indicates that as the Law-giver God is tender, kind, and loving.

3. Concerning Being Holy Men before God

Exodus 22:31 says, "Ye shall be holy men unto me." A holy man is one who is like God. God is holy, and we as His people should also be holy.

4. Concerning Keeping Feasts unto God

In 23:14-17 there are ordinances concerning keeping feasts unto God. The best and highest relationship man can have with God is to feast unto God and with God.

III. A SUMMARY

Now we may give a summary of the sundry ordinances of the law. These ordinances require a man to preserve human life, honor parents, keep marriage pure, to be just, fair, honest, faithful, trustworthy and kind, to care for the needy, not to be greedy for gain, but to be willing to give, and to be a holy man unto God, submitting to Him and His authority and serving Him through the offerings that he may feast with Him regularly.

The ordinances in these chapters require us to preserve human life. Human life is a precious treasure in the sight of God. We should not damage humanity in any way. God would not even allow an ox to go unpunished if it destroyed someone's life. The human life was created for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. For this reason, nothing is more valuable and precious to God than human life. Therefore, God requires that we preserve human life as much as possible and in every way.

The divine ordinances also require that we honor our parents, for parents represent God as the source of human life. Honoring our parents signifies honoring the source of human life. This is the reason the fifth commandment, concerning honoring of parents, is grouped with the first four commandments, which are related to God.

Furthermore, because marriage is for the continuation of human life and its propagation, marriage must be kept pure. Preserving human life, honoring parents, and maintaining the purity of marriage are all according to God's plan.

The ordinances in these chapters imply the human virtues of justice, fairness, honesty, faithfulness, trustworthiness, kindness, and care for the needy. They also indicate that instead of greed, we should have the willingness to give.

If we preserve human life, honor parents, keep marriage pure, and have the human virtues implied in the ordinances, we shall be holy men submitting to God and to His deputy authority and serving Him through the offerings,

which typify Christ. The ultimate issue will be that we feast with God regularly.

Exodus 23:14-17 speaks of three annual feasts: the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of harvest, and the feast of ingathering. The feast of unleavened bread was the continuation of the feast of Passover. Elsewhere the feasts of harvest and ingathering are called the feasts of Pentecost and tabernacles.

In order to feast with God, God's people must be without leaven, and they also must sow in order to have a harvest. As a result of sowing and reaping, we shall have a harvest. If we keep the ordinances and have the human virtues, thereby becoming holy men submitting to God and serving Him with Christ, we shall enjoy Christ with God and in God's presence. This is to feast with God by enjoying Christ. Christ is our feast of unleavened bread, harvest, and ingathering. Therefore, the typology of the ordinances in these chapters consummates with the full enjoyment of Christ with God.

As those who believe in Christ, our daily life should be without leaven. In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul tells us clearly to keep the feast without leaven, but to keep it with Christ as unleavened bread to be our life and our daily living. Then we shall be able to grow something of Christ and reap Christ that we may enjoy Christ with God.

The most significant aspect of the ordinances in these three chapters of Exodus is that in them Christ is typified by implication. By keeping the ordinances we become those who are holy unto God and enjoy Christ. Therefore, the ultimate significance of the ordinances is that we may enjoy Christ with God, that we may feast on Christ with God and in the presence of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVENTY

THE IMPLICATIONS, INDICATIONS, AND SIGNIFICANCES OF THE ORDINANCES OF THE LAW

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 20:24-26; 21:2, 13-14; 22:21-23, 25-27, 28

Because the Bible is the divine revelation, we should not read it in a superficial way. We need to get into the depths of the Word in order to mine its riches. Many precious things are found beneath the surface of the Word. Because such vast riches are found beneath the surface, it is not sufficient merely to know the Bible in black and white letters. We must go deep into the Word and discover the precious things under the surface.

I come from a country which produces the highest quality crystal. One day a friend showed me a large, unsightly stone ball. He told me that hidden within this stone ball was a beautiful crystal. Then he cut into the ball and revealed the crystal concealed within it. We may compare the Bible to this ball of stone which contains precious things. In every chapter of Scripture there can be found things of great value. In particular, many "diamonds" are hidden beneath the surface of chapters twenty-one through twenty-three of Exodus. My burden in this message and in the message following is to mine these "diamonds" and present them to the Lord's people.

The title of this message uses three important words: implications, indications, and significances. These words point to three aspects of the riches found in the depths of Exodus 21 through 23. In certain verses we find implications;

in others, indications; and in still others, significances. If we would mine the riches in these chapters, we need to consider the implications, indications, and significances of the ordinances of the law presented here.

I. THE DECREE OF THE LAW WITH ALL ITS ORDINANCES INDICATING MAN'S FALL AND MAN'S LIVING IN THE FALL

In the decree of the law with its ordinances there is a clear indication that man is fallen and is living in the fall. The expression "fall" or "living in the fall" cannot be found. However, words like pollution, nakedness, slavery, murder, stealing, coveting, and witch strongly point both to man's fall and to his living in the fall. The ordinances related to these matters describe the fallen condition of man. If man had not fallen, or if man were not living in a fallen condition, there would be no need for God to give such ordinances. If we pay attention to words like pollution, murder, lying, and idols, we may be enlightened to see that man's living in the fall is indicated. In this way we get into the depths of the Bible.

The law with its ordinances was not given to people who were innocent and pure. On the contrary, the law was given to fallen mankind, to people living in a fallen condition. Because of man's fall and because of man's living in the fall, there was the need for God to come in to decree the law with its ordinances.

In these chapters we have a picture of man's fallen condition. How very dark is the scene! Here we have pollution, nakedness, witchcraft, idolatry, adultery, fornication, and covetousness. Behind all these negative things is Satan. Although Satan is not mentioned in these chapters by name, his existence behind the negative things is implied. Demons also are mentioned by implication. Witchcraft involves contact with demons. If there were no demons, there would be no witchcraft. Hence, the one word "witch" implies the existence of witchcraft and demons.

The ordinances in these chapters also imply the fact of

indwelling sin. In Romans 7 Paul speaks of covetousness, of coveting of every kind. Although Paul hated the sin of covetousness, he had no way to overcome it. The more he loathed it, the more active it became. Paul could even say, "So now it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me" (Rom. 7:17). The very mention of coveting implies indwelling sin. Furthermore, this indwelling sin is actually Satan with his lusts. We admit that there is no explicit reference to Satan in Exodus 21 through 23. However, in the light of the full revelation of the holy Scriptures, we can trace the word coveting to indwelling sin, and indwelling sin to Satan. Therefore, hidden beneath coveting is indwelling sin, and concealed under indwelling sin is Satan, the Devil, with his lusts.

These chapters not only indicate the fact of indwelling sin, but also speak of outward sins. Murder, lying, and stealing certainly are sins. Therefore, as in the book of Romans, we have both indwelling sin implied and outward sins clearly indicated. In Romans Paul deals with sins in chapters one through three, and he deals with indwelling sin in chapters five through eight. On the negative side, the ordinances in Exodus 21 through 23 point to Satan, demons, indwelling sin, and outward sins.

The picture of the items on the negative side in these chapters is dark and bleak. But the picture of the items on the positive side is bright and glorious. First, these chapters reveal that God is kind and gracious, full of care for us. As the most gracious One, He cares for widows, orphans, and strangers. By preparing cities of refuge into which a person may flee, He even provides for the mistake of one who kills another unintentionally. Furthermore, God also provides that one who sells himself into slavery may be released after six years. All these ordinances show us that God is kind, gracious, and loving and that He cares for mankind.

In these chapters we also have a picture of Christ. Christ is typified by the sacrifices (20:24-26). With Christ, through Christ, and by Christ, we can worship God. Christ

is not for angels; He is for fallen man. The ordinance concerning worshipping God through the altar and with the sacrifices was intended for fallen man, not for angels. Christ is also signified by the city of refuge and by the Sabbath. Furthermore, even the sabbatical year is a picture of Christ.

The cross of Christ is signified by the altar in chapter twenty. This altar is not for angels; it is for fallen man. Angels are spectators, those who observe Christ and the cross, but we are partakers, those who enjoy Christ and the cross.

In these chapters we have, on the negative side, Satan, demons, indwelling sin, and outward sins. On the positive side, we have God, Christ, and the cross. We also have redemption, forgiveness, justification, and reconciliation implied. To be sure, no man-made law has such implications, indications, and significances. As students of the Word of God, we need to consider all the implications, indications, and significances found in these chapters.

II. THE ALTAR AND THE SACRIFICES FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD INDICATING THAT FALLEN MAN NEEDS TO BE REDEEMED, TERMINATED, AND REPLACED BY CHRIST WITH HIS CROSS

According to 20:24-26, the altar and sacrifices for the worship of God indicate that in order to worship God fallen man must be redeemed, terminated, and replaced. God requires man to worship Him through an altar and with a sacrifice. Furthermore, the one who worships God must lay his hand on the head of the sacrifice and thereby identify himself with it. The sacrifice is then slain and placed on the altar. All this indicates that fallen man needs to be redeemed, terminated, and replaced by Christ with His cross. We are redeemed and terminated by the altar, but we are replaced by Christ.

Before we can appreciate these matters, we need to realize that we are sinners and that our case is hopeless. If we

were not sinners, there would have been no need for God to redeem us. If we were not hopeless, God would not require that we be terminated and replaced. The fact that we need redemption, termination, and replacement indicates that we are sinful and hopeless.

It is wrong for a brother to expect his wife to improve. Instead, recognizing that her case is hopeless, he should see that her need is not improvement but termination. We are all a hopeless case, and the case of our husband or wife is likewise hopeless. Thus, we should accept the fact that we need to be terminated. But after we are terminated by the cross, we enter into resurrection, and in resurrection we can be replaced by Christ. A brother needs to see that his wife cannot improve, but she can be replaced by Christ. Likewise, a sister should not pray that the Lord will improve her husband. This kind of prayer is merely ethical and religious. Rather, she should pray, "Lord, I thank You that You are able to replace my husband with Yourself. I ask You, Lord, to replace him."

The altar and the sacrifices imply redemption, termination, and replacement. Furthermore, as we have indicated, the need for redemption indicates that we are sinful, and the need for termination indicates that we are a hopeless case. Whenever I read of the altar and the sacrifices, I see Christ, my replacement, with His cross. Now I can say, "Praise the Lord that even though I am sinful, I have been redeemed, and even though I am hopeless, I can be terminated and replaced. Lord, I thank You that the process of being replaced by You is still going on, and one day it will be completed. The time is coming when I shall be fully replaced by You."

III. THE FREEDOM OF A SLAVE IN A SABBATICAL YEAR SIGNIFYING THAT FALLEN MAN UNDER BONDAGE MAY BE FREED BY GOD'S REST

The freeing of a slave in a sabbatical year signifies that fallen man under bondage may be freed by God's rest (21:2), which is Christ. We know from Genesis that, after

laboring for six days, God rested on the seventh day. Hence, the Sabbath denotes God's rest. In the seventh year, a sabbatical year, a slave would be set free. What good news this was for a slave! A slave knew that after serving six years, in the seventh he would be set free. By God's rest, he would be liberated.

In the ordinance dealing with the freeing of slaves in a sabbatical year, we see the good news of the gospel. Fallen people are slaves. In Romans 7:14 Paul describes himself as "sold under sin." Every sinner has sold himself under slavery. Do not think that you have been enslaved by others. No, you have enslaved yourself. You have sold yourself into slavery. But the gospel declares the good news that when Christ, God's rest, appears to us, our slavery is ended, and we are set free. This indeed is good news!

IV. THE MURDER AND THE LYING WITHIN MAN SIGNIFYING THAT THE DEVIL, THE SOURCE OF MURDER AND THE FATHER OF LIES, IS WORKING IN MAN

The murder and the lies within man signify that the Devil, the source of murder and the father of lies, is working in fallen man (21:14; 23:1-2; John 8:44; 1 John 3:12). We know from John 8:44 that the Devil is the source of murder and the father of lies. This indicates that if we have murdering and lying within us, the Devil is working within us. Because the Devil works in fallen man, it is very easy for people to lie. Children lie automatically, without being taught to lie. We may lie not only in words, but also by gestures and facial expressions. Lying is a sign of the Devil living and working in us. Fallen men are liars because, according to the natural life, we are all children of the Devil.

Actually Exodus 23:1 does not use the word lie. Instead, this verse speaks of raising a false report. Spreading rumors and raising false reports may be even worse than lying.

As long as a person has murdering and lying within him, the Devil, the source of murder and the father of lies, is

working in him. If we trace murder and lies to their source, we shall find the Devil.

V. ONE WHO SLAYS A PERSON BY ERROR SIGNIFYING THAT IN THE EYES OF GOD FALLEN MAN IS A SINNER BY MISTAKE WHO MAY FLEE INTO CHRIST

Exodus 21:13 says, "And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee." This indicates that one who kills another by mistake has the right to flee for refuge into a place appointed by God. This means that, in the eyes of God, fallen man is a sinner by mistake and may flee into Christ. When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). This prayer opened the way for God the Father to come in and forgive mistaken sinners. All those who are sinners by mistake are qualified to flee into Christ as the city of refuge. How wonderful that God may look upon us as mistaken sinners and provide us with Christ as our city of refuge!

Are you a sinner by mistake, or are you a willful sinner? Your repentance toward God indicates that you are a sinner by mistake. If you are a willful sinner, why did you repent? To repent means that you confess you are wrong and are sorry for it. Any sinner who repents is a mistaken sinner, one who can be graciously forgiven by God.

According to 21:14, a person who killed another willfully had to perish. This verse says, "But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die." This indicates that willful sinners must perish. Those who perish do so because they refuse to repent. The fact that a certain person does not repent indicates that he is not a mistaken sinner, but is a willful sinner. If a person repents, God will regard him as a sinner by mistake and will forgive him. Such a one may flee into Christ. But if anyone refuses the gospel and does not repent, God will regard him as a

willful sinner, one destined to perish. Whether you are a mistaken sinner or a willful sinner is determined by whether or not you repent.

In 21:13 and 14 we see a precious matter related to Christ. Christ is implied in 21:13. He was the One delivered into the hands of mistaken sinners. If God had not delivered the Lord Jesus into the hands of the Jews and Romans, the Lord would not have been crucified. After God delivered Him into the hands of those who crucified Him, the Lord Jesus prayed for the ones to whom He had been delivered. He asked the Father to forgive them, because they did not know what they were doing. It seemed that God the Father said in reply, "Yes, it was I who delivered You into their hands. Now I am ready to answer Your prayer by forgiving them." Therefore, according to what is indicated by 21:13, Christ is the One delivered into the hands of mistaken sinners and killed by them. We killed Christ, but we killed Him by mistake. God delivered Christ to us sovereignly, and we mistakenly put Him to death. Therefore, 21:13 not only indicates Christ; it also indicates you and me. According to this verse, we who killed Christ by mistake may now flee into Him as our city of refuge.

Saul of Tarsus was one who killed Christ by mistake. When he was persecuting the believers, the Lord Jesus appeared to him and said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). To Saul's understanding, he was persecuting Stephen and other believers, not the Lord Jesus. The very fact that Saul asked the Lord who He was implies that he was persecuting Him by mistake. He did not realize what he was doing. For this reason, he could say of himself in 1 Timothy 1:13, "Who formerly was a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insulting destructive person; but I obtained mercy because being ignorant I acted in unbelief." In ignorance and by mistake, Saul persecuted the believers and blasphemed God. But God forgave him and opened the gate into Christ as the city of refuge. This is the gospel. What good news that mistaken sinners can flee into Christ!

Exodus 21:13 is the unique verse in the Bible indicating that God delivered the Lord Jesus into the hands of mistaken sinners. In Acts 2:23 we are told that Christ was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and Romans 4:25 says that He was delivered for our offenses. But these verses do not say to whom He was delivered. Only in 21:13 do we see that God delivered the Lord Jesus into our hands to be killed by our mistake.

VI. STEALING SIGNIFYING THAT FALLEN MAN IS NOT SATISFIED WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN ASSIGNMENT AND TRIES TO MAKE BASE GAIN BY TRANSGRESSING GOD'S REGULATION

Stealing signifies that fallen man, like Satan, is not satisfied with God's sovereign assignment, but tries to make base gain by transgressing God's regulation (22:1-5). Perhaps, in His arrangement, God does not assign many riches to you. Instead, He arranges for you to be in poverty. Are you willing to be satisfied with the circumstances in which God has placed you? If you are not satisfied, you may resort to stealing, to the transgressing of God's regulation in order to make base gain. According to the Bible, stealing is fully condemned by God. However, in itself stealing is not always serious. What is serious with respect to stealing is transgressing God's regulation.

We all need to be satisfied with the Lord's sovereign arrangement of our circumstances. Because God is our Creator and we are His creatures, we should be satisfied with the circumstances He assigns to us. If we are satisfied, we shall not break God's regulation. To steal is to be dissatisfied with the divine assignment and to break the divine regulation. In the past I knew some Chinese women who stole sewing needles from other members of the family when sewing needles were scarce. In principle, they were no better than bank robbers. In both cases those who stole were not satisfied with God's sovereign assignment, but broke God's regulation.

VII. COVETING SIGNIFYING SATAN'S LUSTING NATURE BECOMING THE INDWELLING SIN WITHIN FALLEN MAN TO DEADEN HIS BODY

The ordinance concerning coveting (22:7-15) signifies that Satan's lusting nature has become the indwelling sin within fallen man to deaden his body (Rom. 7:8, 17, 20, 24). In Romans 7 Paul tells us that he was not able to deal with the sin of coveting within him. Eventually he described covetousness as indwelling sin. He did not regard it merely as a thing or a matter, but as a person, even as Satan personified. The sin of covetousness is actually Satan's lusting nature. Because we are all fallen sinners, we are given to coveting. Stealing comes from coveting. If a person does not covet anything, he will never steal. Coveting is Satan's lusting nature dwelling within us. Hence, whenever we are greedy or covetous, we should realize that this issues from Satan operating in us as indwelling sin.

VIII. ADULTERY SIGNIFYING SATAN'S SINFUL NATURE WORKING IN MAN TO CORRUPT HIM BY CONFUSING HIM IN BREAKING GOD'S REGULATIONS

The ordinance concerning adultery (22:16-17, 19) signifies that Satan's sinful nature works in man to corrupt him by confusing him in breaking God's regulations concerning the relationships man should have with God, with people, and with other things. According to James 4:4, loving the world causes one to be an adulterer, for it confuses one's relationship with God.

Just as a wife should not love another man besides her husband, we should not love anything in place of God. This is fornication. According to Revelation 17, the degraded church is called a harlot. The church should love Christ alone; however, the degraded church loves many things in place of Christ. For this reason, the fallen church not only becomes an adulteress, but also becomes a fornicator, a harlot. If a wife becomes involved with one other man, that is adultery. But if she becomes involved with many others,

that is fornication. Fornication, therefore, is more serious than adultery. The fallen church is not merely an adulteress; she is a fornicator and for this reason is called a harlot in Revelation 17.

In the sight of God, the earth today is filled with fornication, with confusion. Man is confused in his relationship with others and with many things. According to the Bible, fornication refers to being wrong and confused in our relationships. For example, failing to maintain the right relationship with the government is fornication.

IX. STRANGERS, WIDOWS, ORPHANS, AND THE POOR SIGNIFYING FALLEN MAN BECOMING A STRANGER TO GOD'S BLESSING, A WIDOW WITHOUT CHRIST AS THE HUSBAND, AN ORPHAN WITHOUT GOD AS THE FATHER, AND THE POOR DEPRIVED OF THE RICHES OF GOD

The ordinance concerning strangers, widows, orphans, and the poor signify that fallen man has become a stranger to God's blessing, a widow without Christ as the husband, an orphan without God as the Father, and the poor deprived of the riches of God (22:21-27; 23:9). Ephesians 2:12 and 19 indicate that once we were strangers and foreigners. Were you not a stranger to God before you were saved? Were you not a widow and an orphan, and were you not also among the poor? This is the situation of the unsaved today. But God is a God who cares for strangers, widows, orphans, and the poor.

X. SUBMISSION TO GOD AND HIS AUTHORITY SIGNIFYING THE SUBDUING OF THE REBELLIOUS NATURE OF SATAN WITHIN MAN

The ordinance which requires submission to God and His authority signifies the subduing of the rebellious nature of Satan within man (22:28). Because we are rebellious, we need to be subdued, and we need to submit to God's deputy authority. Rebellion is an activity of Satan's rebellious nature. This rebellious element within us must be subdued.

XI. BRINGING THE LOST CATTLE TO THE ENEMY AND HELPING ONE WHO HATES US WITH HIS BURDENED ANIMAL SIGNIFYING CHRIST BRINGING THE LOST THINGS OF LIFE (LIVESTOCK) TO FALLEN MAN AND HELPING HIM IN RELEASING HIS BURDEN

The ordinances in 23:4 and 5 signify Christ bringing the lost things of life to fallen man and helping him in releasing his burden. These ordinances also signify that we should reconcile ourselves, by such a life of Christ, with our enemies and those who hate us. As sinners, we lost everything related to life. But Christ has come to restore to us all the lost things of life. He has also come to release us from our burden. Has Christ not done these things for you? Has He not restored to you the matters of life and released you from your heavy burden? Praise Him that He has done this for us!

These ordinances also signify that, by the life of Christ, we should be reconciled with our enemies and those who hate us. If an Israelite saw that an animal which belonged to a person who hated him was lying under its burden, he had to stop what he was doing and work with the enemy to release the animal from its burden. Suppose today you saw an enemy of yours having car trouble. Would you be willing to stop your car and help him? In principle, Christ has done this for us. Now we should do the same for others by His life.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVENTY-ONE

THE IMPLICATIONS, INDICATIONS, AND SIGNIFICANCES OF THE ORDINANCES OF THE LAW

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 22:29-31; 23:12, 14-19

It is easy to read and understand the ordinances in Exodus 21 through 23 merely according to the letters in black and white. However, it is difficult to get into the depths of this portion of the Word and dig out the riches of the implications, indications, and significances of the ordinances of the law. In order to mine the riches hidden beneath the surface in these chapters, we should take certain crucial words and then trace their implications. For example, 22:18 says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The crucial word in this verse is witch. If we trace the significance of this word and consider its implications, we shall see that this involves witchcraft and that witchcraft is related to demons. Hence, the single word witch implies the existence of both witchcraft and demons. By tracing the implications of a word in this way, we can get into the depths of the Bible and mine the precious things concealed beneath the surface.

Other important words in these chapters are murder and coveting. We can trace murder to the Devil, the founder, the source, of murder, the one who was "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). In the same principle, the word coveting leads us to the matter of indwelling sin described by Paul in Romans 7. In Romans 7 we see that indwelling sin refers primarily to the lust of coveting. Moreover, if we consider carefully the word in

Exodus 23:1 about raising a false report, we shall see that this involves lying and that lying can be traced to Satan, the father of lies.

On the positive side, we need to consider the implications, indications, and significances of the words altar and sacrifice in 20:24 and 25. The altar points to the cross, and the sacrifices signify Christ. In like manner, the unleavened bread and the feasts also typify the riches of Christ. Actually, to trace the implications, indications, and significances of the crucial words in Exodus 21 through 23 is not a matter of allegorizing the Bible. Rather, it is to open the way for us to dig into the Word and to see what riches are found under the surface.

A number of Bible teachers have pointed out that the altar typifies the cross and that the sacrifices typify Christ. However, not many teachers have gone on to find out how Christ is typified by other items in chapters twenty-one through twenty-three of Exodus. If the altar typifies the cross and if the sacrifices typify Christ, it is logical to expect that the Sabbath day, the sabbatical year, and the feasts of unleavened bread, harvest, and ingathering also typify Christ. We also need to see what the fullness of the harvest and the tears of the presses typify. It is certainly necessary to consider further implications, indications, and significances of the ordinances of the law, especially as they point to Christ and our experience of Him.

In principle, every kind of law has a certain spirit and also presents a picture of something, usually of the one who made the law. For example, the Constitution of the United States has a spirit of democracy and freedom. It also is a portrait of the people in the United States and shows that they care for liberty and equality. Hence, the law of the United States is a picture of the citizens of the United States. God's law also has a spirit and presents a picture. It is very important that we know what is the spirit of the law of God and what is the picture portrayed by God's law with its many ordinances. We have pointed out that God's law has God Himself as its spirit. A law always embodies the

spirit of the lawgiver. Because the law of God was given by God, this law has a divine spirit. There can be no doubt that God the Spirit is the spirit of the law decreed by Him.

Students and teachers of the Bible pay a great deal of attention to the Ten Commandments. Some Christians are able to recite these commandments as easily as they recite the Lord's prayer. I would make it emphatically clear that I by no means belittle the Ten Commandments or detract from them. Nevertheless, it is a fact that in these commandments it is very difficult to see Christ or the cross. Furthermore, in the Ten Commandments we cannot see the redemption of Christ, the things accomplished by Him on our behalf, or anything related to the enjoyment of Christ. The first commandment forbids having any god other than Jehovah God (20:3). Jehovah is our unique Husband, and we should not have another besides Him. The second commandment forbids making a graven image or the likeness of anything and bowing down to it (20:4-5). The third commandment declares, "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain: for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (20:7, lit.). The fourth and fifth commandments are concerned respectively with remembering the Sabbath day and with honoring father and mother (20:8-12). The remaining five commandments forbid murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, and coveting (20:13-17). Do you see anything of Christ here? Do you see anything of the cross or of Christ's redemption? Do you find anything of the experience of Christ or the enjoyment of Christ? The answer is that we cannot see Christ in the Ten Commandments. This is the reason for the ordinances in Exodus 21 through 23. In many of these ordinances Christ is portrayed. Either He is typified in a rather direct way or He is implied, indicated, or signified indirectly.

The ordinances in Exodus actually begin not with chapter twenty-one, but with 20:22-26. These verses may be regarded as a preliminary word concerning the ordinances. They are the door, or the gateway, into the

ordinances in the following chapters. This door provides the way for fallen man to contact God and worship Him. The only way fallen man can contact God in worship is through the altar and by the sacrifices. This indicates that man can worship God only through the cross and by Christ. It is very significant that before giving us the various ordinances God presents a preliminary ordinance which opens the way for the other ordinances. In this preliminary ordinance we see a clear picture of Christ and His redemption according to God's economy. In the ordinances we can see Christ and also Christ's redemption accomplished fully according to the economy of God. As we shall see, in chapters twenty-one through twenty-three we have Christ, redemption, and the economy of God. If we would enter into God's economy, we need a gate, a way, for sinners to contact God. We would emphasize repeatedly that the unique way is the altar and the sacrifices, the cross and Christ. If we are clear concerning this, we shall want to bow before the Lord and worship Him.

Both on the positive side and on the negative side, the ordinances of the law are rich in their implications, indications, and significances. In the foregoing message we pointed out that the ordinances portray a black and bleak picture of fallen man. Man is fallen and continues to live in the fall. He is filled with sins: idolatry, fornication, murder, stealing, lying, coveting, and witchcraft. Furthermore, fallen man has not only sins outwardly, but sin, the lustful nature of Satan, dwelling in him. Actually, the sin of covetousness which dwells in us is Satan's nature. Furthermore, lying and murder point to the Devil, the source of murder and the father of lies, working in fallen man. Both in outward sins and indwelling sin man is related to Satan and even to demons. Witchcraft involves contact with demons. How terrible is the situation of fallen man! He not only sins against God, but he is joined to Satan, involved with demons, and enslaved to sin.

On the positive side, the ordinances present a marvelous portrait of Christ. Christ Himself became a slave, entering

into the condition of fallen man in slavery. Furthermore, He was delivered by God into the hands of fallen men in order to be killed. In this way, He became the sacrifice. Christ is not only the sacrifice offered to God; He is also the city of refuge into which we may flee. The ordinances concerning livestock belonging to an enemy or to one who hates us show that Christ has brought back all the things of life which we sinners, His enemies, had lost and also helped us, who hated Him, to be released from our heavy burdens. Fallen sinners who flee into Christ may thus take Him as their Sabbath, their rest. In Christ we enjoy rest and freedom. What a tremendous gospel this is!

The ordinances in this portion of Exodus first open the gate for us to contact God and come into His economy. Furthermore, they present a vivid picture of fallen man living in the fall, filled with sins, involved with Satan, related to demons, and fully enslaved. However, there is One who came to man in his fallen and enslaved condition, becoming a slave Himself. After He was delivered by God to be a sacrifice for fallen man, He restored the matters of life, released us from our burdens, and became our refuge. Now we, fallen sinners, may flee into Him and take Him as our rest and freedom. This is a summary of what we have covered thus far concerning the implications, indications, and significances of the ordinances of the law. In this message and in the message following, we shall consider what is implied, indicated, and signified by these ordinances concerning how to live in Christ and how to enjoy Him.

In 22:29-31 there are four ordinances related to how we should live in Christ. The first of these ordinances says, "Thou shalt not delay to offer thy fullness and thy tears" (v. 29, lit.). This means to offer the fullness of the harvest and the outflow of the wine and oil presses. The fullness here refers to the fullness of the harvest of the produce in the good land, and the tears refer to the outflowing of wine and oil from grapes and olives that have been pressed. This is the way to live in Christ. Having fled into Christ and having come to enjoy Him as our rest and freedom, we need

to live in Him by having the harvest and the tears. Furthermore, we need to offer to Him the firstborn both of man and of cattle. We also need to be holy men and to be those who do not eat the flesh of animals torn by wild beasts. We need a proper interpretation of these ordinances to know their indications, implications, and significances. We have seen that the altar signifies the cross, and that the sacrifices signify Christ. Now we need to ask what the fullness of the harvest and the flow of wine and oil from the presses signify. We should not have the attitude that there is no need for us to understand these things. What does it mean to offer to the Lord the firstborn of man and beast? What does it mean to be a holy man, and what is the significance of eating flesh torn by wild beasts? All these matters are related to living in Christ, into whom we have fled for rest and freedom.

XII. NOT DELAYING TO OFFER THE FULLNESS AND THE TEARS, THE FULLNESS OF THE HARVEST AND THE OUTFLOW OF THE WINE AND OIL PRESSES, SIGNIFYING THAT THE FULLNESS OF OUR HARVEST OF CHRIST AND THE OUTFLOW OF OUR EXPERIENCE OF THE CROSS SHOULD BE OFFERED TO GOD WITHOUT DELAY

We who believe in Christ and enjoy Him as our rest and freedom are likened in the Bible to a crop. In 1 Corinthians 3:9 Paul says, "You are God's farm." To God, we are a crop. The harvest of the good land was to be offered to God without delay. If we live in Christ, enjoying Him as our rest and freedom, we shall grow in life. In other words, when we live in Christ, we are farming, growing Christ by laboring on Him as the good land to produce a harvest, even the fullness of the harvest. This fullness must be offered to God without delay.

The mention of fullness here implies that we are living in the good land. Apart from Christ as the good land, how can we have a harvest with its fullness, and how can we have grapes and olives that are pressed to produce wine and oil as

tears? The mention of fullness and tears implies that God's chosen people are in the good land. According to typology, this land is the all-inclusive Christ. We need to flee into Christ, enjoy Him as our rest and freedom, and then live in Him, the all-inclusive One, as the good land. As we live in the land, we are farming, laboring, growing a crop. Both the good land and the harvest produced in the land are Christ. The fullness of the harvest thus refers to the reaping of the rich experience of Christ.

In our experience of Christ not only should we have the fullness, but we should also have the tears, the flow of wine and oil. The tears in 22:29 signify the overflow from our experience of the cross. When some saints share in the meetings of the church, part of their testimony may be the fullness of the harvest, and another part may be the tears, the overflow of the experience of Christ through the cross. The presses used to make wine and oil signify the cross. By the press, by the cross, wine flows out to cheer God and man, even to be used as a drink offering, and oil flows out to please God. The fullness and the tears signify the rich experience of Christ and the overflow from the suffering of the cross. This fullness and tears should be offered to God without delay. Have you experienced Christ today? If so, you should come to the meeting and offer to God the fullness of your harvest. This is to offer the harvest with its fullness.

One category of the experience of Christ is that of the fullness of the harvest; another category is that of the tears, the overflow of the presses, the experience of Christ through the cross. Apart from the presses, we may have grapes or olives, but we shall not have wine or oil flowing as tears. On the one hand, Christ is typified by the vine tree; on the other hand, He is typified by the olive tree. Hence, Christ is not only the wheat and the barley, but He is also the grape to produce wine and the olive to produce oil. When the wine flows forth, it cheers God and man, and when the olive oil flows, it pleases God. Both the wine and the oil require the press. This indicates that Christ as the

grape and the olive needs the cross. In our experience, we also must be pressed by the cross. In a very real and positive sense, the church life is a wine press and also an oil press. We need to be pressed so that wine and oil may flow as tears. If we do not experience the pressing in the church life, the grape and the olive will remain whole. The Christian life is a life continually under the pressing of the cross in order that the riches of Christ may flow.

If we would live in Christ, we need both the fullness of the harvest and the tears, the flow from the wine and oil presses. In this matter, do not be deceived by the shallowness and superficiality widespread among Christians today. We need to follow the way of growing Christ and reaping Christ in order to have a harvest of Christ in full. We also need to experience the cross that we may have the tears, the flow of wine and oil. Then, without delay, we should bring the fullness and the tears to the church meetings and offer them to God. The reason there should be no delay is that the producing of the fullness and the tears is not for us, but for God's enjoyment and satisfaction.

XIII. THE FIRSTBORN OF THE SONS AND OF THE CATTLE TO BE GIVEN UNTO GOD SIGNIFYING THAT THE PEOPLE REDEEMED THROUGH CHRIST AS THEIR SUBSTITUTE SHOULD BE SEPARATED, MADE HOLY, UNTO GOD

Exodus 22:29b and 30 say, "The firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me." Here we see that the firstborn both of men and of cattle were to be given to God. According to Exodus 13, the reason for this was that the firstborn among the children of Israel were redeemed at the Passover. Exodus 13:2 says, "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." According to verse 15, an Israelite was to explain to his son, "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go,

that Jehovah slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to Jehovah all that openeth the womb, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem" (lit.). Therefore, giving the firstborn to God is related to the redemption of the firstborn at the time of the Passover.

All the descendants of Adam, the first man, are regarded as firstborn ones. In Adam, we all are the firstborn. Although these firstborn deserve to be slain by God, the firstborn of the children of Israel were redeemed by the Passover lamb. Because they were purchased, bought with a price, they did not belong to themselves. Thus, they had to separate themselves and become holy unto God.

By offering the firstborn unto God, the children of Israel remembered what God did at the time of the Passover. In our experience with the Lord we also should have this kind of remembrance. We should recall that, as firstborn in Adam, we should have been smitten by God, but instead we were redeemed by Christ, who became our substitute. Now we do not belong to ourselves; we belong to God. In 1 Corinthians 6:19 Paul says, "Do you not know that…you are not your own?" If we would live in Christ, we need always to remember that because Christ has redeemed us, we are not our own, but we belong to God. When we come to the meetings of the church, we may say to ourselves, "I was once in Adam, a fallen sinner. According to the righteous judgment of God, I should have been smitten. But I have been redeemed through Christ as my Passover lamb. Now I do not belong to myself. I belong to Him, and I must be separated unto Him." We need to have this kind of remembrance day by day and even moment by moment.

XIV. TO BE HOLY MEN UNTO GOD INDICATING THAT WE, GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE, SHOULD BE SATURATED WITH CHRIST AS OUR HOLINESS BEFORE GOD

Exodus 22:31 says, "And ye shall be holy men unto me."

According to the Bible as a whole, especially the New Testament, to be holy is to be saturated by Christ and with Him as our holiness before God. First Corinthians 1:30 says that Christ has been made unto us sanctification. For Christ to be our sanctification means that we are saturated with Him as holiness. In order to live in Christ, as God's chosen people we need to have a holy life, a life saturated with Christ as holiness.

XV. NOT EATING ANY FLESH THAT IS TORN OF BEASTS, BUT CASTING IT TO THE DOGS SIGNIFYING THAT WE SHOULD TAKE ONLY CHRIST AS OUR LIFE SUPPLY, NOT ANYTHING OF DEATH, WHICH SHOULD BE FOOD FOR THE UNCLEAN MEN

Exodus 22:31 also says, "Neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs." Not eating any flesh that is torn by beasts, but casting it instead to the dogs signifies that we should take only Christ as our life supply, not anything of death. Things related to death should be food for the unclean men. The dogs in 22:31 signify people who are unclean (Phil. 3:2). The significance of this ordinance is that we should eat only Christ. In particular, we should eat Christ as the sacrifices and offerings. We should not eat any meat which has been torn by beasts. This should be cast to the dogs. If we would live in Christ, we need to eat Christ, and not eat anything which bears the nature of death. Those things must be counted as refuse and thrown aside.

XVI. KEEPING THE SABBATH DAY THAT THE CATTLE MAY REST, AND THE SON OF THE HANDMAID, AND THE STRANGER, MAY BE REFRESHED, TYPIFYING TAKING CHRIST AS OUR REST THAT OTHERS MAY ALSO BE BENEFITED

Exodus 23:12 says, "Six days thou shalt do thy work, and

on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed." Christ is the real Sabbath day (Col. 2:16-17). Keeping the Sabbath day that the cattle may rest and that the son of the handmaid and the stranger may be refreshed typifies taking Christ as our rest that others may be benefited.

XVII. KEEPING THE SABBATICAL YEAR THAT THE POOR AND THE BEASTS MAY EAT TYPIFYING TAKING CHRIST AS OUR REST TO A FULLER EXTENT FOR OTHERS TO HAVE FOOD

The principle is the same with the ordinance related to a sabbatical year for the land: "And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat" (23:10-11). Actually, the result of keeping the Sabbath day is not as significant as that of keeping the sabbatical year. Keeping the Sabbath day enabled others to rest and be refreshed, whereas observing the sabbatical year supplied others with food. Some Christians may cause people to rest and even be refreshed; however, not many can supply others with spiritual food. By keeping the Sabbath day we take Christ as our rest to a certain degree, but by observing the sabbatical year we take Christ as our rest to a much fuller degree. Only in the future, however, will Christ become our rest to the fullest extent.

On the one hand, we need to learn from the ordinances in Exodus how to live in Christ; on the other hand, we need to learn how to benefit others in Christ. We should not merely seek to live in Christ ourselves, but should also seek to bring the enjoyment of Christ to others. First we should supply others with rest and refreshment, then with spiritual food, the produce of the field, the vineyard, and the orchard. To supply others with this produce is to supply them with rich food.

XVIII. KEEPING FEASTS UNTO GOD THREE TIMES A YEAR TYPIFYING THE FULL ENJOYMENT OF THE TRIUNE GOD IN CHRIST

Exodus 23:14 says, "Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year." These three annual feasts were the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of harvest, and the feast of ingathering (vv. 15-16). Keeping feasts unto God three times a year typifies the full enjoyment of the Triune God in Christ.

A. The Feast of Unleavened Bread

There is definite ground in Scripture to say that these three feasts typify the enjoyment of the Triune God. Keeping the feast of unleavened bread typifies enjoying Christ as the sinless life supply (1 Cor. 5:7-8). This feast was a continuation of the feast of Passover. Actually the feast of Passover and the feast of unleavened bread are one. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 and 8 we see clearly that the feast of unleavened bread points to Christ.

B. The Feast of Harvest

The second feast was the feast of harvest. Keeping the feast of harvest, the second feast, typifies the enjoyment of the firstfruit of the Spirit of the resurrected Christ (Acts 2:1-4, 17; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 8:23). The feast of harvest is also known as Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out upon the church. However, in the Old Testament the feast of harvest is related not to oil, a type of the Spirit, but to the firstfruit, which typifies Christ. The resurrected Christ is the firstfruit (1 Cor. 15:20). Actually, according to 1 Corinthians 15:45, the resurrected Christ is the life-giving Spirit. In the Old Testament type we see Christ as the firstfruit, but in the fulfillment of this type on the day of Pentecost in the New Testament, we have the Spirit. How can we reconcile the type and its fulfillment? The way is found in Paul's word, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." Christ, the last Adam, resurrected as the

firstfruit, became the life-giving Spirit. Therefore, in its fulfillment the second feast is a feast with the Spirit.

Today virtually all believers, even those who have no heart for the Lord, know that Pentecost is related to the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, the New Testament fulfillment of the feast of harvest, the Holy Spirit came. However, with the Old Testament feast of harvest, which was related to the firstfruit of the harvest, there does not seem to be anything which signifies the Spirit. Pentecost means fifty days. After the firstfruit was offered to God on the eighth day, the people counted seven weeks. Then on the fiftieth day there was the feast of harvest. According to the type, Pentecost involved the offering of the firstfruit to God. But according to the fulfillment, Pentecost is related to the coming of the Spirit. Apparently, the firstfruit has nothing to do with the Spirit. However, if we compare the Old Testament type with its fulfillment in the New Testament, we shall see a strong indication that Christ, the resurrected One, the firstfruit, is the Spirit. What is the firstfruit in typology becomes the Spirit in fulfillment.

Romans 8:23 speaks of the firstfruit of the Spirit. The firstfruit here must refer to the Spirit Himself as the firstfruit for our enjoyment and satisfaction. However, we know from 1 Corinthians 15:23 that Christ is the firstfruit. Then verse 45 says that this Christ became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection. Hence, the firstfruit of the Spirit is actually Christ. The type in the Old Testament of the feast of harvest indicates that the resurrected Christ is the Spirit in the fulfillment of this feast. The Spirit who came down on the day of Pentecost was the very Christ as the firstfruit offered to God. Without the firstfruit in the Old Testament, there would have been no feast of harvest. Without the Spirit in the New Testament, there would have been no Pentecost. The Spirit who came on the day of Pentecost is the fulfillment of the firstfruit offered to God in the Old Testament. The firstfruit typifies Christ in resurrection, and this resurrected Christ is the Spirit.

C. The Feast of Ingathering

The third feast is the feast of ingathering. Keeping the feast of ingathering typifies the enjoyment of the fullness of the Father in Christ (Col. 2:9; Eph. 3:19). The ultimate issue, or consummation, of the enjoyment of the Triune God in Christ is the enjoyment of the fullness of the Father, the fullness of the Godhead, for eternity. The feast of ingathering is also called the feast of tabernacles. This feast signifies the enjoyment of the fullness of the Triune God for eternity in the new heaven and the new earth. For eternity, we who believe in Christ shall enjoy the fullness of the Godhead.

We need to be deeply impressed with the fact that these three feasts signify the full enjoyment of the Triune God in Christ. We may say that with the first feast Christ is sown as a seed. With the second feast we have a harvest, the reaping of Christ as the life-giving Spirit. The enjoyment of this feast began on the day of Pentecost and will continue until the third feast, the feast of ingathering, and will consummate with it. As the consummation of the harvest, the ingathering is the enjoyment of the fullness of the Godhead, the fullness of the Father in Christ, for eternity.

We have seen from the ordinances in Exodus 21 through 23 that first we need to live in Christ and then bring others into the enjoyment of Christ as rest, refreshment, and food. Eventually we shall enter into the full enjoyment of the Triune God in Christ. First, we shall have the enjoyment of Christ the Son; second, the enjoyment of God the Spirit; and, consummately, the enjoyment of God the Father. Praise the Lord that today we are enjoying the Triune God typified by the three feasts!

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVENTY-TWO

THE IMPLICATIONS, INDICATIONS, AND SIGNIFICANCES OF THE ORDINANCES OF THE LAW

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 22:29-31; 23:10-12, 14-19

In the foregoing message we considered a number of points related to how to live in Christ. We saw that we need to offer the fullness of our harvest of Christ and the outflow of our experience of the cross; that as those redeemed through Christ as our Substitute, we should be separated unto God; that we should be saturated with Christ as our holiness to become holy men unto God; and that we should not eat anything of death, but take only Christ as our life supply. Furthermore, we saw that we need to care for others and supply them with food by taking Christ as our rest. Finally, we saw that keeping feasts unto God three times a year typifies the full enjoyment of the Triune God in Christ. Now we must go on to cover some supplementary matters related to the keeping of the three feasts.

XIX. THE BLOOD OF GOD'S SACRIFICE (CHRIST) NOT BEING OFFERED WITH LEAVENED BREAD SIGNIFYING THAT CHRIST'S REDEMPTION SHOULD BE SEPARATED FROM OUR SINFUL LIFE

Exodus 23:18 and 19 give us four supplementary ordinances for the keeping of the feasts. First, verse 18 says, "Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread." This is a warning not to mix Christ's redemption with our sinful life. When the people came to the feast, they

were not allowed to mix the blood of the sacrifice with leavened bread. This indicates that we should not mix Christ's redemption with our sinful life. The blood of the sacrifice signifies the redemption of Christ, and leavened bread signifies our sinful life. These two things must never be put together. In order to enjoy Christ's redemption, we must be separated from our sinful life.

XX. THE FAT OF GOD'S FEAST (CHRIST) NOT REMAINING UNTIL THE MORNING SIGNIFYING THAT THE RICHES OF CHRIST SHOULD BE FOR OUR ENJOYMENT WITH GOD TODAY, NOT TOMORROW

Exodus 23:18 also says, "Neither shall the fat of my feast remain until the morning" (lit.). According to this verse, the fat of God's feast (Christ) should not remain until morning. This signifies that the riches of Christ should be for our enjoyment with God today, not tomorrow. As Christians we should enjoy Christ today and not put off this enjoyment until tomorrow.

XXI. THE FIRST OF THE FIRSTFRUITS BROUGHT INTO THE HOUSE OF GOD TYPIFYING CHRIST AS THE FIRSTFRUIT BEING BROUGHT TO GOD'S DWELLING PLACE FOR HIS SATISFACTION

Exodus 23:19 says, "The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of Jehovah thy God" (lit.). According to this verse, the first of the firstfruits were to be brought into the house of God. This typifies Christ as the firstfruit (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) being brought to God's dwelling place for His satisfaction. This verse does not speak merely of the firstfruits; it speaks of "the first of the firstfruits." For example, there may be firstfruits of both peaches and almonds. The almonds, however, may ripen first. This would make the almonds the first of the firstfruits, which should be brought to the temple, God's house, for His satisfaction. This indicates that in our experience and enjoyment of Christ we should have not only the

top experience, but even the topmost of the top experiences of Christ. This aspect of our experience of Christ should be brought directly to God. No one else should be allowed to enjoy it. Sometimes if we share certain experiences of Christ with others before presenting these experiences to God, we cause our experiences to become common. At other times, we may think that a certain experience of Christ is a topmost experience when it is actually quite ordinary and common. Any experience of Christ that is truly a topmost experience should be kept in secret and then brought to God's temple and offered directly to God for His satisfaction.

XXII. NOT SEETHING A KID IN HIS MOTHER'S MILK TYPIFYING THAT THE WORD OF GOD (THE LIFE SUPPLY OF CHRIST) WHICH NOURISHES THE NEW BELIEVERS SHOULD NOT BE USED TO KILL THEM

Exodus 23:19 also says, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." The milk here typifies the milk of the word of God (the life supply of Christ) used to nourish new believers (1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 3:2). Not seething a kid in his mother's milk typifies that the milk of the word of God should not be used to kill new believers in Christ. Use the milk of the word, Christ as life supply, to nourish newborn Christians; do not use it to kill them. Many Christian teachers have "boiled" new believers with superficial teachings concerning Christ. They have used the word of God for "seething" others instead of for feeding them. The word of Christ which produces milk should be used always to nourish the babes in Christ, never to kill them.

As we are enjoying the Triune God in Christ as typified by the feasts, we need to observe these four supplementary ordinances. We should not mix Christ's redemption with our sinful life. We should not postpone the enjoyment of the riches of Christ until tomorrow. We should offer the topmost experiences of Christ directly to God for His

satisfaction. And we should not use the word of Christ to kill new believers, but use it to nourish them.

In Exodus 21 through 23 we see a picture portrayed by the ordinances of how we, fallen sinners, have been redeemed by Christ and how we have fled into Him to enjoy Him as our rest and freedom. This picture also shows us how to live in Christ and how to supply others with rest and food. Moreover, the three yearly feasts signify the full enjoyment of the Triune God in Christ, with the feast of ingathering, the feast of tabernacles, pointing to the eternal enjoyment of God in the new heaven and the new earth. Is not all this a revelation of God's economy? Praise Him for the picture painted in all these ordinances! We should not simply read the ordinances in black and white letters; we also need to pray-read these verses and fellowship over them that we may apprehend the marvelous picture they present.

I believe it is helpful to consider as a whole the picture presented by the implications, indications, and significances of the ordinances in Exodus 21 through 23. These ordinances reveal that we have fled into Christ, have taken Him as our refuge, and now enjoy rest and freedom in Him. As those who are in Christ and who take Him as their rest and freedom, we need to learn how to live in Christ. Because we are in Christ as our refuge, we are no longer in slavery, no longer in the fall. In Christ we have been set free. This reminds us of Paul's word in Romans 8:1: "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." In Christ we are free and we enjoy rest. In Him there is no condemnation.

Four important matters are related to living in Christ. First, we must have the fullness of the harvest and also the tears of the presses, the outflow of wine and oil, to offer to God. The fullness is the fullness of the produce gained from laboring on Christ as the good land. Hence, the fullness of the harvest is the reaping of the rich experiences of Christ. As those who live in Christ, we should experience Him. To experience Christ is to labor on Him, to grow Him,

and to harvest Him. If we labor on Christ in this way, we shall have the fullness of the harvest to offer to God.

Along with the fullness of the harvest, we need to have the tears of the presses of wine and oil. These tears signify the experiences of Christ through the suffering of the cross. The cross is a press out of which flows wine and oil. As we live in Christ, we should offer to God both the fullness of the harvest and also the tears of the presses. In other words, we should have both the experiences of Christ and the suffering experiences of the cross. The experiences of Christ give us the fullness, and the suffering experiences of the cross give us the tears, the flow of wine to cheer God and man and the flow of oil to please God. Day by day we should offer to God what we experience of Christ and the cross. We should make no delay in presenting to Him the fullness and the tears.

Second, we should always take the standing as those who have been redeemed through Christ as our Substitute and who have been separated unto God. We should declare to others, especially to those in our family, that as the firstborn in Adam our destiny was to be smitten by God in His righteousness. However, we have been redeemed through Christ as the Passover lamb, and now we are no longer our own. We have been bought with a price, the blood of Jesus, and now we belong to the One who purchased us. We need to remember this ourselves and then declare it to others. In particular, the parents should testify to their children that we do not belong to the world, but we belong to God. Should a child ask his father why he does not desire to make money like others in the world, he should say, "Child, I have been purchased and redeemed. Now I must be separated unto God. I deserved to be slain, but instead I have been redeemed by Christ. Because I am not my own, I have no choice but to be separated unto God." Everyone who lives in Christ should have such a standing, remembrance, and declaration.

Third, in order to live in Christ, we must be a holy people. Standing on the ground of having been redeemed

by Christ and separated unto God, we now should be saturated with Christ to become a holy people. To be saturated with Christ is to become a Christ-man, a truly holy person.

Fourth, we should not eat anything which has the nature of death. This is typified by the ordinance related to not eating the flesh of animals torn by beasts in the field. If we do not eat the torn flesh, then what are we to eat? We should partake of the sacrifices slain by God on the altar, not the flesh torn by the Devil, demons, or evil men in the field. Christ should be our unique food. We should eat of Him according to God's way. We are holy men separated unto God and saturated with Christ. Thus, Christ alone should be our food and life supply.

If we live in Christ according to these ordinances, we shall no doubt keep the Sabbath weekly and also the sabbatical year every seven years. This is to take Christ as our rest in order to benefit others with both rest and food. The weekly Sabbath issues in rest and refreshment for others' benefit, and the sabbatical year results in an abundant supply of food for the poor. In principle, both indicate that we should take Christ as our rest for others' supply and benefit.

If we live in Christ and take Christ as rest for the benefit of others, we shall be ushered into the full enjoyment of the Triune God as typified by the feasts. We shall have Christ as our feast of unleavened bread, the life-giving Spirit as our feast of harvest, and the fullness of the Father as our feast of ingathering, our feast of tabernacles. This is the full enjoyment of the Triune God in Christ.

As we are enjoying the Triune God in Christ, we need to take care of four supplementary matters. Although they are supplementary, they are nonetheless crucial. First, we should never mix the blood of redemption with unleavened bread. This means that whenever we enjoy the Triune God in Christ, we should not put Christ's redemption together with our sinful life. If we would apply the redemption of Christ, we must give up our sinful life. Anyone who

remains in the sinful life is not able to apply the blood of Christ and not able to partake of the feasts. It is impossible to enjoy the feasts apart from the redeeming blood of Christ. Therefore, whenever we apply the blood, we must give up our sinful life.

Second, we should enjoy the fat, the sweetest part of Christ, day by day and not wait until tomorrow. We should not try to keep the riches of Christ for tomorrow's enjoyment. This is forbidden by God. He requires that we enjoy the sweetest part of Christ today. In our experience, tomorrow may be not only the next day, but even the next hour or the next minute. Enjoy Christ now—do not wait until a future time. Wherever you are, enjoy Christ now.

Third, we should always keep the topmost of our experiences of Christ for God's satisfaction. We should bring these experiences, the first of the firstfruits, to the house of God. Whenever we enjoy the Triune God in Christ, we must keep the topmost experiences for God's satisfaction.

Finally, we must observe the ordinance of not seething, boiling, a kid in its mother's milk. This means that we should not kill young believers in Christ by our knowledge of the Word or by our experience of the Word. To kill others in this way is to seethe a kid in its mother's milk. Instead of "boiling" the new ones or the young ones, we should use our experience of Christ and our knowledge of the Word to feed them.

Milk comes from nourishing food digested by a mother. Spiritually speaking, we all should be mothers in the enjoyment of Christ. The riches of Christ we digest should produce milk for the feeding of the young ones. However, there is a danger that we would use this milk not to feed others, but to "boil" them by condemning them or rebuking them. Do not use the milk produced in your enjoyment of the Triune God to condemn the young ones or the new ones.

The saints who are experienced in Christ produce a good deal of milk. However, most of these saints have the weakness of using this milk to "seethe" the younger ones.

Although these experienced saints are "mothers," they do not feed the young ones with their milk. Because the more experienced brothers and sisters have the tendency to "boil" others, the young ones often stay away from them, regarding these saints as too "holy." Unable to bear the "seething" of the older ones, the young ones may prefer to stay together. We all should heed the warning not to use our milk, the supply of Christ, to boil others, but always use it to feed them.

Because the law of God was given by Him, it points us back to Him. Thus, God's law with all the ordinances refers to spiritual things. Certain ordinances refer to our fallen life and to sins, sin, Satan, and demons. Other ordinances refer to Christ, the redemption of Christ, and our enjoyment of Christ. In these chapters we see God's economy. We may even say that Exodus 21 through 23 is a condensation of the entire Bible. On the negative side, we see the fall of man, Satan, demons, sin, and sins. On the positive side, we see God, Christ, the cross, redemption, the enjoyment of Christ, and even the full enjoyment of the Triune God for eternity. This is God's economy.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVENTY-THREE

THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH FOR HIS PEOPLE TO TAKE POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 23:20-33; 3:2, 4, 6, 14, 16; 14:19-20; Judg. 13:17-19; Zech. 2:8-9

Exodus 20 through 23 is a section containing the decree of the Mosaic law. In these chapters we first have the decree of the Ten Commandments and then the decree of the ordinances of the law. In the foregoing messages we have pointed out that if we would get into the depths of the ordinances in chapters twenty-one through twenty-three, we shall see that in them the economy of God with the redemption of Christ is portrayed.

It is very significant that chapter twenty-three concludes with a word about the Angel of Jehovah (vv. 20-33). Verse 20 says, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee to guard thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared" (lit.). The Angel was to bring the people into the promised land. The two main things regarding the land here in these verses are the frustraters and the boundaries. There were people inhabiting the land and frustrating the children of Israel from taking possession of it. Verse 23 says, "For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off." In verse 31 we have a word concerning the boundaries of the land: "And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the

Philistines, and from the wilderness unto the river" (lit.). If we would take possession of the promised land, we must deal with the frustraters and also pay attention to the boundaries of the land. Because the Angel of Jehovah plays an important role in leading the people into the land, this message is entitled, "The Angel of Jehovah for His People to Take Possession of the Promised Land." The concluding word of the decree of the law and the ordinances refers to the Angel of Jehovah and the promised land.

Both the Angel and the promised land are types of Christ. The Angel typifies Christ as the One sent by God to guard us in the way and to bring us into the land. Christ is such a sent One, the One sent from God. The good land typifies Christ in His all-inclusiveness. Thus, Christ as the sent One brings us into Himself as the good land. This good land is the goal, the aim, the mark, of God's purpose. Since the good land typifies Christ, this means that Christ is the goal. Who will bring us to this goal? No one other than Christ Himself. On the one hand, Christ is the good land; on the other hand, He is the One who brings us into the good land.

The ordinances in Exodus 21 through 23 portray at least nineteen different aspects of Christ. Christ is the sacrifice, the slave, the Sabbath, the One delivered to us who were the mistaken sinners that put Him to death, the city of refuge, and the One who brings the things of life to His enemies and releases those who hate Him from their heavy burdens. Furthermore, in these chapters the cross of Christ is typified in two ways. First, the altar in 20:24 and 25 typifies the cross. Hebrews 13:10 says, "We have an altar, from which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle." This altar refers to the cross on which the Lord Jesus offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. The children of Israel had an altar, but that altar was merely a type. We have the fulfillment of this type, the cross as the true altar. Second, the cross is typified by the wine and oil presses which produce the "tears." These tears signify the outflowing of the experience of Christ through

the suffering of the cross. Exodus 22:29 speaks of the fullness and the tears (lit.). The fullness signifies the fullness of the harvest of the produce of the good land, and the tears signify the outflow of wine and oil from the presses.

On the one hand, the church is a lovely place, and the church life is wonderful. On the other hand, the church life is a wine press and an oil press. Our family life is also a press. We are pressed by our husband or wife and by our children. If we did not have the experience of the press in the church life and in our family life, there would be no tears, no outflow of wine and oil.

After presenting at least nineteen aspects of Christ and two types of the cross, these chapters conclude with a word about the Angel of Jehovah bringing the people into the promised land. Even the King James Version capitalizes the word Angel in 23:20. This indicates that the translators realized that the Angel here is unique and extraordinary. This Angel signifies Christ Himself.

The fact that the decree of the law concludes with a portion regarding the Angel and the good land indicates that the purpose of the decree of the law is that those who received the law would enter into the good land. It was not God's intention simply to give the law to His people. His intention was to bring the children of Israel into the good land. Exodus 23:20 says, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee…to bring thee into the place which I have prepared." It seems as if the Lord was saying to His people, "I have given you the law and the ordinances. However, this is not My goal. I did not bring you out of Egypt merely to give you regulations. My intention is to train you, discipline you, and regulate you so that you may be a proper people for Me to bring into the good land. Behold, I send an Angel before you to guard you in the way and to bring you into the promised land. This is My goal." For this reason, immediately after the decree of the law and the ordinances, God speaks of the Angel bringing the people into the good land.

I. THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

A. Sent by Jehovah

According to 23:20, the Angel of Jehovah was sent by Jehovah. Here we have both a Sender and a sent One. Zechariah 2:8 and 9 indicate that the Sender and sent One are one. Verse 8 says, "For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you" (lit.). Verse 9 concludes with the words, "Ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me" (lit.). These verses indicate that Jehovah of hosts sent Jehovah of hosts. According to verse 8, Jehovah of hosts says, "After the glory hath he sent me." Here we see that the Sender and the sent One are actually one.

Those who follow the way of systematic theology may ask how we can say that Christ the Son and the Father are one. They may point to the fact that the Son prayed to the Father and that the Father answered the Son (Luke 3:21-22). If the Father and the Son are one, they ask, how could the Son pray to the Father, and how could the Father answer the Son? The answer is found in Zechariah 2. Who is the sent One, and who is the Sender? In Zechariah 2:8 and 9 both "he," the Sender, and "me," the sent One, refer to Jehovah of hosts. According to these verses, Jehovah sent Jehovah, for He is both the Sender and the sent One. The same is true in Exodus 23:20, where we are told that the Angel of Jehovah was sent by Jehovah.

B. Jehovah's Name in Him

Regarding the Angel of Jehovah verse 21 says, "My name is in him." The name Jehovah means "I Am That I Am" (3:14). This name is in the Angel of Jehovah. Why is the name of Jehovah in the Angel? Simply because the Angel is Jehovah Himself. If the Angel were not Jehovah, how could Jehovah's name be in him? The name of a person is identical to the person himself. We cannot separate a person from his name, for his name indicates his very being. For this reason, we do not simply speak of ourselves

as persons, but we identify ourselves by name. The name of Jehovah was in the Angel and inseparable from the Angel.

C. Jehovah Himself

Exodus 3 indicates strongly that the Angel is Jehovah. Verse 2 says, "The Angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a thorn-bush" (lit.). As we read through chapter three, we see that it was actually Jehovah who appeared to Moses and spoke to him (vv. 4, 6, 14, 16). Furthermore, the Jehovah who appeared to Moses is the Triune God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. The Angel of Jehovah is equal to Jehovah, Jehovah is equal to God, and God is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—as signified by the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Therefore, this Angel of Jehovah actually is the Triune God. Furthermore, this Angel is Christ, and Christ is the Son of God. This means that the Son of God is Jehovah God, even the Triune God.

D. His Voice Being Jehovah's Speaking

Exodus 23:22 says, "If thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak…." This indicates that the Angel's voice is God's speaking. In John 14:10, the Lord Jesus said, "The words which I speak to you, I do not speak from Myself; but the Father who abides in Me, He does His works." Just as the Angel's voice was Jehovah's speaking, so the Son's speaking was the Father's working. The fact that the Angel's voice was Jehovah's speaking proves strongly that the Angel and Jehovah are one.

If we study the record in the Old Testament concerning the journey of the children of Israel from Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the good land, we shall not find one instance where the Angel of Jehovah spoke anything. Why then does God speak of the Angel's voice, if the Angel never voiced anything? The reason is that God was the One who spoke. God's speaking was the Angel's voice. God sent

Himself to accompany His people, to guard them in the way, and to bring them into the good land. This indicates that the Angel and God were truly one. Thus, God's speaking was the Angel's voice.

As we consider the fact that God's speaking was the Angel's voice, we see that it involves the matter of the Trinity. The Trinity is the dispensation of God to man. Even with the children of Israel in the Old Testament, we can see God's dispensation.

E. Going before the Children of Israel

Exodus 23:23 says, "Mine Angel shall go before thee." In 14:19 we have a clear indication that the Angel of Jehovah was leading the people: "And the Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them." The Angel refers to Christ, and the cloud signifies the Spirit. The Father also was present, but He, as usual, was behind the scene. Thus, in the incident recorded in Exodus 14, the Triune God was present. The Son was the protecting Angel, the Spirit as the cloud was darkness to the Egyptians and light to the children of Israel, and behind the Angel and the cloud, the Son and the Spirit, was the Father. Here we see the Triune God applying Himself to the people in their situation. Therefore, we may define the Trinity as God's application of Himself to His people. Without the Trinity, God could not have been applied to His chosen people in their distress in Exodus 14.

We have pointed out that the Trinity denotes both the dispensation of the Triune God and the application of the Triune God. No doubt, to many Christians such definitions will come as something altogether new. Nevertheless, according to the Word of God, it is a fact that apart from the Trinity God has no way to apply Himself to His people. When God said, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee," He was applying Himself to the children of Israel. He not only gave them laws and ordinances, but He applied Himself to them.

F. Guarding Them in the Way

According to Exodus 23:20, the Angel of Jehovah kept the people, guarded them, in the way. An excellent illustration of the Angel's guarding is found in chapter fourteen, when the Egyptians were pursuing the Israelites (vv. 19-20).

G. Bringing Them into the Good Land

Exodus 23:20 says that the Angel would bring the people into the place which God had prepared. From verse 23 we know that this was the land occupied by pagan tribes. The Angel of Jehovah would bring God's people into this good land.

II. THE PROMISED LAND

A. Its Boundaries

Verse 31 describes the boundaries of the promised land: "And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness unto the river" (lit.). The "sea of the Philistines" refers to the Mediterranean Sea, and "the river" denotes the Euphrates. Although the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates is extensive, more extensive than the territory the children of Israel have ever inhabited, my point here does not concern the extensiveness of the land. Rather, it concerns the boundaries and their spiritual significance. The bounds were from "the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines." The seas here signify the waters of death. Hence, from sea to sea signifies from death to death. This means that one of the boundaries of the promised land is death. Verse 31 also says that the boundary was to be "from the wilderness unto the river." The river also signifies the water of death, and the wilderness signifies barrenness. If we study a map, we shall see that the promised land is surrounded by death and barrenness. The land itself, however, is a region of life filled with abundance of fruit.

We have pointed out that the promised land is a type of Christ. Now that we see that the boundaries of the good land are death and barrenness, we can realize that outside of Christ there is nothing but death and barrenness. Death and barrenness surround Christ as our land and are the boundaries of Christ. The Bible indicates that the promised land is elevated. This signifies that Christ is elevated in resurrection. However, this elevated land, this elevated Christ, is surrounded by death and barrenness.

We need to apply the boundaries of the good land to our spiritual experience and ask ourselves where we are. Where are you? Are you in the Red Sea, in the Mediterranean Sea, or in the Euphrates? In other words, are you in the waters of death? Are you wandering in a barren wilderness? I repeat, the good land is bounded by the waters of death and by the barrenness of the wilderness. But the territory of the good land is elevated and fruitful, full of life and produce. Hallelujah, this good land is our territory!

B. Its Frustraters

Many Christians do not have a proper understanding of the promised land. Some think that the good land refers to heaven. A well-known hymn even speaks of crossing the cold waves of the Jordan and passing over into the promised land of heaven. According to the concept of many, to die is to cross the Jordan, and to enter into the land is to go to heaven. But what about the pagan tribes and their idols? Will heaven be filled with pagans and idols? Is it necessary to fight against these pagan tribes and destroy their idols after we get into heaven? If we ask questions such as these, considering the significance of the pagan tribes and their idols, we shall realize that the promised land does not refer to heaven.

According to another interpretation, the good land typifies the heavenlies mentioned in Ephesians 6. In the heavenlies there are evil forces against which we must fight. This understanding is close to the proper significance. However, according to the Bible, the habitation of

the saints will not be the air, the heavenlies. Do you expect to go to the air and dwell there? Thus, it is not satisfactory to say that the good land denotes the heavenlies of Ephesians 6.

For many years we were seeking to learn the significance of the good land. Approximately forty years ago, we began to realize that the good land is a type of the all-inclusive Christ. In the history of Israel, Christ is portrayed by different types: the Passover lamb, the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, the sacrifices, the manna, the smitten rock flowing with living water, and the tabernacle with its utensils. The good land also is a type of Christ. Without the land as a type, we would not have an ultimate, consummate, all-inclusive type of Christ.

God redeemed His people through Christ as the Passover lamb so that they might enter into the good land. God's goal is that we enter into the full enjoyment of Christ as the all-inclusive One. Having been redeemed through Christ as the Passover lamb, on our way to the good land we enjoy Christ as the manna and the rock. On the one hand, we are satisfied with Christ as the Passover lamb and the manna. On the other hand, Christ in these aspects stirs up our appetite for more of Him. As we are pursuing something richer, greater, and more all-inclusive with respect to Christ, Christ as the good land, we experience Him as the daily manna. Our goal, however, is to enter into Christ as the all-inclusive land.

According to Exodus 23:23-24, 32-33, there are frustraters which keep us from possessing the land. These frustraters, the various pagan tribes occupying the land, signify different aspects of our natural life. For example, one of the tribes was the Canaanites. The word Canaan means merchant. In our natural life there is a Canaanite, one who aspires to make money. Other tribes signify the lust of the natural man and the greed of the natural life. In principle, all of the pagan tribes signify aspects of the natural life. In a very real sense, these tribes are in us. This means that in our natural life there are many frustraters

which hinder us from taking possession of the all-inclusive Christ.

Exodus 23:24 indicates that these pagan tribes had idols: "Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works." Furthermore, verses 32 and 33 say, "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee." The gods of the pagan tribes were idols, and idols are related to demons. Behind every idol there is a demon. The idols with the demons behind them represent spiritual forces (Eph. 6:12).

Behind our natural life are spiritual forces. For example, do you like to lose your temper? To be sure, none of us is happy when we lose our temper. Within our natural life there is an evil temper, which we despise. But behind this evil temper there are spiritual forces, demons. Often it is these evil forces that cause us to lose our temper. As Christians, we have experienced losing our temper even when we did not want to do so. There was something, some kind of force, which caused us to lose our temper involuntarily. This indicates that the aspects of our natural life are utilized, manipulated, and directed by spiritual forces behind the scene. The aspects of the natural life with the spiritual forces behind them frustrate us from the enjoyment of the riches of the all-inclusive Christ.

III. THE WAY TO TAKE POSSESSION OF THE LAND

Exodus 23:22 says, "But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries." Here we see that if the children of Israel obeyed the Angel of Jehovah, Jehovah would cut off the pagan tribes. Verse 23 goes on to say, "For mine Angel shall go before thee… and I will cut them off." He would drive out the pagan tribes from before His people.

Verses 29 and 30 say, "I will not drive them out from

before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land." Here we see that God would not cut off the pagan tribes all at once. Israel was still comparatively small in number. If God were to cut off all the tribes within one year, much of the land would be desolate, and the beasts would multiply against the people. This indicates that as Christians we should not expect to become fully spiritual overnight. If we were suddenly emptied of our natural life, we would be inwardly vacant. Then demons would have an opportunity to damage us.

After hearing messages on the natural life, we may desire to cut off the natural life all at once. However, to do this is to become vacant and be in danger of being taken over by demons. There is a sense in which we still need our natural life for a period of time. Then the more we grow in the Lord, the more He will cut off the natural life. As long as the number of the children of Israel was rather small, there was the need for the pagan tribes to remain so that the land might be kept from the beasts. But as God's people increased, the Lord would cut off the tribes according to the degree of the numerical increase of His people. This signifies that as we grow in Christ, our natural life will be cut off gradually, according to the degree of our growth in life. God will not cut off the pagan tribes once for all, but He will do it "by little and little" according to our growth.

Verse 25 says, "And ye shall serve Jehovah your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee." Here God promised to bless the people's bread and water and to remove sickness from their midst. This indicates that spiritually God will give us food to nourish us and drink to satisfy us. Moreover, He will take away our weaknesses that we may come to full age, full maturity, full growth in life. In this way we shall take the all-inclusive Christ as our possession for our enjoyment.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVENTY-FOUR

THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH FOR HIS PEOPLE TO TAKE POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 23:20-33

In the foregoing message we began to consider from 23:20-33 the matter of the Angel of Jehovah for His people to take possession of the promised land. We saw that the Angel of Jehovah was sent by Jehovah (v. 20), that Jehovah's name is in Him (v. 21), and that He is actually Jehovah Himself (3:2, 4, 6, 14, 16). Furthermore, we pointed out that His voice was Jehovah's speaking and that He went before the children of Israel to guard them in the way and to bring them into the good land (23:20, 23). We also considered the boundaries of the promised land: from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, the Mediterranean, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates. We also saw that there were frustraters in the land, the pagan tribes with their idols. Finally, in a very general way we shared a word about how to take possession of the land. In this message and in the message following, we need to pay attention to the details concerning the way to take possession of the land. No matter how much we may know about the Angel of Jehovah and about the good land, this knowledge may be vain if we do not see the way to take possession of the land.

Taking possession of the good land is the terminology found in the typology in the Old Testament. In the New Testament Paul speaks of gaining Christ, obtaining Christ, laying hold of Christ (Phil. 3:8). These expressions from

Philippians 3 are the fulfillment of the type of possessing the promised land in the Old Testament. Today we need to experience the all-inclusive Christ typified by the good land. My burden in this message is related to the way to take possession of Christ, the way to experience Christ, win Christ, gain Christ, obtain Christ, take hold of Christ, and grasp Christ. As a help in this matter, we need to patiently consider Exodus 23:20-33 in detail, digging into these verses in order to see the riches they contain.

At this point I wish to say that we do not intend to allegorize the Old Testament according to a certain interpretation. On the contrary, what we are doing is fitting various portions of the Word together in order to see a complete picture. This is not to allegorize or to guess at the meaning of things. This is to fit different parts of the Word together in order to see a picture of spiritual things, which are otherwise invisible. The matters related to spiritual experience are real, but they are mysterious and invisible. For this reason, God has given us both the types in the Old Testament and statements of fact in the New Testament. The Old Testament types are pictures of the spiritual realities revealed in the New Testament. Just as children put together the pieces of a puzzle, so we need to fit together various parts of the Bible in order to see a picture.

It takes time and patience to assemble a puzzle of hundreds of pieces. First you need to try one piece and then another. Eventually, little by little a picture comes into view. Do you want to see a portrait of the wonderful, heavenly, spiritual, and divine things in the Word of God? If you do, then patiently and diligently you need to put the pieces of the "puzzle" of the Bible together. I repeat, to allegorize the Old Testament in a certain way is not my way. Rather, my way is to fit the pieces together until a picture comes into view. In this message I shall present another picture which I have seen through patient study of the Word and prayer over the Word.

We have seen that the ordinances in Exodus 21 through 23 are very rich in their implications, indications,

and significances. It is indeed significant that these three chapters conclude with a word concerning the Angel of Jehovah bringing God's people into the promised land. Christ as God's sent One guards us in the way and brings us into Himself as the all-inclusive good land. Furthermore, 23:20-33 tells us in a detailed way not only how to enter into the land, but also how to take possession of this land for our enjoyment. Actually in these verses not a great deal is said either concerning the Angel of Jehovah or concerning the good land itself. But a good deal of attention is given to the frustraters, the pagan tribes that would keep God's people from possessing the promised land. Yet the description of the way to take possession of the land is even more detailed than that of the frustraters. This indicates that if we would experience Christ we must, on the one hand, know the frustraters and, on the other hand, know the detailed way to take possession of Christ and gain Him experientially. Just as we need a detailed map to find our way around a city, so we need the details in 23:20-33 in order to know the way to possess the good land for our enjoyment. A general sketch is helpful, but it is not adequate. The driver of an automobile needs not only a bird's eye view of the city, but also a detailed understanding of the streets. Then he will be able to find his way. In these fourteen verses we have a detailed "map" for our spiritual "driving" into the promised land, the all-inclusive Christ.

A. By Obeying the Angel of Jehovah

If we would take possession of the promised land, we must learn to obey the Angel of Jehovah, the One sent to us from God. This Angel, this sent One, is Jesus Christ. God sent Christ to us in a way that involves many steps: incarnation, human living, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and enthronement. By means of all these steps, God has sent Christ, His Angel, to us. Now that He is with us, we must obey Him.

In order to take possession of Christ, we need to realize

that we have Him with us, even within us, as a living Person. This means that we have the living Christ Himself, not a system of doctrines. This living Person is now in us (Col. 1:27). Romans 8:9 says, "If anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." If we do not have Christ in us, we do not belong to Him. Instead, we belong to the Devil, the demons, and the world. Praise the Lord that Jesus Christ is in us! We have Him as the sent One, the Angel of Jehovah, who has come to us through the wonderful process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and enthronement. How marvelous that such a One has been sent to be with us!

Many Christians today do not realize that the living Person of Christ is with them and in them. They may care for biblical doctrines, but they may not pay attention to the living One. In an article entitled "The Waning Authority of Christ in the Churches" A. W. Tozer strongly points out that believers today neglect the living Christ and His lordship. Christians may care for their mission work, gospel preaching, or teaching of the Bible and theology, but may pay virtually no attention to the living Person of Jesus Christ.

In 23:21 and 22, God does not say, "I have given you teachings to follow." No, here the Lord says of the Angel, "Take ye heed before him, and obey his voice…obey his voice, and do all that I speak" (lit.). Twice we are told to obey the voice of the Angel, for His voice is God's speaking. This means that as the Angel, the sent One, Christ speaks for God. How crucial, then, that we obey His voice!

Today Christ speaks for God in a living way from within us. In John 10 there is strong emphasis on hearing the Lord's voice. Speaking of Himself as the good shepherd, the Lord Jesus says, "The sheep hear his voice" (v. 3). In verse 16 the Lord goes on to say, "I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice." In verse 27 He testifies clearly, "My sheep hear My voice." I have the assurance that we all

have the voice of the Lord within us. Even the young people, those who are still teenagers, have heard the voice of the living One in them. Because they hear the Lord's voice, many times it is not necessary for their parents or anyone else to tell them what to do. Christ, the living One, is more subjective to them than their parents. The parents of a young person cannot go to school with him, whereas the indwelling Christ not only goes with him to school, but remains in him all the time. Because we have Christ, the sent One of God, within us, we must obey Him. In particular, we should obey His voice.

1. Not Provoking Him

Exodus 23:21 says, "Take ye heed before him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions" (lit.). Here we have four details concerning our relationship to Christ as the Angel of Jehovah. These details are related to taking heed to Him, obeying Him, not provoking Him, and not being pardoned by Him of our transgressions. It is important that we listen to the Lord's voice and not provoke Him. According to this verse, if we provoke the Lord, He will not forgive our transgressions. If we consider this carefully, we shall see that this verse corresponds to our experience.

In a very real sense, the indwelling Christ is a pleasant, gentle person. Nevertheless, it is rather easy for Him to be provoked by us. Even if we are disobedient in a small matter, we provoke Him. As a result, we sense that He is no longer smiling upon us. We realize deep within that He is not happy with us. Because the Lord within us is not happy, we cannot be happy either. Perhaps during our time with the Lord in the Word at morning watch we are happy in the Lord. We rejoice and are full of praise. However, later in the day we may provoke Him by our disobedience. Suddenly our joy is gone. The fact that we are no longer happy indicates that we have provoked the Lord and that He is displeased. He may not be angry with us, but He definitely

is not happy. The indwelling Christ is very sensitive, and we must be careful not to provoke Him.

2. Not Pardoning Our Transgressions

After charging us not to provoke the Angel of Jehovah, verse 21 says, "He will not pardon your transgressions." From our experience we know that once we have provoked the Lord, He will not pardon us until we confess. He is strict and is troubled by even a slight act of disobedience. We should obey His voice and never argue with Him. We may provoke Him even by arguing with Him. Then His face no longer smiles on us, and we no longer have a rejoicing spirit. We may confess our wrongdoing and seek His forgiveness, but He may not pardon us immediately. It may take a few days before we sense that the Lord is once again happy with us and is smiling on us.

I am glad that verse 21 does not say that the Angel will not pardon our transgressions forever. No particular time is specified. Perhaps He will wait just a few minutes before forgiving us, perhaps several days, a week, or even longer. From our experience with Christ we know that sometimes He does not pardon us immediately. This causes us to be miserable. At such times we may try to shout, "Hallelujah, Christ is Victor!" Although we may shout and try to rejoice, the Lord is silent, still unhappy with us and continuing to withhold His pardon. Eventually, after a certain period of time, we suddenly realize that we are inwardly happy once more. We may even feel like singing, "Jesus is the Lord and He lives in me; now I'm as happy as I can be." We are genuinely happy because the Lord who dwells within us is happy.

We need to realize that if we provoke the Lord by not obeying His voice, He may not pardon our transgression right away. In this matter we should not be careless, thinking that after we have disobeyed the Lord we can say, "Lord Jesus, I was wrong. Please forgive me." You may think that after praying like this everything is all right, but this may not be the feeling of the Lord within you. He may not

pardon you until later. This word about provoking the Lord and about not receiving His forgiveness immediately is not a mere doctrine. This is according to our spiritual experience. I can testify that my experience with the Lord corresponds to the details in verse 21.

According to the Old Testament, the Angel of Jehovah was always with the children of Israel. We know from the New Testament that Christ, God's sent One, is with us all the time. In Matthew 28:20 the Lord Jesus said, "Behold, I am with you all the days." However, the fact that the Lord is always with us does not necessarily mean that everything is all right. Our relationship with the Lord is a two-way matter. There are two sides, the Lord's side and our side. There is the need for us to cooperate with Him. Cooperating with the Lord may be illustrated by a three-legged race. The partners in such a race have one leg free and one leg bound together. They must run the race with good coordination. Both parties must cooperate. In principle, the same is true in our relationship with the Lord. On His side, He always does everything well; but we are extremely poor in cooperating with Him. Because of our lack, we need to consider further details in 23:20-33 about possessing the promised land.

B. By Jehovah's Cutting Off the Pagan Tribes

According to verse 23, the Angel of Jehovah would go before the people and bring them into the land occupied by the pagan tribes. Concerning these tribes, the Lord promised, "I will cut them off" (v. 23). In verse 27 the Lord says, "I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come; and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee." Here we see that the Lord promised to cut off all the pagan tribes from the promised land. I prefer the word pagan rather than the word heathen. The heathen may denote the Gentiles, whereas pagan indicates something demonic, devilish, and idolatrous. All the tribes which were frustraters to the children of Israel were pagan.

1. Defeating Them

It is clear from verses 23 and 27 through 31 that God promised to defeat the pagan tribes. He even promised to send hornets before His people to drive out these tribes (v. 28). Furthermore, the Lord promised, "I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee" (v. 31).

2. Driving Them Out Little by Little

Although God promised to drive out the pagan tribes, He said, "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land" (vv. 29-30). Here we see that God would drive out the frustraters according to the increase, the growth, of Israel. This indicates that the degree of God's driving out of the inhabitants of the land is measured by the increase of His people. If their growth was slow, God would drive out the tribes slowly.

In Philippians 2:13 we find a word which corresponds to God's promise in the Old Testament to drive out the pagan tribes little by little. In this verse Paul says, "It is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." God is working, operating, in us to cut off our natural life. Our natural life is fallen, sinful, devilish, and demonic. Whether the natural life appears to be good or bad, simply because it is natural it has these four extremely negative characteristics. Our natural life frustrates us from experiencing Christ and enjoying Him. If we check our experience, we shall see that it is not others who keep us from experiencing Christ, not our husband or wife or any member of our family; it is our own natural life. Sometimes we sense that our natural life is fallen, and at other times, that it is sinful. On some occasions we become conscious of the fact that our natural life is even devilish and demonic. Perhaps you are wondering how I can say that the natural life is demonic, that it behaves as if it

were a demon. I would ask you this question: Have you ever looked at yourself in a mirror when you were losing your temper? At such a time your facial expression is not that of a gentleman, much less that of a son of God; it is the expression of a demon. Many years ago I saw the faces of some who were gambling. How demonic were those expressions!

The natural life has many different aspects. Certain aspects may seem to be quite good. But in fact these aspects are masks; they are not genuine. Even if they are regarded as true in the sight of men, they are not genuine in the sight of God.

The pagan tribes which occupied the promised land signify the different aspects of the natural life. According to the Bible, there were seven tribes in the land. But we may have many more "tribes" in us. Our fallen life is corrupted and polluted. This is true of young and old alike. A young sister may seem to be pleasant and nice. Nevertheless, the fallen, sinful, devilish, demonic element of the natural life is in her. I say again, the natural life with all its characteristics frustrates us from experiencing Christ. But God has promised to cut off all the pagan tribes, all the aspects of our natural life. He will cut them off and drive them out.

However, it is important for us to realize that God's driving out of the natural life depends on two matters. First, it depends on our growth, on our increase, reproduction, and multiplication. The more we grow, the more God drives away the natural life. Second, God's driving out the pagan tribes depends on our taking the initiative to drive out these tribes. In verse 29 God indicates that He will drive out the tribes, but in verse 31 He says, "Thou shalt drive them out before thee." Yes, God promises to drive them out, but we must take the initiative.

In our seeking after the Lord we may pray, "O Lord, I hate myself. I hate my lust and my natural life. Lord, I ask You to drive these things out of me." But the more fervently we pray in this way, the less the Lord seems to respond. In

fact, there seems to be no answer at all. We pray that the Lord will clear away all the aspects of our natural life so that we may be spiritual people, but He does not answer us.

At this point the type, the picture, in these verses is clear and helpful. According to the type, the Lord will drive out the pagan tribes, the natural life, but the extent of His driving out of the tribes is determined by the pace of our growth. If we do not grow, the Lord will not drive out the tribes. Some Christians, hating the natural life, pray to be free from it. But then they are attacked by "beasts." In the words of verse 29, the beasts of the field multiply against them. These beasts are even worse than the pagan tribes, for the beasts signify demons. The natural life is terrible, but demons, evil spirits, are even worse. This underscores the danger of being vacant in our inner being. The cutting off of the natural life must correspond to our growth in Christ. The more we grow in the Lord and increase in Him, the more He will replace our natural life. This is the spiritual significance of God's driving out the pagan tribes according to the increase of Israel. The more God's people increased in the land numerically, the greater would be the number of pagans God would cut off and drive out of the land. This indicates that the more Christ increases in us, the more He will replace our natural life. The degree of the growth of Christ in us determines the measure of how much the natural life can be cut off.

Without spiritual experience it is not possible to understand that the driving out of the natural life is in proportion to the increase of Christ within us. We know from experience that in our Christian life we must have the increase of Christ. This increase is what replaces the natural life. We should not expect God immediately to drive out every element of the natural life. God's driving out of the pagan tribes from within us depends on our growth in life, on the increase of Christ in us. If God were to drive out the natural life without a corresponding increase of Christ, we would become vacant. Then something worse—the beasts, the

demons—would enter in to take possession of us. Therefore, God's way is to terminate the natural life according to the increase of Christ within us.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVENTY-FIVE

THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH FOR HIS PEOPLE TO TAKE POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 23:20-33

In the foregoing message we considered from God's side how to take possession of the land. In this message we shall consider the matter from our side.

C. By Cooperating with God in the Destruction of the Pagan Tribes

1. The Source of Sin against Jehovah

In order to take possession of the promised land, God's people must cooperate with Him in destroying the pagan tribes (23:31-33). Exodus 23:33 says, "They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me." It is a fact of history that the pagan tribes were the source of Israel's sin in the good land. When Israel lived in the promised land, their sins came from the source of the pagan tribes that were still in the land. This indicates that the natural life is the source of sin. Our sins come from our natural life. Whether our sins are gross or somewhat refined and cultured, they have their source in the natural life. Some people are refined and polite even in the way they lose their temper. Sometimes a husband may be very cultured and refined in the way he offends his wife. Such culture and refinement are actually a mask. Wearing this kind of mask, people often lie by speaking the truth. Even sins that appear to be rather refined come from the natural life. In the sight of God, all those who live according to the

natural life are sinning continually, even when they give alms or donate to charity.

As the source of sin among God's people, the natural life frustrates them from possessing Christ as the good land. Because the natural life keeps us from possessing Christ and enjoying Him, we must hate it and, as we grow, be willing to drive it out. As we have pointed out, without growth in Christ it is not possible for us to drive out the natural life.

2. Making No Covenant with Them

The children of Israel were forbidden to make any covenant with the pagan tribes (v. 32). Today we should not make any covenants with the natural life. To make a covenant with the natural life is to compromise with it. Because it is not easy to eliminate the natural life, we may be tempted to compromise with it. To compromise in this way is to tolerate some aspect of the natural life. But we should not tolerate the natural life in any way. Whether or not we are able to drive out the natural life, we still must hate it. Instead of agreeing with any aspect of your natural life, hate it and do what you can to drive it out. Of course, without growth, your attempts to drive out the natural life will be in vain. The more you grow, the more you will be able to drive it out. If we take the initiative to drive out the natural life, God will come in to honor us and strengthen us in this matter.

This principle is found in Romans 8. Yes, Romans 8:11 indicates that God will give life to our mortal bodies. But this depends on whether or not we take the initiative to put to death the practices of our body (Rom. 8:13). If we take the initiative to do this, God will honor this by giving life to our mortal bodies. God is ready to give us life, but we must be willing to kill the practices of the body. If we are not willing to do this, not willing to cooperate with God, God has no way to impart life to our mortal bodies.

According to Romans 8, we should also take the initiative to walk according to spirit (v. 4), to mind the things of

the spirit (vv. 5-6), and to be led by the Spirit. Verse 14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." This verse does not speak of the leading of the Spirit, but of our being led by the Spirit. The Spirit is willing to lead us, but we must be willing to be led by Him. If we are not willing to be led, there is no way for the Spirit to lead us. Therefore, it is first our responsibility to be led; then it is the responsibility of the Spirit to lead us. Even in this matter, we must take the initiative.

According to Romans 8:15, we should also take the initiative in crying "Abba, Father." This verse says that we have received "a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father." A verse parallel to this, Galatians 4:6, says that it is the Spirit who cries "Abba, Father." Who is it, then, who cries out, we or the Spirit? The answer is that both we and the Spirit cry together. Although the Spirit is ready to cry, we must take the initiative. He cries when we cry. But if we do not cry, He will not cry either.

Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God." This verse indicates that we must be the first to witness, then the Spirit will witness. We are not told that our spirit witnesses with the Spirit, but that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit. When our spirit testifies, the Spirit honors our testifying and testifies with our spirit.

Romans 8:23 speaks of our groaning, and verse 26, of the Spirit interceding for us "with groanings which cannot be uttered." When we groan, the Spirit intercedes. Actually, He intercedes in our groaning. If we do not groan, the interceding Spirit has no way to work. Therefore, we need to groan, the more the better. By taking the initiative to groan, we give the Spirit an opportunity to intercede on our behalf.

According to Romans 8, God gives life and the Spirit leads, witnesses, and intercedes. However, these four activities depend on our taking the initiative. When we put to death the practices of the body, God gives life. When we are willing to be led, the Spirit leads. When we cry Abba,

Father, the Spirit cries. When we witness, the Spirit witnesses. Furthermore, when we groan, the Spirit intercedes. In the same principle, when we drive out the pagan tribes, the natural life, God also drives out these tribes. Hence, we and God together drive out the natural life. Nevertheless, we must again emphasize the fact that we must take the initiative. It is easy for God to drive out the tribes. He is always ready to do this, but we usually are not ready. Instead, we may make a covenant with them. In such a situation, God has no way to drive them out. Therefore, it is crucial for us to take the initiative to drive out the natural life.

Catholicism teaches that we must work for salvation. At the time of the Reformation, Luther fought against this teaching and declared that salvation is by grace, not by works. We are justified through faith, not through works. After the Reformation two schools of theology came into being: the Calvinist school, which emphasizes God's sovereign mercy and grace, and the Arminian school, which claims that a person can lose his salvation and that good works are necessary to keep one from losing his salvation. Although the Calvinist teaching is far more accurate than the Arminian, it is not complete. According to the Bible, everything is by God's grace. Nevertheless, man must cooperate with God.

This cooperation can be illustrated by a mother feeding her child. No matter how much the mother loves the child and how carefully she prepares nourishing food for him, she cannot eat for him. The child must take the initiative to eat the food prepared by his mother. In the same principle, we must take the initiative to cooperate with God's working.

This was the reason on the day of Pentecost Peter commanded the people to repent and be saved (Acts 2:37-40). God cannot repent for us or believe for us. We ourselves must repent and believe. To be sure, we cannot save ourselves. God has done everything necessary to save us, but we must still repent and believe. We cannot save ourselves,

but we can, in Peter's words, "be saved." The Savior is at hand, ready to save us. But we must be willing to be saved. In this matter we take the initiative. This is a basic principle in the Bible.

This principle is also illustrated in Philippians 2:12 and 13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." Our working out of our own salvation is related to God's operating in us. We take the initiative to receive God's operation. When we receive it, we work out our salvation. Then the more we work out our salvation, the more God operates in us. In this way we have a practical salvation for our enjoyment.

Taking the initiative to drive out the pagan tribes, the natural life, depends on our growth in Christ. God promised the children of Israel that He would drive out the pagan tribes from before them. But the children of Israel had to take the initiative to drive them out. However, this was dependent on their growth, their increase. The more they grew, the more they could take the initiative to drive out the tribes. Likewise, the more we grow in life, the more we shall take the initiative to drive out the natural life.

We need to grow and be replaced by Christ. As we are growing, we shall take the initiative to deal with our natural life. God will honor this by coming in also to deal with the natural life. This is the proper way to drive out the frustraters that we may take possession of Christ, enjoy Him, and gain Him in an experiential way.

Do not think that driving out the natural life and possessing Christ depend on a sudden inspiration. In this matter, we should not wait for the Lord, because the Lord is actually waiting for us. In particular, He is waiting for our cooperation. Are you ready to cooperate with Him to drive out the natural life? If so, take the initiative and God will honor you.

Our Christ is with us not as a doctrine, but as a living Person. Furthermore, God has promised to work on our

behalf. However, we must grow and be replaced by Christ. We must have the increase of Christ within us so that we can be replaced by Him. For this, we need to cooperate with God. We have already pointed out how Philippians 2:12 and 13 illustrate this cooperation. On the one hand, God is operating in us; on the other hand, we must work out our own salvation. In this matter we and God are partners. Prayer and mere waiting on the Lord are not the way for this to be accomplished. That is the religious way, not the biblical way. According to the biblical way, Christ is with us and God has promised to work for us. But we must grow to have the increase of Christ and be replaced by Him so that we may take the initiative to drive out the natural life. We know from our experience that when we take the initiative in this way, God comes in to honor us and to join us in driving out the natural life. Thus, the teaching of the New Testament and our spiritual experience agree with the type portrayed in Exodus 23.

D. By Destroying the Idols

Exodus 23:24 says, "Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and break in pieces their pillars" (lit.). This indicates clearly that the children of Israel were to destroy all the idols in the promised land. If we have anything within us which is an idol replacing the Lord, that thing will be a snare to us. Thus, we must overthrow it and break it. No idols are allowed in the Christian life. Nothing is permitted to replace the Lord within us. Anything that occupies the place of the Lord within us is an idol. If we would take possession of the all-inclusive Christ for our experience, we must destroy all idols.

E. By Jehovah's Complete Care

1. Blessing His People's Food and Water

In verses 25 and 26 we see Jehovah's complete care for His people. Verse 25 says, "And ye shall serve Jehovah your

God, and he will bless thy bread, and thy water" (lit.). God promised to bless His people's food and drink. Without food and drink it would have been impossible for His people to take possession of the land and live in it. The same is true in our Christian life. Without proper food and drink we cannot enjoy Christ, experience Christ, gain Christ, and possess Christ. Our food is the Word and our drink is the Spirit.

The Lord's recovery today is very much under God's blessing. We certainly have the blessed Word and the blessed Spirit. If you visit a group of Christians and see that the Word and the Spirit are blessed there, you should say, "Lord, thank You. You are here." Only by having the blessed Word and Spirit can we take possession of Christ, enjoying Him, experiencing Him, and obtaining Him to the uttermost. Hallelujah for the Word and the Spirit as our food and drink! This is a sign of God's care.

2. Taking Sickness Away from Them

In 23:25 the Lord said, "I will take sickness away from the midst of thee." Sickness makes us weak, it hinders our growth, and it may even cause us to die. In 1 Corinthians 11:30 Paul refers to certain believers who became weak, sick, or died. When the Lord Jesus came, there was widespread sickness among God's people: blindness, deafness, dumbness, and paralysis. Today many Christians are spiritually blind, deaf, dumb, or paralyzed. Are you healthy spiritually? How is your spiritual eyesight and your spiritual hearing? Are you healthy in your speech and activities? Many of today's Christians are paralyzed. Spiritually, it is impossible for them to move. Only when we are healthy in our spiritual seeing, hearing, speaking, and moving are we able to take possession of Christ, experience Him, and enjoy Him. The proper church life is a healthy life, a life without blindness, deafness, dumbness, or paralysis. If we are spiritually healthy in every way, we shall be able to take possession of Christ as the good land and experience Him.

3. Granting Them Multiplication

In 23:26 God promised, "There shall none cast her young, nor be barren, in thy land" (lit.). This means that God promised to give the people multiplication. They would not only grow and produce, but also multiply. Multiplication here has two meanings. First, it means to produce fruit; second, it means that one's growth is multiplied. We should not simply grow—we should be multiplied. Usually when someone grows spiritually, he is also multiplied.

According to the promise in 23:26, to be multiplied means not to have any miscarriages. It is possible for saints to have a spiritual miscarriage. For a while, some may grow quite well in the Lord. But suddenly they have a spiritual miscarriage, and this causes their growth in life for production to cease.

Another problem is spiritual barrenness. Some Christians may have a spiritual miscarriage, but others are barren. They do not bear any fruit. We all need to grow constantly and to produce without miscarriage.

It is sad to see a brother who is the same today as he was many years ago. He is spiritually barren. With him there is no multiplication, no reproduction. It is also sad to see those who do well for a period of time, only to have a sudden spiritual miscarriage. We all need to pray, "Lord, I take Your word as a promise. I stand against spiritual miscarriage and barrenness. Lord I want to produce, to multiply without miscarriage."

4. Causing Them to Live to Full Age

Exodus 23:26 also says, "The number of thy days I will fulfil." This means that God would cause the people to live to full age, to maturity. Today there are very few persons who have come to full spiritual maturity. If you consider the writings of Christians today and what is spoken on the radio broadcasts, you will realize that most Christians are childish. Where can you find believers who are spiritually mature, who have come to full spiritual age? Such Christians are very rare indeed. This lack proves that the

situation among most Christians is not under God's blessing. God is willing to bless them, but He has no way to do so. This is why the Lord has need of the recovery. We look to Him that in His recovery we may always have the blessed food and drink, that we shall be spiritually healthy in every way—in our sight, hearing, speech, and activities—and that we shall not be afflicted with miscarriage or barrenness. We look to Him that we shall come to full age and become mature spiritually.

More than forty years ago in the church life, there were very few elders who were truly spiritual fathers. Most of those who were elders were not yet very mature in life. But I can testify that many who have been in the recovery for thirty or forty years have become very mature. They did not have a premature death, spiritually speaking. I am also encouraged by the fact that some of the saints among us today are much more experienced and mature than five years ago. I hope that during the next several years many more will come to maturity and that, spiritually speaking, none will die prematurely. Do not think that the elders are the only ones who need to be mature. No, all the saints must mature. I hope that even those who are young sisters today will become mature in the years to come.

Many who have been with us for decades are still growing. This means that God is still fulfilling the number of their days. This is important, for in the church life in the Lord's recovery we need a good number of those who are spiritually aged. If the Lord delays His coming back for many years, I hope that all the saints will keep on growing. Even this aspect of growth is one of the details of the way to take possession of Christ and gain Him.

I am sorry that among most Christian groups you find miscarriage, barrenness, and immaturity. Much of the talk among them is on a kindergarten level. The situation must be different in the church life in the Lord's recovery. If we have many among us who are spiritually aged, mature, this is a proof that we are taking Christ as our possession.

We have pointed out that God's complete care of His people includes four items: blessing their food and water, taking sickness away from them, granting them multiplication, and causing them to live to full age. These matters are arranged in an excellent sequence. If we have proper food and water, there will be no disease among us. Then we shall be fruitful and not have miscarriages. Finally, our days will be fulfilled, and we shall have a long life.

The second, third, and fourth aspects of the Lord's complete care are dependent on the first—His blessing on our food and drink. We all need the proper food of the Word and the proper drink of the Spirit. Then we shall be healthy, fruitful, and mature. We shall have a healthy and abundant life. As a result, we shall have the strength to take the initiative to drive out the pagan tribes, the natural life. Then the whole land, the entire Christ, will become our enjoyment.

I appreciate the picture in the Old Testament formed by putting together the different pieces of the puzzle. First we have Christ as the sent One, the Angel of Jehovah. Then we have God, the One working for us, and also the food and water under His blessing. If we eat and drink properly, we shall grow and multiply. Among us there will be no sickness, miscarriage, barrenness, or premature spiritual death. Through our growth, multiplication, and maturity we shall be qualified to drive out the natural life, allow Christ to replace it, and then enjoy Him and take full possession of Him. We thank the Lord for this picture in the Old Testament showing us in detail how to take possession of Christ as the good land.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVENTY-SIX

THE ENACTMENT OF THE COVENANT

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 24:1-8; Heb. 9:18-20, 22

In this message we come to 24:1-8. After the decree of the law with the ordinances, God charged Moses to bring the leaders of Israel up to the mountain to stay with Him for a particular thing: to receive the vision of the tabernacle which they were to build as His dwelling place on earth. As we have pointed out, the book of Exodus begins with God's redemption and concludes with God's dwelling place. God needs a people to be His dwelling place on earth. However, because the people God created became fallen, it was necessary for God to come in to accomplish redemption. God not only redeemed His people; He also rescued them, delivering them from their bondage in Egypt and bringing them to the wilderness to have intimate fellowship with Him. In the messages given on chapters nineteen through twenty-three, we have seen the intimate and thorough fellowship God had with His chosen and redeemed people. During the course of this intimate fellowship between God and His people, God revealed Himself to them. He made known what kind of God He is. Many Christians think that the giving of the Ten Commandments was merely a decree of the law. Apparently this is true; actually it is not entirely true. The giving of the law was the unveiling of what God is. This means that through the decree of the law God revealed Himself to His chosen and redeemed people.

We have pointed out that in the Old Testament the law is called the testimony (Exo. 31:18). This testimony is a

portrait, a picture, a photograph, of God. The law with its ordinances shows us what kind of God our God is. By reading the Ten Commandments and all the ordinances of the law, we can realize what God is like.

Legislators or lawmakers are always revealed in the kind of laws they enact. In fact, the law made by a person is always a revelation of that person. In the same principle, the law in chapter twenty with the ordinances in chapters twenty-one through twenty-three provides a detailed portrait of God, showing us what He is. For this reason, we should not be satisfied simply with reciting the Ten Commandments. It is not adequate merely to know the commandments about not having another God, not making images and worshipping them, not using God's name in vain, keeping the Sabbath, honoring one's parents, not committing murder or adultery, and not stealing, bearing false witness, or coveting. It is crucial to realize that the law is a portrait revealing what kind of God has chosen us, called us, and redeemed us. We are thankful to the Lord for the clear picture of Himself He has given in chapters twenty through twenty-three. Here we see that God is holy and righteous, that He is full of love and light. Because God is holy, with Him there is nothing common. Because He is righteous, with Him there is no injustice. Because He is love and light, with Him there is no hatred or darkness.

In the ordinances found in chapters twenty-one through twenty-three we see a clear view of God's economy. We have pointed out that in these ordinances we have the cross, Christ, and Christ's redemption. Therefore, through the law and the ordinances we have a revelation of God and His economy. How wonderful! May we be deeply impressed that the law and the ordinances decreed by God on Mount Sinai present a clear view of God and His economy.

After giving His people such a revelation of Himself and His economy, God's intention was to reveal the desire of His heart. The desire of God's heart is to have a dwelling place

with man on earth. After a time of intimate fellowship with His redeemed people, God wanted to open His heart and make known to them that the desire of His heart is to have a dwelling place on earth.

It is unfortunate that today many of God's redeemed people do not even have intimate fellowship with Him. A good number of Christians know God hardly at all, and they know nothing of His economy. However, by God's mercy certain of the saints have entered into intimate fellowship with Him. In this fellowship they have come to know what God is and, at least to some extent, what God's economy is. Nevertheless, rarely do we find Christians who have truly been brought into the desire of God's heart to see that His desire is to have a dwelling place on earth.

In today's Christian meetings, gatherings, and "services," seldom, if ever, is there a message on God's building, although messages are given on fellowship between God and man. Believers may be charged to spend time in the Lord's presence to have fellowship with Him. But where are the messages on the building? Before you came into the Lord's recovery, did you ever hear a message on God's building? This matter is neglected by Christians today.

We praise the Lord that the book of Exodus has not only twenty-three or twenty-four chapters, but forty chapters. Chapter twenty-four is a bridge connecting the first twenty-three chapters with the last sixteen. In this message and in a few that follow, we shall walk on this bridge from one section of Exodus to the other. When we get to the other side, composed of chapters twenty-five through forty, we shall see the desire of God's heart concerning His tabernacle built by His people on earth. Although we may be eager to get to the other side, we cannot do so without spending a certain amount of time on the bridge.

Exodus 24:1 and 2 say, "And he said unto Moses, Come up unto Jehovah, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. And

Moses alone shall come near Jehovah: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him" (lit.). God had a particular purpose in wanting these leaders of Israel to come up on the mountain: it was to show them the vision, the design, the blueprint, of the tabernacle as His building. After Moses received this charge from God, he descended from the mountain. But before ascending the mountain again with the leaders of the people, Moses enacted the law. In verses 1 and 2, therefore, we have God's charge that Moses bring up with him to the mountain certain leaders of the people so that they might have fellowship with God and that God might reveal to them the desire of His heart. Then in verses 3 through 8 we have Moses' enactment of the law.

After the law was enacted, it became a covenant. Without such an enactment, the law simply would have remained the law; it could not have been a covenant. But as soon as the law was enacted, it became a covenant between God and His people.

A covenant involves two or more parties. Here the covenant was between God and His people. This making of a covenant was a tremendous matter. Using today's words, this covenant was an agreement or a contract. The proper way for a contract to be enacted today is for the participating parties to sign it. A time is set, and an official document is prepared. Then all the parties concerned, perhaps accompanied by witnesses, sign this document. In some cases, the parties make an oath or a pledge. Without such an official enactment, the contract would exist as a written statement, but it would not be binding on either party.

Although the law had been decreed on the mountain of God, there was still the need for the law with its ordinances to be enacted. Thus, before Moses climbed the mountain again with the leaders to receive further revelation, he took care of enacting the law.

Here I wish to point out that the revelation Moses received on the mountain of God was of two parts: the first part was the decree of the law in intimate fellowship with

God; the second was the revelation of the design of God's building. Before the second part of the revelation was given, Moses was told to go down, call the leading ones, and bring them up to the mountain. This indicates that the second part of the revelation was even more crucial than the first. Moses was not to receive it alone; he had to bring with him Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders. Only then would God show him the plan of His building. Furthermore, the fact that Moses enacted the law before ascending the mountain again shows that this enactment was very important.

Although the enactment of the law was not mysterious, there was something rather secret about it. In the Bible there is no record of God commanding Moses to go down among the people to enact the law. Nevertheless, this is exactly what Moses did. Furthermore, the enactment of the law by which it became a covenant corresponds to the entire economy of God. This is a matter of great significance. If Moses had not received a command from the Lord to enact the law, how would he have known what to do? Also, God recognized what Moses did by enacting the law and making it a covenant. The book of Hebrews makes this clear (9:19-20). As we shall see, all the principles involved in the enactment of the law through Moses correspond to God's economy.

We should not think that everything which took place during the time the law was decreed and enacted has been recorded in the Bible. Certain things took place, but there is no record of them in the Scriptures. No doubt, God must have told Moses to descend from the mountain and enact the law which He had decreed, and to enact it in a specific way. If such a commandment had not been given, why would Moses have enacted the law in the way he did, in a way which is altogether different from common human practice?

In ancient times, when two parties entered into a covenant, they usually used some kind of birds or animals as a sacrifice. Then they enacted the agreement or covenant.

But with the enactment of the law through Moses, there are certain particular, uncommon points. First, there was an altar, and there were twelve pillars "according to the twelve tribes of Israel" (v. 4). Then two types of offerings were presented: burnt offerings and peace offerings (v. 5). There was no sin offering, trespass offering, or meal offering. Finally "Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar" (v. 6). Therefore, we have the altar, the pillars, the sacrifices, and the blood. Throughout the centuries of human history, no covenant has ever been enacted in this way. This shows that the enactment of the covenant in Exodus 24 is unique. In this covenant between God and man the enactment was through an altar and with twelve pillars, sacrifices of burnt offerings and peace offerings, and with the blood. We need to see the significance of all these things.

In order to understand the spiritual significance of the altar, the pillars, the sacrifices, and the blood, we need to realize that in decreeing the law it was not God's intention to charge His chosen people to observe the law. However, most Christians think that because God gave the law to His people, His intention was for them to keep it. If God did not expect the people to observe the law, they say, what was the need for Him to give them the law? As a young Christian, I also held the concept that God gave the law to His people with the intention that they keep it. But if this had been God's intention, He would have been acting in a most foolish manner. Expecting fallen people to keep the law of God may be compared to requiring a dog to fly like a bird. Suppose someone said to a dog, "Little dog, you must realize that from now on you belong to me. Thus, I issue the command for you to soar in the air like an eagle." How foolish and absurd would be such a requirement! God could never be so foolish as to demand such a thing.

We must remember that the law is actually a portrait of an almighty, divine Person—God Himself. We have seen

that the law reveals that, as the unique One, God is holy, perfect, altogether uncommon. Moreover, He is righteous and full of love and light. The laws decreed by Him are actually descriptions of His various virtues and attributes. In vivid contrast to God, who is holy and righteous and full of love and light, the people were fallen, sinful, rotten, and thoroughly corrupt. Their fallenness and corruption are exposed through the ordinances, especially those which refer to fornication, theft, and witchcraft. How could such a fallen people observe the divine law of a holy and righteous God? Impossible! Anyone who believes that such a thing is possible is very superficial or not sound in his thinking. God would never make the gross error of assuming that fallen man could observe His holy law. He did not give the law with this intention.

Humanly speaking, since there was to be a covenant between God and man, the law did function as the conditions or terms of this covenant. For the enactment of the covenant Moses served as the middle man. According to the natural concept, God should have required the people to make an oath, seal the oath with their blood, and then vow to keep the divine law under penalty of death. This may be the human way, but it was not the way followed by Moses. Moses did not say, "O children of Israel, I have just come down from the mountain where I received the holy law decreed by God. Now you must be faithful to keep the law. You must make an oath to this effect. I ask you to seal this pledge with your own blood." This certainly was not the way the covenant was enacted through Moses.

I. THROUGH THE ALTAR

Exodus 24:4 says, "And Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill" (lit.). The altar indicates that we cannot keep the law of God and that we need to be redeemed. Actually, before the law was made known to the people, they had already broken its terms and conditions.

Because their situation was hopeless, they needed an altar for their redemption.

The altar indicates that they needed to be terminated and replaced by the sacrifices. Initially the sacrifices offered on the altar were their substitute, but eventually this substitute would become their replacement. Therefore, symbolizing the cross, the altar indicates that we need to be redeemed, terminated, and replaced. The cross of Christ redeems us and terminates us. Then as the sacrifices to be our substitute, Christ becomes our replacement. He is our Redeemer, substitute, and replacement.

The children of Israel should not have thought that they could keep God's law. Because they were sinful, fallen, and corrupted, such a thing was impossible. Instead of trying to keep the law, they needed to be redeemed, terminated, and replaced. This is the way to enact the divine law decreed by God.

It is useless for us to attempt to keep God's law. Because we do not have the capacity to keep it, it is impossible for us to do so. Romans 8:3 and 4 indicate this: "For, the law being impossible in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to spirit." Because the law is weak through our flesh, God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin to redeem us, terminate us, and replace us. Then, as such redeemed, terminated, and replaced ones, we now have Christ in our spirit. As we walk according to the mingled spirit, our spirit mingled with the indwelling Spirit, the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us. Romans 8:3 includes the matter of enactment, for the cross is implied here. The redeeming and replacing Christ is also implied. Hallelujah, we have the cross, the means, and we also have the Redeemer, the substitute, and the replacement!

I hope that we would all be impressed with the fact that it is utterly impossible for fallen man to observe the law of

God. Even the thought that man can do so is most foolish. Moses was not so foolish as to think that the children of Israel could obey the law of God. Instead, according to God's revelation and requirement, he enacted the law by building an altar. By doing this he seemed to be telling them, "You children of Israel must realize that you need to be redeemed, terminated, and replaced."

II. WITH TWELVE PILLARS SIGNIFYING THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL AS THE TESTIMONY OF THE LAW OF GOD

In 24:4 we are also told that Moses built "twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel." According to biblical usage, in both the Old and New Testaments, a pillar stands for a testimony. First Kings 7:21 illustrates this: "And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz." Jachin means "He will establish," and Boaz means "The strength is in Him." These pillars stood as a testimony that God would establish the building, the temple, and that its strength would be in Him. These pillars were not erected to support the temple. No, instead of being used as a support, they stood as a testimony. The New Testament also speaks of pillars. First Timothy 3:15 says that the church is the pillar and base of the truth. This means that the church bears the testimony of the divine realities of God's economy. The twelve pillars in 24:4 also function as a strong testimony of what God is. Furthermore, these pillars represent the twelve tribes of Israel. They indicate that in the sight of God the twelve tribes should be pillars testifying what God is. In other words, the children of Israel should stand as a testimony reflecting God and what He is.

The Bible is a very picturesque book. We have an excellent example of this here in Exodus 24 with the altar and the twelve pillars. The altar tells us that we need to be redeemed, terminated, and replaced. The pillars declare

that we should be a testimony of what God is and also a reflection of God. On the one hand, we need to be redeemed, terminated, and replaced. On the other hand, we need to be a testimony of God and a reflection of Him. What we reflect should not be our ability to keep the law. Rather, we should reflect God's virtues and attributes. After we have been redeemed, terminated, and replaced, we become pillars, the testimony of God, reflecting what He is.

The law was not given for God's people to keep or observe. It was given that the people might become God's testimony. However, the children of Israel thought that the law was given for them to keep. Likewise, out of ignorance of God's economy, many of today's Christians think that the New Testament was given for them to keep and observe. No, the New Testament was not written so that Christians would observe its requirements; it was given to make Christians a reflection of God. There is a tremendous difference between trying to keep the law of God and being made a reflection of Him.

God's mind is altogether different from the mind of fallen man. According to our concept, when God gave the law it was a sign that He wanted us to keep it. But this was not God's intention. His intention is to make us a testimony of Himself. To be a testimony of God involves not only our deeds; it involves our very being. God did not want the children of Israel merely to keep the commandments and observe the ordinances. He wanted to make them pillars bearing a testimony of Himself. As the law is a testimony of God, so God intended that the people of Israel would become a living testimony of Him. The law is a portrait, a photograph, showing what God is. As living persons, the children of Israel were to be a living testimony of God. Through Moses' enactment of the law, God was saying to the people, "I don't want you to keep My law. I want to make you a testimony of the law. Then you will be a living testimony of Me. If you are to become My testimony, you must be redeemed, terminated, and replaced."

Again and again I wish to emphasize this crucial point: The law was not given for us to keep, for us to observe; it was given that we might be made a living testimony of God according to what the law portrays. The way for us to become such a living testimony is to be redeemed, terminated, and replaced. This can be accomplished only by Christ through the cross. If we see this, then we shall understand why God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin and condemned sin in the flesh so that the righteous requirement may be fulfilled in us as we walk according to the mingled spirit. This is the way we become a reflection of God, a testimony of Him. If we become such a reflection and testimony, then surely the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us. However, this is not a matter of our keeping the law and fulfilling its requirements. No, it is a matter of having Christ become our replacement and then of walking according to the mingled spirit. This is what makes us God's reflection.

God has no intention to make us law-keepers, observers of the law. God's intention is to make us pillars which stand on earth as a reflection of Himself as the divine Person who is holy, righteous, and full of love and light. This is not to keep the law—it is to be a living testimony of what God is, as portrayed by the law.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVENTY-SEVEN

THE ENACTMENT OF THE COVENANT

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 24:1-8; Heb. 9:18-20, 22; Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 36:25-29a

This message is a continuation of the foregoing message on the enactment of the covenant. We have seen that when Moses enacted the covenant, he built both an altar and twelve pillars. The altar indicates that we need to be redeemed, terminated, and replaced. The pillars signify that we need to become a living testimony of God, a reflection of what He is.

III. WITH BURNT OFFERINGS AND PEACE OFFERINGS

Exodus 24:5 says, "And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto Jehovah" (lit.). It is not difficult to understand the significance of these offerings. The burnt offering was for God's satisfaction. We were created by God for His satisfaction. However, because of the fall man has failed to satisfy God. Eventually Christ came as the second man and fully satisfied God. Thus, He could be the burnt offering to satisfy God.

After God was satisfied through the burnt offering, there could be peace between God and man. This peace depends on the peace offering. When man and God together enjoy Christ, there is mutual satisfaction and peace. Christ first became the burnt offering offered to God to satisfy Him, and then He became the peace offering to make peace between man and God. Eventually, Christ became a feast for God and man to enjoy mutually. This is the Christ

who has redeemed us and terminated us and who is now replacing us. The more we are replaced by Christ in our experience, the more we become the burnt offering and the peace offering. Day by day we satisfy God and enjoy peace with Him as we feast on Christ with God and enjoy Him with God.

By our own efforts to keep the law it is impossible for us to satisfy God, to have peace with God, or to enjoy Christ with God. I say again that God did not give the law to His people with the intention that they observe it. God's intention is for the people to be replaced by Christ and to become a reflection of God. This is God's economy. We thank Him that in the recovery this has been made clear to us.

According to the natural concept, the almighty God, the Creator, the holy One, has given us the law that we may observe and keep it. Although this religious concept is common among Christians today, it is far off from God's economy. We in the recovery may still be under the influence of this concept, perhaps subconsciously, to some degree. After listening to a particular message, we may pray, "Lord, I make up my mind to live according to this message. Please help me carry out my decision." This kind of prayer exposes the fact that we are still under the influence of the natural, religious concept. It takes a long time to be fully free from this influence. When we read a certain requirement in the Bible, it is easy for us to make up our mind to fulfill that requirement ourselves. Like the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, we promise the Lord that we shall do whatever He says. However, if we are enlightened by the Lord, we would no longer make up our mind to do what He requires. Instead, we would pray, "Lord, have mercy on me, for I am not able to do what You require. Lord, I praise You that You have redeemed me and terminated me and that You are in the process of replacing me with Yourself and making me Your reflection."

Praise the Lord that we have the cross to terminate us

and Christ to replace us! Christ is our burnt offering and our peace offering. As we experience Him, He makes us a living burnt offering and peace offering. This does not come from trying to keep the law; it issues from experiencing the altar and the sacrifice, the cross for termination and replacement to become God's testimony. If we experience Christ and the cross in this way, we shall have not only the altar and the sacrifices, but also the twelve pillars. Hallelujah for Christ's marvelous redemption and replacement that can transform fallen, corrupted sinners into pillars!

Do not strive to keep God's law. Christ has redeemed you, and now He is in the process of replacing you, reconstituting you, and rearranging you to make you a living testimony of God, His reflection. If you walk according to spirit and set your mind on the spirit, automatically the righteous requirements of the law will be fulfilled in you and you will become a testimony of God.

IV. BY THE BLOOD

Exodus 24:6 says, "And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar." The blood here was for redemption. Although we are sinful, fallen, and corrupted, we have the blood for our redemption and for the forgiveness of sins. Hebrews 9:22 declares, "And almost all things are purified by blood according to the law, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

The blood in Exodus 24 should have reminded the people of the blood of the Passover lamb. Less than a year before the covenant was enacted at Mount Sinai, the children of Israel put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their houses.

Moses sprinkled the blood on "both the book itself and all the people" (Heb. 9:19) and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded to you," as an indication that the children of Israel were sinful and needed the covering of the blood. This blood came from the

sacrifices, and the sacrifices typify Christ. Therefore, 1 Peter 1:18 and 19 say that we were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

The Old Testament not only reveals the covenant enacted in 24:1-8, but also prophesies of a new covenant. Jeremiah 31:33 says, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." In Ezekiel 36:26 and 27 the Lord made this promise: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them" (lit.). These prophecies indicate that God would make another covenant with His people, a covenant which would make up for any shortage in the first covenant. In Jeremiah 31:33 God promised to write His law in the hearts of the people, and in Ezekiel 36 He pledged to change their nature by giving them a new heart and to regenerate them by putting a new spirit and also His Spirit within them. For the law to be inscribed on our inner being means that we are regenerated, that we receive a new nature, and that God's Spirit is placed within us. The result, as indicated by the enactment of the covenant, is that we are replaced by Christ and spontaneously live in a way which corresponds to the righteous requirement of God's law. Then instead of being those who try to keep the law, we shall be a living reflection of the law.

We have seen that for God's people to become His living testimony and reflection, they had to be redeemed, terminated, and replaced. According to Ezekiel 36, this results from a profound inward change, from receiving a new heart, a new spirit, and the divine Spirit.

All these matters have their counterpart in the New Testament. The New Testament reveals the cross of Christ through which we are redeemed, terminated, and replaced.

The New Testament also reveals that, as those who believe in Christ, we have a new nature, that we have been regenerated to receive a new spirit, and that the divine Spirit, God Himself, dwells in our spirit. Now if we walk according to the mingled spirit, the divine Spirit mingled with our spirit, we shall have a living which is the reflection of God. All this is made possible because we have the precious blood of Christ to cleanse us of our sins. Thus, our sins are cleansed, and we become God's reflection.

V. THE IGNORANCE OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

Exodus 24 exposes the ignorance of the children of Israel. Verse 3 says, "And Moses came and told the people all the words of Jehovah, and all the ordinances: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Jehovah hath said will we do" (lit.). The people spoke in such a foolish way not only once, but twice. Verse 7 says that after Moses "took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people," they said, "All that Jehovah hath said will we do, and be obedient" (lit.). This shows that they were spiritually blind. In their fallen, natural condition they did not see what God was and they did not know themselves. Being self-confident, they had a foolish trust in themselves. Lacking revelation and vision, many of today's Christians are the same as the children of Israel in this respect. We also may still be under the influence of the religious concept and think that we are able to obey the law of God. We all need the altar, the pillars, the sacrifices, and the blood. We need to apply the blood and be replaced by Christ to become a reflection of God.

Exodus 24:1-8 is a picture of God's economy. According to this picture, we should not be observers of the law. Rather, we should be terminated and replaced in order to become pillars as God's living testimony, a reflection of God in Christ. No longer should we speak to God in a nonsensical way, promising to do whatever He says. To make such an oath or pledge to God is to speak in a natural way. We

simply do not have the means to fulfill such a pledge. Our lives are filled with failures and shortcomings. What ground do we have to promise to fulfill God's requirements? We need redemption, termination, replacement, and reconstitution. Instead of making ridiculous promises, we should pray, "Lord, I have nothing, and I can do nothing. But with You there is the possibility for me to be redeemed, terminated, and replaced. Lord, by working Yourself into me You can reconstitute me and make me a living pillar as Your testimony." May we all see that God's desire is to work Himself into us and to reconstitute us with Himself that we may be His testimony. This is the significance of the altar, the pillars, the sacrifices, the blood, and the foolish talk of the children of Israel in Exodus 24.

Religion instructs people to worship God and obey His commandments. Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism all have this emphasis. Such an emphasis, however, is according to man's natural concept. Under the influence of this concept, we may try our best to keep God's laws in order to be approved by Him and to please Him. We may think that God gave the law to His people so that by keeping the law they would maintain a good relationship with Him. This concept is natural and religious, utterly contrary to God's intention in His economy.

We have pointed out that the way Moses enacted the law was very different from what we would expect as the common human way. Instead of commanding the people to be faithful and to observe the law, Moses enacted the covenant by means of the altar, the pillars, the sacrifices, and the blood. By enacting the covenant in this way, Moses seemed to be telling the people that even though they were sinful and corrupted, hopeless in their fallen condition, God could make them pillars to be His testimony. As we have emphasized again and again, this can take place only by the cross of Christ, by the blood of Christ, and by Christ Himself. By the cross we are redeemed and terminated, by the blood we are cleansed from our sins, and by Christ Himself we are replaced, reconstituted, and rearranged.

While we are undergoing the process of being replaced by Christ, we often fail the Lord. But we have the blood to cleanse us.

The Lord is working to terminate us and replace us in order to make us pillars, a reflection of God in Christ. To be such a pillar is to magnify Christ in our daily living. This is God's economy. If we see how the enactment of the old covenant portrays God's economy, we shall turn from the natural, religious concept to God's concept and to His intention in His economy.

In the Ten Commandments themselves we do not see redemption, termination, or replacement. Neither do we see the redeeming blood, the altar, or the sacrifices. Of course, the altar and the sacrifices are mentioned later. Although the law itself does not depict God's economy, the enactment of the law does portray the economy of God. Furthermore, in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 we read of another covenant. According to these chapters, God will inscribe His laws into our inner being, change our heart, regenerate our spirit, and put His Spirit within us in order to replace us, and He will also forgive us and cleanse us. Jeremiah 31:34 says, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Ezekiel 36:25 declares, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." These verses indicate that God will wash us, cleanse us, and forgive us. Thus, we need not be troubled by our failures, sinfulness, and uncleanness.

However, the main point regarding the enactment of the covenant is not that we are forgiven and cleansed. The crucial matter is that God's nature is put into us as the law of life. Just as the law of sin is Satan's nature, so the law of life is God's nature. By putting His nature into us as the law of life, God changes our heart, regenerates our spirit, and imparts Himself into us as the Spirit. In this way we are gradually replaced and reconstituted to become a living testimony, a living portrait, of what God is. This is the way to become God's reflection.

Through the ministry of Paul in the New Testament, we see that God desires to reconstitute us of Christ and thereby make us His testimony. Peter says that we are partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4)—this statement is the highlight of Peter's ministry—but Peter does not say clearly that Christ is in us or that Christ is being wrought into us. Paul is the one who presents the details of how we are terminated by the cross and replaced by Christ to become a living testimony of our God. May all the saints see this revelation and experience the tremendous difference it makes in our Christian life.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVENTY-EIGHT

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 24:3-7; Heb. 9:18-20, 22, 12-15; 8:8-12; Lev. 16:11-16; Ezek. 36:26-27; Matt. 26:27-28; Heb. 13:20-21; 10:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 22:14; 7:14-17

Exodus 24:8 says, "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which Jehovah hath made with you concerning all these words" (lit.). Many Christians may not be familiar with the term "the blood of the covenant" found in this verse. This expression is also used by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 26:28. Even readers of the Bible who are familiar with the term "the blood of the covenant" may not know the true significance of it. This matter comes from the heart of God. However, it has no place in the heart of the natural man. Certain things found in the Bible may correspond to what is in our heart. For this reason, when we come across these things in the Word, we automatically pay attention to them. Other matters, however, are far beyond our concept. When we read of them in the Word, we may not be impressed. This is the case with the blood of the covenant.

Why did Moses in 24:8 speak of the blood of the covenant? Why did the Lord Jesus say on the night He was betrayed, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28)? The Lord's word here seems to be at least a reference to Exodus 24:8. Luke 22:20 speaks of the new covenant. This indicates that in 24:8 we have the blood of the old covenant and that in Matthew 26:28 and Luke 22:20 we have the

blood of the new covenant. Both for the Old Testament and the New Testament the blood was necessary.

I do not believe that many of us have been impressed with the fact that the blood is the blood of the covenant. We may realize that the blood is the redeeming blood, the cleansing blood, the sanctifying blood, and the blood which overcomes the enemy. But have you ever paid attention to the fact that the blood is also called the blood of the covenant? This is a matter of great significance.

THE ENACTMENT OF THE LAW

Before we consider the significance of the blood of the covenant, I would like to point out once again that in Exodus 24 we have the enactment of the law. Prior to this, the law was decreed by God and, through Moses as their representative, it was received by the children of Israel. As we have pointed out, Moses enacted the law in a way that was quite different from what we would expect according to the natural concept. Instead of charging the people to observe the law of God, Moses built an altar. An altar, no doubt, is for sacrifices. But what have sacrifices to do with the law? If we consider this matter, we shall realize that the law does not necessarily involve sacrifices. Why, then, in the enactment of the law did Moses build an altar? The altar points to the need for redemption, termination, and replacement. Because we are fallen, sinful, and corrupt, we need redemption and termination. We also need to be replaced by Christ.

Moses also built twelve pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. These pillars indicate, or signify, that after God's people have been redeemed, terminated, and replaced at the altar, they can become the testimony of God reflecting what He is.

Exodus 24:6 says, "And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar." We have seen that, according to verse 8, Moses also sprinkled the blood on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant." To be sure, the blood came from the

sacrifices offered on the altar. It was the blood and neither the altar nor the pillars which made effective the enactment of the law. The covenant was established by the blood which came from the sacrifices offered on the altar. Thus, the altar with the sacrifices produced the blood for the enactment of the law. In the enactment of the law, the blood is the focus.

Apparently the altar, the pillars, the sacrifices, and the blood are not related in any way to the law. Why did Moses use all these things when he enacted the law? What Moses did in Exodus 24 is related to God's economy.

GOD'S INTENTION IN DECREEING THE LAW

In the foregoing message we placed great emphasis on the fact that it was not God's intention to have His people observe the law He decreed. It is impossible for fallen, sinful, and corrupted people to keep the law. They simply do not have the ability to observe the law of God. Even though God did not intend for the people to keep the law, they presumed that since God had given them His law, they were expected to keep it. Exodus 24:3 says, "All the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Jehovah hath said will we do" (lit.). According to verse 7, the people promised, "All that Jehovah hath said will we do, and be obedient" (lit.). Here we see two different intentions. The intention of God in decreeing the law was different from the intention of the people who received it. These two intentions did not correspond to each other.

If it was not God's intention that His people observe the law decreed by Him, then what was His intention in giving them His law? In decreeing the law, God's intention was to reveal to His chosen and redeemed people what kind of God He is. This is the reason the law of God is called the testimony. As the testimony of God, the law is a portrait or photograph of God. Therefore, the first function of the law is to reveal God.

The second function of God's law is to cause His people to realize that they are fallen and far away from God. As a

sinful and corrupt people, it is not possible for them to please God. They need the Lord's redemption. Only through the redeeming blood can they have contact with God. If through redemption God's people are brought to Him and have contact with Him, they will then have God infused into them. The more contact they have with God, the more they will receive the infusion of God.

THE REDEEMING BLOOD AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD

As the representative of the children of Israel, Moses was brought into the presence of God and stayed there for quite a time. If the redeeming blood had not been in view, God could not have tolerated a fallen, sinful, corrupted man remaining in His presence. Do you think that Moses was perfect? Do you think that he was not fallen, sinful, or corrupt? Moses was fallen, sinful, and corrupt, just as all the other children of Israel were. Then how could such a sinful person stay in the presence of God on the mountaintop for a period of forty days? Moses could remain in God's presence because God had the redeeming blood in view. The blood was the ground which enabled God to permit Moses to come into His presence and stay there. This means that under the redeeming blood Moses could come into the presence of God.

We can prove that it was through the redeeming blood that Moses came into the presence of God by considering the various aspects of the tabernacle and the outer court. Inside the Holy of Holies was the ark with the propitiatory cover (mercy seat). God was on the propitiatory cover, which was over the ark. The law was in the ark. In the Holy Place there were the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar, and in the outer court there were the brass altar and the laver. The children of Israel were not permitted to come into the Holy Place, much less to pass through the veil and enter into the Holy of Holies to stand before the propitiatory cover. The propitiatory cover equals the throne of grace spoken of in Hebrews 4:16: "Let us

therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help." Although we may come forward boldly to the throne of grace, the children of Israel were not permitted to touch the propitiatory cover. The penalty for doing so would have been death. Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, were slain because they "offered strange fire before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1). In burning incense, they used fire from a source other than the altar. Who then was qualified to enter the Holy of Holies and touch the propitiatory cover? The only one qualified to do this was the one who brought with him the redeeming blood from the altar in the outer court. First the blood of the sin offering was shed on the altar. Then this blood was brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the propitiatory cover. This blood, which is the blood of the covenant, brought God's people into His presence.

I repeat, in giving the law to the children of Israel God had no intention that they keep it or observe it. His intention was to show them what a wonderful God He is. His aim was to reveal to them that He is holy, righteous, and full of light and love. It was also His intention to cause the people to realize that, whereas He was holy, righteous, and a God of love and light, they were altogether unrighteous, unholy, and filled with hatred and falsehood. Then if they would realize their sinfulness and fallen condition, they would repent and receive God's redemption. By means of this redemption they, as sinful persons who had been redeemed, would be brought into God's presence and remain there to be infused with Him.

Moses' experience with the Lord illustrates this. Although he was a fallen, sinful, and corrupted person, through the blood he was ushered into the presence of God. Staying in God's presence for a period of forty days, Moses was infused with God and even became His reflection. This was the reason the skin of Moses' face glowed when he descended from the mountain (34:29). It was shining with the element of God infused into him. Because Moses had

been infused with God, he became the reflection of God. God's intention in giving the law was to make all the children of Israel such a reflection of Himself.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF THE DIVINE ECONOMY

The children of Israel, however, had absolutely no understanding of God's intention. But Moses was a man who knew God's heart and His intention. Therefore, he enacted the law not according to the intention of the children of Israel, but according to the intention of God. No matter how foolish and ignorant the children of Israel were, Moses nevertheless enacted the law according to God's way. God's way was to show the people that, in His sight, they were fallen, sinful, and corrupted and that they desperately needed God's redemption and forgiveness. God, of course, was willing to redeem the people and to forgive their sins. After they received redemption and forgiveness, the redeeming blood would bring them into God's presence where they could contact Him, receive Him into them, and be constituted into pillars as a living testimony of God, a reflection of what He is. This is a basic principle which operates in the universe unto this day.

According to this basic principle of the divine economy, the Bible first reveals to us what God is. Second, the Bible enables us to realize that we are fallen, sinful, corrupted, altogether hopeless and helpless. However, the Lord has accomplished redemption for us, and His blood is available to cleanse us and bring us into His presence. Now He is waiting for us to repent, turn to Him, and receive His redemption and forgiveness. According to the revelation in the New Testament, we are not only brought into God's presence—we are brought into God Himself. Oh, the redeeming and cleansing blood brings us into God! This gives us the ground and the standing to receive God, to enjoy God, and to eat and drink of God. Eventually, by partaking of God in this way, we shall become pillars, His living testimony.

THE WAY TO BECOME PILLARS

Do you have the confidence to say that you are a pillar of God? We all should be able to declare, "Yes, I was a fallen, sinful, and corrupted person. Hallelujah, the precious blood has redeemed me and brought me into God. Now I am filled with God and I have become a pillar." If you do not have the assurance to make such a declaration now, I am confident that in eternity you will have the boldness to declare that you are a pillar testifying what God is and reflecting Him.

The way to become such a pillar is the way of enjoyment; it is the way of eating of Him as our life supply and drinking of Him as our living water. By eating and drinking Him we enjoy Him and are constituted of Him. This is God's economy according to the revelation in the Word of God.

The enactment of the law in Exodus 24 was fully according to God's economy. The principle is the same with the Bible as a whole. Just as the children of Israel were foolish in promising to obey all that the Lord had spoken, so many of today's Christians are foolish in thinking that they are able to obey what the Bible says. When many believers read the Scriptures, they think that the commandments contained in the Word are for them to keep. For example, in Ephesians 5:22 and 25 Paul charges wives to submit to their husbands and husbands to love their wives. However, no husband is truly able to love his wife, and no wife can submit to her husband. In my entire life, I have never seen one husband who genuinely loved his wife or one wife who truly submitted to her husband. Rather, every wife is stubborn and rebellious, and every husband is full of love for himself. Thus, we simply are not able to observe the commandments found in the Bible. Instead of trying to carry out these commandments, we should confess, in the light of the revelation in the Bible, that we are fallen, sinful, and corrupt. We need to be convinced, convicted, and subdued so that we may repent and receive God's salvation. Then the redeeming blood of Christ will bring us into the Triune

God, and we shall be infused with Him to become pillars. Only such pillars can love their wives or submit to their husbands.

In this message we have seen the basic concept of God's economy. This concept is not that God's people should keep the law. The law was decreed by God not that His people might observe it, but that through it they might come to know God in a positive way and know themselves in a negative way. Having a proper knowledge of God and of themselves, they would then repent and receive God's redemption. Through the redeeming blood, they would be brought into the presence of God to receive the infusion of God to become pillars as a living testimony and reflection of what God is.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE SEVENTY-NINE

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 24:3-7; Heb. 9:18-20, 22, 12-15; 8:8-12; Lev. 16:11-16; Ezek. 36:26-27; Matt. 26:27-28; Heb. 13:20-21; 10:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 22:14; 7:14-17

In this message we shall cover a number of crucial points related to the blood of the covenant.

I. THE BLOOD INDICATING THAT ONE PARTY IS SINFUL AND THAT THE OTHER PARTY IS WILLING TO FORGIVE

Exodus 24:6 says of Moses that "half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar." According to Hebrews 9:19, Moses "sprinkled both the book itself and all the people." Why was it necessary for Moses to sprinkle the book? The book of the law was clean, but when it was brought down to the people, it became unclean. We have very little realization of how contaminated and defiled we are, and how contagious is the evil within us. Anything we touch immediately becomes unclean. This was the reason that even the book of the law needed the sprinkling of the blood.

The people were foolish in promising to do whatever the Lord required of them. Moses, however, was not foolish. He did not take heed to the promise made by the children of Israel. Instead, he sprinkled the blood on all those foolish ones. He realized that they needed the cleansing of the blood, and he sprinkled them with the blood. This sprinkling of the blood indicates that one party of the

covenanters was sinful and needed forgiveness. It also indicates that God was willing to forgive. Hebrews 8:12 reveals God's willingness to forgive His people: "For I will be propitious to their unrighteousnesses, and their sins I will by no means remember anymore."

II. NO FORGIVENESS WITHOUT THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD

Hebrews 9:22 says, "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Blood was shed in Exodus 24 because of the need for the forgiveness of the people's sins. The very fact that blood is mentioned indicates that the children of Israel needed forgiveness and that God was ready to forgive them. If God had not been willing to forgive the people, He could have set the sacrifices aside and put the people all to death. But blood was shed as the necessary requirement for the forgiveness of sins.

III. THE BLOOD FOR FORGIVENESS OF SIN USHERING THE SINFUL PARTY OF THE COVENANT INTO BETTER THINGS

The blood for forgiveness of sins ushered the sinful party of the covenant, the children of Israel, into better things. We know this by the fact that after God's people failed to observe the law, He came in to make another covenant with them.

A. A New Heart

In the new covenant God pledged to make with His people, He promised to give them a new heart. Ezekiel 36:26 says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." For God to give the people a new heart means that He would change their nature. At the foot of Mount Sinai the children of Israel spoke foolishly to Moses when they promised to do whatever the Lord commanded. God does not want His

people to speak in such a way. His intention is to change their heart.

B. A New Spirit

In Ezekiel 36:26 God also promises to give the people a new spirit. This is to regenerate them and reconstitute them.

C. The Spirit of God

In Ezekiel 36:27 the Lord says, "And I will put my Spirit within you." For God to put His Spirit within His people is for Him to put Himself into them.

Many Christians do not understand the difference between a new heart, a new spirit, and God's Spirit. Many years ago I visited a particular city and gave a message on Ezekiel 36:26 and 27. I emphasized the matters of a new heart, a new spirit, and the Spirit of God. A certain sister was bothered by the fact that I made a distinction between the heart and the spirit. She could not understand the difference. According to her concept, the heart and the spirit were the same. I endeavored to explain that we have a heart with which to love the Lord and a spirit with which to contact Him and receive Him. Taking a Bible in my hand, I told her that although she may love the Bible with her heart, she would have to use her hand to receive it. Eventually she understood that although we may love God with our hearts, we need another organ, the spirit, to contact Him and receive Him. A new heart, a new spirit, and the Spirit of God can all be ours because the blood has been shed for the forgiveness of sins.

D. The Inward Law of Life

Jeremiah 31:33 says, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." Here God promises to put His law into our inward parts and to write it upon our hearts. This

word is quoted in Hebrews 8:10. The law inscribed into our inner being is not the outward law, but the inward law of life.

God promised to give the people a new heart, a new spirit, His Spirit, and the inward law of life. These denote God's nature, God's life, and God Himself. As believers, we have a new heart, a new spirit, and God Himself as the Spirit. We also have the inward law of life.

E. The Ability of Life to Know God

Because we have a new heart, a new spirit, the Spirit of God, and the inward law of life, we have the ability of life to know God. Jeremiah 31:34 says, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." This verse is quoted in Hebrews 8:11. Because we have the inward ability of life to know God, we do not need anyone to teach us.

God Himself has come into us as the Spirit to impart His life and nature to us. God's life and nature have become the inward law of life, an organic element which spontaneously regulates us. A new heart, a new spirit, the Spirit of God, the inward law of life, the ability of life to know God—these are the better things into which the blood for forgiveness of sin has ushered us.

The promises in Ezekiel 36:26 and 27 and Jeremiah 31:33 and 34 have not yet been fulfilled with the children of Israel. They will be fulfilled in them only after the coming back of the Lord Jesus. The children of Israel are still involved in Judaism, and they have not yet received a new heart, a new spirit, the Spirit of God, and the inward law of life. They do not possess the ability of life to know God. But one day, at the time prophesied in Zechariah 12, they will repent. Then the promise will be fulfilled, for God will regenerate them, put a new heart and spirit into them, place His Spirit within them, and also impart to them the

law of life. Hallelujah, as New Testament believers, we have received all these better things already!

IV. THE BLOOD OF ATONEMENT LEADING THE REDEEMED INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES

Even in Old Testament times, the high priests could enter the Holy of Holies through the redeeming blood shed on the altar. Aaron was the first to enter the Holy of Holies in this way and to behold the shekinah glory of God and to be under God's infusion.

Leviticus 16:11-16 is an important passage showing that the blood shed on the altar enabled the high priest to enter into the Holy of Holies. Verse 14 says, "And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times." First the sacrifice was slain at the altar. Then the blood was brought into the Holy of Holies by the high priest. Verse 15 continues, "Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat." This made it possible for the high priest to stay in God's presence and receive the infusion of His shekinah glory. This is to have the enjoyment of God on the basis of the blood shed at the altar and brought into the Holy of Holies.

The blood not only redeemed God's people; it also brought them into the enjoyment of God. David speaks of this enjoyment in Psalm 27:4: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." How is it possible to enter into the house of God and behold the beauty of the Lord's countenance? This is possible only because of the redeeming and cleansing blood. Only on the basis of the blood can we behold the beauty of the Lord in His temple. The redeeming blood actually brings sinful, corrupted people into the enjoyment of God.

V. THE BLOOD OF CHRIST OF THE NEW COVENANT

The blood of the sacrifices in the Old Testament typifies the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ is the blood of the new covenant (Matt. 26:28). This blood has done many wonderful things for us.

A. Redeeming the Believers

The blood of Christ has redeemed us. First Peter 1:18 and 19 say that we have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

B. Bringing the Believers to the Tree of Life

After man fell, the way to the tree of life was closed. Genesis 3:24 says that God placed "at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Hallelujah, the blood of Christ brings us back to the tree of life! Revelation 22:14 says, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city." This refers to the enjoyment of Christ in eternity. But we can share in this enjoyment even today. Through the blood of Christ, we may enjoy the tree of life, which is God Himself as life to us.

C. Leading the Believers to the Waters of Life

The blood of Christ also leads the believers to the waters of life. In John 7:37 the Lord Jesus said that all those who thirst may come to Him and drink. Eventually, out of our innermost being will flow rivers of living water. We all have experienced drinking the water of life through the blood of Christ. Day by day, because of His blood, we may eat of the tree of life and drink of the water of life. According to Revelation 7:14, those who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" will be guided by the Lamb to "springs of waters of life"(v. 17). This indicates that for eternity we shall enjoy the living water through the blood of Christ.

D. Ushering the Believers into the Holy of Holies

Hebrews 10:19 and 20 say, "Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh." This word is a fulfillment of Leviticus 16:11-16. In Leviticus 16 we have the type, but in Hebrews 10 we have the reality, the fulfillment of the type. From Hebrews 10:19 and 20 we see that the blood of Jesus opens the way for us to come into the Holy of Holies. Because the Lord has opened the way and brings us in, we may enjoy God in the Holy of Holies and daily be infused with Him.

E. Enabling the Believers to Serve the Living God

Hebrews 9:14 says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." The blood of Christ makes it possible for us to serve the living God. How could we serve God if we were still dead? There is no way for lifeless people to serve the living God. Praise Him that through the redeeming blood we have life and have been brought into His presence to serve Him!

F. Bringing the Believers into the Temple of God to Enjoy God for Eternity

Finally, the blood of Christ brings us into the temple of God, where we shall enjoy Him for eternity. Those who are brought into God's temple through the cleansing of the blood of Christ are pictured in Revelation 7:15 and 16: "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits upon the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall not hunger anymore, neither shall they thirst anymore,

neither shall the sun beat upon them, nor any heat." This is the eternal enjoyment of God in His temple made possible because of the blood of Christ, the blood of the new covenant. This precious blood brings us into the enjoyment of God Himself as our life and life supply for eternity.

I can testify that I treasure the blood of the covenant. What blessings we have by this blood! We have God Himself, the divine life, the divine nature, the inward law of life, and the ability of life to know God. The blood of the covenant brings us into the presence of God, into the infusion of God, and into the eternal enjoyment of God. What we experience today is a foretaste of the full enjoyment to come.

How sad that so many Christians pay little or no attention to the blood of the covenant! In principle, Christians are the same as the children of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai: they promise God that they will obey Him and they try to keep His law. What ignorance of God's economy and of the blood of the covenant! The blood of Christ is not only the cleansing blood, the blood which washes us from our sins. It is the blood of the covenant which brings us into God, into the divine life and nature, into the inward law of life and the ability of life to know God, and into the infusion, transfusion, and enjoyment of God both now and in eternity. This is the function of the blood of the covenant.

Hebrews 13:20 says, "Now the God of peace who brought up from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of an eternal covenant." This verse indicates that it was by the blood of the eternal covenant that God raised Christ from among the dead. All that God has ordained has been covenanted to be our portion. This portion is actually God Himself with His nature, life, attributes, and virtues.

It is extremely difficult for the natural mind to grasp the idea that through the blood of the covenant God becomes our portion. To say that the Lord shed His blood for our sins is not too difficult for the human mind to

comprehend. To some extent, we have such an understanding within us. We realize that we are sinful and need something to wash away our sins. But to think that the blood has opened the way for us to come into God is far beyond our understanding.

When I was a young Christian, I read a number of articles on the precious blood of Christ. These articles pointed out that the blood redeems us, cleanses us, and overcomes the enemy. Certain articles even stated, although in a superficial way, that the new testament was enacted through the blood. But I did not read one article or hear one message which said that the blood of Christ brings us into God to enjoy Him as our portion.

Many missionaries to China did an excellent job in helping the Chinese turn from the ethical concept of doing good to realize their need to have their sins washed away by the blood of Christ. In his classical writings Confucius refers a few times to God, speaking of Him not in biblical terms, but with the title of heavenly king or the heavens. This is similar to the word in Luke 15 about the prodigal son sinning against heaven. Confucius said that if we offend the heavenly emperor, or the heavens, there is no way for us to be forgiven. According to his concept, instead of asking for forgiveness, we should try to change ourselves and improve. This was a basic philosophical and ethical thought among students of Confucius: forget the past and try your best to improve. Agreeing that it was a good thing to forget the past and try to improve, the missionaries proceeded to convince many Chinese that it was still necessary to settle the wrongs committed in the past and to be forgiven. They pointed out that even if we can improve, we still need to clear our past. Furthermore, only the Lord Jesus can take care of this. Confucius may teach us to improve ourselves, but he cannot solve the problems of our past. For this, the cleansing of the blood of Jesus is necessary.

In 1 Corinthians 2:9 Paul says that God had prepared for those who love Him things which eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and which have not entered into the heart of

man. Who would ever imagine that a sinner could enter into God and inherit Him? This enjoyment is according to the wisdom of God.

When the covenant was enacted in Exodus 24, the blood was used to sprinkle the people. This indicates that the people were to forget their concept of trying to observe the law and realize that God's intention was to make them pillars by bringing them into Himself and by placing Himself into them. According to Jeremiah 31, God would even impart His law, signifying His life and nature, into His people.

Every kind of life functions according to the law of its nature. For example, an apple tree brings forth apples; it never produces bananas. It would be useless and utterly nonsensical to decree a law to an apple tree and say, "You must remember that, as an apple tree, you should never produce bananas. You must always bring forth apples." An apple tree has a life with a nature. As long as the tree grows normally, it will bring forth apples, for it is regulated inwardly by the law which corresponds to its life and nature.

In promising to make a new covenant with His people and to write His law on their hearts, God seemed to be saying, "I gave you an outward law to show you who I am and what I am. However, you did not understand My intention. You thought that I gave you the law that you might observe it. But you cannot observe My law unless I come into you and become your life and nature. Then spontaneously you will have a living that corresponds to My law." Just as an apple tree automatically produces apples according to the law of an apple-tree life and nature, so we automatically fulfill the requirements of God's law by having His life with His nature imparted to us. This is the reason Paul says in Romans 8:4 that the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled not by those who try to keep the law, but in those who walk according to spirit. The spirit according to which we walk is not in the heavens; it is the mingled spirit, the divine Spirit mingled with

our regenerated human spirit. This spirit is now our inner life.

According to Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36, God promised to impart His law into us, to change our heart, to regenerate our spirit, and to put His Spirit within us. As a result, we have the inward law, which is actually God Himself, to produce in us not only what God requires, but also what God is. This was the reason the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "You, therefore, shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). When the divine life within us grows to perfection, we shall be perfect even as our Father is perfect. Notice that here the Lord does not charge us to observe all the requirements; He tells us to be perfect as the Father is perfect.

The blood of the covenant is not mainly for forgiveness; it is primarily for God to be our portion. God has ordained and predestinated us to enjoy Him. This enjoyment has also been covenanted to us. What enacted this covenant? It was enacted by the blood of Jesus Christ, the blood which brings us into all the divine blessings. According to Matthew 26:28, the Lord Jesus took the cup and said, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." According to Luke 22:20, the Lord Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." In 1 Corinthians 10:16 Paul refers to the cup as the "cup of blessing." This cup of blessing is the covenant enacted by the blood. The blood of the new covenant is the blood which enacted the covenant of blessing. The covenant is the cup and also the blessing as our portion. This portion is God Himself for our enjoyment. This concept of the blood far surpasses our natural understanding. Yes, the blood cleanses us from our sins. But even more important than this, the blood brings us into the very God who is our portion for us to enjoy.

The blood is spoken of in Exodus 12, Exodus 24, and Leviticus 16. In these chapters we have the blood of the Passover lamb for redemption, the blood of the sacrifices for the enactment of the law, and the blood of the atonement by

which man could enter into the Holy of Holies, contact God, and be one with Him. In the New Testament we see that the Lord Jesus shed His blood on the cross. This is typified by the blood of the Passover lamb in Exodus 12. With the blood shed on the cross the Lord enacted the new testament. This is typified by the blood in Exodus 24. Ultimately, the blood of Christ brings us into the fullness of God as our eternal enjoyment. This aspect of the blood, the blood of the eternal covenant, is typified by the blood in Leviticus 16.

The blood brings us into the Holy of Holies; that is, it brings us into God. When the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies, it was not his purpose to observe the law. On the contrary, because of the blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies, he could enjoy God, behold His beauty, and receive His infusion. Enjoying God in this way is what produces a man of God.

In Revelation 7 those who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" are before the throne of God, in the temple of God, and are brought to springs of waters of life. Furthermore, Revelation 22:14 says, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city." Here we see that through the washing of the blood, we have the right to come to the tree of life and enter into the city, New Jerusalem. The tree of life and the city are the ultimate aspects of God as our portion. If we view the Bible as a whole, we shall see that the blood of the covenant brings us into the full enjoyment of God as our portion both now and forever.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHTY

THE VISION OF GOD IN A TRANSPARENT AND CLEAR HEAVEN AND THE STAY WITH GOD UNDER HIS GLORY

Scripture Reading: Exo. 24:1-2, 9-18

The book of Exodus may be divided into two sections: chapters one through twenty-four as the first section and chapters twenty-five through forty as the second. The second section, composed of sixteen chapters, is primarily a record of visions concerning the tabernacle. These chapters contain very little history. Here we see the details concerning the design, materials, and construction of the tabernacle as God's dwelling place on earth.

Many Christians have read through the book of Exodus without being deeply impressed with the fact that the goal of God's salvation is to bring His redeemed people into His dwelling place on earth. God's aim in His salvation is to make us His dwelling place. This crucial matter must be emphasized repeatedly until it makes a deep impression on us. Therefore, we need many messages covering the details of the wonderful, heavenly visions described in chapters twenty-five through forty of Exodus.

During the last century and a half, Bible teachers among the Brethren have written a number of books about the tabernacle and its furniture, including the ark, the incense altar, the showbread table, the lampstand, the laver, and the brass altar. However, when I was with the Brethren I was never told that today's church is God's tabernacle.

In the Bible the word tabernacle is used in three ways. First, it refers to the tabernacle built at the foot of Mount Sinai. Second, it denotes the Lord Jesus as God's

tabernacle with man. John 1:14 says that the Word, which is God, "became flesh and tabernacled among us." Through incarnation, Christ became God's tabernacle on earth. Hence, the tabernacle in Exodus is a type of Christ as the tabernacle of God. Third, the tabernacle refers to the New Jerusalem, the ultimate, consummate, enlarged tabernacle of God which includes God's redeemed people from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The goal of God's salvation revealed in the book of Exodus is to bring His people into the tabernacle as His dwelling place.

In this message we shall consider 24:1-2, 9-18. When we come to this portion of Exodus, we are at the threshold of the heavenly visions contained in the following chapters. Unless we come to this threshold we shall not be able to see the heavenly visions.

In order to arrive at the threshold in Exodus 24, it was necessary for God's people to experience all the events recorded in the previous chapters. The people were slaves in Egypt under Pharaoh's tyranny, but God prepared Moses and then sent him as an apostle to rescue the people. In chapter twelve we have the Passover; in chapter fourteen, the crossing of the Red Sea; in chapter fifteen, the waters at Marah and the twelve springs and seventy palm trees at Elim; in chapter sixteen, the heavenly manna; in chapter seventeen, the living water from the cleft rock and the warfare with Amalek; and in chapters nineteen through twenty-three, the decree of the law and of the ordinances at Mount Sinai. God's people had to pass through all these experiences before they could stand at the threshold in chapter twenty-four.

In chapter nineteen the people were brought into fellowship with God at Mount Sinai. However, at first this fellowship was rather obscure, for it took place in the darkness of a thick cloud. Exodus 19:9 says, "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud," and 20:21 says, "Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was."

Although the people were brought into fellowship with God at Mount Sinai, they did not know what kind of God

He was, and they did not realize that they were a fallen, sinful, and corrupted people. They did not have the revelation either of God or of themselves. Instead, they had a natural concept of God and also of themselves. But as a result of their stay at Mount Sinai, eventually through their fellowship with God they were enlightened.

We have pointed out that when the law of God was enacted, Moses built an altar, and sacrifices were offered with the shedding of blood. This blood, the blood of the covenant, was then used to sprinkle the people. The altar, the sacrifices, and the blood indicate that God regarded His chosen people as having been redeemed, terminated, and replaced. Then, as indicated by the twelve pillars set up by Moses, they could become pillars standing before God to reflect Him as His living testimony.

I do not believe that God's people had this realization concerning themselves. They did not know the significance of the altar, the sacrifices, the pillars, and the blood. Today when either Jews or Christians read Exodus 24, they are veiled and do not understand the significance of these things. But God had a full understanding of what was taking place. He knew what He had planned and what He was doing through the enactment of the covenant. He realized that He had gained a people who were redeemed, terminated, and replaced to become His living testimony.

In 1 Corinthians 10:5 Paul indicates that the condition of God's people in the wilderness was actually very poor: "But with most of them God was not well pleased, for they were strewn along in the wilderness." Nevertheless, when Balak hired the Gentile prophet Balaam to curse the children of Israel, Balaam declared, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel" (Num. 23:21). Balaam also said, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" (Num. 24:5). Balaam had been hired to curse God's people, but he blessed them instead. By this we can see that, in the sight of God, His redeemed people were without fault. This

should teach us to not speak negatively of the saints. Such negative speaking may be offensive to the Lord. It may seem to us that the condition of the believers in a certain locality is not good, but God regards them as those who have been redeemed, terminated, and replaced. In the eyes of God, all His redeemed people have been terminated by the cross and replaced by Christ and with Christ. In Exodus 24 we have such a redeemed, terminated, and replaced people.

I. THE VISION OF GOD IN A TRANSPARENT AND CLEAR HEAVEN

The scene in chapter nineteen was dark and threatening. But suddenly, in chapter twenty-four the thick cloud passes away, and the sky becomes clear and beautiful. Exodus 24:9 and 10 say, "Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of transparent sapphire, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness" (lit.). Beneath God's feet they saw something that had the appearance of a large transparent stone. Because human words cannot describe this scene, verse 10 says that they saw "as it were a paved work of transparent sapphire, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness." The words "as it were" indicate that human language cannot adequately describe this marvelous sight. Moses could only liken what they saw under God's feet to a transparent sapphire stone, which was like the body of heaven in clearness.

Verse 11 goes on to say, "They looked upon God, and did eat and drink" (lit.). While they were looking upon God, they ate and drank. As they experienced a most wonderful sight, they were refreshed by eating and drinking. Those on the mountain saw something no one had ever seen before. God's redeemed, terminated, and replaced people were given a wonderful view of Him, even of His feet.

To see such a vision of God is to worship Him. Exodus

24:1 says that those who went up the mountain with Moses were to worship afar off. But in the following verses nothing further is said about the worship of God. If we read this chapter carefully and thoughtfully, we shall wonder when they worshipped Him. The worship in this chapter consists of beholding God and of eating and drinking. This is true worship, the worship God desires. God does not want us to worship Him by prostrating ourselves before Him. He wants us to enjoy Him and to worship Him out of this enjoyment. Have you ever been in a chapel or cathedral where the people worshipped God by eating, drinking, rejoicing, and enjoying the Lord? This kind of worship is altogether contrary to our religious concept. Yet this is the worship described in verse 11: "They looked upon God, and did eat and drink." This was the way they worshipped Him.

We should not try to analyze the Bible according to our natural mentality, and we should not try to systematize biblical doctrine. John 1:18 says that no one has seen God at any time, but Exodus 24 says that the seventy elders and the others who were with Moses saw God. They even saw God's feet. Moses does not say that a paved work of transparent sapphire was under God's feet; he says that what was under His feet was "as it were" a work of transparent sapphire. In Colossians 1:15 Paul speaks of the invisible God. How can the invisible God be seen? Questions like these remind us that the Bible is divine, spiritual, and mysterious and cannot be systematized or analyzed by the natural mind.

We need to apply the record in Exodus 24 to our spiritual experience. We have been redeemed, we have experienced the termination of the cross, and, at least to some extent, we have experienced being replaced by Christ. We can testify that we have been brought into fellowship with God. At first, this fellowship is somewhat obscure. But eventually, during the course of our fellowship with the Lord, the sky becomes clear and even beautiful. Then it seems that a certain spiritual element comes into view.

This element can be compared to transparent sapphire, which is as clear as the body of heaven. When we experience such fellowship it is difficult to say where we are. This is beyond words. If you have experienced the Lord in this way, it is a sign that your fellowship with Him has been enriched and uplifted.

We have pointed out that in chapters nineteen and twenty the fellowship between the children of Israel and God was obscure, for a cloud of thick darkness was present. But in chapter twenty-four, after the blood of the covenant was sprinkled on the people, the sky immediately became clear. There was no thunder and no sense of threat, tension, or uneasiness. The entire atmosphere became tranquil and peaceful. Have you not entered into such an atmosphere in your fellowship with the Lord? Have you not experienced this kind of situation in your contact with Him? I can testify that many times I have had a vision of the Lord like that described in Exodus 24. The sky above me was clear, and in front of me there seemed to be something like a beautiful, transparent sapphire like the body of heaven in its clearness. There, in such a spiritual environment, I saw God.

When some hear us testify of seeing God in this way, they may find fault and say, "This is absurd and even heretical. The Bible tells us that no one has ever seen God. God is invisible. How can you claim to have seen Him?" The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Certainly He was not in error in saying this, and He did not contradict the Bible. In my fellowship with the Lord I like to have a clear sky and to see a work of transparent sapphire underneath Him. I am happy when there is nothing between me and the Lord, when there is no cloud, shadow, or obscurity and everything is clear. Those who have had a certain amount of experience with the Lord can bear witness to what I am speaking concerning the vision of God in a transparent and clear heaven.

Only when we are in such a clear atmosphere can we receive the heavenly vision of the building of God's dwelling place. This was necessary for seeing the vision of the tabernacle in the Old Testament, and it is necessary also for seeing the vision of the church today. The vast majority of the people, however, were at the foot of the mountain and could not see this view. They might have seen something, but they did not have as full a view as did those who were with Moses on the mountain.

Those who see God according to the scene described in Exodus 24 are "nobles" among the human race. They are particular people who have entered into a particular state. They have seen God in a transparent and clear sky. This experience itself is very noble. Have you not had such a noble time with the Lord? Many of us can testify of having had this kind of noble experience. Those who have had this experience of seeing the Lord under a transparent and clear sky will not trade it for anything in the world. Nothing can compare with it.

If you have not had the kind of spiritual vision described here, it may indicate that you have not yet come to Mount Sinai in your experience with the Lord. You need to come to Mount Sinai and stay there with the altar, the sacrifices, and the blood. Then in your fellowship with the Lord, the sky will eventually become clear and transparent. It will seem that in front of your eyes there is something which resembles the body of heaven in its clearness. Then, in such an environment, you will see God and the heavenly vision concerning the desire of His heart to have a dwelling place on earth. The reason there is virtually nothing said among Christians today concerning God's dwelling place is that many believers have never come to Mount Sinai to receive the vision of God's dwelling place. Many of those who are truly saved have not yet come up the mountain to behold the Lord in a transparent and clear heaven.

II. THE STAY WITH GOD UNDER HIS GLORY

In 24:12 we see that God called to Moses and said,

"Come up to me into the mount." The Lord seemed to be saying, "Moses, the others see Me, but they must worship afar off. They cannot be close to Me. I want you to come to Me and stay with Me." Here we have something which goes beyond beholding God under a transparent and clear sky. In our spiritual experience first the sky becomes clear over us. Then in this clear atmosphere we receive a call from God to come to Him. Although this experience is very real, words cannot define it or illustrate it. If you have had the experience, you understand what I am talking about.

Exodus 24:13 says, "And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua; and Moses went up into the mount of God." Joshua was one who helped Moses and ministered to him. I have studied this chapter again and again, but I have not been able to find out where Joshua was during the time Moses was with the Lord receiving "tables of stone, and a law, and commandments" (v. 12). In verse 14 Moses told the elders, "Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you." The words "us" and "we" indicate that Joshua did not remain with the elders. But what did he do, and where did he go? Verse 15 says, "And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount." Not a word is said about Joshua. The fact that we are not able to locate him has an important spiritual significance. In our experience we may come to the stage of seeing God under a clear heaven without reaching the stage of remaining with God under His glory. At such times it may seem that we cannot be located. Others do not know where we are, and we ourselves do not know. We may desire to return to the experience of the clear sky, but not be able to do so. On the one hand, we cannot go back to the experience of seeing God under a transparent sky; on the other hand, we have not yet entered into the glory. The reason is that in our spiritual experience of fellowship with God we are still Joshua; we are not yet Moses. Just as we are not able to locate Joshua in the remainder of Exodus 24, we also cannot be located by others and we cannot tell where we are. This is an aspect of the experience of fellowship with God.

In Exodus 24 the majority of the people were at the foot of Mount Sinai, some were on the mountain far off from the Lord, and Moses was on the top of the mountain under God's glory. This difference with respect to the degree of distance from the Lord can be illustrated by the tabernacle with the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. The people at the foot of the mountain were in the outer court, around the altar. The seventy elders, along with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and Hur, were on the mountain, in the Holy Place. Moses on the mountaintop was in the Holy of Holies, where the shekinah glory was. Later, after the tabernacle had been built, the high priest could enter into God's glory in the Holy of Holies, where he could receive revelation and vision from God concerning His people. The principle is the same in Exodus 24 with Moses on the mountaintop under God's glory receiving commandments from God that he may teach the people.

It is true that in the Lord's recovery today we all are priests and that we have neither clergy nor laity. Nevertheless, actually and experientially there are differences among us concerning our fellowship with the Lord. Many saints are in the outer court with the altar and the sprinkled blood, others have entered the Holy Place to enjoy fellowship with God to a certain degree, and some are in the Holy of Holies, under God's glory.

Moses was actually the only one to receive the direct vision of the tabernacle. The seventy elders who worshipped afar off did not see the vision directly. During the forty days Moses was with the Lord on the mountaintop, they were waiting. Enjoying a transparent sky and a clear view of God, they ate and drank for forty days, while God gave Moses vision after vision concerning the design of the tabernacle. It took forty days for Moses to receive a detailed vision of God's dwelling place.

If you had been there at the time, would you prefer to receive the vision of the tabernacle or would you rather be with those afar off waiting for Moses? Waiting exhausts a person's patience. The nobles on the mountain waited for

Moses, but the people at the foot of the mountain became impatient and demanded that Aaron make a god for them to worship. Thus, during the time Moses was on the mountaintop, the people practiced idolatry. While the people were practicing idolatry at the foot of the mountain, Moses was on the top of the mountain dwelling with God under His glory and receiving the vision of His dwelling place. Praise the Lord for the vision through which we know the desire of God's heart. God's desire is to have a dwelling place on earth constituted of Christ and constituted according to Christ.

We need to consider the picture portrayed in Exodus 24 and ask ourselves where we are in our fellowship with the Lord. Are we with the people at the foot of the mountain, are we with those on the mountain, or are we Moses on the mountaintop? Perhaps some of us are Joshua who cannot be located, because in our experience we are between the transparent sky and the glory of God on the mountaintop. Among believers today there are different degrees of fellowship with the Lord and different degrees of closeness to Him. The majority are in the outer court; that is, they are at the foot of the mountain. Others, a much smaller number, are on the mountain; that is, they are in the Holy Place. A few have come to the mountaintop; that is, they are in the Holy of Holies dwelling with God under His glory.

It is very difficult to describe the appearance of God's glory. In 24:16 and 17 the glory is likened to a cloud and also to a consuming fire. Actually God's glory is neither a cloud nor a fire. We cannot describe fully what the glory of God is. This reminds us that, as human beings, we can understand spiritual things only to a limited degree. It is simply not possible for us to comprehend these things in a full way. Although what we have covered in this message lies beyond human utterance, we can at least partially comprehend that in Exodus 24 we have the vision of God in a transparent and clear heaven and also the stay with God under His shekinah glory. Here we receive the revelation

that the desire of God's heart is to have a dwelling place with man on earth.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHTY-ONE

THE VISION OF THE TABERNACLE AND ITS FURNITURE CONCERNING THE MATERIALS AND THE PATTERN

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:1-9

During the last century and a half, many books have been written on the typology of the tabernacle. The Bible teachers among the Brethren in particular devoted a great deal of time to the study of the tabernacle. Today we stand on the shoulders of those Bible teachers. Although many of the books written on the tabernacle are quite good, there is a great lack in them. For the most part, these books were written from a doctrinal point of view. There is not much emphasis on Christian experience.

In his writings John twice refers to the tabernacle. John 1:14 says that the Word, which is God, became flesh and tabernacled among us. When Christ was in the flesh, He was God's tabernacle, God's dwelling place on earth. Prior to Christ's incarnation, God dwelt in the tabernacle built at Mount Sinai. Then God moved with the tabernacle and later consolidated it with the temple. Thus, the tabernacle and the temple should be regarded as one dwelling place, not two.

Centuries before Christ was born, God left the temple and returned to the heavens. In Ezekiel 10 we see that the glory of the Lord left the temple and, in a sense, never returned. Hence, there was a period of several hundred years when God did not dwell on earth. Nevertheless, God did not altogether give up the temple until the Lord Jesus

was rejected by God's people. According to Matthew 23:38, the Lord Jesus said, "Behold, your house is left to you desolate." From that time onward the temple was no longer the house of God; it had become the house of the degraded Israelites. It had been the house of God, but it was now called "your house." The prophecy that their house would be left to them desolate corresponds to that in Matthew 24:2, which was fulfilled when Titus destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The time the Lord Jesus was on earth was a transitional period. Before the temple made with hands was destroyed, Christ was incarnated and became the real tabernacle of God. When Christ came forth to minister, God dwelt in Him, not in a temple made by human hands. One day, the Lord Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). John 2:21 says, "He spoke of the temple of His body." Both the temple made by human hands and the body of Jesus as God's temple were to be destroyed. This was a transitional period, a time of change from the material temple to Christ as God's temple. The Lord realized that by His death on the cross, the temple of His body would be destroyed. But on the third day, in His resurrection, He would raise it up again. At that time the tabernacle, the temple, would be enlarged into the church. Therefore, the church today is the tabernacle. Ultimately, this tabernacle will consummate in the New Jerusalem as God's eternal dwelling place. Concerning the New Jerusalem, Revelation 21:3 says, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall tabernacle with them." The New Jerusalem will be the enlargement of the church, and the church is the enlargement of Christ. Christ is the tabernacle, the church is the enlarged tabernacle, and the New Jerusalem will be the consummate tabernacle. The tabernacle not only typifies Christ as an individual person, but also typifies the church as a corporate dwelling place of God.

As we have pointed out, the book of Exodus may be divided into two main parts: the first part consists of chapters

one through twenty-four, and the second part, chapters twenty-five through forty. The first twenty-four chapters are a record of preparation, and the last sixteen chapters are a record of the building of the tabernacle. The first nine verses of Exodus 25 are crucial. When we begin to read this chapter, we may not pay adequate attention to these verses. We may have little interest in the different materials mentioned. In 25:1-9 the emphasis is not on the furniture—the ark, the incense altar, the lampstand, the showbread table, the laver, and the altar—but on the tabernacle. In verse 8 the Lord says, "And they shall make for Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." The sanctuary here is the tabernacle as God's dwelling place. This sanctuary typifies the church. According to the context, we can see that this sanctuary is not an individual person; rather, it is a corporate people, for God speaks of dwelling "in their midst."

These verses are related to the vision of the tabernacle, not to the vision of the ark. To be sure, the ark typifies the individual Christ. The tabernacle, however, typifies both the individual Christ, the Head, and the corporate Christ, the Body. The New Testament reveals clearly that the individual Christ is the Head. But this Head must have a Body. The Body of Christ is the church. In Ephesians 1:22 and 23 Paul speaks of the church which is Christ's Body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. In Exodus we have not only the ark-Christ, but also the tabernacle-Christ, not only the individual Christ, but also the corporate Christ.

If we apply the type of the tabernacle only to Christ individually, everything about it may be objective and doctrinal. There will be very little place for spiritual experience. But if we realize that the vision in Exodus is not merely a vision of Christ as the ark but also of the tabernacle as the enlargement of Christ, the church, we shall realize the need for experience. To repeat, in Exodus we have not only the ark, but also the tabernacle. This means that we have not only Christ, but also the church. In 25:8 God did not say, "They shall make for Me an ark that I may be expressed." He said,

"They shall make for Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst."

It is vital for us to see that the second section of the book of Exodus is concerned with the tabernacle as a type of the church as the enlargement of Christ. In order for Christ to be enlarged into the church, we need to have many spiritual experiences. For this reason, as we consider chapters twenty-five through forty of Exodus, our emphasis will be more on experience. This certainly does not mean that I reject the doctrinal aspect. The point here is that the emphasis is on Christian experience more than doctrine. My burden is to show that this portion of the Word is full of experiences.

Again and again, I wish to emphasize that in chapters twenty-five through forty of Exodus we have a vision of the tabernacle not merely as a type of Christ, but especially as a type of the church, Christ's enlargement. In order for Christ to have the Body, the church, as His enlargement, we need to have much experience of Christ. If we do not experience Christ, there is no way for Him to be enlarged, to have the Body, or to have the tabernacle as the enlargement of the ark.

Both the ark and the standing boards of the tabernacle were made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. This indicates that the tabernacle is the enlargement of the ark. In the same principle, the church is the enlargement of Christ. The process by which this enlargement comes into being requires the genuine experience of Christ.

I. SEEING THE VISION

Seeing the vision of the tabernacle is a matter of tremendous significance. However, many readers of Exodus have little interest in chapters twenty-five through forty. They may not be concerned with the materials used in building the tabernacle.

Moses received the vision of the tabernacle when he was on the mountaintop under the glory of God. God removed

the veil, and Moses saw a vision of heavenly things. Hebrews 8:5 says, "Moses was warned when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, He said, that you make all things according to the pattern that was shown you in the mountain." In order to see this vision, Moses had to make a journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai.

A. After the Initial Experiences

In order to see the vision of the tabernacle, we need to pass through certain initial experiences: the Passover (Exo. 12), the crossing of the Red Sea (Exo. 14), Marah and Elim (Exo. 15), the enjoyment of manna (Exo. 16), the enjoyment of the living water out of the cleft rock (Exo. 17), and the war against Amalek (Exo. 17). The crossing of the Red Sea signifies baptism, which separates us from Egypt, the world, and delivers us from the tyranny of Satan. The experiences at Marah and Elim point to the dealing of the cross and the fullness of resurrection. After we have passed through the experiences of manna, the living water out of the cleft rock, and the war against Amalek, we arrive at Mount Sinai, the mountain of God, where we may receive the vision. If we lack the initial experiences, we shall not be able to see the vision recorded in chapters twenty-five through forty. We praise the Lord that most of us in His recovery have had these initial experiences.

All the initial experiences are related to Christ. Every one of these experiences is an experience of Christ. But however good these experiences may be, they are still rather elementary. When we come to chapter twenty-five, we have an advance in our spiritual experience.

B. In Intimate Fellowship with God

1. Receiving the Revelation of What God Is

After God's people passed through the initial experiences, they entered into intimate fellowship with God at Mount Sinai. During the course of their fellowship with

God, they received a revelation of what He is. This revelation was portrayed by the law of God. The law is a portrait, a photograph, showing what God is. Suppose you tell me about a brother whom I have not met and then show me a photograph of him. By the photograph I get some idea of what this brother is like. In a sense, the brother's picture is a revelation of him. In the same principle, the law was a revelation of what God is. It revealed that He is holy and righteous and that He is a God of light and love.

Although the Ten Commandments with all the supplementary ordinances give us a clear view of what God is, many Christians do not have this understanding when they read Exodus 20 through 23. Instead, they pay their attention to the commandments as requirements for them to keep. Few Christians today realize that the law is a revelation of God.

The law also exposed the condition of God's people. God is holy, but the people were worldly and common. God is righteous, but the people were filled with unrighteousness. God is a God of light and love, but the people were filled with darkness and hatred. Because the people were exposed, they urged Moses to go to God on their behalf. They realized that because God is holy and righteous, they needed a mediator.

Many of us can testify that when we have intimate fellowship with God and receive His revelation, we are exposed. We sense that we are fallen, sinful, and corrupt and desperately in need of the blood. It is good to receive the revelation of what God is and to be exposed.

2. On the Mountain of God

Moses saw the vision when he was on the mountain of God. If we would see the vision of the tabernacle, we also need to be on the mountaintop with the Lord.

3. By Staying with God

When Moses was on the mountain of God, he stayed with God under His glory for forty days and forty nights. In

the Bible, the number forty signifies tests or trials. It is difficult for us to stand God's tests. We prefer to see the vision very quickly, within the space of a few minutes. But to see a revelation from God requires a long period of time. It took Moses forty days and forty nights to see this vision. From my experience I can testify that it has taken me forty years to see this vision. Little by little throughout the years, the Lord has shown His revelation. We should not think that we can see the divine revelation in a hasty way.

Some experiences we had in the Lord's recovery years ago demonstrate that it takes time to see God's revelation. In 1964 some brothers decided that they would move to different cities in the United States to spread the church life. At first I agreed that such a move would be good for the Lord's recovery. A few weeks later, however, I encouraged the brothers to wait for a period of time, perhaps three years. Some brothers nevertheless went out to different places and tried to have the church life. Each situation was a failure, and the brothers came back convinced that they should wait a period of time before trying to spread the church life. Three years later, in 1967, I encouraged the saints to wait for another three years. Some brothers could not pass this test of time. Unable to wait any longer, they went out on their own. History has proved that all those who went out in this way were not successful. This indicates that spiritual things take time. In order to see the vision Moses had to spend forty days and forty nights under the glory on the mountaintop.

The forty days Moses was with the Lord on the mountaintop were a test to the children of Israel. They were not able to wait for Moses to come down from the mountain. They demanded that Aaron make them a god. The people took golden rings and brought them to Aaron, and he fashioned them with a graving tool into a calf (32:3-4). Then the people said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (v. 4). Instead of seeing a vision, the people, unable to bear the test of time, made a god for themselves. They could look at the golden calf and

declare that this was the god that rescued them from Egypt. Actually, it was an idol. The situation is the same in principle among many Christians today. They may boast that they have seen a vision. Actually, what they have is nothing more than a calf, a self-made idol. Not able to take the time needed to see God's revelation, they make idols for themselves.

II. CONCERNING THE MATERIALS

In 25:1-7 God revealed to Moses the materials, the basic elements, to be used in building the tabernacle. All the materials represent basic elements we should use in building the church. Every element, however, is lacking among today's Christians. Instead of caring for the materials which correspond to God's revelation, Christians are taught how to organize and how to use psychology. In the Lord's recovery we do not teach psychology or organization. We need to know all the heavenly materials in a thorough way.

A. Referring to the Virtues of Christ's Person and Work

All the materials described in 25:1-7 refer to the virtues of Christ's Person and work. This means that these materials signify different aspects of Christ. They signify the virtues of what He is in His Person and of what He has done and will do in His work.

B. A Heave Offering

Exodus 25:2 says, "Speak to the sons of Israel, that they take for Me a heave offering; from every man whose heart urges him you shall take My heave offering." According to the Old Testament, an offering is something created by God and prepared by Him, yet gained, possessed, and enjoyed by us. It refers to something created by God which becomes our experience. Suppose, for example, that an Israelite offered a lamb to God. Although the lamb was created by God and prepared by Him, the one offering it had to gain it

in a rightful way. He could not steal a lamb and then offer that stolen lamb to God. After possessing the lamb in a proper way, he had to enjoy it and experience it. Then he could offer this lamb to God. Presenting an offering to God is a matter of experience. All the materials prepared by God must become our possession, enjoyment, and experience. Then, through our experience, we shall have the right and the position to offer these materials to God as a heave offering.

In the Old Testament a heave offering refers to an offering lifted up before God. Furthermore, the heave offering and the wave offering belong together. Actually, these two offerings are a pair. The heave offering refers to the uplifted Christ in the heavens, the Christ in ascension. If we would have a heave offering, we must experience the heavenly Christ. The wave offering typifies Christ in resurrection. As the resurrected One, Christ is able to move. He is active and powerful. He was buried in the tomb, but He broke through the bondage of death and came out of the grave. Death cannot retain Him.

Here in 25:2 the heave offering, not the wave offering, is mentioned. The fact that the materials were to be presented as a heave offering means that these materials refer to what we have experienced in resurrection. All the virtues of Christ's Person and work are offered to God as a heave offering in the character of resurrection, in the position of the heavenlies, and for the building of God's dwelling place on earth. The materials we offer must have the character of resurrection and a heavenly position. This indicates that the church is built with materials which are filled with the character of resurrection and altogether in a heavenly position.

We have pointed out that the materials used in building the church must be in the character of resurrection and in a heavenly position. If we see this, we shall not take the way of organization. Organizing is natural; it has nothing to do with resurrection. The material for the building of the church must be full of the character of resurrection. Even

our love should not be a natural love, but a love in resurrection. When you are about to express love for a saint, you need to discern whether this love is natural or in resurrection. You need to ask whether your love is according to your natural taste, tendency, and purpose, or is of the character of resurrection. If it is in resurrection, this means that the natural life has been crucified and buried. Love that is in resurrection is automatically in a heavenly position. If we have a wave offering, this offering is also a heave offering. It is something which is in resurrection and which is in the heavens. All the materials must be the virtues of Christ's Person and work that have been possessed, enjoyed, and experienced by us and offered to God in resurrection as a heave offering. Thus, our experiences need to be in resurrection and in the heavenlies.

The church is not built with any natural materials, and it is not even built with Christ directly. Rather, it is built with the Christ who has become our experience. The church is built not merely with the Christ prepared by God, but with the Christ possessed, enjoyed, and experienced by us in resurrection and in the heavenlies. We need a rich experience of Christ's resurrection and ascension. We should not be natural or earthly. On the contrary, we should be in resurrection and in the heavenlies.

As we shall see, there were twelve kinds of materials used in building the tabernacle. These materials were of three categories: minerals, plants, and animals. In the Bible, animal life signifies redemption. Before the fall, God did not ordain that man should eat animals. Since man had not yet sinned, there was no need for redemption as signified by the eating of animals. The taking of animal life with the shedding of blood signifies redemption.

Plant life in the Bible signifies generating life, producing life. Before the fall of man, there was the need only for this generating life. This was the reason that before the fall it was necessary for man to eat only of the plant life. Man needed generating life for production. But after the fall, he also needed animal life for redemption.

In the Bible minerals are used for building and for fighting. Of course, fighting may also be related to building.

Christ's life is first for redemption; second, for generation; and third, for building. Christ's life is a redeeming life, a producing life, and a building life. God's goal is neither redemption nor regeneration. God's goal is the building. For us to be built up together as God's dwelling place, we need both the redeeming life and the generating life. If we would be built up, we need the generating life, and if we would be regenerated, we need the redeeming life.

The reason the minerals are mentioned first in 25:1-7 is that the building is God's goal. We have seen from verse 8 that God's desire was that the people make a sanctuary for Him. This sanctuary, this building, requires certain minerals. In the building of the New Jerusalem, the ultimate consummation of God's building, there will not be the plant life or the animal life. There will only be minerals: the pearl gates, the golden streets, and the wall and foundations of precious stones. But in order to arrive at God's goal, we need both the redeeming life and the generating life. Only when we have Christ's redemption and generation can we have God's building. Therefore, the three categories of materials are minerals, plants, and animal life to show that the redeeming life is for the generating life and that the generating life is for the building.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHTY-TWO

THE VISION OF THE TABERNACLE AND ITS FURNITURE CONCERNING THE MATERIALS AND THE PATTERN

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:1-9

The more I study the book of Exodus, the more I love it. Through my reading of this book, I have discovered that it is a book not only on the exodus, but also on God's dwelling place. The title of the book—Exodus—was not given by Moses. It was given by others years later. This title is not all-inclusive, for it covers only part of the contents of the book of Exodus. In the first part of this book we are told how God redeemed His people and enabled them to make their exodus out of Egypt and thereby to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh and the slavery under the Egyptians. As far as the first part of the book is concerned, the title Exodus is comprehensive. But although this title is good, it can cause difficulty for many readers, because it may give them the impression that this book is merely concerned with coming out from under the tyranny of Satan. This title does not include the goal, or the consummation, of this book. Consummately, the second book of the Old Testament is on the building of God's dwelling place on earth.

In this book many of today's Christians care only for the exodus, not for the building of the tabernacle. In those places where the Scriptures are studied and expounded, can you hear a message concerning the building of God's dwelling place on earth in this age? Many believers have

the concept that the building of God is in the heavens and only in the future.

The book of Exodus has forty chapters, not only fourteen chapters. According to the title of this book, Exodus should conclude with chapter fourteen, after the exodus from Egypt was accomplished and the people were safely on the other side of the sea, dancing and praising the Lord. In the experience of many Christians, the book of Exodus does conclude with chapter fourteen. Before you came into the recovery, how many chapters, according to your experience, were there in the book of Exodus for you? Many Christians have gone only as far as chapter twelve; others, to chapter fourteen; and certain seeking Christians, all the way to chapter twenty-four. The more experienced believers have enjoyed the waters at Elim, the manna from heaven, and the living water from the cleft rock, they have engaged in the warfare against Amalek, and they have been brought into intimate fellowship with God at Mount Sinai. Some Christians do treasure Exodus 15 through 24 and have even written hymns to express their experience.

In this Life-study we have given many messages on chapters nineteen through twenty-four, chapters which present a complete view of the fellowship between God's redeemed people and the redeeming God. At the beginning of this fellowship in chapter nineteen, there was a cloud of thick darkness. But in chapter twenty-four the atmosphere is changed, and the sky becomes clear. Exodus 24:10 says, "And they looked upon the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of transparent sapphire, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness." Such a vision was unprecedented. Never before had anyone seen God under a clear and transparent heaven. Here we are told that those on the mountain with Moses not only saw the God of Israel, but that they even saw God's feet.

At this point I wish to say that we should follow the pure word of the Bible and not the traditional, systematized teachings concerning the Trinity. We know from

Genesis 18 that Abraham had a wonderful experience with God. God came to Abraham in the form of a man. Abraham served Him a meal and even washed His feet. How could God eat, and how was it possible for a man to wash God's feet? Is God physical or spiritual? If you say that He is merely spiritual, I would ask how He could appear to Abraham in human form in such a way that Abraham could wash His feet. Some Christians have too much trust in their theological knowledge. Let them explain how God could walk physically on earth in Genesis 18. Many Christians know that God first took the form of man with the birth of the Lord Jesus. But how should we understand Genesis 18? Did God not appear to Abraham in the form of man? What Abraham saw was not a ghost or a phantom. He talked with a real man and even washed his feet and served him a meal.

The more we consider matters such as these, the more we realize that we are not able to understand thoroughly the revelation in the Bible concerning the Triune God. He is mysterious and wonderful. He is beyond our imagination and cannot be explained adequately by the traditional teachings concerning the Trinity. Instead of trying to systematize the biblical revelation of God, we should simply believe what the Bible says. Genesis 18 tells us that God came to Abraham in the form of man, and in Luke 2 we see that the Son of God was born in a manger at Bethlehem. We simply believe the Bible and in the God revealed in it.

In Exodus 24:10 we are told explicitly that Moses and those with him on the mountain saw the God of Israel. This sight was marvelous, beyond our ability to describe. They saw God under a transparent and clear sky.

We have pointed out that God's people experienced different degrees of fellowship with the Lord at Mount Sinai. Moses was on the mountaintop under the glory of God; the elders were on the mountain where they beheld the God of Israel; and the majority of the people were at the foot of the mountain. Because of their immaturity, they were not

allowed to ascend the mountain. However, God did not reject them. He brought them into His fellowship, but He required them to keep a certain distance. Only Moses entered into the glory and stayed with God under this glory for forty days and forty nights. What a wonderful fellowship Moses enjoyed with God!

The situation of the children of Israel at Mount Sinai is a portrait of our situation as believers today. We have been redeemed through the Passover, we have made our exodus from Egypt, and we have crossed the Red Sea. We have also had the experiences at Marah and Elim. In the wilderness we have enjoyed the manna and have drunk the living water from the cleft rock. Furthermore, we have engaged in the warfare with Amalek. Many of us can testify that we have been brought to the mountain of God and have entered into fellowship with the Lord. No longer are we in Exodus 19 or even in Exodus 20 through 23, with the Ten Commandments and the ordinances, which reveal God's economy. We are enjoying the fellowship with God described in chapter twenty-four. However, we need to ask ourselves where we are in this fellowship. Are we with the majority of the people at the foot of the mountain, with the elders on the mountain beholding the Lord under a clear sky, or with Moses on the mountaintop under the glory of God?

We have pointed out in a foregoing message that the situation of God's people at Mount Sinai can be compared to the tabernacle with the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. The people could be in the outer court, but only the priests were permitted access to the Holy Place. Furthermore, only the high priest was allowed to enter into the Holy of Holies to be in the shekinah glory of God and receive His speaking, His revelation. The principle is the same in Exodus 24. The majority of the people were at the foot of the mountain. This can be compared to the outer court of the tabernacle. The elders were on the mountain. This can be compared to the Holy Place. Moses, who was truly functioning as a high priest, was on the mountaintop.

This can be compared to the Holy of Holies. During the forty days and forty nights he stayed under God's glory, Moses received God's revelation.

Our understanding of the typology of the tabernacle is dependent upon the writings of those who have preceded us. We owe much to them and we are thankful for them. But because we are on their shoulders, we are able to see more than they did, especially concerning the experiential aspect of the tabernacle.

Before the children of Israel could receive God's revelation, they had to leave Egypt, cross the Red Sea, and have the experiences at Marah and Elim and of the manna, the living water from the cleft rock, and the warfare with Amalek. As a result of all these experiences, they were brought into fellowship with God. They had the position with the right angle to receive the revelation concerning God's dwelling place. We should consider the typology of the tabernacle and its furnishings not only from the point of view of doctrine, but also from the perspective of spiritual experience. In all these messages on the tabernacle, we shall place particular emphasis on the significance of the tabernacle for Christian experience. Yes, we care for the doctrinal points, but we care even more for experience.

In the previous message we began to consider the materials used for the building of God's dwelling place. We saw that all the materials refer to the virtues of Christ's Person and work and that all were offered to God as a heave offering. The materials were not only created by God and prepared by Him; they were also gained, possessed, enjoyed, and experienced by God's chosen people. First God had to create all the materials and prepare them. Then the people had to gain them, experience them, and offer them to God as a heave offering.

Although most versions do not adopt the rendering "heave offering" in 25:2, the Hebrew word definitely denotes a heave offering. We have seen that the heave offering refers to Christ in ascension, to the ascended

Christ, and that it is always accompanied by a wave offering, which signifies Christ in resurrection, the resurrected Christ. The wave offering comes first and then the heave offering. The wave offering is a type of Christ in resurrection. In resurrection, Christ is able to move, to "wave." Christ was buried, but the grave could not hold Him. In resurrection He became the "waving" One and emerged from the tomb. When we offer to God the resurrected Christ, the "waving" One, we offer Him as the wave offering. We know from the book of Leviticus that certain parts of an animal, a breast or a thigh, were often waved before the Lord as a wave offering. Other parts were heaved up to Him as a heave offering. Christ is not only the wave offering but also the heave offering, not only the resurrected One, but the ascended One, the One who has ascended to the heavens, far above all. We need to possess Christ, gain Christ, enjoy Christ, and experience Christ both as the resurrected One and as the ascended One. On the one hand, we need to know Christ in resurrection. Like Paul, we should aspire to know Christ and "the power of His resurrection" (Phil. 3:10). On the other hand, we must experience Christ in ascension. Paul speaks of the ascended Christ in Ephesians 1:20 and 21, where he says that God raised Christ from among the dead and seated Him "at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named." The more we experience the ascended Christ, Christ in the heavenlies, the more He becomes our possession. He becomes our particular treasure, which we then offer to God as material for the building up of His dwelling place. This is to offer the materials as a heave offering.

We need to be impressed with the fact that the heave offering in 25:2 implies spiritual experience. We should not offer the materials to God in an objective way, in a way without experience. To repeat, first the materials must become our possession and enjoyment. Once they belong to us, they become our possession, and we may keep them, or

we may willingly offer them to God. We should say, "Lord, because we love You, we want to offer up our precious treasure and possessions as a heave offering for the building of Your dwelling place."

The materials listed in 25:1-9 are twelve in number and of three categories: minerals, plants, and animals. We have seen that the plants refer to the generating life, the animals to the redeeming life, and the minerals to the building life.

C. Of Minerals

Concerning minerals, we read of gold, silver, bronze, onyx stones, and "stones to be set for the ephod and for the breastplate." These materials were not used for decoration or ornamentation; they were all used for building. The onyx stones and other precious stones were used for the shoulder-pieces and the breastplate worn by the high priest. When the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to minister before the Lord, he wore the ephod with the shoulder pieces and the breastplate. Using the Urim and the Thummim along with the breastplate, the high priest could receive a message from God. The breastplate worn by the high priest was not an ornament. In a sense it may be regarded as a divine "typewriter" used to spell out messages from the Lord. The point here is that the breastplate was built with minerals, with precious stones set in gold.

The fact that the minerals were mentioned as the first category indicates that whatever Christ is and whatever He has done and is doing are all for the building. The building is God's goal. The consummation of the divine revelation is the New Jerusalem built with gold, precious stones, and pearls. The Bible is altogether consistent concerning this. The minerals in 25:1-9 are for God's building. In 1 Corinthians 3:10 and 11 Paul says that as a wise master builder he laid the foundation, and this foundation is Jesus Christ. Then he says, "Let each one take heed how he builds upon it" (v. 10). In verse 12 Paul goes on to say, "But if anyone

builds on the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble." Notice that in this verse Paul speaks of minerals: gold, silver, and precious stones. Instead of building with gold, silver, and precious stones, many Christians use wood, grass, and stubble, materials that have no value and are good only for burning. Furthermore, in 2 Timothy 2:20 Paul says that in a great house there are vessels not only of gold and silver, vessels unto honor, but also wooden and earthen vessels, vessels unto dishonor. In the Life-study of 2 Timothy we pointed out that this great house does not signify the church as the house of God, but it signifies Christendom. In today's Christianity only a small number are using precious minerals to build God's house. The majority of so-called Christian workers use wood, grass, and stubble. The best of these workers use wood; the others use straw or stubble.

The minerals in 25:1-9 signify Christ as the building material ordained by God and prepared by Him. Although Christ is this building material, God does not use this material directly to build up His dwelling place. Instead, God gives Christ to us that we may gain Him, enjoy Him, and experience Him. Like Paul in Philippians 3, we need to pursue Christ, gain Christ, and take possession of Christ. Eventually, Christ becomes our possession both in resurrection and in ascension. In the meetings of the church we should then offer to God as a heave offering the Christ we have experienced and who has become our special treasure.

When we release our spirit by functioning in the meetings, we need to have Christ as our content. If we merely shout praises to the Lord without Christ as our content, we shall not be offering the surplus of Christ to God. I encourage all the saints to function in the meetings and to release the spirit. But this function and release must be filled with Christ. This Christ is not objective; He is the subjective Christ experienced by us and gained by us as our treasure. In the meetings we should offer this precious Christ to the Father as the material for the building of the church.

If we see that Christ is the material for God's building, offered to God as a heave offering, we shall mourn over the pitiful situation among Christians today. Many pride themselves on their education and theological knowledge. A few years ago a certain person boasted to me of the large number of people in his organization who have doctoral degrees. But Moses was not a theologian, and the Lord Jesus did not have a doctoral degree. On the contrary, in appearance he was an unlearned Nazarene. Others marveled and said concerning Him, "How does this man know letters, having never learned?" (John 7:15). The Lord Jesus even rebuked the so-called learned ones, calling them a "brood of vipers" (Matt. 23:33). These religious leaders had poisoned God's people, but the Lord Jesus came to heal the people. Those who boast of their degrees and theological knowledge actually have only a superficial knowledge of the Bible. Have they seen that Christ is the material for God's building? Praise the Lord that Christ is the precious material for the building of God's dwelling place!

We have pointed out that the high priest wore a breastplate made of precious materials when he came into God's presence. If we experience Christ as the building materials and put Him on as the breastplate when we come into God's presence, we shall receive God's revelation. The revelation comes through the Christ we have experienced and who becomes the building material worn by us.

The Lord's recovery is absolutely different from today's religion. We are not concerned with knowing the Bible merely in letters. We are here to carry out God's economy in His recovery. It is impossible for there to be reconciliation between the recovery and Christianity. In the recovery we repudiate the wood, the grass, and the stubble. But these inferior materials are not only welcomed by many Christians—they are appreciated, praised, exalted, and advertised. Many Christian publications even make a display of wood, grass, and stubble. In the recovery we would rather have a small amount of gold, silver, and precious

stones than a huge pile of wood, grass, and stubble. We deeply regret the fact that the spiritual eyes of many religious leaders and Bible teachers are blind. They may study the Word in letters, but they do not know the mysterious reality of verses such as 25:1-9. We do not care for the traditional teachings, but for God's revelation in His Word.

1. Gold, Signifying Christ's Divine Nature

The first of the minerals mentioned in 25:1-9 is gold. Gold signifies Christ's divine nature and it is pure and everlasting. In Jesus, the Nazarene, there was the divine nature, although this "gold" was concealed within Him.

We need to experience Christ's hidden divine nature. For example, in all that a brother does as a husband, father, or employee he should have Christ's divine nature hidden within him. Others may wonder about him and sense that there is something weighty and valuable with him.

The religionists were puzzled by the Lord Jesus. They knew that He was a carpenter, and some even knew His brothers. Nevertheless, they wondered how He could do and say certain things. The cause of their wonder was the divine nature concealed within this Nazarene.

Even the young people among us need to experience Christ in His pure and everlasting divine nature. Then they will give the impression to others at school or in the neighborhood that they possess something weighty and valuable. In their speech and behavior they will convey the impression that they have something admirable within. I thank the Lord that many of our young people do bear such a testimony.

What we experience and possess of Christ's divine nature we should bring to the meetings and offer to God. Those who are still in high school should not think that they are too young to present such a heave offering to God for His building. I can testify that when the young people function in this way, I am edified and built up. We all need the experience of

the gold, the divine nature of Christ. Then we need to offer this element of the Christ we have experienced to God as a heave offering. We need to experience Him, possess Him, and then offer Him to God for the building of His dwelling place.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHTY-THREE

THE VISION OF THE TABERNACLE AND ITS FURNITURE CONCERNING THE MATERIALS AND THE PATTERN

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:1-9

In the two previous messages we have considered the vision of the tabernacle and its furniture. The children of Israel could see this vision only after they had had the initial experiences of the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, Marah and Elim, the enjoyment of manna, the enjoyment of the living water out of the cleft rock, and the war against Amalek. Then the people were brought into fellowship with God at Mount Sinai, where they received the law of God. On the one hand, the law revealed what kind of God our God is. On the other hand, it exposed the people's fallen, sinful, and corrupt condition. The vision of the tabernacle was given to Moses on the mountaintop when he was staying with God under His glory for forty days and forty nights.

We have pointed out that in 25:1-9 three categories of materials are mentioned: minerals, plants, and animals. All the materials refer to the virtues of Christ's Person and work, and all were presented to God as a heave offering for the building of His dwelling place. Gold, the first of the minerals mentioned, signifies Christ's divine nature. In this message we shall go on to consider the other minerals, the plants, the animals, and the pattern.

2. Silver, Signifying Christ's Redemptive Work

Silver, the second of the minerals, signifies Christ's redemptive work. We should not understand this redemptive work in a superficial way. Redemption involves termination and replacement. We were created by God for Himself and chosen by God to be for Him. However, because we became fallen and lost, we need Christ to redeem us. As fallen creatures, we also need to be terminated. Thus, on the cross Christ crucified us; He terminated us. Furthermore, through His redemption Christ imparts Himself into us to be our replacement. All this—redemption, termination, and replacement—is signified by the silver. The silver testifies that we have been redeemed, terminated, and replaced.

In our daily life we need to bear the testimony that we are redeemed, terminated, and replaced people. Even the young people in high school should have such a testimony. Others should be able to say, "These young people are very human, but there is something wonderful about them. They are special in a way that I find difficult to explain." The more we are replaced by Christ, the more wonderful we shall be. Praise the Lord that Christ has redeemed us and terminated us and that He is now in the process of replacing us! This is the experience of Christ as our silver.

When we experience Christ as silver and possess Him in this way as our treasure, we should bring this treasure to the church meetings. Then as we function by releasing our spirit, we should offer to God in worship the silver we have gained, enjoyed, and experienced. This is the kind of worship God desires. He does not want us to prostrate ourselves before Him, and He does not want to listen to the performance of a choir. The worship which is acceptable to God is worship in which we offer to Him as a heave offering the Christ we have experienced and possessed. Such worship will not only be acceptable to God; it will also build up the saints. Meeting by meeting, we all need to be built up in this way.

3. Bronze, Signifying the Testing of God's Judgment

Bronze signifies the testing of God's judgment. Christ as a man was tested again and again. He was tested throughout His life on earth, and He was tested when He stood before the priests, Herod, and Pilate to be tried and sentenced to death. Moreover, Christ was tested by God. Every day of His life Christ was under God's testing.

In typology bronze signifies the testing of God's judgment. This is the reason the altar in the outer court was built with bronze instead of gold. The altar is a means and a place of testing. As such, it typifies the cross as both the means and the place where we are tested by God.

The brass serpent lifted up on a pole in Numbers 21:9 was a type of Christ as the One who was made in the likeness of the flesh of sin and lifted up on the cross to be judged by God. Just as the serpent was lifted up on the pole, Christ was lifted up on the cross to be tested by God. In every way He stood God's test and passed through it.

Daily we also are under God's testing. The kind of life we have at home, at work, and at school is subject to God's test. What a brother says to his wife will be tested by God, and the attitude of a young person toward his teachers and classmates at school will also be tested. God will even test our motives, intentions, and all that is in our heart. As we experience God's testing, we gain not only gold and silver, but also bronze. This causes us to be a different kind of person, a person who is not careless about the way he behaves, speaks, and expresses his attitudes. A person who experiences the bronze is a person under the cross, under God's test.

Under God's testing, a young person may be examined by Him when he is about to say or do a certain thing at school. A brother will also experience God's testing in relation to his wife. Suppose he intends to say a strong word to her. At that point the Lord may test him, and he will realize that he should not utter such a word. Instead of saying a negative word to his wife, the brother may say a positive

word to the Lord, telling Him, "Lord, how wise and how good You are! I love You, Lord, and I love my family." Through such an experience, the brother will gain some experience of bronze.

First we should gain bronze from our daily experience with the Lord. Then we should bring it to the meetings and, as we function by exercising our spirit, offer it to the Lord as a heave offering. This bronze, experienced and possessed by us, is also material used for the building of God's tabernacle.

4. Onyx Stone, Signifying Christ's Redemptive Work as the Base for the Spirit's Transforming Work

The onyx stone mentioned in 25:7 was red in color. This onyx stone signifies Christ's blood shed for redemption as a base for the Spirit's transforming work. Christ's redemption is the basis for the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

5. Other Precious Stones, Signifying the Transformation of the Spirit

The other precious stones signify different aspects of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit based on Christ's redemption. The experience of the onyx is the basis for the experience of the other precious stones. As we have pointed out, this means that Christ's redemption is the foundation for the transforming work of the Spirit.

We all need to experience the Spirit's transformation. For example, we need to love our parents, relatives, neighbors, and especially the brothers and sisters in the church. God, however, does not accept our natural love. In His sight, our natural love is clay, not precious stones. We may feel very positively about our natural love, but to God it is loathsome and uncomely. Our love needs to be transformed. We need a love that is transformed by the Spirit with Christ's redemption, termination, and replacement as the basis. Then we shall love others with a pure love, a love

which is the product of the precious transforming work of the Holy Spirit. To love others in this way is very different from loving them in a natural way.

We should not be satisfied with our natural morality, ethics, character, or behavior. All these things need to be transformed. First we must be redeemed, terminated, and replaced and then transformed metabolically by the Holy Spirit. This is the experience of the precious stones.

If we bring these precious materials to the meetings of the church and offer them to God as a heave offering, we shall help to build the church as God's dwelling place. Then our meetings will be filled with the offering of such precious materials and a wonderful work of building will take place among us.

D. Of Plants

We have seen that the plant life is for generating, for producing. Christ is the essential factor of the generating and producing life. His life is very productive, and He imparts His life to us. According to John 12:24, He was the unique grain of wheat which fell into the ground and died in order to produce us as the many grains. This is Christ as the producing, generating plant life.

1. Linen, Signifying Christ's Conduct

The first expression of this generating life is linen, which signifies Christ's conduct.

a. Blue, Signifying Heavenly

Exodus 25:4 speaks of "blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen." Linen in the color of blue signifies that Christ's generating life not only imparts life to us, but also produces a character and behavior which are heavenly, as signified by the color blue. When others see us, they should have the sense that we are not earthly, but have instead a heavenly nature. We have a heavenly appearance, the appearance of a blue sky.

b. Purple, Signifying Royal

Linen with the color of purple signifies royalty. In our behavior we should show forth a royal, or kingly, character. Even the students in high school should be dignified and kingly in their behavior. There should be a certain dignity and royalty in what they say and do.

To have a heavenly and royal character in our conduct does not come from our efforts to improve ourselves. We must turn from the religious, philosophical, and natural teachings concerning self-improvement. We need to experience Christ as our heavenliness, royalty, and dignity and grow until we become those who have the experience of blue and purple linen in their daily living. Just as a prince in a royal family is a person of dignity, we also should be dignified people, not by trying to improve ourselves, but by experiencing Christ and growing in Him. We all need the experience of the blue and purple linen.

c. Scarlet, Signifying Redemption

For the tabernacle there was also the need for scarlet colored linen. Scarlet signifies the blood of Christ shed for our redemption. We should always bear the testimony that we realize we are sinful and need the cleansing of the precious blood of Christ. Often we need to turn to the Lord and say, "Lord, cleanse me. Even if I am not conscious of any sin, I know that I am still unclean. Lord, I am natural, so much in the old creation, and I am still fleshly. How I need Your cleansing!" Others may admire our heavenly appearance and royal character, but we should have the realization that we are sinful, always in need of the cleansing of the Lord's precious blood. This is to have the experience of scarlet linen.

Suppose the attitude of a young person toward his parents is that he is always right and that others are wrong. He may say, "Father, I have never offended you. I love everyone in the family, and I am always willing to do things for others." To have this kind of attitude is to be lacking the scarlet colored linen. Anyone with such an attitude may be

represented by black clothing, but certainly not scarlet clothing.

Others can testify that when I pray I ask for the Lord's cleansing. Even though I may not feel defiled, I know that I am still in the old creation. Unconsciously I may still be in the natural life in many respects. Because this is the condition of us all, we need the scarlet. We need the Lord's cleansing.

d. Fine, Signifying Even, Perfect, and Beautiful

Verse 4 indicates that the linen used for the tabernacle was not only blue, purple, and scarlet, but was also fine. To be fine in our conduct and behavior means that we are balanced in every way. For example, when we laugh or cry we should be balanced. We should not laugh or cry excessively or without limitation. However, there are some who laugh or weep without restraint, without any balance in the emotion. It is also possible to love others too much. To love without the proper limitation is a sign that we are coarse in our love, that our love is not balanced.

Our conduct should not only be balanced, but also perfect and even beautiful. A certain person may be very humble, but his humility may not be beautiful. We need a beautiful humility. All our virtues and attributes should be like fine linen—even, perfect, and beautiful.

The more we consider through prayer and fellowship the significance of the fine linen in the color of blue, purple, and scarlet, the more we shall realize what a revelation is unfolded here and what experience is implied.

2. Acacia Wood, Signifying Christ's Human Nature

The acacia wood used in building the tabernacle signifies Christ's human nature, strong in character and high in standard. Christ's humanity is not like cotton; on the contrary, it is like acacia wood. In His humanity, the Lord Jesus was strong in character and high in standard. However, the humanity of many believers is more like cotton than like acacia wood.

3. Oil, Signifying the Spirit of Christ

The "oil for the lamp" (v. 6) signifies the Spirit of Christ. We should continually be under the Lord's anointing. We should be the fine flour mingled with oil and thoroughly saturated and permeated with oil. Whatever we are and whatever we do, we should be saturated with the Spirit of Christ.

The Spirit of Christ can be distinguished from the Spirit of God. However, this does not mean that there are two divine Spirits. The Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit of God, but also the Spirit of Christ, including all the virtues of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ. We need to experience the continual anointing of this Spirit. Then we shall have the oil to offer to God for the building of the church.

4. Spices, Signifying the Effectiveness and the Sweet Odor of Christ's Death and Resurrection

Exodus 25:6 speaks of "spices for the anointing oil and for the incense of perfumes." These spices typify the effectiveness and sweet odor of Christ's death and resurrection. These spices were used both for making the anointing oil and for making the incense which was burned before God.

We need to experience these spices in our daily living. First, Christ's death will be effective in dealing with negative things. It will repel all the "bugs" and drive them away. Certain spices function as antibiotics to kill spiritual germs. When we experience the effectiveness of the spices, in our living there will be the fragrance of Christ's death and resurrection. Others will sense that Christ's death and resurrection are effective in us and are also producing a sweet-smelling aroma.

E. Of Animals

Christ's life is also typified by the animal life. As we have pointed out, the animal life is for redemption. Before man fell, God did not ordain for man to eat the flesh of

animals. Man could live on the fruits, vegetables, and nuts prepared by God in His creation. But because man fell and became sinful and corrupt, he needed the shedding of blood for redemption and also the flesh of animals for nourishment and sustenance. This indicates that sinful man needs the redeeming Christ, the Christ who shed His blood on the cross and sacrificed His life to redeem us. With Christ's redemptive life we are nourished, fed, and sustained so that we may live.

1. Goats' Hair, Signifying Christ Made Sin for Us

Exodus 25:4 and 5 refer to three aspects of the animal life: goats' hair, rams' skins, and porpoise skins. According to Matthew 25:33 and 41, the goats signify sinners. Hence, goats' hair signifies Christ being made sin for us in His redemptive work (2 Cor. 5:21). God caused Christ to be made sin on our behalf. Although He was not sinful and did not have the sinful nature, in appearance He looked like a goat.

2. Rams' Skins Dyed Red, Signifying Christ's Redemption through the Shedding of His Blood

The rams' skins dyed red signify Christ's redemption accomplished through the shedding of His blood. Christ was the ram who died on the cross for our sins. He was offered to God on the altar and shed His blood to wash us from our sins.

3. Porpoise Skins, Signifying Christ's Strength in Bearing Sufferings

The porpoise skins are strong, tough, and long-lasting. They signify Christ's strength in bearing sufferings. The skins were used as a covering for the tabernacle and served to protect the tabernacle. Today we have Christ as the porpoise skins to cover and protect us. He bears every kind of suffering, injury, and difficulty. In the life signified by the

animal life Christ first redeemed us and then became a covering and protection that can withstand trials, attacks, troubles, and sufferings.

We should experience Christ in the aspects of this animal life and then bring Him as signified by the goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, and porpoise skins to the meetings and offer Him to God for the building up of the church and of all the saints.

If we compare the materials used in building the tabernacle with those used by Christians, we shall see that most of today's Christians have gone far astray from God's revelation. In 25:1-9 we have God's revelation, not a man-made religion. We regret to say that among Christians there is much more of man's religion than of God's revelation.

III. CONCERNING THE PATTERN

Exodus 25:8 and 9 say, "And they shall make for Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I am showing you, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture; even so you shall do." The pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture signifies the church and all the details of the church life. This pattern was shown by God to Moses when Moses was on the mountaintop under God's glory.

Recently I have emphasized a need for us to see the central vision concerning Christ and the church in God's economy. This does not mean, however, that we pay attention only to the vision and neglect the many practical aspects of the church life. No matter how clear we may be concerning the vision of God's economy, we still need to clean the meeting hall, cut the grass, and care for many other aspects of the church life.

As indicated by the tabernacle and its furnishings, the church life is not simple. We must pay attention to many details indicated by the types in order to have a proper church life and the proper fellowship with all the saints, including the weaker ones and those who come to the

church meetings only occasionally. The tabernacle with its furnishings signifies the church life with all its details.

The pattern revealed to Moses was according to the heavenly things, the things in the heavens (Heb. 9:23). Both the design of the tabernacle as a whole and of all its furnishings was according to the heavenly things. The pattern of the tabernacle and its furnishings is a full and complete type of the church life.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHTY-FOUR

THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:10-11

Exodus 25:10 says, "And they shall make an ark of acacia wood." According to verse 22, this ark was called "the ark of the testimony." In the book of Exodus the testimony refers to the law. God regarded the law decreed through Moses on Mount Sinai as His testimony.

The photograph of a person is a testimony of that person. Suppose I have never met a certain brother. When someone shows me a photograph of that brother, I see a testimony of what that brother is like. As a description of the brother, his photograph is his testimony.

We know from the first chapter of Genesis that in His work of creation God accomplished many things. However, Genesis 1 does not reveal what kind of God our God is. We do not know from this chapter whether He is a God of love or of hate, a God of darkness or of light. We do not know whether He is holy or common, righteous or unrighteous. The law was given that we might have a portrait, a description, of God and thereby understand what He is. For this reason, God considers the law as His testimony. As a testimony of God, the law is a type of Christ. Christ is the living portrait of God, His living definition and description. Therefore, Christ is the real testimony of God.

Just as Christ is the testimony of God, so the church is the testimony of Christ. The church is a portrait, a picture, of Christ and is therefore the testimony of Christ.

We have seen that the ark is called the ark of testimony or the ark of the testimony. The meaning is the same

whether or not the definite article is used. Furthermore, the tabernacle is called the tabernacle of the testimony (38:21), because the testimony is in the ark, and the ark is in the tabernacle. In these messages on the last sixteen chapters of Exodus, when we speak of the ark of the testimony or the tabernacle of the testimony, we should understand that the word testimony refers to the law. However, it refers to the law as a definition of God, not as commandments for people to keep.

In the messages on Exodus 19 and 20 we emphasized the fact that, contrary to the concept of both Jews and Christians, the law was given not for us to keep, but to reveal what kind of God our God is. As the testimony of God, the law is indeed lovable. Romans 7:12 says, "So that the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." In Romans 7:14 Paul says that "the law is spiritual." The law is holy, just, good, and spiritual because it is a portrait of God. We should love the law because it is a picture of our God.

God's testimony, the law, was placed in the ark for safekeeping. The ark can be compared to a safe used to keep important documents or personal valuables. In the tabernacle of the testimony there was a "safe," a box, where the law, God's testimony, was kept. Thus, the ark of the testimony was a divine safe for the preservation of God's "photograph."

I. THE FIRST ITEM OF THE FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE

The ark of the testimony was the first item of the furniture of the tabernacle. The tabernacle had a number of important furnishings: the altar and the laver in the outer court; the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar in the Holy Place; and the ark in the Holy of Holies, the inmost chamber of the tabernacle. The first of these furnishings was the ark. As the first item, it occupied the place of preeminence. We know from 40:2 and 3 that it was

in the tabernacle, and from 40:20 and 21, that it was in the Holy of Holies.

To have a proper understanding of the tabernacle with its furnishings, we should have clearly in mind a diagram of the tabernacle including the altar and laver in the outer court, the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar in the Holy Place, and the ark in the Holy of Holies. We need to have a clear understanding of the location of each item in relation to the tabernacle.

II. TYPIFYING CHRIST

A. As the Embodiment of God's Testimony

The ark, the incense altar, the showbread table, and the lampstand are all types of Christ. Christ has many aspects, and these four items show forth different aspects of Him. As a type of Christ, the ark typifies Christ as the embodiment of God's testimony. Christ is the embodiment of God. The ark as the embodiment of God's testimony typifies Christ as the embodiment of God. All that God is, is embodied in Christ. Colossians 2:9 says that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily. Our use of the word embodiment is based on this verse. Because God is embodied in Christ, He is portrayed, defined, and explained by Christ. Christ is God's definition, His explanation. As God's testimony, Christ is typified by the ark of the testimony.

In Colossians 2:9 we have a clear statement saying that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily. With the ark of the testimony we have a picture, a type, which corresponds to this direct statement. In teaching children to read, a teacher often shows a picture of an object with the word identifying it underneath. For example, there may be a picture of an airplane, and underneath the picture the word "airplane." In the Bible we have both pictures and words. Concerning Christ as the embodiment of God's testimony, we have the word in Colossians 2:9 and the picture of the ark in the book of Exodus.

B. For God's Redeemed People to Contact Him and Enjoy Him

God is in Christ. Apart from Christ we cannot meet God. Not only is God in Christ, but Christ Himself actually is God. John 1:1 says that the Word, which is Christ, was with God and was God. In Romans 9:5 Paul says that Christ is God blessed forever. Jesus, a carpenter from Nazareth, was the very God over all and blessed forever. The only way for us to contact God and enjoy Him is through Christ and in Christ. The ark as a type of Christ indicates that God's redeemed people can contact God and enjoy God in Christ and through Christ.

Because the Jews do not contact God in Christ, they do not have genuine contact with God, and they certainly do not enjoy God, even though they may worship Him. It is doubtful that today's Jews even have the concept of enjoying God. Instead, they emphasize fearing God, worshipping God, exalting God, and adoring God. They may wonder how we can speak of contacting God and enjoying Him. But the New Testament reveals that God has come in Christ that we may contact Him, receive Him, and enjoy Him. As the ark of the testimony, Christ is for us to contact God and enjoy God.

III. THE CENTER OF THE TABERNACLE OF TESTIMONY

A. Signifying the Center of God's Dwelling Place

If we look at a diagram of the tabernacle, we may wonder how it is possible to say that the ark of the testimony is the center of the tabernacle of testimony (38:21). But in the Bible it is the inmost part of something which is regarded as the center. For example, although our heart is not located at the exact center of our body, we nonetheless regard it as being in the center. Likewise, because the Holy of Holies is in the inmost part of the tabernacle, it is the center of the tabernacle. It is the focus of the tabernacle and signifies the center of God's dwelling place. God dwelt

in the tabernacle, but not in the outer court or in the Holy Place. He dwelt in the Holy of Holies. The ark in the Holy of Holies signifies the center of God's dwelling place, the church (Eph. 2:21-22).

The cover of the ark is equal to the throne of grace in Hebrews 4:16. It was upon the cover of the ark, the throne of grace, that God dwelt. This was the exact place where God was. In the Old Testament this place was in the tabernacle of the testimony. But in the New Testament this place is in the church. The church today is God's tabernacle, His dwelling place.

B. Signifying the Contents of the House of God

The ark also signifies the contents of the church as the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15-16). Just as the ark as the embodiment of God's testimony was the content of the tabernacle, so Christ as the embodiment of God is the content of the church. Many Christians argue over who is the church today. Some may ask, "Why do you say that you are the church? Are we not the church also?" When this question is raised, our inward feeling may be, "You claim to be the church. But what is your content? Do you have Christ as the embodiment of God's testimony?"

Inwardly the church must have Christ as the content in reality and not merely in terminology. Outwardly the church must be on the proper ground, the ground of oneness. This ground is also the ground of locality. Any ground other than the ground of locality is not the ground of oneness. The church in Jerusalem was built on the ground of the locality of Jerusalem. Hence, it was established on the ground of oneness. Among Christians today there are so-called churches built on many different grounds, such as the ground of presbytery, immersion, or certain teachings. All these grounds are divisive, the basis for division. They are not the unique and genuine ground of oneness.

If we would be the church, we must comply with both the outward prerequisite and the inward prerequisite. The

outward prerequisite is the ground of oneness, and the inward prerequisite is Christ as the contents, as the embodiment of God's testimony. If we claim to be the church, we must have Christ not merely in terminology, but in reality as the embodiment of God's living testimony. Certain groups of Christians are actually societies, not churches, because their content is something other than Christ Himself. The church is the Body of Christ with Christ as life and everything. The content of the church is Christ as the embodiment of God's testimony.

IV. THE MATERIALS OF THE ARK

A. Acacia Wood

1. Signifying Christ's Humanity

Exodus 25:10 says, "They shall make an ark of acacia wood." The ark was not made of gold. It was made of acacia wood, which signifies Christ's humanity, strong in character and high in standard. Christ's humanity is the basic element, the basic substance, for Him to be God's testimony. Christ became the embodiment of God's testimony in His humanity.

The acacia wood is a type of Christ's humanity. Christ was a genuine human being. He was born of a human mother, He partook of human blood and flesh, He had a human name—Jesus—and He lived on earth as a man. His humanity was the basic substance for Him to be God's testimony.

Christ's humanity was strong in character and high in standard. No other person in history has had a humanity as strong in character and high in standard as that of the Lord Jesus. The learned Chinese appreciate Confucius. Yes, Confucius did have a strong character, and his standard was quite high, but there is no comparison between him and the Lord Jesus. In the Gospels of Mark and Luke we see the character and standard of Christ's humanity. The Gospel of Matthew emphasizes the kingdom, and the Gospel of John emphasizes life, whereas Mark and Luke

emphasize the Lord's humanity with its character and standard. These books record the life of a Person who has a strong character and a high standard related to His humanity.

2. Signifying that Christ's Humanity Is the Basic Substance for Expressing God

The acacia wood used to make the ark also signifies that Christ's humanity is the basic substance for expressing God. In order to be God's testimony, His expression, Christ needed a humanity with a strong character and a high standard.

B. Pure Gold

1. Signifying Christ's Divinity

Exodus 25:11 says, "And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside you shall overlay it." This pure gold signifies Christ's divinity. Other metals may rust or decay, but the substance of gold does not change. Hence, it signifies God who is eternally unchanging.

Christ is one Person with two natures, a human nature and a divine nature. Because He is man as well as God, He can rightly be called a God-man.

Today some oppose our use of the term God-man to describe Christ. Some even go so far as to charge us with heresy concerning the Person of Christ. Those who make this accusation do not have the full knowledge of the truth. Their theology is superficial, traditional, natural, religious, inadequate, and even superstitious. They have not touched the depths of God's revelation concerning Christ.

Certain Bible teachers claim that, although Christ was both God and man in His human living, after His resurrection He was no longer a man. They actually believe that Christ is now no longer a man, that as the resurrected One He no longer possesses a human nature. Some of the outstanding teachers among the Brethren fought the battle for the truth concerning Christ's humanity after His resurrection and ascension. Stephen's experience at the time of his

martyrdom proves that the Lord Jesus is still a man. According to Acts 7:55, "looking intently into heaven, he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Then he testified, "Behold I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (v. 56). This proves that, after His resurrection and ascension, Christ is still a man. On the day of His resurrection the Lord showed His disciples His hands and His pierced side. This also proves that He still has a human nature.

We need to turn from superficial theology to the full revelation in the Scriptures. According to the Bible, for eternity Christ will be both God and man. He is typified by the ark made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold.

2. Overlaying the Acacia Wood Inside and Outside

The acacia wood was overlaid with gold both inside and outside. This signifies the divine nature mingled with the human nature—God and man becoming one. This also signifies that the divine nature penetrates the human nature and also rests on the human nature so that it may be expressed through the human nature. If only the outside of the ark had been overlaid with gold, this would have signified joining instead of mingling. Mingling is signified by the fact that the acacia wood was overlaid with gold both inside and outside. The acacia wood was between two layers of gold. This is mingling.

Another illustration of mingling in the Bible is in the meal offering described in Leviticus 2. The basic elements of the meal offering were fine flour and oil. The oil was mingled with the fine flour and also poured upon it. The fine flour is in the oil, and the oil is in the fine flour. Likewise, in our relationship with the Lord, we are in God, and God is in us. This mingling is typified both by the meal offering with the oil mingled with the flour and by the ark of the testimony with the acacia wood overlaid inside and outside with gold. Both types point not merely to joining, but to mingling.

Today some oppose the teaching that as children of God we are mingled with Him. They claim that to teach that the believers are mingled with God is to teach that we actually make ourselves God Himself. There is no doubt that as God's redeemed people, those who have been born of Him, we do possess God's life and nature. Second Peter 1:4 says that we are partakers of the divine nature. How can a child not have the life and nature of his father? In the same principle, how can we be genuine children of God, those born of Him, and not be the same as He in life and in nature? To repeat, as children of God, we do have the life and nature of God. But although we share in God's divinity, we shall never attain to the Godhead or be worshipped as God. To say that we shall attain to the very Godhead and be worshipped as God is blasphemy. But it is also a serious error to deny the fact that the genuine believers in Christ have the divine life and nature.

Jesus Christ is the God-man, the mingling of God with man. He is true God and a true man as well. Some who oppose our teaching concerning the mingling of God with man claim that mingling entails the producing of a third nature, a nature which is neither altogether divine nor completely human. This is nonsense, and we repudiate it. When the acacia wood of the ark was overlaid with pure gold, there was no third nature produced. Likewise, when the oil is mingled with the fine flour, a third nature, something which is neither altogether oil nor flour, does not come into being. Christ is one Person with two natures, a divine nature and a human nature. Although divinity and humanity are mingled, this does not involve a third nature. We certainly do not teach that Christ was neither fully God nor fully man. According to the Bible, we teach that He is both God and man, hence, a God-man.

V. THE SIZE

Exodus 25:10 tells us the size of the ark: "two cubits and a half its length, and a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit

and a half its height." Notice that these measurements are all halves of complete units. Two and a half cubits, the length, is half of five cubits; and one and a half cubits, both the width and the height, is half of three cubits. The numbers five and three are numbers of God's building (Gen. 6:15-16). The ark built by Noah was the first building of God in the Bible. It is significant that the measurements of the ark are with the numbers three and five. If we read carefully the description of the measurements of the tabernacle in Exodus, we shall discover that the numbers five and three are mentioned repeatedly. However, the measurements of the ark of the testimony are halves. This signifies that the ark is a testimony. A half implies that another half is needed for a full testimony. For example, half a watermelon causes us to realize that another half is needed for a whole melon. Furthermore, in married life we sometimes speak of a wife being her husband's other half. Thus, the husband and wife together make a complete unit. The fact that two and a half cubits is half of five, and one and a half cubits is half of three indicates that the ark is a testimony. The halves imply another half, and these halves put together make up the testimony.

Every detail in the Bible, including the measurements of the ark given in halves of complete units, is meaningful and purposeful.

VI. A RIM OF GOLD AROUND THE ARK

Verse 11 says, "And you shall make upon it a rim of gold round about." The rim of the ark was the border in the form of a wreath as a crown. The King James Version even uses the word crown. As the embodiment of God's testimony, Christ has a rim, a wreath as a crown. This rim of gold signifies the glory of the divine nature. Christ as God's embodiment expresses God by showing forth His glory. The glory of God is upon Christ as a border, a rim. This rim which is upon Christ is the glory of God, the effulgence of His glory, which expresses God. Furthermore, the glory of the divine

nature as a rim signifies the divine keeping power and holding strength.

When we as a living testimony of Christ live Him out, there will be a rim of glory upon us. Others will sense that there is something wonderful and glorious with us. This rim of glory will keep us and hold us. However, if we do not live Christ in this way, we shall not have the rim with its keeping power and holding strength. Actually what keeps us and holds us is the very Christ whom we live out day by day. Praise the Lord for the golden rim which is to us the keeping power and the holding strength!

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHTY-FIVE

THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:12-16

The last sixteen chapters of Exodus are a test of whether or not we truly have a heart seeking after God's economy. In their reading of the Bible many Christians skip over these chapters after they have read the book of Exodus through once or twice. They may prefer the stories in Genesis and in the first chapters of Exodus to all the details related to the tabernacle and its furnishings recorded in Exodus 25 through 40.

We have pointed out that, according to Colossians 1:25, Paul's ministry was a completing ministry. The revelation given to Paul was the completion of the Word of God. Actually the last sixteen chapters of Exodus are closely related to the completing ministry of Paul.

Exodus 1 to 24 is mainly concerned with history. However, God's concern in this book is not with history—it is with the tabernacle. The tabernacle and all its furniture is a type of Christ and the church, including many details of the church life. Because the spiritual significance of the types in Exodus 25 through 40 is deep and mysterious, they have been neglected by many in today's organized religion. The revelation in these chapters brings us into the depths and also into the details of Christ and the church. The writings which make up the heart of the divine revelation in the New Testament—Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians—are brief, but they are profound and unfathomable. Deep and profound matters related to Christ and the church are also found in the last sixteen chapters of Exodus.

For this reason we need a seeking heart when we come to this portion of the Word.

In this message on 25:12-16 we shall consider the rings and the poles of the ark of the testimony. However, before coming to these matters, I would like to say a further word about the rim of gold which was made round about the ark (v. 11).

Exodus 25:11 says, "And you shall make upon it a rim of gold round about." Instead of the word "rim," some versions say "wreath" or "crown." In the previous message we pointed out that the rim of gold around the ark signifies the glory of the divine nature, and that the glory of the divine nature as a rim signifies the divine keeping power and holding strength. It is significant that concerning this rim no measurements are given. In typology anything that does not have a measurement refers to something eternal, immeasurable, unlimited, and inexhaustible. Verse 11 does not tell us how high or how wide the rim was. This verse simply speaks of a rim of gold. We have seen that acacia wood signifies Christ's humanity with its character and standard and that gold signifies His divinity. Although the ark was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, the rim upon the ark was made only of gold. This rim thus signifies the glory of the divine nature.

Christ as the embodiment of God's testimony has glory. He is the effulgence of God's glory (Heb. 1:3). When the Lord Jesus was on earth, outwardly He was a despised Nazarene, One without form or comeliness. But not even those who opposed Him could deny the fact that there was a wonderful and glorious expression with Him. This was the divine nature lived out of Him. Through the Lord's human life the divine nature was expressed as a wreath, or crown, of glory. As you consider the record of the Lord's life in the four Gospels, you will realize that in His living, glory was expressed. This glory was not human, something of wood; it was divine, something of gold.

The glory of the divine nature as a rim signifies the divine keeping power and holding strength. With Christ as

the embodiment of God's testimony, there is a keeping power and a holding strength. Peter, James, John, and others were kept, held, and preserved by the rim of glory upon Christ. Because of his weakness, Peter denied the Lord. In the end, however, his denial was actually a proof that he believed in the Lord Jesus and loved Him, for afterwards Peter went out and wept bitterly. Peter had seen the expression of God's glory in the Lord Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. That expression of divine glory was the holding power and the keeping strength which preserved Peter.

We also are kept by this holding power and keeping strength. The expressed glory of the Lord's divinity can keep us from falling. If we live Christ at home and at work, the very Christ whom we live will become the glory expressed through us. This glory, this expression, will become a rim that holds us and keeps us.

In Philippians Paul expected that, whether through life or through death, Christ would be magnified in his body (1:20). Because Paul lived Christ and magnified Him, no one would presume to suggest that he join them in worldly entertainments. The glory expressed through his humanity was a rim that held Paul and kept him.

Although our experience is very limited compared to Paul's, many of us can testify that we have been held and kept by the rim of the expressed glory of God. Our relatives and friends may not dare to speak to us about worldly things. This is an indication that upon us we have a golden rim, the rim of the ark of God's testimony. In our daily living we all should have this rim upon us.

VII. FOUR RINGS OF GOLD, SIGNIFYING THE DIVINE NATURE OF CHRIST AS THE LINKING FACTOR AND POWER

We have pointed out repeatedly that the ark typifies Christ as the embodiment of God's testimony. Far from being stationary, this testimony should be able to move.The book of Acts is

a record of the acts, or the move, of Christ. There was a move of Christ from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and then on to the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). In Acts the Christ we see is not the incarnated Christ, the Christ who walked on earth in a human body. Rather, we see the Christ who was crucified and resurrected, and who has ascended to the heavens and descended on His Body as the life-giving Spirit. Acts records the move of such a Christ in and through His Body. If we would have an adequate understanding of the four rings of gold and the two poles, we need to make a thorough study of the entire book of Acts. In Acts we have a description of the rings and the poles; that is, we have an account of the move on earth of Christ as God's testimony.

The ark was made at Mount Sinai, but it did not remain there. The ark was built in such a way that it could be moved. According to the book of Numbers, the children of Israel carried the ark and marched like an army. In order for the ark to be moved, it had to have the four rings and two poles.

Exodus 25:12 says, "And you shall cast for it four rings of gold and put them upon its four feet, two rings upon its one side, and two rings upon its second side." In typology a golden ring signifies the eternal Spirit. Four rings of gold signify that the divine nature of Christ is the linking factor and power. Elsewhere we have pointed out that a gold ring signifies the Spirit with whom we have been sealed. Because a ring has no beginning or ending, it signifies the eternal Spirit. These rings made of gold, the divine nature of Christ, signify the linking factor and power. Without the rings, there would have been no way to hold the ark. There would have been no link, no connection. The life-giving eternal Spirit signified by the rings is the linking factor and power.

A. Being Cast

Verse 12 says that the rings were cast. They were not made of beaten work. The casting of the rings signifies that

the eternal life-giving Spirit becomes the linking power through the experience of the cross. Being cast signifies tests which come through suffering. The more we experience the cross, the more the life-giving eternal Spirit will be cast to become the golden rings. Then we shall have strong rings for the move of God's testimony.

This understanding of the spiritual significance of the four rings of gold is according to the New Testament and our Christian experience. The cross is always a test to us. Daily we need to experience the cross with its testing. This is the experience of the rings being cast. The gold used in making the rings must be gold that has been cast. Only after the gold has been cast can it become a ring. Yes, the golden ring signifies the life-giving Spirit. But in our experience this Spirit must pass through the testing of the cross, the casting, before the eternal Spirit can become in us a golden ring with its linking power.

It is possible to be a very good Christian and yet not bear the ark of the testimony. This is to be a Christian and yet live in a natural way. Those Christians who live in a natural way do not bear the testimony of Jesus. Recently we have pointed out that in the Lord's recovery we must preach the gospel, teach the Bible, and meet together according to the Bible. However, these things in themselves are not the testimony of Jesus. We may preach the gospel prevailingly, teach the Bible accurately, and meet together properly and still not bear the Lord's testimony. This means that we do not have the ark; that is, we do not have Christ lived out of us. Oh, we must see the central vision that to bear the ark of testimony is to live Christ! We must preach the gospel, teach the Bible, and meet according to the Bible. But along with all this we need to bear the ark, the testimony of Jesus.

In Matthew we are told to disciple the nations; in Mark, to preach the gospel to every creature; in Luke, to preach the gospel of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; and in John, to bear fruit. But Acts 1:8 says, "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto

the remotest part of the earth." Here the Lord does not speak of preaching the gospel, but of being witnesses unto Him. A witness bears a testimony. The witness refers primarily to the person, and the testimony refers to what is borne by this person. To bear the Lord's testimony is to be His witnesses.

Revelation 1 speaks of the testimony of Jesus. This testimony in Revelation is the golden lampstand. We may preach the gospel, teach the Bible, and have excellent meetings according to the Bible, but still not have the golden lampstand as the testimony of Jesus.

In Old Testament times it was possible to have the tabernacle with the laver and the altar, and yet not have the ark. There were occasions in the Old Testament when, due to the degradation of the children of Israel, the ark was separated from the tabernacle. When Solomon came into his reign, according to religious custom, he visited the place where the tabernacle was. However, the ark was not there. At night in a dream he came to realize that God was not in the tabernacle; He was with the ark. Therefore, Solomon went to worship the Lord where the ark was (1 Kings 3:4-15).

Our experience today may be the same in principle. We also may have the tabernacle without the ark. We may have good gospel preaching, Bible teaching, and meetings, but we may lack the testimony of Jesus. Furthermore, in our living we may be good Christians, but we may not bear the ark, the testimony of Jesus, for we may have little or no experience of the cross casting the divine nature into a ring of gold. Daily we need the experience of the cross, the experience of the rings being cast.

The cross of Christ actually is in the Spirit, and we experience the cross through the Spirit. This crossing out is the casting. When we experience the cross, we have not only gold, but gold which has passed through the process of being cast into a ring. Then we have the life-giving Spirit as the ring which holds the ark as the linking factor and power needed for bearing the ark, the testimony of Jesus. This is

an important detail related to experiencing Christ and living Him.

B. Four, Signifying the Four Corners of the Earth to Reach All Men

The number four according to the Bible signifies the four corners of the earth to reach all men (Rev. 7:1). According to Revelation 5:6 the seven Spirits of God are "sent forth into all the earth." Christ as the embodiment of God's testimony must reach all men.

When I left mainland China in 1949, I was very sorrowful because we had lost the vast field of China. But now I am happy because the Lord's recovery has been released from the confinement of the Chinese language and has spread to the four corners of the earth to reach all people. We expect that in the years to come many will go out, not simply to preach the gospel, teach the Bible, and have proper church meetings, but also to bear the testimony of Jesus.

Wherever we go, the ark with the four golden rings should be with us. In the wilderness the children of Israel did not move without the ark. They always journeyed with the ark. Likewise, we should move with the Lord as the embodiment of God's testimony. This is indicated by the fact that the ark has four rings signifying that the testimony of Jesus should reach all people.

C. Two Rings on Each Side, Signifying a Testimony in Every Aspect

According to 25:12, there were to be two rings on one side of the ark and two on its second side. Two rings on each side signifies a testimony in every aspect (Rev. 11:3). The two rings on each side imply coordination. There were two persons at each end to carry the ark.

Notice how the number two is emphasized. There are two sides, two rings on each side, and two poles. For carrying the ark there were probably two persons in front and two in the back. The number two signifies that the move of Christ as

God's embodied testimony is through a good coordination, not through individuals. An individual cannot be a lampstand. A lampstand is a corporate entity. We must be one with others who love the Lord and seek Him if there is to be a lampstand in our locality.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He sent out His disciples two by two. The disciples sent out in this way were to bear His testimony for His move on earth. The principle is the same with the ark and its move. There were two rings, two sides, two poles, and probably two persons in front and in back. This signifies testimony and coordination.

I hope that many will pray and have fellowship concerning the four golden rings cast for the ark. Through prayer and fellowship the reality of this will be assimilated by us and even constituted into us. I believe that through the life-study of the last sixteen chapters of Exodus many saints will be built up with the detailed revelation of Christ.

VIII. THE TWO POLES

A. For the Ark's Moving by Being Carried

Exodus 25:13 and 14 say, "And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and you shall overlay them with gold. And you shall put the poles into the rings upon the sides of the ark to carry the ark by them." The two poles for carrying the ark signify the move of Christ as God's testimony.

B. Made of Acacia Wood

The poles, like the ark itself, were made of acacia wood. We have seen that acacia wood signifies Christ's humanity. Christ's humanity is the strength to carry out His testimony. The fact that the poles were made of acacia wood signifies that Christ's human nature is the strength for His move as God's testimony.

Today many in the Pentecostal or charismatic movement emphasize gifts, miracles, and power. However, Paul's emphasis was not on such things. He and his co-workers

spread the kingdom of God and bore the testimony of Jesus by having a humanity with a high character and standing. They bore the testimony on poles made of acacia wood, by a transformed and uplifted humanity. Paul spread the testimony of Jesus by means of his humanity with its strong character. For example, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "For you remember, brothers, our labor and hardship: working night and day so as not to be burdensome to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God" (1 Thes. 2:9). This is acacia wood.

When the early missionaries went to China, it was not easy for them to reach the ethical and philosophical Chinese with the gospel. These Chinese were conservative and proud of their culture. But a good number of missionaries to China truly had the acacia wood, the uplifted humanity. These missionaries were genuinely human in a way that could reach the Chinese and open the door for the gospel.

Let me give you one illustration of how these missionaries demonstrated the acacia wood in bringing the gospel to the conservative Chinese. All the villages were closed to foreigners. It was the practice for anyone who saw a foreigner to sound a gong to warn the villagers to go into their houses and shut the door. No one desired contact with the "foreign devils." One missionary, however, would hide right beside the door of one of the houses. Eventually, someone would open the door, and the missionary would thrust a stick into the opening, thus preventing the door from being shut. Then he would put his foot in the door and, as soon as he had the opportunity, walk into the yard. Once inside, he would head for the millstone and begin grinding wheat or corn. The family might say, "If this foreign devil wants to do this hard work of grinding for us, let him go ahead." Eventually, in keeping with their ethical character, they would give him something to eat and drink. Then he would have an opportunity to speak with them about the Lord. Gradually, by such a testimony borne by acacia wood, various sections of the conservative country of China were

opened for the gospel. I worship the Lord for this and thank Him for sending the best missionaries and the most spiritual persons to labor for Him in China.

Today for the testimony of Christ we also need poles made of acacia wood. Some Christians, however, resort to the use of rock music and dramas for preaching the gospel. But the Lord's testimony is not carried by such a means. Rather, it is borne by our transformed humanity with its high character and standard. This humanity is the strength for the move of Christ as the embodiment of God's testimony.

C. Overlaid with Gold

Exodus 25:13 says, "You shall overlay them with gold." The acacia wood overlaid with gold here signifies that Christ's divine nature is the expression of His move. If we have the acacia wood in our living, then the gold, Christ's divine nature, will be expressed.

D. The Move of Christ as God's Testimony Being by His Two Natures Mingled as One

The move of Christ as the testimony of God is always by His two natures, human and divine, mingled as one. While the apostles and the best missionaries were carrying out the testimony of Jesus, not only did they live a life of an uplifted humanity, but they also had the divine nature expressed through their humanity. This is clearly indicated in the Acts and the Epistles.

E. Two Poles

The fact that there were two poles signifies that Christ's move is not by an individual, but by a corporate testimony.

F. The Poles Put into the Golden Rings for Carrying the Ark

Verse 15 says, "The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not depart from it." The poles were put into the

golden rings for carrying the ark. This signifies that the move of Christ is by men bearing God's testimony in their bodies in the uniting power of Christ's divine nature. It is not by men pulling the ark, for then there would be a distance between the ark and those who pulled it. Neither were cattle used to pull it on a cart, for then there would have been no relation between men and the ark. God's way of carrying the ark was that it be borne on the shoulders of those appointed to carry it. This indicates that the witnesses, those who bear the ark of the testimony, must be one with the ark.

In the Old Testament there are two instances where the ark of testimony was not carried in the proper way. First, in 1 Samuel 6:7 and 8 the Philistines, who had captured the ark, returned it by laying it upon a cart pulled by two cows. Because the Philistines were Gentiles, God tolerated this mistake. Second, after David became king, he used a cart drawn by oxen to transport the ark (2 Sam. 6:3-7). When "Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it,…the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God" (vv. 6-7). God did not approve of the ark being carried in this way, and He judged the one who touched it.

We must be careful to use only the proper means to carry the Lord's testimony today. If you look at certain popular Christian publications, you will see that "carts" drawn by "cattle" are still being used to carry the Lord's testimony. In fact, even worse means are used. Is the Lord's recovery to be carried on by such things? Certainly not! The proper way is to have a direct connection with the Lord Jesus. We must bear Christ upon our shoulders. This means that there should not be any distance between us and Him. If we would bear Him as God's testimony, we should be one with Him.

Paul spread the testimony of Jesus by speaking and by writing. He did not use any gimmicks. He carried the testimony by his living. Likewise, the testimony of the Lord must

be one with us today. This means that our living should be the carrying of the testimony. As we live Christ, we bear Him wherever we go.

G. The Two Poles Staying in the Rings of the Ark

According to 25:15, the poles were to stay in the rings of the ark and not depart from it. This signifies our readiness for the move of Christ as God's testimony. We must always be ready for the testimony of God to move. We should have the rings and the poles, and the poles should be in the rings. For a period of time, we may stay where we are. At some point the Lord may move us to another city, perhaps even to another country. We should always be ready to go, to move, with the Lord's testimony.

IX. THE TESTIMONY PUT INTO THE ARK

Exodus 25:16 says, "And you shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you." Because the testimony, the law, was put into the ark, it caused the ark to become the ark of the testimony (v. 22). We have seen that here the testimony, the law, does not refer to regulations which God's people were to observe. Rather, it denotes a portrait, a picture, a photograph, of the living God. Because the law was a picture of God, it was His testimony. Today the law of God, the living law, as God's testimony dwells in Christ bodily (Col. 2:9), making Him the testimony of God. Hallelujah, Christ is God's testimony, and we are those who carry Him!

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHTY-SIX

THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:17-22; Lev. 16:14-15

In the two foregoing messages we considered the materials of the ark, the dimensions of the ark, and the rim of gold around the top of the ark. We have also considered the four rings of gold and the two poles used for the move of the ark. In this message we shall consider from 25:17-22 the propitiatory cover which was put on the ark.

X. THE PROPITIATORY COVER

Exodus 25:17 says, "And you shall make a propitiatory cover of pure gold, two cubits and a half its length, and a cubit and a half its width." This propitiatory cover was the lid of the ark. In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament made before the time of Christ) the word *hilasterion* is used to translate the Hebrew word for propitiatory cover. This Greek word is a noun form of the Greek verb *hilaskomai. Hilaskomai* means to appease, to reconcile two parties by satisfying the demand of one upon the other, that is, to propitiate. According to Hebrews 2:17, the Lord Jesus made propitiation for our sins to reconcile us to God by satisfying God's righteous demands on us.

Suppose a certain party is indebted to another party. However, he is not able to fulfill the demands of the second party. There seems to be no way to settle this problem. Then a third party comes on the scene and, on behalf of the first party, fulfills the requirements of the second party, thus appeasing the second party. In this way, the first party is reconciled to the second, for the demands of the second party have been

satisfied. The Greek word *hilaskomai* refers to such a transaction in which reconciliation is brought about through the appeasement of a particular party and the satisfaction of his requirement. Christ has reconciled us to God by satisfying God's demands on us.

The Greek word for propitiation, *hilasterion*, is different from *hilasmos* in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10. *Hilasmos* denotes that which propitiates, that is, a propitiatory sacrifice. According to 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, the Lord Jesus is the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Christ is not only the One who reconciles us to God by fulfilling God's requirements and appeasing Him, but He is also the propitiatory sacrifice. He sacrificed Himself that we may be reconciled to God.

We have seen that Christ is the One who makes propitiation to God for us as well as the One who is the propitiatory sacrifice. In Romans 3:25 Paul says that Christ is our propitiation-cover. God has set forth Christ to be our *hilasterion,* our propitiatory cover. This means that as the *hilasterion* Christ is also the very place where God is able to meet with us, His redeemed people, and talk to us. Therefore, Christ is the One who propitiates, He is the propitiatory sacrifice, and He is the propitiatory cover, the place where God and His redeemed people meet together.

As the propitiatory sacrifice and as the One who has made propitiation to God on our behalf, Christ is also the place, called the propitiation-cover in Romans 3:25, where we can meet with God. The Septuagint uses *hilasterion* for the lid, or cover, of the ark. Paul uses this word to refer to Christ as the propitiation-cover. No doubt, when Paul was writing Romans 3:25 he had in mind a picture of the propitiatory cover placed on the ark of the testimony. (See note 25[1] in Romans 3, Recovery Version.)

As we study the description of the propitiatory cover in Exodus 25:17-22 and seek to understand its significance for our spiritual experience, we need to receive light through the Word and not mere knowledge. Our goal in reading the Bible should be to receive light and not simply to gain objective knowledge. Therefore, we need to guard against

unnecessary questionings and thoughts which interfere with the shining of the light through the Word. On the one hand, we need to ask meaningful questions concerning what we read in the Bible. On the other hand, we need to avoid useless questions, questions which have no answers. When we read the account of the propitiatory cover in Exodus, we may be snared by such questions. For example, some may ask if the cherubim on the ark are angels. Others may want to know the weight of the cherubim or how many faces they have. Some may try to figure out the thickness of the propitiatory cover, realizing that the length and the width are given, but not the thickness. Some readers may ask if the cherubim and the lid of the ark were all one piece of gold. Other readers may wonder how the cherubim can have their faces toward each other and also toward the lid of the ark. In this message we shall not be concerned with questions such as these. Rather, our aim is to consider those matters crucial for our spiritual understanding and experience. Thus, we come to these verses not to find answers to unnecessary questions, but to obtain light from the Lord.

A. Signifying Christ

The propitiatory cover signifies Christ as the cover of God's righteous law. It also signifies Him as the place where God speaks to His redeemed people in grace. Hence, the propitiatory cover equals God's throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

B. Made of Pure Gold

Verse 17 says that the propitiatory cover was made of pure gold. Gold here signifies Christ's pure divine nature.

C. The Size

The size of the propitiatory cover was "two cubits and a half its length, and a cubit and a half its width." The dimensions of the propitiatory cover signify a testimony.

D. With Two Cherubim

Exodus 25:18 says, "And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of beaten work you shall make them, from the two ends of the propitiatory cover." The cherubim signify God's glory (Ezek. 10:18; Heb. 9:5). We do not know whether or not the cherubim are angels, but we do know that they are related to God's glory. Hebrews 9:5 speaks of the cherubim of glory, and Ezekiel 10:18 says that God's glory left the temple and stood above the cherubim. Thus, the cherubim are related to God's glory and signify His glory. The cherubim on the propitiatory cover indicate that Christ expresses God's glory, that God's glory shines out from Him. The cherubim were on the cover, and the cover is Christ. This means that the glory of God shines out of Christ and upon Christ.

The cherubim were made of gold, of Christ's divine nature, and they were made of beaten work, indicating Christ's sufferings.

Verse 19 says, "And make one cherub from this end, and one cherub from that end; from the propitiatory cover you shall make the cherubim upon its two ends." The cherubim on the two ends of the propitiatory cover signify testimony. The fact that the cherubim were one with the propitiatory cover indicates that God's glory comes out of Christ being the propitiatory cover to be a testimony.

Verse 20 says, "And the cherubim shall spread out their wings above, covering over with their wings the propitiatory cover, with their faces each toward the other; toward the propitiatory cover the faces of the cherubim shall be." The wings of the cherubim covered the propitiatory cover. This means that God's glory is expressed in Christ to be a full testimony. The faces of the cherubim were toward each other and toward the propitiatory cover. This signifies that God's glory watches over and observes what Christ has done.

E. Put upon the Ark from Above

Verse 21 says, "And you shall put the propitiatory cover

upon the ark from above, and into the ark you shall put the testimony which I shall give you." Here we are told that the propitiatory cover was put upon the ark from above. This signifies Christ as the propitiatory cover covering the law within the ark.

F. God Meeting with His Redeemed People Here

The first part of verse 22 says, "And I will meet with you there." This indicates that God met with His people in the propitiating Christ.

G. God Speaking to His Redeemed People from between the Two Cherubim

In verse 22 God also says that He "will speak with you from above the propitiatory cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, all that I shall command you concerning the sons of Israel." This means that God speaks to His people from the glory expressed in the propitiating Christ as His testimony.

We have seen that the cherubim signify God's glory shining out from Christ. Thus, for God to speak to His people from between the cherubim means that He speaks to us in the midst of His glory. God does not meet with His redeemed people in any place other than the midst of His glory. God cannot meet with us in any other place or in any other condition. Whenever God meets with us, that meeting must take place in the midst of His glory. We can testify of this from our experience. Whenever we meet with God, we sense that we are in the midst of glory, a glory like that signified by the cherubim on the cover of the ark. On the day we repented and believed in the Lord Jesus, we were brought into a realm of glory. God never meets with us in darkness. On the contrary, He always meets with us in glory and speaks to us from between the cherubim of glory.

When we listen to someone speaking in a meeting, as long as that speaking is the word of the Lord, we should have the sense that we are in glory. Whenever the word of

God is spoken in the ministry, we sense glory within us. Many preachers today are eloquent. But when you hear them speak, you do not have any sense of God's glory. You may admire their eloquence and appreciate their knowledge, but there is no sense of God's glory. However, when you listen to the genuine ministry of the Word, you are attracted, not by eloquence or knowledge but by a sense of God's glory. After you return home, the glory may follow you. Years later, you may still recall the glory you sensed in that meeting. From our experience we know that God meets with us in the midst of His glory and speaks to us in His glory. Even when God speaks to a sinner, God speaks to him in His glory.

The glory in which God meets with us and in which He speaks to us is the shining of Christ. The cherubim signify Christ shining. We may use electricity to illustrate this shining. The meeting hall is illuminated by the shining of lights, which are actually the shining of electricity. Hence, in the meeting hall we meet together under the shining of electricity. In like manner, the cherubim are Christ shining, or the shining of Christ.

What kind of Christ is this shining Christ? We have pointed out that the ark was made of acacia wood overlaid within and without with gold. Acacia wood typifies Christ's humanity, and gold signifies His divinity. The propitiatory cover was made of pure gold; it did not contain any acacia wood. This indicates that the shining of Christ, who is the effulgence of God's glory, is divine. However, Christ's divinity is not the base for this shining. Rather, the base for His shining is the acacia wood used to make the ark. It was not the gold which bore the acacia wood; it was the acacia wood which bore the gold. With His humanity as the base, Christ expresses divinity. In our experience today, we need the humanity of Jesus in order to express Christ's divine nature.

Exodus 25:17 tells us the length and width of the propitiatory cover, but it does not tell us the thickness of the cover. Therefore, we do not know the weight of the lid of the

ark. The fact that the thickness is not given and that the weight is not known indicates that the weight of Christ is immeasurable. No one can say how weighty Christ is. Experientially speaking, His weight is according to what we are able to bear. If you are able to bear a lid of one pound in weight, then Christ to you weighs one pound. But to someone else who is able to bear more of Christ, Christ may weigh fifty pounds. How heavy Christ is to us depends on how much of Him we are able to bear. I am concerned that some saints are able to bear only an extremely small amount of Christ.

Furthermore, we are not told anything in Exodus 25 about the form, size, or weight of the cherubim. This indicates that the glory of Christ's shining is immeasurable. It also indicates that Christ's glory is unexplainable. Just as we cannot describe the cherubim, so we cannot explain the glory of Christ's shining. However, we know from the fact that the cherubim had faces and wings that this glory is not lifeless, but is something living. Christ's glory is living. We may even say that this glory has a face, eyes, and wings. From our experience we know that when God meets with us and speaks with us, we have the sense that glory is watching over us and that this glory is living. Actually, this glory is the very Christ Himself. Thus, the general concept of the propitiatory cover in Exodus 25 is that it signifies that Christ is the shining of the divine glory and that God meets with us and speaks with us in this glory. As we consider the account of the propitiatory cover in 25:17-22, we need to center our attention on this crucial point and not be distracted by questions which have no answers.

We need to be impressed with the fact that the propitiation-cover with the cherubim signifies Christ shining. It also signifies that the glory of God as the shining of Christ is living. It is something with a face, eyes, and wings. To have a proper understanding of this, we need light from God and also a certain amount of spiritual experience. Apart from being enlightened by the Lord, we may

read these verses again and again without seeing anything of their significance. But when the light shines upon us, we realize that the propitiatory cover with the cherubim is nothing less than our dear Lord Jesus Himself. Whenever God meets with us and speaks with us, this precious Christ is present. Actually, it is in this shining Christ that God meets with us and speaks with us. When we realize this, we may say, "Lord, You Yourself are this very propitiatory cover. Without You, Lord, there is no place where God can meet with me or I can meet with Him. Lord, without You as the propitiatory cover God cannot meet with me or speak with me in glory."

At this point we need to consider an important question: How can we, who are so sinful, natural, and full of offenses, meet with God in the glorious Christ? We have offended God, and we have offended other people. How, then, can we meet with God in the shining Christ? In 25:17-22, a record which describes the propitiatory cover of the ark, nothing is said which can answer our question. For the answer we need to turn to Leviticus 16:14 and 15. Speaking of the high priest on the day of atonement, these verses say, "And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the propitiatory cover eastward; and before the propitiatory cover shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the propitiatory cover, and before the propitiatory cover" (lit.). As we shall see, the crucial matter here is the sprinkling of the blood upon the propitiatory cover.

On the day of atonement sacrifices were offered on the altar in the outer court. The blood of the animals shed on the altar for atonement was a promissory note of the true redemption accomplished by Christ. When Christ came to accomplish redemption by shedding His blood on the cross, the promissory note was then set aside. What we have

today in New Testament times is not atonement, but redemption. In Old Testament times blood was shed on the altar for atonement. This typifies the blood of Jesus shed on the cross for redemption. In the Old Testament we have the altar and atonement; in the New Testament we have the cross and redemption. The blood shed on the altar for atonement was brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the lid of the ark, the propitiatory cover. In fact, the blood was sprinkled on the lid seven times, signifying completeness. Through the sprinkling of the blood, the golden lid became red in color. Because of the blood sprinkled on the propitiatory cover, sinners could have fellowship with the righteous God. Therefore, because of the blood of redemption, we today can have fellowship with the righteous God in the glory of Christ.

The propitiatory cover of the ark covered the law, the Ten Commandments, which had been placed in the ark. Then on the day of atonement this cover was sprinkled with the blood. This indicates that when God speaks to sinners in the glory of Christ, He does not see the righteous law—He sees only the blood on the propitiatory cover. Without the cover with the blood sprinkled on it, God would see the Ten Commandments. As a result, we would be condemned, for we have all broken the law of God. God would have no way to meet with us or speak with us. Instead, according to His righteousness, He would have to condemn us to death. But when God comes to us in the glory of Christ, He does not see the requirements of His righteous law, and He does not see our sins. Instead, He sees the redeeming blood on the propitiatory cover.

Many of us can testify that this matter of the blood on the propitiatory cover is not a mere doctrine. It is very real in our experience with the Lord. When we repented, God met us and spoke to us. At that time we had the deep sense that we were washed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Now whenever we meet with God in glory, we have the sense deep within that we are washed by the blood. This is the propitiatory cover in our experience.

We have pointed out that the propitiatory cover was made of pure gold. It did not contain acacia wood, which typifies the humanity of the Lord Jesus. However, the blood of Jesus certainly was derived from His human nature. Christ's humanity is for redeeming and His divinity is for shining. The cherubim on the propitiatory cover signify Christ's shining with His divinity, and the blood sprinkled on the cover signifies His humanity for redeeming. Therefore, we have here a picture of Christ not only as God, but also as man, even the God-man. As God, Christ shines in His divinity, but as man, He accomplished redemption in His humanity, signified by the blood. Now, because of Christ's divinity and humanity, we and God can meet together and talk together in the redeeming and shining Christ. This is Christ as the propitiatory cover, as the place where God and we meet together.

The King James Version speaks of the "mercy seat" instead of the propitiatory cover. The word seat implies that the lid of the ark was the place for God to sit when He talks with us. The word mercy indicates that God showed mercy to people. Actually, the lid of the ark is not a mercy seat; it is a propitiatory cover with the shining of Christ's divinity and the redeeming of Christ's humanity as the place where we can meet and speak with our righteous, holy, and glorious God. This place is Jesus Christ Himself, the One who is both God and man. In His humanity Christ shed His blood to redeem us, and in His divinity He shines with God's glory. Today He is for us the redeeming and shining Christ as the place where the righteous, holy, and glorious God can meet with fallen sinners.

The propitiatory cover in Exodus 25 mentioned by Paul in Romans 3:25 must be considered part of the central vision of Paul's completing ministry. Paul is the one who speaks of the propitiatory cover, of the cherubim of glory, and of Christ making propitiation for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:17). Paul presents Christ as the *hilasterion,* the propitiatory cover, with His shining divinity and redeeming humanity. Here, upon the propitiatory cover and in the

midst of the shining of His glory, God can meet with us and converse with us. This is the place where we hear His voice and learn the desire of His heart. No doubt, this was the place where Paul received the revelation of the completing ministry. In our experience day by day we also need to meet with God at the propitiatory cover and in His glory.

Without the propitiatory cover, there is no way for us to enjoy the ark. The ark can become our enjoyment only because of the lid which covers it. If the ark did not have the propitiatory cover as a lid, we could not come to God, and God could not come to us. The ark would still exist, but there would be no way for us to have contact with it. The propitiatory cover is needed by both God and us for the ark to become our enjoyment. Now because of the propitiatory cover, we have a way to meet with God and speak with Him.

The propitiatory cover is also related to the testimony. The more God meets with us and speaks with us, and the more we meet with God and listen to His speaking, the more of the testimony of God there will be in our experience. The function of the ark of testimony depends on the cover. The ark's usefulness as the ark of testimony is altogether dependent on the cover. Because of the cover on the ark, the ark becomes our enjoyment and God's testimony.

May we all look to the Lord and pray that He will give us light concerning the propitiatory cover and its significance for our spiritual experience. We should not be satisfied simply to interpret the types in Exodus in a doctrinal way. By the Lord's mercy, we need to see the significance of these types for our experience. On the one hand, the light confirms our experience of the Lord; on the other hand, it causes our experience of Christ to increase. Praise the Lord for the glorious, wonderful Christ who is the propitiatory cover! We do not have the utterance adequate to describe such a Christ, but we have seen Him, we have experienced Him, and we are enjoying Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHTY-SEVEN

THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY

(4)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:17-22

In our study of the tabernacle and its furnishings, we are concerned not merely to know the types in a doctrinal way, but to apply the types to our spiritual experience. In this message and in the next two messages I am burdened to speak a further word on the propitiatory cover. We have seen that the propitiatory cover signifies Christ as the cover of God's righteous law and also the place where God speaks to His redeemed people in grace. This cover is made of pure gold, signifying Christ's divine nature, and its size signifies a testimony. Furthermore, the two golden cherubim on the propitiatory cover signify God's glory and indicate that God's glory comes out of Christ as the propitiatory cover to be a testimony. In the foregoing message we emphasized the fact that God meets with His redeemed people and speaks with them in the propitiating Christ. He speaks to them from between the two cherubim, indicating that He speaks to His people from the glory expressed in the propitiating Christ as His testimony.

THE CHRIST WHO DWELLS IN OUR SPIRIT

We have pointed out that the ark of the testimony was in the inmost part of the tabernacle. The tabernacle was surrounded by the outer court. There were two sections in the tabernacle—the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies may be likened to our deepest part, our spirit. The Holy of Holies is the deepest part of

the tabernacle, and in this deepest part the ark occupies the central place.

Just as we are tripartite, composed of body, soul, and spirit, so the tabernacle with the outer court is composed of three parts. The outer court corresponds to our body; the Holy Place, to our soul; and the Holy of Holies, to our spirit. The ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies signifies the Christ who dwells in our spirit. Christ, the resurrected One, lives as the indwelling Spirit in our regenerated spirit. Actually, this message is not an exposition on the propitiatory covering. Rather, it is a word concerning the Christ who lives in our spirit.

You may be familiar with Paul's word, "The Lord be with your spirit" (2 Tim. 4:22), and you may have had some experience of the Christ who dwells within you. But do you know what kind of Christ lives in you? He is wonderful and all-inclusive. However, if we have never been enlightened concerning the ark of the testimony, and if we have not had a vision of the ark as a type of Christ with its significance for our experience, we do not have adequate knowledge of the Christ who is in our spirit. We may know the terminology and the verses which speak of Christ dwelling in us, but we may not actually know who is the Christ and what is the Christ who dwells in our spirit. If we would know this Christ, we need a vision of the ark of the testimony. In particular, we need to be enlightened with respect to the propitiatory cover.

GOD'S TESTIMONY

The ark is a box in the shape of a stand. We have seen that the ark typifies Christ. The very Christ who is in our spirit is the ark, and this ark is a stand. In the Bible any stand or standing implies a testimony. To take a stand is to testify. As the ark, Christ is God's testimony. He stands as the testimony of God in our spirit and in the whole universe.

Because the ark is a box, a container, it has a particular content. Exodus 25:21 says, "Into the ark you shall put the

testimony which I shall give you." This testimony, the tables of the law, can be considered a photograph, a portrait, of God. Hence, the content of Christ as the ark is the law as a portrait, a photograph, a definition, of God. Later, the golden pot with manna and Aaron's budding rod were also put into the ark.

THE GOD-MAN

We have seen that the ark was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The acacia wood and the gold typify the two natures of Christ: the gold typifies His divine nature, and the acacia wood, His human nature. Both within and without, the ark was overlaid with gold. This indicates that Christ is divine, that He is God. However, He is not only God, but also a man. Therefore, Christ is a God-man. The gold-wood ark typifies Christ as the God-man.

It is a mark of blindness and foolishness to oppose the truth that Christ is a God-man. Certain of our opposers seem to pay attention only to the gold of the ark, only to Christ's divinity. They do not pay adequate attention to the fact that the ark is made of wood overlaid with gold, to the fact that Christ is truly the God-man. We most assuredly believe that Christ is God. But we realize that just as the ark was made of wood overlaid with gold, so Christ has a human nature within His divine nature.

In time to come, more believers will realize that, as the One typified by the ark made of wood overlaid with gold, Christ is the God-man. The truth will go out, and it will convince, subdue, and enlighten. We praise the Lord for this.

As the God-man, the One who possesses both the divine nature and the human nature, Christ is both the Creator and a creature. Several years ago some who oppose this truth declared, "Our Christ is the Creator—He is not a creature." What blindness! The Bible says clearly that Christ is the Firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15). Because Christ is all-inclusive, He is the first of the creatures and He is the Creator of all. If Christ were only God and not man, only

the Creator and not a creature, He would not be all-inclusive. He would not be the reality of all positive things in the universe.

Eventually, either in this age or in the coming age, all those who oppose today will come to believe that Christ is all-inclusive. In eternity we all shall know that Christ is God and man, the Creator and the creature, for He is the ark made of acacia wood overlaid with gold.

THE TOPMOST PART OF CHRIST

The most crucial part of the ark of the testimony was its cover. Many buildings in ancient times had something called a topstone, or capstone. The cover of the ark was like a capstone of a building. The propitiatory cover of the ark signifies the topmost part of Christ. The Hebrew word for cover here means a lid. Most translators, however, do not regard the word lid as an adequate rendering, for they realize that this cover is not simple in its significance. For example, there were two cherubim on the lid, the cover, of the ark. Although no one can describe these cherubim, we know that they had faces, eyes, and wings. Exodus 25:20 says, "And the cherubim shall spread out their wings above, covering over with their wings the propitiatory cover, with their faces each toward the other; toward the propitiatory cover the faces of the cherubim shall be." The cherubim were made at the two ends of the propitiatory cover, and their wings covered the entire lid. The cherubim were made of beaten work, signifying that Christ's expression of the divine glory was through sufferings. According to the Bible, these cherubim signify God's glory. Wherever the cherubim are, there the glory of God is also. Thus, the picture of the propitiatory cover with the cherubim shows that God's glory, signified by the cherubim, is upon Christ.

In verses such as these, it is necessary to have an accurate translation to obtain the proper understanding. However, it is not easy to translate the Bible. Do not think that simply because a person has a scholarly knowledge of

biblical languages he is qualified to translate the Bible properly. To translate the Bible accurately we must know the truth of the Bible as a whole and we should also have experience in the Lord.

According to the truth of the Bible, blood was sprinkled on the propitiatory cover of the ark. This blood came from the sacrifices offered on the brass altar in the outer court for propitiation, sacrifices to make peace between sinners and God. The blood of these sacrifices was brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled seven times on the propitiatory cover. No doubt, at least a large area of the lid was covered by the sprinkled blood. As a result, the golden lid was eventually covered with blood. The ark in this way became a place of propitiation for man with God.

In a foregoing message we pointed out that the ark of testimony has a rim of gold. The King James Version uses the word crown. This may imply that the cover of the ark is a crown. This signifies that, as the One typified by the ark, Christ wears a crown. A crown is always placed on the top of a person's head and may be worn as a special hat, or cap.

In seeking to understand the significance of the ark of testimony for our spiritual experience, we should not rely on the ability of our natural mind. To attempt to do this is to be like cows listening to beautiful music: the sounds can be heard, but there is no understanding or appreciation. There were times many years ago that I was like such a cow listening to messages. Although I could easily recite all the points of a certain message even a year afterward, I didn't understand the "music" or appreciate it. I did not have genuine spiritual vision, and I was short of light from the Lord. By the Lord's mercy, my situation today is very different. Now I appreciate the "music" I hear from the Word. I hope that more and more of the saints will also come to appreciate the music. Concerning the ark, we need light from the Lord. In particular, we need light regarding the cover, the cherubim, the rim, and the sprinkling of the blood on the lid of the ark.

Exodus 25:22 says, "And I will meet with you there, and will speak with you from above the propitiatory cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, all that I shall command you concerning the sons of Israel." This verse indicates that God could meet with man and speak with man between the cherubim on the ark. Would you have the boldness to come into the Holy of Holies, stand before the ark, and meet with God face to face? Even though I have known the grace of God for many years, I would not have such boldness.

A PORTRAIT OF GOD MEETING WITH MAN

At this point, we need to consider the portrait of the ark in more detail. God was between the cherubim, ready to meet with man. The Holy of Holies, in which the ark of testimony was situated, was a rather restricted space; it was only ten cubits square. Under the glory and in the glory, God meets with man and talks with him. In the foregoing message we said that God always meets with us and speaks to us in glory. According to the picture in the Old Testament, God was in the midst of the glory of the cherubim, and under His feet was the propitiatory cover sprinkled with the blood. Here we have a portrait of God meeting with man. Now we must see that this portrait signifies Christ in His totality, Christ not only as the ark itself, but also as the top, the cap, of the ark. This is the Christ who is in our spirit. However, few of us have realized that the Christ who dwells in our spirit is such a One.

We need a new language to describe the Christ who lives in us. This Christ is the ark, a stand, as a testimony and container. The content of Christ as the ark is God's law as the definition, description, and portrait of God. Furthermore, Christ has two natures, a divine nature and a human nature. He also has a top part, signified by the lid of the ark, which is the propitiatory cover. At the ends of the lid there are cherubim, which are related to God's glory. All this portrays the Christ who is in our spirit.

THE BLOOD ON THE PROPITIATORY COVER

The blood sprinkled on the propitiatory cover came from the sacrifices. Although the sacrifices were slain at the altar in the outer court, the blood was brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the ark. This indicates that the effectiveness of the blood of the sacrifices is not mainly at the altar in the outer court, but at the ark in the Holy of Holies. However, the understanding of most Christians today regarding the blood is limited to the blood shed on the cross. Many hymns speak of the blood of the cross. In their Christian life, believers may spend all their time at the cross, at the altar. Some may spend their entire Christian life making one circle after another around the cross. Few enter into the Holy of Holies.

Consider your experience in the past. When you were in the denominations, did you ever enter into the Holy of Holies? Did you not spend a great deal of time only at the cross? Did you not sing hymns which only emphasized the blood at the altar? The blood shed on Calvary has been brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the propitiatory cover. According to the Old Testament, the blood shed at the altar was first sprinkled at the altar. This signifies the accomplishment of redemption. Then after redemption, or propitiation, had been accomplished, this blood was brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the cover of the ark. This made it possible for God to meet with man and speak with him from between the cherubim. When God comes to meet with us, His standing is the redeeming blood. Because the blood has been sprinkled on the propitiatory cover and because God's standing is on the blood, He can meet with us in the midst of His shining glory. All this is related to the Christ who lives in us.

We now have such a wonderful Christ dwelling in our spirit. But because of our blindness and ignorance, not many of us have an adequate realization concerning Him. Most Christians have never realized in a full way that the Christ who lives in us is the very One portrayed by the ark with the propitiatory cover. However, we should not be satisfied

simply to hear of such a Christ and learn of Him in a doctrinal way. We must go on to experience Him more and more.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHTY-EIGHT

THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY

(5)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:17-22

In this message we shall continue to consider the significance of the ark of the testimony, especially the propitiatory cover on the ark, for our spiritual experience. In the foregoing message we saw that the ark with the propitiatory cover sprinkled by the redeeming blood is a portrait of the Christ who dwells in our spirit.

OPENING THE WAY TO THE TREE OF LIFE

Although the record in 25:17-22 is brief, it involves a lengthy historical background. In eternity God, for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose, created the heavens and the earth with man as the center. According to Zechariah 12:1, the Lord stretched forth the heavens, laid the foundation of the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him. The spirit of man is the organ to receive God and contain Him. Because God's intention is to dispense Himself into man, man needs a spirit in order to receive God.

Before God dispensed Himself into man's spirit, Satan intervened to inject himself into the man created by God. When man ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Satan entered into man. In Romans chapters five, six, and seven, indwelling sin refers to Satan who injected himself into man. Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed to all men because all have sinned." The tree of life in the garden indicates that God's intention is to dispense Himself into man to be man's life. However, God

knew that His enemy would act first to work himself into man. Satan as this evil source is indicated by another tree, called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When man ate of this tree, he was poisoned by Satan. In fact, Satan became the sinful nature of fallen man. Because man had fallen by eating of the tree of knowledge, God closed the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3:24 says, "So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

In the book of Revelation we once again read of the tree of life. In Revelation 2:7 the Lord Jesus makes this declaration: "To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." Revelation 22:2, 14, and 19 also speak of the tree of life. Verse 14 says, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life." All these verses indicate that something has happened to open the way to the tree of life.

Who opened the way? How was the way opened, and when? In Hebrews 10:19 and 20 we have the answer to these questions: "Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh." The living way, the way to the tree of life, has been opened by the blood of Jesus. This opened way has now become the new and living way for us to come into the Holy of Holies. Therefore, through the redeeming blood of Christ we can once again enjoy the tree of life.

A certain well-known Bible teacher has said that the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were both unusual trees, but that he could not say much about these trees because they are no longer in existence. According to this Bible teacher, these two trees have been removed from the scene. But according to the Bible, the tree of life will exist for eternity. Nineteen hundred years ago, when the Lord put forth the epistles to the seven churches, He promised that the overcomers

would be given to eat of the tree of life. If this tree were no longer in existence, if it had been removed from the scene, how would it be possible for the overcomers to eat of it? How could all the believers have access to it in the New Jerusalem?

Many believers today have religion, ethics, and morality. But in their experience they do not have the tree of life. As far as they are concerned, it seems that the tree of life does not exist. Hallelujah, we have the tree of life, and we eat of this tree and enjoy it! We praise the Lord for the new and living way back to the tree of life through the redeeming blood of Christ. If we would properly appreciate the Christ who lives in us, we need to understand this historical background.

ENJOYING CHRIST AS THE ARK IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

Suppose a person who is a typical sinner one day hears the gospel, repents, confesses his sinful deeds, and believes in the Lord Jesus. After he repents, confesses, and believes, God meets with him, and he with God. Furthermore, Christ comes into him as the One typified by the ark with all its aspects. When Christ died on the cross, He was the Lamb for redemption. But when He comes into a believer's spirit, He comes not only as the Lamb, but also as the ark. Today, due to their limited understanding and the inadequacy of much gospel preaching, most Christians only realize that Christ is the Lamb. Very few know that this Lamb has become in them the indwelling ark with many marvelous aspects.

I can testify that I enjoy Christ in a very rich way as the ark. To me, Christ as God's testimony is a precious container with God's portrait concealed inside. He also has a covering with a crown. This crown is the top part of my Christ. On this top part the redeeming blood has been sprinkled. No matter how many failures and defeats I have and no matter how many mistakes I make, I can still enjoy Christ because I am standing on the blood.

If we are short of the proper knowledge, we may speak of being under the blood. Actually, the Bible does not say that the believers are under the blood. We have the blood as our ground and standing. Likewise, according to the type of the ark of testimony with the propitiatory cover, God is not under the blood, but is standing on the blood. If we have Christ as the ark, we also have the redeeming blood.

No words can describe the glory we experience when we meet with God upon Christ as the propitiatory cover. Although we may not have the understanding or the words, we have a deep sense of peace and the realization we are experiencing something glorious. Often as we meet with the Lord, we are repentant and say to Him, "O Lord, forgive me. I am so evil. I have been a Christian for many years, but I am still sinful." But even as we are repenting and begging the Lord for forgiveness, we have the sense within of something glorious. On the one hand, we confess that we are evil, pitiful, and full of failures and defeats. On the other hand, deep within we have peace and joy. Outwardly we may weep, but inwardly we sense a deep rejoicing. This inner sense comes from the blood and the glory in the midst of which God meets with us.

When we spend time with the Lord in the Holy of Holies, we are infused by Him with all He is. We may illustrate this by the case of a young man who spends an hour in conversation with a famous university professor. After this hour spent in the presence of such a professor, many things from that person will be infused into the young man. He may even unconsciously imitate the professor's way of speaking. How much more will the Lord infuse Himself into us if we spend an hour of fellowship with Him!

We need to enjoy Christ as the ark in our spirit, which, in our experience, is the Holy of Holies. Whenever we come to Christ, to the ark in the Holy of Holies, two things are before our eyes: the redeeming blood and the cherubim of glory. Because we have the blood as our ground and standing, we may meet with God in glory. It is impossible to come

to the ark with the blood and the cherubim and fail to meet with God. We know from our experience that whenever we come to Christ with the realization of the blood and the glory, we have the sense that God is present. Even though we may not have many words before the Lord, we are infused with Him.

LIVING CHRIST

Recently we have spoken a great deal about living Christ. But if we do not experience Christ as the indwelling ark and if we are not infused with Him, we shall not be able to live Him. Living Christ is the spontaneous issue of being infused with Him. According to 25:22, God not only meets with man on the propitiatory cover, but speaks with him "from above the propitiatory cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony." Whenever God meets with us, He also speaks to us. It is not possible to meet with God without having His speaking. Hence, we are not only infused by Him—we also are enlightened. We are instructed concerning what to do and where to go. As a result, our living and activities are according to God's revelation. Then we shall not live in a way which is merely moral or ethical, religious or devotional. Those who simply have religious behavior or devotional activity do not experience Christ as the living ark. This is why we say that Christ is different from religion, morality, ethics, and so many good aspects of culture. Christ, and Christ alone, is the living ark.

I wonder how much you have seen of Christ as the indwelling ark and how deep an impression this has made on you. In our spiritual life we must learn to speak of Christ in this way. But because of the influence of our culture, tradition, background, and terminology, we easily neglect this fact. We may have a little enjoyment of Christ as the ark, but then automatically we revert to living according to ethics, morality, religion, or devotion. We may also endeavor to live according to Scripture, without living according to the Christ who has been infused into us.

What a pitiful situation! To be ethical, religious, moral, and devotional is one thing. But to enter into the Holy of Holies and enjoy Christ as the living ark is another thing altogether.

In Colossians 1:25 Paul speaks of completing the word of God, of completing the divine revelation. Actually, the completing ministry of Paul is to reveal Christ to us as the indwelling ark with all His aspects.

THE ARK IN THE MENDING MINISTRY OF JOHN

However, not even Paul's completing ministry made these things as clear as John's mending ministry made them. The mending ministry was needed because of the damage caused to the church life in the latter decades of the first century. The Gospel of John opens with the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (1:1). John 1:14 says that this Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth, and John 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" As the Lamb of God, Christ shed His blood for our redemption. In John 17 we have the glory, the cherubim. Verse 1 says, "These things Jesus spoke, and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You." According to verse 22, the Lord prayed, "And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one." In verse 24 the Lord Jesus went on to pray that we would be with Him where He is in glory: "Father, I desire that those whom You have given Me may also be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me." In his first Epistle John speaks of the word of life and of the fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:1-3). Following this, he says, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (v. 7). In all these verses we have life, blood, fellowship, and glory.

As we have pointed out, the book of Revelation speaks of the tree of life. Furthermore, as we read through this book, we can see the redeeming blood and also Christ with the cherubim. For example, Revelation 1:5 says that Christ has loosed us from our sins by His blood, and 5:9 declares that He purchased us to God by His blood. According to Revelation 12:11, by the blood of Christ the Lamb we may overcome the enemy, the accuser of the brothers. Regarding Christ with His glory, we should consider the vision of Christ in Revelation 1. Here we see Christ not with a crown of thorns, but with the shining of His glory.

We need to read the Gospel of John, the First Epistle of John, and Revelation to see how these books cover every aspect of Christ as the ark of the testimony. Instead of concentrating on such things as foot-washing in John 13 and the horns in Revelation 13, we should pay attention to the words life, blood, fellowship, and glory. I, of course, do not deny that the Bible mentions foot-washing and the seven heads with the ten horns. However, I do not pay nearly as much attention to such things as I do to Christ. When we are in the New Jerusalem, we shall be fully occupied with Christ, not with foot-washing, teachings, or prophecy. How pitiful that so many Christians pay more attention to these things than to Christ as the living ark of God!

Revelation 22:1 and 2 say, "And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life." Revelation 21:11 speaks of the glory of the New Jerusalem: "Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, as a jasper stone, clear as crystal." We know from Revelation 21:21 that "the street of the city was pure gold as transparent glass," and from 21:23, that the city "has no need of the sun nor of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." In the New Jerusalem the Lamb-God is sitting on the throne, and flowing out from the throne is the river of living water. On either side of the river grows the tree of

life, and the entire transparent city shines with God's glory. If we consider this picture with spiritual understanding, we shall see that the New Jerusalem will be the ultimate and consummate issue of the experience of Christ as the ark. It will even have a cap, a crown—Christ shining with God's glory.

Oh, we all must have this heavenly vision! I hope that we all shall have a vision that is beyond description. We all need to see something which is beyond our capacity to describe adequately. If this is our experience, then what we have seen is genuine.

CHRIST AS THE PROPITIATORY COVER

Both the completing ministry of Paul and the mending ministry of John speak of the things related to Christ as the ark with the propitiatory cover. In a foregoing message we saw that in Romans 3:25 Paul says concerning Christ, "Whom God set forth a propitiation-cover through faith in His blood." God has set forth Christ Jesus as a propitiatory cover. As the propitiation cover, Christ is the One who shed His blood and who shines with the glory of God.

The Greek word rendered propitiation-cover in Romans 3:25 is *hilasterion.* It refers to the place of propitiation. For this reason, in Hebrews 9:5 it is used for the cover, the lid, of the ark. In Exodus 25:17-22 and Leviticus 16:12-16, the Septuagint also uses this word for the cover of the ark. In Hebrews 2:17 Paul uses the Greek word *hilaskomai,* which means to appease, to reconcile one by satisfying the other's demand; hence, it means to propitiate. According to Hebrews 2:17, the Lord Jesus made propitiation for our sins to reconcile us to God by satisfying God's righteous demands on us. Both in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 the Greek word *hilasmos* is used. This word denotes something which propitiates, that is, a propitiatory sacrifice. In 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 the Lord Jesus is the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, two apostles, the completing apostle and the mending apostle, used Greek words related to

propitiation. Both were concerned with matters related to Christ as the living ark.

Translators sometimes have had difficulty with the words *hilasterion, hilasmos,* and *hilaskomai. Hilasterion* denotes the place of propitiation; *hilasmos* denotes a propitiatory sacrifice; and *hilaskomai* means to propitiate. Propitiation is needed when one party is indebted to another and unable to meet that party's demands and requirements. Should a third party appear on the scene, he may solve the problem between the first two parties by paying what the first party owes and causing the second party to be satisfied with this payment. This is precisely what the Lord Jesus did in offering Himself as the propitiatory sacrifice to solve our problems with God.

We praise the Lord that Christ is not only the One who propitiates and the propitiatory sacrifice, but even the place of propitiation, the propitiatory cover. Here God is satisfied, and we are happy. Here on the propitiatory cover God can meet with us and speak with us. Therefore, with Christ as the propitiatory cover of the ark, God and man can meet and have fellowship under a mutually satisfying situation.

The two cherubim of glory with their faces toward the propitiatory cover signify that God's glory has been satisfied with what Christ has done. The propitiatory blood sprinkled upon the propitiatory cover (Lev. 16:14-15) satisfies the requirements of God's law under the cover and God's glory above the cover and thus gives peace to man's conscience.

Inside the ark, under the propitiatory cover, is the law with its demands, which exposed us and condemned us. Furthermore, above the propitiatory cover is God's glory watching and observing everything that takes place. But through Christ both the demands of God's law and the requirements of God's glory have been satisfied. Now we can meet with God in glory on the propitiatory cover sprinkled with the blood. By the lid of the ark with the redeeming blood sprinkled on it the whole situation on the

sinner's side is fully taken care of. Therefore, upon this lid as the propitiatory cover, God can meet with the people who broke His righteous law without any governmental contradiction of His righteousness, even under the observing of the cherubim, which bear His glory overshadowing the lid of the ark. Because the law with its demands is covered and God's glory is satisfied, God can speak with sinners, and these sinners can be at peace with God and receive grace from Him. Therefore, this propitiatory cover equals the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

When we look at the redeeming blood on the propitiatory cover, our conscience is at peace. We know that Christ died for us and that the blood, the emblem of His death, has been sprinkled for us on the propitiatory cover to satisfy the requirements of God's righteousness. At such a time God may ask, "Child, are you happy?" and we may respond, "Oh, yes, I am very happy, Father." Then the Father may say, "I am much happier than you are. Let us embrace and enjoy intimate fellowship." This is the experience and enjoyment of Christ as the propitiatory cover on the ark of the testimony.

This vision of Christ as the ark with the propitiatory cover is wonderful and inexhaustible. I hope that after hearing of such a Christ, the Christ who lives in you will become much more precious to you than ever before. The Christ who dwells in us is not simply the Lamb; He is the ark with the cap, the top part. He is the all-inclusive Christ living in us for our continual enjoyment and experience. Because we have such a Christ, we need not be troubled by anything. God's righteousness does not condemn us. On the contrary, His glory justifies us, and God Himself is happy, knowing that everything between us and Him is in harmony and that we can freely enjoy a mutually satisfying fellowship.

The result of this intimate fellowship with God upon Christ as the ark in the Holy of Holies is that we are infused with God. When we contact God in this way and are infused with Him, we are different from what we were before.

Eventually, when we enter into the Holy of Holies to be infused time after time, we shall be transformed and become transparent. The ultimate issue will be the New Jerusalem. This is the experience of Christ as the ark of the testimony.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE EIGHTY-NINE

THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY

(6)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:17-22

THE PLACE OF PROPITIATION

Not many Christians have seen that Christ is the place of propitiation. Speaking of Christ Jesus, Paul says in Romans 3:25, "Whom God set forth a propitiation-cover through faith in His blood." Here the Greek word for propitiation-cover is *hilasterion,* which means the place of propitiation. In Hebrews 9:5 this word is used for the cover, the lid of the ark within the Holy of Holies. In Exodus 25:17-22 and Leviticus 16:12-16, the Septuagint also uses this word for the cover of the ark. The King James Version adopts the rendering "mercy seat." This indicates that those translators regarded the place of propitiation as a seat, realizing that Christ as the place of propitiation was a seat for God to grant mercy to us.

It is important to see that propitiation is not only an act; it is also Christ Himself as a place. According to Romans 3:25, God set up Christ Himself, the Person, to be a propitiation-cover. It is upon this Person that God can meet with us and we can meet with God.

In the book of Hebrews Paul speaks of the propitiation-cover as the throne of grace: "Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help" (4:16). Hebrews 10:19 and 20 say, "Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He dedicated for us through the veil,

that is, His flesh." The throne of grace is in the Holy of Holies, for it is the cover of the ark, which is in the Holy of Holies. Thus, the cover of the ark is a place where God gives us grace. For this reason, the place where God gives grace to us is surely the throne of grace. Now we must see that this throne of grace, the place where God gives us grace, is actually Christ Himself.

In these messages on the ark of the testimony we have seen that the entire ark with its cover is a type of Christ. This is a matter of great significance. Christ is all-inclusive. We should not think that the propitiation-cover on the ark is something other than Christ Himself and regard propitiation simply as an act accomplished by Christ. To repeat, Christ is the entire ark, including the top, the cover.

Because few Christians have seen that Christ is the place of propitiation, the propitiation-cover, they do not appreciate the preciousness of the blood on this cover. Rather, the majority of Christians appreciate the preciousness of the blood at the cross. Instead of entering into the Holy of Holies, they continue to linger at the cross, the altar. Most of the hymns written about the redeeming blood are centered on the cross. Can you find one hymn which speaks about the preciousness of the redeeming blood on the propitiatory cover? I do not know of such a hymn.

THE ARK IN THE MENDING MINISTRY OF JOHN

We have seen that both Paul and John spoke of matters related to Christ as the propitiatory cover. Both Paul's completing ministry and John's mending ministry cover this point. Certain points in the mending ministry of John are stronger than the points in the completing ministry of Paul. When something is mended, often it is stronger than it was before. For example, when you mend a worn part of a garment, the area that is mended is usually stronger than the original cloth. This is true of the mending ministry of John with respect to Christ as the ark.

In John 1:1 and 14 we see that the Word which was in the beginning and which was God became flesh. According to verse 14, the disciples beheld the Lord's glory. In other words, they saw the cherubim, the shining of Christ's divinity. John 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" An important element related to the Lamb of God is the redeeming blood. John 19:34 says, "But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water." In John 17 we read more concerning the glory, concerning the cherubim. In verse 1 the Lord Jesus prayed, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You." In verse 22 the Lord went on to pray, "And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one."

In chapter one of the First Epistle of John we read of life, fellowship, and the blood. Verse 1 speaks of the Word of life, and verse 2 says that the life was manifested. In verse 3 John says, "That which we have seen and heard we report also to you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed the fellowship which is ours is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Concerning the blood, verse 7 says, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Eternal life has been proclaimed that we may have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Although we are sinful, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us.

In the book of Revelation we see the shining Christ, beginning with His unveiling in chapter one: His head and hair are white as white wool, as snow; His eyes as a flame of fire; His feet like shining brass; and His face "as the sun shines in its power" (vv. 14-16). Revelation 10:1 also describes a shining Christ: "And I saw another strong Angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon His head, and His face was as the sun, and His feet as pillars of fire." Revelation 18:1 also speaks of Christ as the shining One: "After these things I

saw another Angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was illumined with His glory."

The book of Revelation also emphasizes the blood. Revelation 1:5 says, "To Him who loves us and has loosed us from our sins by His blood." Revelation 5:9 declares, "You were slain and did purchase to God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." Revelation 7:14 speaks of "those who come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Speaking of the overcomers, Revelation 12:11 says, "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." The blood with which we are cleansed also shuts the slandering, accusing mouth of the Devil.

In the book of Revelation we can see the very Christ typified by the ark made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Much is said concerning gold in this book. The Son of Man in the midst of the golden lampstands is the One typified by the acacia wood.

THE ARK IN HEBREWS

At this point we need to see that the book of Hebrews is a definition of the ark. If we would know the ark of the testimony, we need to study Hebrews. Speaking of Christ, Hebrews 1:3 says, "Who being the effulgence of His glory and the express image of His substance." Christ as the effulgence of God's glory is the cherubim. He is God, and He has the golden nature out of which come the cherubim, the glory. In Hebrews 2 we have the element of acacia wood, the human nature of Christ. From verse 14 we see that Christ took on a human nature of blood and flesh. Verse 17 says, "Wherefore He ought to be made like His brothers in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

The book of Hebrews has much to say concerning the redeeming blood. Hebrews 9:22 says that "without shedding of

blood there is no forgiveness." Verse 12 says that Christ "through His own blood, entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, having found an eternal redemption." Verse 14 goes on to say, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

In Hebrews 9:5 Paul speaks explicitly of the propitiation-cover on the ark. This verse says, "And above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the propitiation-cover." How rich and all-inclusive is the Christ signified by the ark! We can never exhaust the definition of this ark. Just as the ark of the testimony was in the Holy of Holies, so now the Christ typified by the ark dwells in our spirit.

THE THRONE OF GRACE IN OUR SPIRIT

The understanding of most Christians regarding the ark is extremely superficial. Most Bible teachers have expounded the record of the ark merely in a doctrinal way. They do not emphasize the place of the ark in Christian experience. Do you know of any Bible teacher who has said that the ark is the Christ who dwells in our spirit? Many believers do not even know the human spirit; they consider the spirit and the soul synonymous terms. Even many Bible teachers believe in dichotomy—the doctrine that man is made of two parts, body and soul—and not trichotomy—the truth that man is composed of three parts, spirit, soul, and body. Certain Christians who emphasize the inner life do stress that man is made of three parts and that the spirit and the soul are not identical. If we do not realize that we have a human spirit, there is no way to see that the ark in the Holy of Holies typifies Christ dwelling in our spirit.

We need to consider this matter in a practical way from the standpoint of our experience. Where is it that you have fellowship with God? Do you go to the heavens to have fellowship with Him? Certainly not. Hebrews 4:16 encourages us to come forward to the throne of grace. But when you

come forward to the throne of grace according to this verse, where do you come? Do you not come to your regenerated human spirit? Practically speaking, the throne of grace is now in our spirit. If we do not know Christ as the ark in our spirit, we shall not know how to come to the throne of grace.

To say that the throne of grace is in our spirit is practical and experiential. It is not merely a matter of doctrine. Whenever we pray by turning to the spirit, we touch the throne of grace. What is the throne of grace? It is the all-inclusive Christ typified by the ark, in particular typified by the top part of the all-inclusive Christ, the propitiatory cover.

THE BLOOD AND THE CHERUBIM

Two important symbols are related to the cover of the ark: the blood and the cherubim. The blood signifies the redemption accomplished by Christ in His humanity, and the cherubim signify the glory of Christ's divinity. It is on this cover, the propitiatory cover with the cherubim of glory and sprinkled with the redeeming blood, that God and we can meet together. Here on this cover we and God have fellowship. Furthermore, this is also the place where we hear a word from God and receive vision, revelation, and instruction to control our daily life.

CONTROLLED BY VISION

Our daily walk as Christians should not be controlled by ethics, morality, devotion, piety, or religion. Our daily life should not even be controlled by the Scriptures alone. Then by what should our daily living be controlled? It should be controlled by the vision we see when we meet with Christ on the cover of the ark. Proverbs 29:18 says that where there is no vision, the people run wild (lit.). This indicates that it is the vision which controls us. Where do we receive this vision? We receive it when we meet with God on the top part of Christ, the propitiatory cover. How meaningful and deep this is!

Daily we may enter into the Holy of Holies through the new and living way opened by the blood of Jesus shed in His humanity. When we come into the Holy of Holies, we meet the all-inclusive Christ. With the redeeming blood as our standing, we can meet with God and have fellowship with Him in the midst of Christ's shining glory. Then we shall be infused with God and receive revelation, vision, instruction, and direction. We should then walk according to this infusion and direction. This is to be a genuine Christian and not a devotional Christian or a pious, ethical, moral, or religious Christian.

To be a Christian who receives God's infusion in the Holy of Holies and walks according to it is to be a Christian in the most wonderful sense of all. In order to be such Christians, we need to turn from devotion, piety, religion, morality, and ethics and turn wholly to Christ. Because of their lack of understanding, some may oppose what we say regarding this. Their opposition simply exposes their pitiful situation and shows that they do not see into the depths of God's Word. In His mercy, God has opened many things to us, and we believe that He intends to open more.

We also believe that we are in the last recovery, the ultimate move of God on earth. The world situation has come to an ultimate point. The Lord's ultimate recovery is the recovery of Christ and the church. It is the recovery of the all-inclusive Christ typified by the ark. However, we must remember that the measurements of the ark are halves of complete units. This indicates that just as a wife is the other half of her husband, so the Christ typified by the ark also has another half—the church. Christ is the Bridegroom, and the church will be His bride. With the Bridegroom and bride we have the testimony in full. For this reason, in His recovery today, the Lord is emphasizing not only Christ, but Christ and the church, the great mystery. Praise the Lord that we are in His recovery! By His ultimate recovery the Lord will terminate this age and usher in the age of the kingdom.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINETY

THE TABLE OF THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:23-30; Lev. 24:5-9

In this message we come to the second item of the furniture of the tabernacle—the table of the bread of the Presence.

The sequence in which the furniture of the tabernacle is unveiled is very meaningful. The first item to be revealed is not the tabernacle itself, but the ark of the testimony. Without the ark there is no way to have the tabernacle. This indicates that if we do not have Christ as the embodiment of God, we cannot have the enlargement of Christ, which is the church, His Body. Thus, it is significant that in the record in Exodus God speaks about the ark of the testimony before He reveals the details regarding the tabernacle.

In the outer court there were the brass altar and the laver; in the Holy Place, the table of the bread of the Presence, the lampstand, and the incense altar; and in the Holy of Holies, the ark of the testimony. Although God's revelation begins with the ark, this is not where we begin in our experience. Rather, in experience we start with the altar in the outer court. After experiencing the altar with the laver, we then may enter the tabernacle and come to the table, the lampstand, and the golden altar in the Holy Place. Only then are we able to enter into the Holy of Holies and stand before the ark to meet with God based upon the redeeming blood sprinkled on the propitiatory cover. Then we can talk with God, have fellowship with Him, and receive His instructions. Therefore, the sequence

of the furniture in experience—from the brass altar to the ark—is different from the sequence according to revelation.

According to God's revelation, the first aspect of the tabernacle revealed to Moses was the ark of the testimony, a type of Christ as the embodiment of God. Because Christ is the embodiment of God, He is God's testimony. Not only does Christ speak for God—He speaks God. He is God Himself expressed. Christ as the embodiment of God is typified by the testimony within the ark, and Christ as the expression of God is typified by the golden rim, or crown, upon the ark. First, God is embodied in Christ, and then He is expressed from within Him. This is not the hidden God, God in a mystery, but the expressed God, God in revelation. Christ Himself is God in revelation; He is the very God revealed.

In Christ God is embodied and expressed. When this Christ is enlarged, we have the church. The church as the Body of Christ to be His enlargement is typified by the tabernacle as the enlargement of the ark.

I. A TABLE SIGNIFYING CHRIST AS THE FOOD FOR GOD'S PRIESTS

According to the sequence of God's revelation, after the ark of the testimony we have the table of the bread of the Presence. This implies that the table is connected to the ark. The ark is for God's testimony, and the table is for our nourishment. Not only is it necessary for God to have a testimony, but it is also necessary for us to receive nourishment. Without nourishment we would be hungry and eventually die. Praise the Lord that we have the ark for God's testimony and the table for our nourishment!

We need to consider the relationship between the ark and the table from the standpoint of our experience. We know from experience that when we meet with God upon Christ as the propitiatory cover, enjoying fellowship with God and hearing words from His mouth, the ark becomes a table where we enjoy a nourishing feast. Has there ever

been a time when you have met with God in the Holy of Holies on Christ as the propitiatory cover, conversed with Him, and received a word from Him, and yet there was no table set up for your nourishment? Experientially speaking, it is not even necessary to say that a table has been set up, for the ark spontaneously becomes the table. This means that Christ, God's testimony, becomes our nourishment. As the embodiment of God, Christ becomes a table full of life supply to nourish us. This is not a mere doctrine.

Those who lack experience will have no way to understand what we are talking about. Because they are strangers to the culture related to spiritual things, they cannot understand this language about the ark of testimony becoming in our experience the table of the bread of the Presence. Nevertheless, it is a fact of spiritual experience that when we have the propitiatory cover of the ark, Christ as our place of propitiation, eventually the ark becomes a table. All of this is the experience of the one Christ, the very Christ who is the embodiment and expression of God as His testimony who becomes both the table and also the food upon which we may feast for our nourishment.

In particular, the table of the bread of the Presence signifies Christ as the feast for God's priests. Exodus 25:23-29 does not say anything about priests. However, the priests were the only ones qualified to be in the Holy Place. Those who were not priests were forbidden to enter the tabernacle. It is significant that this table was not set up in the outer court, but set up in the tabernacle. All those who ate of the bread displayed on this table were priests. For this reason, the table signifies that Christ is a feast for God's priests.

Every believer in Christ is a priest. This is a spiritual fact. But because of the degraded situation today, many Christians do not live as priests. The reason they are not living as priests is that they are not in the tabernacle. Many are lingering in the outer court, and others are still

in the world. What percentage of today's Christians would you say are living as priests in the Holy Place? We must admit that the percentage is extremely small.

As we consider the picture of the tabernacle and the outer court, we can see the real situation among Christians today. When we speak concerning the table in the Holy Place, we are not speaking of Christians in the outer court or those who have not yet come into the outer court. Rather, we are speaking of those who have entered the tabernacle and who are there serving God as His priests. Christ as the feasting table is for this category of Christians.

The experience of feasting on the bread of the Presence is different from the experience of eating manna. The bread of the Presence was in the Holy Place, whereas the manna was gathered outside the court of the tabernacle. When some Christians hear that the table signifies Christ as the feast for God's priests, they may argue that they daily enjoy the Lord as their manna. It is true that many believers do enjoy manna. This enjoyment, however, is in the wilderness, not even in the outer court. In this message we are not speaking of manna—we are speaking of the table of the bread of the Presence. It is very important that we see this distinction.

Another difference between the bread of the Presence on the table in the Holy Place and the manna in the wilderness is that manna typifies Christ as the daily life supply, but the table signifies Christ as our weekly supply. According to Leviticus 24:5-9, fresh loaves were placed on the table once a week. Hence, the table signifies a weekly supply. The daily supply of the manna enables us to live; the weekly supply from the table enables us not only to live, but also to serve the Lord. It supplies us that we may have a serving life. With manna we have the life supply for our living; with the table we have the supply of life for our serving. Thus, we have both a daily supply for living and a weekly supply for serving. Those Christians who are feeding only on manna need to realize that this is different

from enjoying Christ as the weekly supply to serve God as priests in His tabernacle. Christ is not only the manna for God's people in a general way; He is also in particular a table for God's priests.

A. Before God

The table of the bread of the Presence was set up before God. This is why the bread on the table is called the bread of the Presence—the presence of God. This indicates that the priests enjoyed Christ as a feast before God. In contrast, many of those who ate manna did not eat in God's presence. They could eat manna in any place, whether or not they were in the presence of God. The table, on the contrary, was before God. It was not far from the ark of the testimony in the Holy of Holies.

B. Within the Tabernacle

The table of the bread of the Presence was inside the tabernacle. This signifies that the table is within, or among, the builded saints. Although it may seem unusual to express it this way, I would like to ask this question: Who is the tabernacle today? I do not ask, What is the tabernacle? Instead, I ask, Who is the tabernacle? The answer to this question is that those believers who have been builded together in an actual and practical way are God's present tabernacle as His dwelling place. Within this tabernacle, the saints who have been built together, there is a table. The tabernacle was a building. This means that it was built of many pieces. For this reason, we can say that the table was within a building.

We who have been in the church life for a period of time can testify that the enjoyment of Christ as a table for our nourishment cannot be found anywhere else. Apart from the church life, we cannot enjoy Christ in this way. Yes, Christians may experience manna everywhere. But if they enjoy Christ as their manna when they are doing something worldly, Christ will supply them to turn away from that activity. For example, some who still go to the movies

may contact Christ as their daily manna. As a result of this contact with Him, they know they must stop going to movies. A husband or wife may touch the Lord as manna even in the midst of an argument. Then one of them may stop quarreling, go to another room, and pray to the Lord and be supplied by Him. This is the experience of manna, not of the table.

Certain Christian teachers say that this table typifies Christ as the nourishment for God's people. In their application, however, they make the table too general. The table is not general; rather, it is particular. In contrast to the table spoken of in Psalm 23, the table set up on the battlefield before the enemy, this table was near the ark in the tabernacle. Praise the Lord for this particular, precious table! I repeat, according to typology, this table signifies the enjoyment of Christ as our nourishment for serving. Furthermore, this table is located next to God's embodiment in the midst of the builded-up saints.

Suppose certain believers meet together week after week, yet there is no building among them. As long as they are not built up together in a practical way, they cannot have the experience of the table, for the table is located within the tabernacle, God's dwelling place. Since these believers do not have a tabernacle, they cannot have the table. I wish to emphasize the fact that the enjoyment of the table requires the building of the tabernacle—the church. Then in the tabernacle we may enjoy the table. This means that we must be those believers who are built up together as God's present dwelling place in an actual and practical way. Then within this building there will be the table of the bread of the Presence. Our experience in the church life proves that this is true.

From my experience of Christ and the church I have learned that this table is found only within the tabernacle, only in the midst of the builded saints. When I studied the typology of the tabernacle many years ago, I did not realize that the table was among the builded saints. At that time I did not have any experience. But now I can strongly testify

that I enjoy my Christ as a particular portion, the table, within the tabernacle and close to the ark as God's embodiment. Oh, how rich is this enjoyment of Christ!

C. To Be Their Daily Life Supply

The table of the bread of the Presence was also to be the daily life supply for God's priests. By means of this supply, they were able to live and serve in God's dwelling place. Our living and serving of the Lord should not be in any worldly place, nor even restricted to our home. Our living and serving must be in God's dwelling place. For this, we have the daily supply from the table of the bread of the Presence.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINETY-ONE

THE TABLE OF THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:23-30; Lev. 24:5-9

This is the continuation of the foregoing message on the table of the bread of the Presence.

D. Made of Acacia Wood

The table of the bread of the Presence was made of acacia wood (25:23). Acacia wood here signifies that Christ's humanity is the basic element for Him to be our feast. It is significant that both the ark of the testimony and the table were made of acacia wood, signifying Christ's humanity.

E. Overlaid with Gold

Exodus 25:24 says, "And you shall overlay it with pure gold." The fact that the table was overlaid with gold signifies the expression of God, Christ's divinity. Within Him, Christ's humanity is the basic element for our enjoyment, and upon Him is His divinity as the expression of God. If we enjoy Christ, we shall express God. This means that as we enjoy the Lord Jesus as the supply with which to serve God, the outcome will be gold, Christ's divinity as the expression of God. This is very meaningful, and I trust in the Spirit to reveal more to the saints concerning it. From our spiritual experience we know that the more we enjoy Christ as the basic element of our feast, the more we express God. This is the significance of the table being overlaid with gold.

F. A Rim of Gold Round About

Verse 24 also says, "And make for it a rim of gold round about." The rim of gold around the table signifies that the expressed glory of Christ's divinity becomes the keeping power and holding strength. We have previously seen this with respect to the rim of gold around the ark of the testimony. With both the ark and the table, the significance of the rim of gold is the same.

G. The Size

1. Two Cubits Its Length and a Cubit Its Width

According to verse 23, the table was two cubits in length and a cubit in width. Here we have two units of measure, each one cubit square, or two square cubits. In the Bible the number one signifies a complete unit, a unique unit. Furthermore, for something to be square indicates that it is perfect and without bias or defect. Thus, the two square cubits signify the perfect and complete life supply of Christ to issue in a testimony.

The enjoyment of Christ is perfect, represented by a square. It is without bias or defect. Eventually, this enjoyment makes us a testimony. This two-square enjoyment issues in a testimony. No words are adequate to explain this. But if we consider the picture of the table, we shall gain a proper understanding of it.

2. A Cubit and a Half Its Height

We know from verse 23 that the table of the bread of the Presence was a cubit and a half in height. This signifies that the standard here is up to that of the ark of the testimony. The nourishment of Christ to us as serving priests matches the standard of God's testimony. If our enjoyment of Christ does not come up to God's testimony as signified by the height of the ark, then our enjoyment is not perfect. It is in some way defective and below the standard.

Today Christians everywhere read the Bible and study it. But is the standard of their enjoyment up to the standard of God's testimony? In the vast majority of cases it is not up to God's standard. Along with the study of the Bible, some Christian groups use worldly music. The use of such music lowers the standard to a very great degree. On the one hand, these Christians have the Bible; on the other hand, they have things which lower the standard.

As we consider the picture of the ark of the testimony and of the table of the bread of the Presence, we see that the height of both the ark and the table is the same—one and a half cubits. This indicates that the ark and the table are on the same level. This reveals that our enjoyment of Christ must match the standard of God's testimony. Our enjoyment of Christ through the Word must be very high. No place should be given to any gimmicks which lower the standard.

H. A Frame Round About

Exodus 25:25 says, "And you shall make for it a border of a handbreadth round about; and you shall make a rim of gold to its border round about." According to our present understanding, the Hebrew word here does denote a border. However, it does not denote a border in an ordinary sense. According to verses 26 and 27, four rings of gold were to be put upon the four corners which were on its four feet. Furthermore, the rings were to be "close to the border as receptacles for the poles to carry the table." In Hebrew, the word rendered close means side by side. Thus, for the rings to be close to the border means that they were next to the border. This indicates that, since the rings were on the four corners which were on the four feet of the table, the border must have been close to the bottom of the table. Some translations use the word frame instead of border.

1. For Connecting and Strengthening the Legs

As we consider the table and its frame, or its border, we

see that the purpose of the frame was to connect the legs and strengthen them. In this way the frame helped to stabilize the table.

2. Of a Handbreadth

The frame, or border, was a handbreadth round about. A handbreadth here signifies full of strength to connect and strengthen. Notice that verse 25 does not say that the frame was a handbreadth in height. This may indicate that the frame was a square handbreadth, a handbreadth in both width and height. Such a frame certainly would have been a strong support to the table.

3. With a Rim of Gold

Verse 25 says that a rim of gold was made to its border round about. Just as there was a rim, or crown, upon the top of the table (v. 24), so there was a rim of gold upon the frame. As we have pointed out, this rim is for keeping and holding.

It is not adequate simply to use our mind to try to understand the significance of the frame round about the legs of the table. We need to consider this in the light of Christian experience. We know from our experience with the Lord that when we obtain Christ as our nourishment, Christ becomes to us a table with power to connect and strengthen. This means that the enjoyment of Christ as a feast strengthens us, connects us, upholds us, and keeps us. Every aspect of the frame is related to our experience. The size, shape, and material are all significant when considered in the light of spiritual experience.

I. Four Rings of Gold

Verses 26 and 27 say, "And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings upon the four corners which are on its four feet. The rings shall be close to the border as receptacles for the poles to carry the table."

1. Signifying the Spirit of Christ as the Linking Factor and Power

Here it is sufficient simply to review what we have said about the four rings of gold that were cast for the ark. These rings do not signify the divinity of Christ. Rather, they signify the Spirit of Christ as the linking factor and the linking power. In typology, a gold ring signifies the Spirit. When Rebekah became engaged to Isaac, she received rings of gold. These rings signify the Spirit mentioned in Ephesians 1:13. Furthermore, when the prodigal son came home, the father gave him not only a robe signifying Christ as righteousness to cover him, but also a ring of gold, which signifies the initial gift, the sealing Spirit (Luke 15:22). The Spirit signified by a golden ring is a uniting bond. Ephesians 4:3 speaks of keeping the oneness of the Spirit. This oneness of the Spirit is the ring, the bond with its binding power.

If Christ were only the Lord objectively in heaven and not also the life-giving Spirit dwelling in us subjectively, there would be no way for us as believers to be united, for we would not have the golden rings. In order to have oneness and to keep the oneness, we must have in our experience the rings of gold, the Spirit as the linking factor and the linking power.

2. Put upon the Four Feet of the Table for Moving

The four rings of gold were put upon the four feet of the table so that there could be a way for the table to be moved. Without the rings, the table could not be carried. This table, signifying Christ as our feast, is not stationary; it is a table which moves and follows us all the time. According to 1 Corinthians 10:4, the children of Israel "drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ." Just as Christ as a spiritual rock followed the children of Israel, so Christ as the table for our feast follows us. The ark of the testimony could be moved, and the table of the bread of the Presence could be moved also.

3. Close to the Frame as Receptacles for the Poles to Carry the Table

From verse 27 we see that the rings were close to the border as receptacles for the poles to carry the table. This signifies that both the linking and the moving are dependent on the connecting and strengthening. We have seen that the frame was for connecting and strengthening and that the rings were for linking and moving. The fact that the rings were close to the frame indicates that the linking and the moving are dependent on the connecting and the strengthening. If among us there is no connecting or strengthening, there cannot be any linking or moving. If we are disconnected from one another, we shall not have the strengthening. Then it will be impossible to have the linking or the moving. But because we have the connecting and the strengthening, we also have the linking and the moving. How meaningful it is that the golden rings were placed close to the connecting and strengthening frames!

J. Two Poles of Acacia Wood

Verse 28 speaks of the poles: "And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold; and the table shall be carried with them." Once again, the acacia wood signifies Christ's humanity. Here the poles made of acacia wood signify that Christ's humanity is the strength for moving. The fact that these poles were overlaid with gold signifies that Christ's divinity is the expression of the move of the table. The acacia wood is the strength, and the gold is the expression of God in His move. Furthermore, the poles made of acacia wood overlaid with gold signify that the move of Christ as our life supply is by His two natures mingled as one.

K. The Dishes, Cups, Jars, and Sacrificial Bowls

Verse 29 says, "And you shall make its dishes, and its cups, and its jars, and its sacrificial bowls with which to pour a drink offering; you shall make them of pure gold."

The dishes were for displaying the bread. When you serve a meal, you put the food in serving dishes. In the same principle, the dishes were used for displaying the bread.

The cups contained frankincense. Frankincense signifying Christ's resurrection was poured upon the bread of the Presence displayed on the table. The cups were used to contain this liquid frankincense. The jars and sacrificial bowls were used for pouring the drink offering.

All these utensils were made of pure gold. This signifies that the divine nature of Christ is the means through which we partake of Him as our life supply and our offering to God.

If we consider our experience as Christians, we shall know that this interpretation of the details related to the table is accurate. Praise the Lord that He is God's ark and our table! He is the embodiment of God's testimony and also the feast for our enjoyment. As the ark, the law is within Him and the cherubim are upon Him. As the table, the bread of the Presence is displayed on Him. If we remain in the tabernacle to serve God, we shall enjoy Christ as such a portion.

II. THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE SIGNIFYING CHRIST AS THE FOOD FOR GOD'S PRIESTS

A. The Presence-bread, the Face-bread

Exodus 25:30 says, "And you shall put upon the table bread of the Presence before Me continually." The King James Version and other versions adopt the rendering showbread in place of bread of the Presence. In the Old Testament the bread on this table in the Holy Place has two names: the first, found here in Exodus, is the bread of the Presence; the second, found in 1 Chronicles 9:32, is the bread of arrangement. In both places the King James Version says showbread. This expression is very close in meaning to the bread of arrangement. When the bread was arranged in a certain way, there was a show, a display, of the bread. However, by the term showbread we do not have any realization that the bread is related to the presence of

God. This bread is not only for a show, display, or arrangement; it is also the bread of the Presence.

The bread of the Presence is surely an unusual expression. In ordinary language we do not have such a term, for this is not part of our culture. People do not ordinarily speak of the food of God's presence. But this is precisely the meaning of the term bread of the Presence. It denotes the food of God's presence. Actually, the Hebrew word means face. Hence, verse 30 speaks of the presence-bread or of the face-bread. When you have this bread, you have God's presence, God's face. Furthermore, when you eat this bread, you eat the presence of God, the face of God. Therefore, this bread is not merely for show or display.

We have pointed out that the table of the bread of the Presence was not far from the ark of the testimony. This table was thus before God, in His presence.

Perhaps we can illustrate the significance of the bread of the Presence by pointing to the delight a mother has in preparing a favorite meal for her son. Although a certain mother may be in her seventies and her son in his fifties, she still loves him and enjoys cooking for him. Suppose her son comes to visit her after an absence of several years. The elderly mother may prepare a meal she enjoyed cooking for her son and that he especially enjoyed eating when he was young. She recalls that her beloved son enjoys this particular dish very much. Thus, she prepares the meal for him and serves it to him. As he eats the food she has prepared, her eyes are upon him. He enjoys this meal in his mother's presence. Therefore, this food is the food of his mother's presence, his mother's face. In a sense, this meal is virtually the presence of his mother. By eating this food, he eats his mother's presence. When he eats this food before his mother, it becomes the food of his mother's presence. In like manner, the bread on the table in the Holy Place is the bread of God's presence.

This bread is very different from manna. Manna could be gathered and eaten far away from God's face. We have indicated that no matter where they may be, Christians

may have manna without God's presence. If we consider our past experience as believers, we shall be able to confirm this. Did you not experience manna years ago, before you came into the church life in the Lord's recovery? But did you enjoy God's presence at that time? Now in the midst of the built-up saints we have a portion of Christ with God's presence. Although words cannot explain this adequately, if we have had the experience, we shall also have the understanding. Praise the Lord for the bread of the divine presence, the bread of God's face! In the church life we are feasting on the face of God.

The presence-bread, the face-bread, signifies Christ as the food of God's priests. This food was to be enjoyed by them in God's presence and it was to bring them into His presence. We know from our experience that when we enjoy Christ as such a portion, this enjoyment brings us into the presence of God. Actually we are enjoying Christ as our life supply in God's presence.

B. Most Holy of the People's Offerings to Jehovah by Fire

According to Leviticus 24:9, the bread of the Presence was the most holy of the people's offerings to Jehovah made by fire. It signifies the surplus of the believers' experience and enjoyment of Christ offered to God for His satisfaction. This means that the bread of the Presence was God's food. It was offered to God by His people to be His food. God, however, caused certain loaves to be spared, brought into the Holy Place, and arranged and displayed on the table. Eventually, the priests who served in the Holy Place ate of this bread.

The significance of this matter is that the believers should experience Christ and enjoy Him daily. Then they should bring the Christ they have experienced and enjoyed, and they should offer Him to God for His satisfaction. God will reserve a part of this food for the priests. Suppose no one has this experience and no one makes such an offering to God. Then God would not have any food, and He would

not be satisfied. Furthermore, nothing could be spared as a weekly supply for the serving priests. If in the church in your locality no one experiences Christ and enjoys Christ to this extent, then there will not be anything of Christ offered to God. As a result, there will not be the bread of the Presence, and the serving ones will not have any weekly supply.

We today are both the believers and the serving ones, both the people of God and His priests. For this reason, we encourage all the saints to experience and enjoy Christ daily. Then they will have a portion of the Christ experienced by them to bring to the meetings and offer to God for His satisfaction. In a very real sense, this offering is God's food. God will reserve a portion of this food for the priests who serve Him. They will then display this portion in God's presence and partake of it as their weekly supply.

C. On the Table within the Holy Place of the Tabernacle

The bread of the Presence was on the table within the Holy Place of the tabernacle. This signifies that Christ as the food of God's priests is for a corporate feasting within God's dwelling place.

In the meetings of the church we have a particular enjoyment of Christ. Those who stay away from the meetings do not have this enjoyment, although they may enjoy Christ in other aspects. When we are in the tabernacle, in the midst of the built-up saints, we enjoy Christ on the table in God's dwelling place.

The bread of the Presence on the table signifies a corporate feasting. In the Bible a table always signifies not an individual feasting, but a corporate feasting. In the church life we feast corporately. To be sure, we can have some enjoyment of Christ when we are alone. But this enjoyment cannot compare with feasting with Christ corporately in God's dwelling place. How rich is our enjoyment of the bread on the table in the tabernacle!

D. To Be Eaten in the Holy Place

The bread of the Presence was to be eaten in the Holy Place. This means that it is to be partaken of and enjoyed in God's habitation, the church. It is not possible to have this table outside the church life. This table is found only in the tabernacle, only in God's habitation.

E. The Display of the Bread

The display of the bread on the table signifies the life supply. The ark with the cherubim signifies God's glory, but the table with the bread of the Presence signifies nourishment. In the church life we should have both the testimony and the nourishment. We should have both the ark of God as God's testimony and the table with the bread of the Presence as nourishment for the priests.

We have seen that both the ark and the table were made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, that both were of the same height, that both had golden rings at the feet, and that both were carried on poles of acacia wood overlaid with gold. These similarities indicate that the table comes out of the experience of the ark. It is always the ark which first issues in the table, not the table which issues in the ark. Eventually, however, in our experience it is difficult to say which is first. The ark issues in the table. But the more we experience the table, the more we shall have of the ark, for the table will always bring us back to the ark. Therefore, the ark issues in the table, and the table brings us back to the ark. This means that Christ as the embodiment of God's testimony issues in our enjoyment of Him, and that our enjoyment of Him always brings us back to Him as God's testimony.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINETY-TWO

THE LAMPSTAND

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:31-40

In this message we come to the lampstand. The golden lampstand may be regarded as the most mysterious of all the furnishings in the tabernacle.

I. THE EXPRESSION OF THE TRIUNE GOD

The lampstand signifies the expression of the Triune God. This alone is sufficient to impress us with how mysterious the lampstand is. Nothing in the universe is more mysterious than the Triune God. Furthermore, the most puzzling element of the divine revelation in the Bible is also the Triune God. Throughout the centuries, readers of the Bible have been puzzled by the revelation of the Triune God in the Scriptures. Even today we do not have an adequate understanding of the Triune God. However, it is very helpful to see that the lampstand is the expression of the Triune God.

Throughout the centuries of their history, the Jewish people have treasured the lampstand. But no rabbi would ever say that the lampstand signifies the expression of the Triune God. I do not even know of any Christians who have such a realization. Actually, this understanding of the lampstand is a truth recently recovered by the Lord in His recovery. Years ago, we said nothing about the lampstand signifying the expression of the Triune God. But several years ago we began to see that in the Bible the lampstand is an expression of the Triune God.

As we consider this matter of the golden lampstand, we need to remember that the Bible is a complete entity. Hence, we should not separate 25:31-40 from the rest of the Word and ignore all the other books of the Bible. The lampstand is mentioned not only in Exodus, but also in 1 Kings, Zechariah, and Revelation. According to chapter one of Revelation, the lampstand is the church. Furthermore, the seven lamps are the Spirit. How mysterious this is! Eventually, at the consummation of the divine revelation, the lampstand in Exodus 25 becomes the church, and the seven lamps become the Spirit of God. By this we see that a great deal is involved with the lampstand, for the lampstand is related both to the church and to the Spirit of God. The book of Revelation also emphasizes the church and the Spirit. Revelation 22:17 even contains the words, "The Spirit and the bride say…." Here we see that the Spirit and the church have become one in speaking.

In the last century certain teachers emphasized the significance of the types in the Old Testament. Concerning the lampstand, these teachers mainly said that the lampstand is a type of Christ as the light of the world. What they said was right and good; however, it was not adequate. These teachers of the Word did not see that the lampstand is an expression of the Triune God, that consummately the lampstand becomes the church, and that the seven lamps of the lampstand are the seven Spirits of God.

A. The Substance

As we ponder the substance, the stand, and the lamps of the lampstand, we see that the lampstand is indeed the expression of the Triune God. According to 25:31, the lampstand was of pure gold. Thus, gold is the substance, the element, of the lampstand in its entirety. In typology gold signifies the divine nature, the nature of God the Father. If we consider this substance, this element, of the lampstand, we shall see that it signifies the divine nature. Therefore, by this we can see God the Father, the One whose nature is the

very substance of the lampstand. The golden lampstand exists in the nature of God the Father.

B. The Stand

God the Father is invisible and abstract. God the Son is the embodiment of this invisible One. The stand is a form signifying God the Son as the embodiment of God the Father. This solid form of the lampstand is the embodiment of the gold. According to the New Testament, God the Father is embodied in God the Son. Here in the lampstand we have the substance signifying the Father, and the solid form signifying the Son.

C. The Lamps

Exodus 25:37 says, "And you shall make its lamps, seven." These seven lamps signify God the Spirit being the seven Spirits of God for His expression (Rev. 4:5; 5:6). The shining of the lamps denotes expression. Thus, the seven lamps are the expression of God the Son as the embodiment of God the Father. In the book of Revelation we see that the seven lamps are the Spirit of God.

Because we have in the lampstand the element of gold signifying God the Father, the stand signifying God the Son, and the seven lamps signifying God the Spirit, we have the ground to say that the lampstand itself is the expression of the Triune God.

We have pointed out that, consummately, in the book of Revelation the lampstand becomes the church. If we realize this, our understanding of the church will be deepened and enriched. The church is actually the expression of God. In this expression we see the Father's nature, the Son's embodiment, and the Spirit's expression. In the proper church life, God the Father is the substance, God the Son is the embodiment, and God the Spirit is the expression. In Exodus 25 the lampstand signifies Christ, but in Revelation 1 it signifies the churches. This indicates that the unique Christ has been reproduced, that the one lampstand has become seven lampstands. In Exodus 25 we have the

masterpiece, but in Revelation 1 we have the masterpiece reproduced and multiplied. Praise the Lord for the one lampstand in Exodus 25 and the seven lampstands in Revelation 1! At first God's expression was only in Christ as the lampstand. Now this expression has been reproduced in the churches as golden lampstands. By this we see that Christ has been reproduced. The church is actually the reproduction of Christ. Both Christ and the church are the expression of the Triune God. In the church life we have the nature of the Father, the embodiment of the Son, and the expression of the Spirit. How wonderful!

II. WITHIN THE DWELLING PLACE OF GOD

The lampstand was not in the outer court; it was in the Holy Place, that is, within the dwelling place of God.

In their experience, most Christians have not yet entered the Holy Place. On the contrary, they spend a great deal of time at the altar, the cross, in the outer court. In a very real sense, we need to leave the cross and enter into the Holy Place. Where are you in your experience—at the altar or in the Holy Place? Many among us may still be at the cross.

We have seen that the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God, signifies the saints who have been built up to be the house of God. We all need to ask ourselves if we are truly in the dwelling place of God. This means that we must inquire whether or not we have been built into the church as God's house. Among a great many Christians today, there is no experience of the lampstand, because these believers are still at the cross and have not been built up with others. Since there is no dwelling place of God, no building with the saints, how can there be the lampstand? It is impossible. The lampstand is not near the cross in the outer court; it is within the dwelling place of God, that is, among the saints who have been built up together to be the house of God.

In the eyes of God, every local church is a lampstand. God regards every church as a house built up for His

dwelling. If we would see the lampstand, we must be in the house of God, the church.

III. AFTER THE TABLE OF THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

According to the sequence of revelation, the lampstand comes after the table of the bread of the Presence. This table signifies Christ as the life supply; it is a figure showing us that Christ is the source of our life supply. The lampstand signifies Christ as the light of life (John 8:12). Hence, the table is the supply of life, and the lampstand is the light of life.

The Gospel of John speaks of Christ as the light of life. John 1:4 says, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." According to John 8:12, the Lord Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

What is the meaning of the expression "the light of life"? Although this is rather difficult to explain, it is easy to illustrate. Life is light, but death is darkness. Because we are living, we are able to see. But if we were to die, we could no longer see anything. Death would produce darkness. In the Bible blindness equals death. All the worldly people are blind and in darkness. Because they are dead, they are also blind. When we receive the divine life supply, we have spiritual sight, and this sight is the light. Hence, it is the light of life. Christ as the light of life comes out of the life supply. This is the reason we must first have the table and then the lampstand.

Even in our physical life there is a connection between the life supply and sight. For example, if a person goes a long period of time without eating, his eyesight will begin to fail. But if he eats nourishing food, his vision will improve. This indicates that the lack of the life supply can cause loss of sight. It also indicates that the life supply brings in the sight, the light.

If we would have the light of life, we must come to the table before we come to the lampstand. The reason we need

morning watch every day is that we need to be nourished by the life supply on the table. Then in our experience the lampstand will appear. Whenever we have the food, the supply of life, the light from the lampstand shines upon us. For example, a brother may think that regarding a certain matter he is right and that his wife is wrong. But after he enjoys Christ as the life supply at the table, his sight becomes clear, and he is enlightened concerning the matter. Then he realizes that he was the one who was wrong. This illustrates the fact that when we take in the life supply, we automatically receive the light of life.

IV. OF PURE GOLD

We know from verse 31 that the lampstand was of pure gold. Pure gold signifies the pure divine nature. As the embodiment of the Father for His expression, Christ is purely divine. This is also true of the church as the lampstand. In Revelation we see that the seven churches are seven golden lampstands (1:20). It is true that in the church life we need a strong uplifted humanity, a proper humanity. Nevertheless, the actuality of the church does not depend at all on humanity. On the contrary, it depends on divinity. How much of the divine nature has been imparted into us determines to what extent we are the church in actuality.

Christians have said to us, "Why do you call yourselves the church? Are we not the church just as much as you are?" In God's standard of measurement, the church is measured by divinity. How much of God do we have in us? How much of the divine element is in the church in our locality? If we have only a very limited amount of the divine element, of divinity, then the church in our locality is limited, small, and immature. But if we have a greater measure of divinity, the actuality of the church is increased.

When Christ was on earth, He had both humanity and divinity. However, it was not because of His humanity that the light was shining, but because of His divinity. This is

why there is no mention in Matthew, Mark, and Luke of Christ as the light of life. Matthew does refer to Christ as a light (4:16), but not in the way John does. John says explicitly that Christ is the light of life, because his Gospel reveals the divinity of Christ. It opens with the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.…In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:1, 4). Christ's being the light of life is intimately related to His divinity. If He were not divine but simply a good man, He could not be the light of life. To repeat, the light of life is derived from Christ's divinity. This is the significance of the lampstand being of pure gold.

Just as Christ shines because of His divine nature, so we are able to shine with the divine element which has been infused into us. The degree of our shining is according to the degree of the divine element within us. If you are kind, nice, humble, and loving in a natural way, without any portion of divinity, you will not have any light. Others will not see light in you. But if you live Christ with His divinity and express God, light will be manifest. First John 1:5 says, "God is light." Light comes from divinity, not from humanity.

V. OF BEATEN WORK

Exodus 25:31 says, "Of beaten work shall the lampstand be made." Verse 36 says, "Their knobs and their branches shall be from it—all of it one beaten work of pure gold." Beaten work signifies sufferings. To be beaten is to suffer. When Christ, the embodiment of God, was on earth, He experienced much suffering, much beating.

With the ark, the gold was beaten to express the glory of God. The two cherubim were made of gold which had been beaten. These cherubim of glory signify that the glory of God comes out of the beating, that the glory of God expressed in Christ comes out of His sufferings.

With the lampstand, the gold was beaten to shine forth the light of God. This light equals the glory of God. This

means that the light on the lampstand equals the glory above the ark. Both came out of gold which had been beaten. This indicates that through His sufferings Christ expresses God's glory.

If we are short of sufferings, our light may not shine brightly. Although we should not seek to suffer, we should not despise sufferings, for they are useful. If we never experience any difficulties, any beating of the gold, we shall not be able to shine. For example, if your husband or wife or your children are always good to you, this may hinder your shining. But if you face difficulties in your family life, these difficulties will help you to shine. Children can be compared to little hammers, hammers which beat the gold within their parents and help them to shine.

VI. WITHOUT MEASUREMENT

We do not know the measurements of the lampstand. The dimensions of neither the cherubim nor the lampstand are recorded. No one knows how high the lampstand was. Although we know that the weight of the lampstand with all its utensils was one talent, we do not know the exact weight of the lampstand itself.

What the Bible does not say is sometimes just as significant as what it does say. The significance of the lampstand being without measurement is that the divinity of Christ and the light He shines are immeasurable (John 3:34). The shining of the lamps we use today can be measured, but the shining of Christ is immeasurable. Both His divinity and His light are beyond measure.

VII. THE BASE AND THE SHAFT

Verse 31 speaks of the base and the shaft of the lampstand. The base is for stability, and the shaft is for strength. The four Gospels reveal that the Lord Jesus was always stable and strong. He always had a stable base, and no matter what situation He encountered, He stood as a strong shaft.

VIII. THE CUPS WITH THE KNOBS AND BLOSSOMING BUDS

Now we come to an aspect of the lampstand which is difficult to understand. Verse 31 says of the lampstand, "Its cups, its knobs and its blossoming buds shall be from it." What are these cups, and why are they on the branches and the shaft? The expression "blossoming buds" actually means blossoms, although "blossoming buds" is the literal translation of the Hebrew. What is the significance of these blossoms? When I was young, I had great difficulty understanding this matter. I thought that on each branch there was a knob over the cup and a blossom over the knob. Actually, the cup, the knob, and the blossoming bud are all parts of one flower, one blossom.

A flower, an almond flower for example, has several layers. The bottom layer may be green, like a green leaf. The proper word to describe this bottom layer is calyx. The word knob in verse 31 denotes the calyx of a flower, the outer leafy green layer of a flower. The calyx contains the blossoming bud. The top of the flower, the blossoming bud, is actually the flower itself. In verse 31 the word cup is used to describe the whole flower, including the calyx and the blossoming bud. Thus, the cup is equal to the complete flower. This cup comprises the calyx at the bottom and the buds at the top. When the buds blossom, a flower is produced.

In the lampstand the cup is shaped like an almond blossom, an almond flower. Here the almond flower is called a cup. Almonds blossom early in the spring, before other trees. Every little almond flower is a cup. At the bottom of the cup there is a leafy green part called the calyx, which forms a container to hold the blossoming buds. Eventually these buds become flowers.

A. The Cups Shaped like Almond Blossoms

The cups shaped like almond blossoms signify the resurrection life blossoming. According to Numbers 17:8, Aaron's

rod budded and brought forth almonds. This is a picture of resurrection life coming out of death. Aaron's rod was a dead stick, but through resurrection it brought forth almonds. Hence, almond blossoms signify the blossoming of resurrection life.

We have pointed out that an almond tree blossoms early in the spring. Thus, the almond blossom signifies the firstfruit of resurrection.

Jeremiah 1:11 and 12 say, "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it." In Hebrew the words almond and hasten are from the same root. This root word means to watch over, to be alert. The spiritual significance of this is very meaningful. Resurrection implies to watch, to be alert, to hasten. Resurrection hastens matters. According to Jeremiah 1:12, the Lord's intention was to hasten His word to perform it; that is, He would hasten to fulfill His word.

We have pointed out that Christ's being the light of life is altogether a matter of divinity. Now we see that it is also a matter wholly in resurrection. Without resurrection life, there cannot be any light. Christ can be the light of life only in His divinity and in resurrection. Hence, divinity and resurrection are the prerequisites for Christ to be the light of life. In principle, the same is true of us in our experience. We cannot shine by our natural life, by our humanity. If we would shine forth the light of life, we must have divinity and we must be in resurrection. Resurrection is the basis for the shining of the divine light.

B. The Knobs, the Calyxes, the External Green Leafy Parts of the Flowers, Containing the Blossoming Buds

The knobs, the calyxes, the external green leafy parts of the flowers, containing the blossoming buds, signify the sustaining and supporting power of the resurrection life. We can comprehend this only through our experience with

the Lord. To shine the divine light is to blossom. But this blossoming requires a container to support and sustain it. From our experience we know that in order to shine with the divine light, we must have resurrection life to be a knob, a calyx, as a container to sustain and support our shining. If we do not have resurrection life as such a container, our blossom will collapse. This means that the shining of the divine light in us will cease. Without the knobs, the calyxes, the flowering buds would fall. In like manner, without the resurrection life, we have nothing to uphold, support, and sustain our shining of the divine light.

Suppose in your daily life with your family you are shining with the divine light. Suddenly, however, you revert to your natural life and begin to speak and behave in a natural way, especially in your relationships with the members of your family. Immediately, your blossoming buds collapse and you stop shining. Because you have lost the calyxes as the support of the blossoming buds, there is no more shining. When you remain in resurrection, you are blossoming, shining. But when you leave resurrection and return to your natural life, you immediately stop shining. You may have been shining a few minutes ago, but now, having lost the support of resurrection life, you are no longer shining. Whenever the calyx, the support of the blossoming bud, is removed, the flower collapses and falls. Thus, because there is no blossoming, there is no shining. The shining of the divine light is held by the resurrection life.

C. The Blossoming Buds

The blossoming buds, the petals, signify the expression of the resurrection life. Resurrection life is both the container and the blossom, both the support and the expression.

IX. THREE BRANCHES ON EACH OF THE TWO SIDES

Exodus 25:32 says, "And there shall be six branches

going out from its sides, three branches of the lampstand from its one side, and three branches of the lampstand from its other side." On each side of the lampstand there are three branches arranged in layers. Here the number three denotes both resurrection and the Triune God. Actually resurrection is the Triune God. According to 1 Corinthians 15, the life-giving Spirit is the ultimate expression of the Triune God and the ultimate reaching of the Triune God to man. Hence, the life-giving Spirit is the ultimate consummation of the Triune God. Through resurrection, in resurrection, and with resurrection, Christ, the last Adam, became a life-giving Spirit. This life-giving Spirit is the processed Triune God. Resurrection is nothing less than the processed Triune God Himself. Resurrection is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is Christ Himself. This understanding of resurrection corresponds to the Lord's word: "I am the resurrection" (John 11:25).

On the one hand, in the Bible the number three refers to the Triune God; on the other hand, it refers to resurrection. Resurrection is the very Triune God. In the lampstand resurrection is signified not only by the almond blossoms, but also by the three branches on each side of the lampstand.

Furthermore, the branches signify the branching out of Christ's resurrection life. The six branches in two groups of three signify the testimony of the light of life. Two is the number of testimony. For this reason, the Lord Jesus sent out the disciples two by two. In the same principle, the two groups of branches on the two sides of the lampstand signify the testimony of the light of life.

X. THREE CUPS SHAPED LIKE ALMOND BLOSSOMS ON EACH BRANCH WITH KNOB AND BLOSSOMING BUD

The three cups shaped like almond blossoms on each branch with knob and blossoming bud signify the resurrection life blossoming in and with the resurrection life. We have pointed out that there were three blossoms on each

branch. This indicates resurrection with resurrection, and resurrection in resurrection. The lampstand is filled with almond blossoms. This reveals that the divine thought here is focused on resurrection.

We truly need a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17) to understand the significance of the lampstand. In the golden lampstand we have divinity, resurrection, and the light of life. The shining is the expression of the divine life in resurrection. Although we are human and natural, through regeneration we have received the divine life with the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). This means that as believers in Christ, we have the divine substance, the divine element, that is, divinity. Now we need to live Christ, to live divinity, by practicing to be one spirit with the Lord. The vast majority of Christians neglect this matter. Instead, they simply teach others to improve their natural humanity. But in our natural humanity there is no divinity, no resurrection, and no light. We must not remain in our natural life, but enter into resurrection. For this, we must pass through the cross. Then we shall be in resurrection, and with the divine element in resurrection there will be the blossoming, the shining.

Once again I would emphasize the fact that the blossoming is the shining. When we blossom, we shine. With the lampstand we have divinity and resurrection. Now this resurrection needs to blossom. Whenever it blossoms, it shines; that is, it expresses the life of God. This expression, this blossoming, is the shining.

I encourage all the saints to consider the picture of the golden lampstand and pray about it. This will help us to see how Christ today is shining over us and how we can be a shining member of Christ through the divine nature and by blossoming in resurrection. This is to shine the divine light. The more we shine in this way, the more we shall be the church with the seven Spirits.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINETY-THREE

THE LAMPSTAND

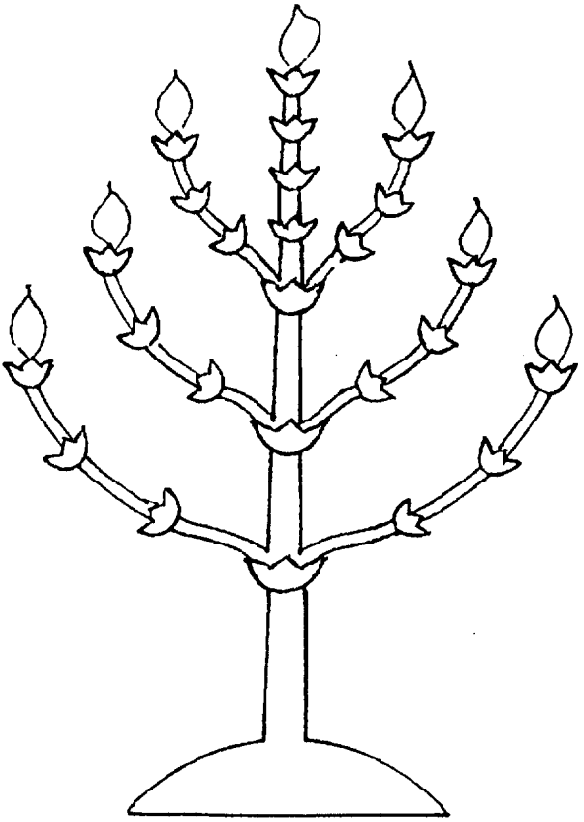
(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:31-40; 40:4, 24-25

Before we consider more detailed points concerning the lampstand, it will be helpful to have a general view of the lampstand. Exodus 25:31 says, "And you shall make a lampstand of pure gold; of beaten work shall the lampstand be made: its base and its shaft; its cups, its knobs, and its blossoming buds shall be from it. And there shall be six branches going out from its sides, three branches of the lampstand from its one side, and three branches of the lampstand from its other side." The lampstand consists of a base, a stalk, and three pairs of branches. There were three branches on each side of the lampstand. Underneath each pair of branches there was a knob holding the two branches at the stalk. Then on each branch there were three cups shaped like almond blossoms with knobs and blossoming buds. We have seen that each cup was composed of two layers: a bottom layer, called the knob, or the calyx, the leafy green bottom of the blossom, and a top layer of petals, which actually made up the blossom, the flower. The bottom layer is called the knob, and the top layer is called the blossoming bud. The whole flower, including calyx and blossom, is a cup shaped like an almond blossom.

As we consider the lampstand as a whole, we shall see that on it there are twenty-five knobs. There are three on each branch, three holding one pair of branches each, and four on the shaft of the lampstand, making a total of twenty-five. Since the three knobs which each hold one

pair of branches do not have blossoms, the lampstand has a total of twenty-two blossoms. The divine thought here is that the lampstand is actually a tree with calyxes and blossoms.



If we have a general view of the entire lampstand, we shall realize that it does in fact look like a tree. Furthermore, the lampstand is described in such a way as to give the idea of growth. These verses speak of branches, buds, and almond blossoms. Blossoming indicates growth. Thus, we must be impressed that the lampstand is a growing tree.

As a tree, the lampstand has certain outstanding features. First, it is a golden tree. Gold signifies the nature of God. As we pointed out in the previous message, the golden lampstand is the expression of the Triune God. The Triune God is a living tree, growing, budding, and blossoming.

We have seen that this golden tree has many almond blossoms. In typology almonds signify resurrection life. Aaron's rod budding with almonds signifies resurrection life. Hence, the almonds on the lampstand indicate that it is a tree in resurrection. Resurrection is life that overcomes death without being damaged or injured by death. Death is powerless to do anything with resurrection life. Death can inflict all kinds of damage on other forms of life, plant life, animal life, and human life. Only one kind of life cannot be hurt by death, and this is resurrection life. Resurrection is life which passes through death and can never be held by it. According to the full revelation of the Scriptures, God Himself is this resurrection life.

The lampstand, of course, gives light. However, the first significance of the lampstand is not light, but life. The light is at the top of the lampstand and underneath this shining light are the blossoms. The lampstand is something that grows. The calyx under each pair of branches indicates the growth of life. These branches are produced by the growing of life. Thus, with the lampstand we see the branching out of life which takes place under the shining of the light. Life grows out light and blossoms with light. This means that the light is actually the blossoming of life. When we grow and blossom, the light shines. Our blossoming is our shining. We grow with life, but we blossom out light.

Thus far, we have seen that with the lampstand we have the divine nature, resurrection, life, and light. The seven lamps on the lampstand (v. 37) signify the Spirit. Therefore, with the lampstand there are five crucial matters: the divine nature, resurrection, life, the Spirit, and light. The revelation in the Bible, especially in the New Testament,

corresponds to the lampstand in these five matters—the divine nature, resurrection, life, the Spirit, and light.

Now we must see that as those who believe in Christ, we are a part of this wonderful tree. Realizing that I am part of this golden tree causes me to be beside myself with joy. Praise the Lord that we are parts of this tree in resurrection and with the divine nature, life, the Spirit, and the shining light!

The lampstand in Exodus 25 signifies the Triune God embodied in Christ. The lampstand in Zechariah 4 signifies the Triune God expressed in the Spirit. Finally, in Revelation we have the lampstand reproduced and multiplied. In both Exodus 25 and Zechariah 4 we have just one lampstand, but in Revelation 1 we have seven. The one lampstand has been reproduced to become seven lampstands. These seven lampstands are the church. Because the lampstand has become the church and because we are all parts of the church, we have the ground to say that we are parts of the lampstand. I have the boldness to testify that I am a part of the lampstand. I hope that all the saints can declare this marvelous fact. Do you not have the divine nature? Do you not also have resurrection, life, the Spirit, and the shining light? As true believers in Christ, we have all these things.

We have seen that the lampstand is a tree. It is not an entity without light, and neither is it inanimate. It is living, organic, and full of life. It is a tree-stand, a stand that grows like a tree. This living tree is growing, branching, budding, and blossoming.

As we have pointed out, the blossoming is the shining of the light. Thus, the light is the life blossoming. Actually the light is the life. John 1:1 and 4 say, "In the beginning was the Word…and the Word was God.…In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." This is the shining of Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, as the light of life.

The fact that the lampstand is golden signifies that, as the embodiment of God, Christ is altogether divine. But two aspects of the lampstand point to the humanity of Christ.

First, the central stalk of the lampstand has four blossoms, whereas each branch has just three blossoms. In the Bible the number four is not composed of two plus two; rather, it is composed of three plus one or one plus three. The number three signifies both the Triune God and resurrection. Actually, as we have mentioned, the Triune God is resurrection. Therefore, according to the Bible, the number three signifies the Triune God in resurrection. The number four in the Bible signifies creatures. For example, we have the four living creatures and the four winds. Thus, the number four signifies creation.

As God, Christ is the Creator. But as a man, He is a creature. Some Christians may protest when they are told that Christ is both the Creator and a creature. But the Bible definitely says that Christ put on human nature, that He had a body with flesh, blood, and bones. Are these not the elements of a creature? Furthermore, Colossians 1:15 says that Christ is the Firstborn of all creation. In the lampstand we have not only the Triune God, but also the creature, as signified by the number four. This is the first aspect of the lampstand which points to Christ's humanity.

The second aspect of the lampstand related to the humanity of Christ is the wick. The wick was made of fibers, primarily of cotton. When the lamps on the stand were lighted, the wick burned with the oil. Every morning it was necessary for the priests to trim the lamps, that is, to snuff the charred, burnt wick. The charred portion of the wick is called snuff. The word snuff is also a verb meaning to cut off the burnt part of the wick. Exodus 25:38 speaks of the snuffers and the snuff dishes. The snuffers were used to cut the wick, and the snuff dishes were used to contain the burnt part of the wick. When the priest trimmed the lamps every morning, he cut off the charred wick and also added fresh oil. This was the priests' work in caring for the lampstand.

The wick was the only part of the lampstand that was not made of gold. Thus, the wick signifies not divinity but humanity. Furthermore, the fact that the wick could become charred indicates that the lampstand not only signifies

Christ Himself, but also us. Christ's humanity could never produce a charred wick. Only our humanity is capable of becoming burnt and charred. Surely Christ had no need of a snuffer to trim Him, to deal with Him. As we read the four Gospels, we realize that it was never necessary for Christ to be snuffed, for there was never a charred wick in His human living. However, we easily become charred and need to be snuffed every day.

Morning watch is an excellent time to experience the Lord's trimming, His snuffing. I can testify that this trimming takes place as I make confession to the Lord and ask Him to forgive me of all my defects, failures, weaknesses, and wrongdoings. If we consider our situation each day, we shall see that there is always some charred wick that needs to be snuffed. Our humanity is very low compared to Christ's humanity. His humanity never produces any snuff, but ours produces snuff every day and requires a daily trimming. Thus, in our experience we need the snuffers and the snuff dishes.

Perhaps you are wondering who performs this work of trimming, or snuffing. Often Christ Himself will snuff us during times of fellowship with Him in the morning. At other times He may use an elder or one of the saints to do this. Furthermore, the ministers of the Word also snuff the saints and trim them. If you are a Christian who is growing and maturing in the Lord, you will unconsciously snuff others as you have fellowship with them. Some have told me that, during the course of fellowship, they have been snuffed by me. Of course, I had no intention of trimming anyone. This happened unconsciously and unintentionally. For example, one brother told me that something I said in fellowship helped him with respect to a problem he had with his wife. He told me that this cutting, this snuffing, was very helpful to him.

Many Christians today are not shining because they have a long, charred wick. Their charred wick is smoking rather than shining. In some cases, the wick may be more than twelve inches long! In order to shine properly and adequately, we need the snuffing.

XI. FOUR CUPS SHAPED LIKE ALMOND BLOSSOMS ON THE LAMPSTAND WITH ITS KNOBS AND ITS BLOSSOMING BUDS

Exodus 25:34 says, "And on the lampstand four cups shaped like almond blossoms with its knobs and its blossoming buds." The four cups shaped like almond blossoms on the central stalk of the lampstand with its knobs and its blossoming buds signify Christ's humanity in His shining with the resurrection life.

XII. A KNOB UNDER EVERY TWO BRANCHES

Verse 35 says, "And a knob under two branches of it, and a knob under two branches of it, and a knob under two branches of it, for the six branches going out from the lampstand." These three knobs do not hold blossoms but branches. This indicates that the branches are growing in order to branch out. The knob, or calyx, holding the branches signifies life growing. The branches are branching out through the growth of life. Thus, we have the life, the growth, and the branching out. This signifies the resurrection life's branching out for the shining. Life is branching out by growing in order to produce the shining.

Although there is mention of blossoms, nothing is said of the fruit. Actually, the fruit is simply the shining light. This can be applied in our daily life with the Lord. As we grow in resurrection life, we shall bud, blossom, and bring forth fruit. If we compare Galatians 5 with Ephesians 5, we shall see that this fruit is the light. In Galatians 5:22 Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit, but in Ephesians 5:9 he speaks of the fruit of the light. Actually, the light is the fruit. As a result of growing, budding, and blossoming, we bring forth fruit. This fruit is the shining of the light. How is it possible for our relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and schoolmates to see the light shining from us? They can see it only when fruit is brought forth in our Christian life, for this fruit will be the light.

Let us consider as an example the case of two sisters, one called Mary and the other, Martha. Mary is growing in the

Lord and is budding, blossoming, and bringing forth fruit. Martha, however, does not grow, but remains in the flesh. When Martha comes in contact with Mary, she sees fruit in Mary's life. This fruit is the light. With Mary herself, it is fruit, but in relation to Martha this fruit becomes the shining light. Martha sees this light and is enlightened by it. Then she realizes that she is fleshly, worldly, and far away from the Lord. In this way she is enlightened by the fruit of the light which is growing, budding, and blossoming in Mary.

Often the saints are enlightened in the meetings of the church. Even when no message is given, we may experience this shining. For example, certain young ladies may attend the meetings dressed in a way which is somewhat immodest or inappropriate. Spontaneously, they become conscious of the way they are dressed and desire to be fully covered. This consciousness comes from the shining of light in the church. These young ladies would not have the same realization if they were sitting in a place of worldly entertainment. This indicates that there is light in the church meetings. We are enlightened in the meetings because here we see the fruit, the shining. Therefore, with the lampstand we have the budding, the blossoming, and the shining of the light as the fruit.

XIII. THE LAMPSTAND AND ITS KNOBS AND BRANCHES ALL BEING ONE BEATEN WORK OF PURE GOLD

Verse 36 says, "Their knobs and their branches shall be from it—all of it one beaten work of pure gold." The fact that the lampstand and its knobs and branches are all of one beaten work of pure gold signifies that the entire entity is all purely of Christ's divinity without anything added to it. The knobs and the branches were not added to the lampstand; they were part of the lampstand, part of one beaten work of pure gold. This indicates that in the lampstand there is no mixture. Mixture in our Christian life brings in darkness. But when our Christian life is purified through the divine nature, we have light.

XIV. SEVEN LAMPS

Exodus 25:37 says, "And you shall make its lamps, seven." The seven lamps signify the seven Spirits of God and the seven eyes of the Lamb (Zech. 4:2, 10; Rev. 4:5; 5:6) as the full expression of the Triune God.

XV. THE LAMPSTAND GIVING LIGHT IN FRONT OF ITSELF THROUGH THE THREE LAMPS ON EACH OF ITS TWO SIDES

The latter part of verse 37 says, "And one shall light its lamps, and it shall give light in front of it." The lampstand gives light in front of itself through the three lamps on each of its two sides. The two sides of the lampstand shine toward each other. The shining is in front of the lampstand. In Hebrew the words "in front of it" mean "facing it." Through the branches on each side, the lampstand gives light facing itself. The three lamps on each side of the lampstand face the central stalk and also face each other. This signifies Christ's shining in His resurrection life, bearing testimony for itself and giving confirmation to itself. The divine light which shines within us bears testimony to itself and gives confirmation to itself. Of the seven lamps on the lampstand, only one, the lamp on the central stalk, shines upward. The other six shine facing the central stalk. Eventually, the seven lamps shine together as one light. They do not give seven lights, but just one light.

XVI. THE SHINING OF THE SIX BRANCHES IN THREE PAIRS TAKING THE CENTRAL STALK OF THE LAMPSTAND AS THE OBJECT

The shining of the six branches in three pairs, taking the central stalk of the lampstand as the object, signifies that Christ is the central object of the shining of all the churches and saints by the Spirit with the resurrection life. The churches and the saints all take Christ as the object of their shining.

XVII. A PRIEST LIGHTING THE LAMPS

We have pointed out that it was the responsibility of the priests to light the lamps. A priest lighting the lamps signifies that Christ, or anyone who serves as a priest with Christ, keeps the resurrection life shining (Rev. 1:20; Phil. 2:15).

XVIII. THE SNUFFERS AND THE SNUFF DISHES FOR TRIMMING THE CHARRED WICKS

Verse 38 says, "And its snuffers and snuff dishes shall be of pure gold." The snuffers and snuff dishes for trimming the charred wicks signify the dealing with the old and charred natural life so that the shining of the resurrection life may be bright and pure. In our experience the snuffers are not only things and matters but also the persons involved in the snuffing. Our charred natural life needs to be snuffed so that the shining of the resurrection life in us may be bright and pure.

XIX. THE SNUFFERS AND THE SNUFF DISHES MADE OF PURE GOLD

According to verse 38, both the snuffers and the snuff dishes were of pure gold. This signifies that the trimming, the purifying, must be altogether of the divine nature. Suppose a sister named Carol visits a sister called Catherine. Realizing that Catherine's charred wick is very long, Carol becomes offended and rebukes Catherine. This rebuke will not trim Catherine's charred wick, but instead will lengthen it, for this trimming of the wick is not by the divine nature. However, if Carol exercises her spirit and looks to the Lord for His leading as she fellowships with Catherine, Catherine's wick will be snuffed unconsciously and unintentionally. In such a case Carol will conduct herself according to the divine nature, and the divine nature does the cutting, the cleansing, and the purifying. This is the significance of the snuffers and the snuff dishes being made of pure gold.

XX. THE LAMPSTAND WITH ITS UTENSILS BEING OF ONE TALENT OF PURE GOLD

Verse 39 says, "Of a talent of pure gold it shall be made with all these utensils." The lampstand with all its utensils was one talent of pure gold. The talent was the weightiest measure used by the Hebrews. A talent equals approximately one hundred pounds. Such a heavy unit, a whole and complete unit of weight, signifies that Christ as the lampstand shining the divine light in resurrection is perfectly and completely weighty.

XXI. IN THE HOLY PLACE THE LAMPSTAND BEING OVER AGAINST THE TABLE OF THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE CLOSE TO THE ARK

The lampstand was in the Holy Place, over against the table of the bread of the Presence and close to the ark. With the table we have the supply of life, and with the lampstand we have the shining of the life. The placement of the lampstand with respect to the table and the ark indicates that in the church the light of the truth and the supply of life must match and balance each other for the carrying on of Christ as the testimony of God.

XXII. IN THE MAKING AND DISPLAY OF THE FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE, THE LAMPSTAND FOLLOWED BY THE INCENSE ALTAR

In the making and display of the furniture of the tabernacle, the lampstand was followed by the incense altar (Exo. 37:23-25; 40:24-27). According to chapter thirty-seven, the incense altar was made after the lampstand. According to chapter forty, the incense altar was displayed following the lampstand. This signifies that the shining of Christ in resurrection as the divine light leads us into contact with God in the sweet fragrance of prayer. In experience we go from the table to the lampstand, and from the lampstand to the incense altar. Spontaneously, the shining of Christ as the divine light in resurrection leads us to prayer. Whenever we

are enlightened by Christ, we are spontaneously led into prayer to contact God.

XXIII. THREE LAYERS OF DIFFERENT LIGHTS WITH THE TABERNACLE

A. In the Outer Court

There were three layers of different lights with the tabernacle. First, there was the natural light in the outer court. The outer court did not have any covering. The light there came from the sun by day and from the moon and the stars by night. Hence, this light is a natural light. Because many Christians today are in the outer court, the light they have is natural.

B. In the Holy Place

The light in the Holy Place came from the light of the lampstand. This light signifies the shining of Christ in resurrection and in the Spirit. This light excludes all human thoughts, concepts, and perspectives. We should not do things according to natural light. Many Christians still look at matters according to their natural philosophy, culture, background, education, and perspectives. We in the Lord's recovery must view things differently. We need to experience the shining of the lampstand in the Holy Place. Only when we have been enlightened by Christ are we able to drop our natural thoughts, concepts, and perspectives.

C. In the Holy of Holies

The light in the Holy of Holies is the light of God's shekinah glory. Thus, the light in the Holy of Holies is the inmost light. The natural light in the outer court is the outer light, the light of the lampstand in the Holy Place is the inner light, and God's shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies is the inmost light, God's glory appearing on Christ as the propitiatory cover. Thus, the glory of God is our inmost light.

XXIV. THE LAMPSTAND BECOMING THE CHURCH TO BEAR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS AND THE SEVEN LAMPS BECOMING THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD TO EXPRESS THE TRIUNE GOD

According to Revelation 1:20; 4:5; and 5:6, eventually the lampstand becomes the church to bear the testimony of Jesus, and the seven lamps become the seven Spirits of God to express the Triune God. The one lampstand in Exodus 25 has been reproduced as the seven lampstands in Revelation 1. Today the churches are the lampstands bearing the testimony of Jesus, and the seven Spirits of God are the seven lamps expressing the Triune God. In the Lord's recovery we hope that every saint will live a shining life and that every local church will be a lampstand bearing the testimony of Jesus. Then we shall have the Holy Spirit as the seven Spirits, the sevenfold intensified Spirit, expressing the Triune God among all the churches in the Lord's recovery.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINETY-FOUR

THE LAMPSTAND

(3)

GROWING, BRANCHING, BUDDING, AND BLOSSOMING TO SHINE THE LIGHT

Scripture Reading: Exo. 25:31-40; 40:4, 24-25

As we consider the various types related to the tabernacle, we shall pay more attention to the aspect of experience than to the aspect of doctrine. In the past many books have been written on the furniture of the tabernacle. For the most part, these books concentrate on doctrine. Reading these expositions of the tabernacle does not afford much help on the experiential side. Throughout the years I have learned that these types are not only for doctrine, but also for our experience. Furthermore, this experience should not be general Christian experience. Rather, it must be the experience of Christ.

The title of this message is "The Lampstand—Growing, Branching, Budding, and Blossoming to Shine the Light." Here we have six matters: growing, branching, budding, blossoming, shining, and light. In order to have the shining of the light, we must first have the growing, the branching, the budding, and the blossoming. Only when we reach the last step, the step of blossoming, can there be the shining, for we shine by blossoming. We blossom in order to shine. Then the light, of course, comes out from the shining.

The lampstand portrays Christ. However, the Christ pictured by the lampstand is not simple; He is the all-inclusive Christ. We may even say that, in a positive sense,

He is a complicated Christ. This Christ is portrayed by a lampstand with one stalk, six branches, and seven lamps.

In the foregoing message we pointed out that the lampstand is actually a tree; hence, it is a tree-stand. On this golden tree we have the calyxes (the knobs), the buds, and the blossoms. Only something organic and living is able to bud and blossom. Thus, as we consider the lampstand with its branches, calyxes, buds, and blossoms, we have the definite impression that this golden lampstand is a tree.

Verse 35 is written in a very unusual way: "And a knob under two branches of it, and a knob under two branches of it, and a knob under two branches of it, for the six branches going out from the lampstand." The repetition in this verse related to the knobs and the branches indicates growth. Hence, the central stalk of the lampstand is something living and growing. As the stalk grows, the branches grow also. First, two branches grow out of the lower part of the stalk. Then as the stalk continues to grow, two more pairs of branches grow out, one pair out of the middle section and another pair out of the upper section of the stalk. Furthermore, knobs, buds, and blossoms appear on all the branches. With the full growth we eventually have the budding and the blossoming to produce flowers. The buds produce petals, and the petals are parts of the blossom. First we have the growing, then the budding, and finally the blossoming. This blossoming produces the shining of the light. For this reason, in this message we speak of growing, branching, budding, and blossoming to shine the light. The branching is implied in the growing. The shining of the light is the issue of the four steps of growing, branching, budding, and blossoming.

On the lampstand there is a total of twenty-five knobs, or calyxes. There are three knobs under the pairs of branches, one knob under each pair; three on each of the six branches; and four on the upper part of the stalk, making a total of twenty-five. The number twenty-five is\ composed of five times five. In the Bible five is the

number of responsibility. This can be illustrated by our hand with its four fingers and thumb. The number five in the Bible is composed not of two plus three, but of four plus one. The number four signifies the creature, the creation, and the number one signifies God the Creator. Furthermore, the fact that five is the number of responsibility is indicated by the dividing of the ten virgins into two groups of five, five wise and five foolish, and the engraving of the Ten Commandments in two groups of five on two tablets of stone. The twenty-five knobs indicate five times the number of responsibility.

Although there are twenty-five knobs, there are only twenty-two buds, for the three knobs holding the three pairs of branches do not have any buds. That there are twenty-five knobs for responsibility and only twenty-two buds for blossoming and shining indicates that with the lampstand the matter of responsibility for growth is greater than the matter of budding, blossoming, and shining. This means that growth is basic. It shows that we need more growth, even growth multiplied twenty-five times.

I. CHRIST AS THE RESURRECTION LIFE GROWING, BRANCHING, BUDDING, AND BLOSSOMING TO SHINE THE LIGHT

As a type of Christ, the lampstand portrays Christ as the resurrection life growing, branching, budding, and blossoming to shine the light. We have seen that the lampstand is a growing entity. Since the lampstand typifies Christ, it indicates that Christ is the One who is growing. Remember that the lampstand is not made up of only one branch and one lamp. On the contrary, as the central stalk grows, it produces three pairs of branches. Moreover, all the branches are growing and have knobs, buds, and blossoms. As the stalk of the lampstand begins to grow, it produces the first pair of branches. Then as it continues to grow, it produces the second pair and finally the third. Eventually, the stalk itself grows to its full measure. All this indicates that Christ is growing.

Christ grows first in Himself and then also in us as the branches. Apparently it is the branches that are growing. Actually, it is the stand that is growing through the branches and within them. This indicates Christ's growth in us. We are not growing—Christ is growing in us. As the central stalk, Christ grows in Himself, by Himself, and with Himself. But in the six branches He grows in us, by us, and with us.

This matter of Christ growing both in Himself and in us is not merely a doctrine; it is a vision which applies to us in our experience with the Lord. We have pointed out that there are six branches on the lampstand. Man was made on the sixth day; hence, six is the number of man. This number is composed not of two plus four, but of three plus three. The number three in the Bible indicates the Triune God in resurrection. Although as those created on the sixth day we are the number six, we nonetheless have the Triune God in resurrection. This means that we are created men who are now in the Triune God in resurrection. This is the significance of the number six composed of three plus three.

As the stalk, Christ is growing in Himself and with Himself; but He is also growing in us as the six branches. This is why we say that the lampstand does not portray a simple Christ, but rather a complicated Christ, the all-inclusive Christ.

The lampstand also implies two other matters—the wick and the oil. If the lampstand did not have a wick and if it was not supplied with oil, it would be impossible for it to burn and give light. The wick was made of material from plants and thus signifies humanity. The oil, a symbol of the Spirit, signifies divinity. When humanity is burned in divinity, there is the shining of light. However, if our wick becomes too long, smoke will be produced instead of light. Whenever there is too much wick and too little oil, there is smoking instead of shining.

There is no mention in Exodus 25 of either the wick or the oil. But if we consider the picture of the lampstand given in this chapter, we shall realize that both the wick and the

oil are implied. How could the lampstand shine if it did not have a wick and a supply of oil? Thus, the wick and the oil are implied. Furthermore, the wick must be of the right length, in proper proportion to the lampstand, and there must be an adequate quantity of oil. Then the wick and the oil will work together to produce the burning, the burning will cause the shining, and the shining will give forth light. However, this burning and shining result from the growing, branching, budding, and blossoming.

II. SHINING IN THE HOLY PLACE

The lampstand shines in the Holy Place; that is, it shines in the church. Today Christians argue with us and ask, "Why do you say that you are the church? Are we not the church just as much as you are?" There is no need to quarrel about who is the church. If you are truly the church, then you are the church. But if you are not the church, then you simply are not the church. For example, I am a man. This is a fact no matter what others may say. Since I am a man, there is no need for me to advertise the fact. Likewise, if we are the church, there is no need for us to argue the fact. If we are the church, then the shining of the lampstand will surely be among us.

In the foregoing message we pointed out that with the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies there are three kinds of light. In the outer court we have the natural light, the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Since the outer court is in the open air, it has this kind of light. However, both the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies are completely covered. This covering makes it impossible for the light of the sun, moon, and stars to penetrate. If it were not for a particular kind of light in the Holy Place, it would be like a dungeon full of darkness. But the Holy Place is full of light because it is enlightened by the shining of the lampstand with its seven lamps.

Whenever a priest left the outer court and came into the Holy Place, he could see the shining of light from the lamps on the lampstand. The shining of the lampstand was proof

that this place was indeed the Holy Place. Without the lampstand shining, that place would have been a dark dungeon. But the shining of the lampstand proves that it is the Holy Place. The principle is the same with the church today. How can we discern who is the church and who is not the church? We can determine this by discerning whether in the meetings there is darkness or the shining of light from the lampstand. Whether or not a particular group of believers is the church depends on whether or not there is the shining of the lampstand among them.

Before we came into the church life in the Lord's recovery, many of us attended other Christian gatherings. But we did not see the shining of the lampstand until we came into the genuine church life. In the meetings of the church we behold something shining. I can testify that I was first in fundamental Christianity and then with the Brethren assemblies. With the denomination there was darkness, and with the Brethren assembly there was only a small amount of light. But when I came to the church in the Lord's recovery, I was not only in the light, but was even immersed in the light. This light is not a natural light, the light of the sun, moon, or stars; it is the light of the lampstand.

Psalm 73:16 and 17 say, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." The psalmist was bothered, perplexed, and puzzled about a particular situation. When he thought about it, it was painful to him. Thinking about the matter was unbearable. But when he went into the sanctuary of God, the Holy Place, he received understanding. This means that he was enlightened by the light in God's sanctuary. Many of us can testify that we have been troubled and perplexed about certain things. But when we came to a meeting of the church, we were enlightened, and the matter became clear to us.

How much light there will be in our meetings depends upon how much we have of the growth of Christ. If we have more growth of Christ, we shall have more light. Suppose the lampstand in the Holy Place was not fully grown or had grown

in an unbalanced way. The lampstand would still shine, but it would not shine adequately or properly. If the lampstand did not have the opportunity to grow in full, the light in the Holy Place would likewise not be full. For this reason, we sometimes sense that the light in a particular church meeting is not very bright. Yes, there is light, but there is not the full, complete shining. How much light there can be in the church depends on the extent to which Christ has a way to grow in us and through us. If we all give the Lord a free course to grow within us day by day, there will be the adequate shining of the light whenever we come together. Only when there is the full growth of Christ within us can there be the full shining of the light.

It is crucial for all the branches to give the lampstand a free way to grow in them and through them. The more the lampstand grows in the branches, the more it will blossom and shine, and the more light there will be. Then when we come together in the church meetings, the light will gradually become brighter and brighter. Many of us can testify of having been enlightened in the church meetings. Certain things related to us that were covered or hidden were exposed by the light. This light comes from the Christ who grows not only in Himself as the central stalk, but who also grows in us as the branches of the lampstand.

III. DIRECTING US TO ENJOY CHRIST AS OUR LIFE SUPPLY

The shining of the lampstand directs us to enjoy Christ as our life supply. When we come into the Holy Place, the light shines upon us. Because we are not in darkness, we know what is in the Holy Place, and we also have direction. The light directs us to the table where we have the bread of God's presence for our life supply. This is the reason that in the church meetings, when we are under the shining of the light, we receive the life supply.

Only priests were qualified to enter into the Holy Place. The nourishment on the table was for them alone. After they were nourished at the table, the priests would go to the

lampstand and carry out their duty of snuffing the charred wick and supplying fresh oil. When we enjoy Christ as our life supply on the table and are nourished by Him, we also come to the light and trim the old, charred wick. From our experience we know that in the church life the light shines upon us and directs us to the nourishment of Christ. Then after we have been nourished by Him, we snuff, cut, trim, the wick. We do not trim others' wick; we trim ourselves. When we have only the natural light, the light in the outer court, we may criticize others. But when we come into the Holy Place to receive nourishment and enlightenment, we snuff ourselves. Instead of criticizing others, we trim our own wick. I can testify that often after enjoying Christ as my nourishment, I have snuffed myself.

IV. THE LIFE SUPPLY BECOMING THE LIGHT OF LIFE TO US

The issue of the snuffing is a brighter shining of the light. In experience this means that the life supply received at the table turns out to be the light of life to us. The more life we enjoy, the more shining there will be.

V. LEADING US TO ENJOY CHRIST AS THE FRAGRANT INCENSE OF RESURRECTION IN THE PRAYER OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

The shining of the lampstand not only directs us to enjoy Christ as our life supply, but also leads us to enjoy Christ as the fragrant incense of resurrection in the prayer of fellowship with God. First we enjoy Christ at the table as our nourishment, and then we enjoy Him at the incense altar as the fragrant incense of resurrection. The resurrection life is the incense offered to God in prayer.

What is difficult to understand doctrinally can be understood in the light of spiritual experience. When we are in the outer court, we are natural, and our thoughts and concepts are natural because the light in the outer court is a natural light. But after we come into the Holy Place, we are no longer natural, for we are ushered to the threshold of the spirit. In the

Holy Place Christ as our life supply deals with our natural life, and the snuffing cuts away the natural life. To trim the wick is to cut off the charred natural life. Then the light burns brighter and leads us to the resurrection life at the incense altar. Thus, we enjoy Christ not only at the table, but also at the incense altar with the resurrection life as the fragrance offered to God. When we reach this point, it is difficult to determine whether we are in the Holy Place or in the Holy of Holies. The Bible does not locate the incense altar with certainty. We are not sure from reading the Bible whether the incense altar is within the veil or outside the veil. Sometimes it seems to be in the Holy Place, and at other times in the Holy of Holies. This points to the fact that in our experience we may either be absolutely in the spirit or on the threshold, the border, of the spirit.

VI. GUIDING US INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES TO ENJOY CHRIST AS THE TESTIMONY OF GOD WITH THE THRONE OF GRACE

The light from the lampstand also guides us into the Holy of Holies to enjoy Christ as the testimony of God with the throne of grace. The throne of grace (Heb. 4:16) is the propitiatory cover of the ark. The ark is the testimony of God, and the propitiatory cover is God's throne. Both the ark as a whole and the cover in particular are Christ.

In the Holy of Holies we enjoy Christ to the uttermost. After we enjoy Him as our life supply at the table and as our resurrection life at the incense altar, we enjoy Him as God's testimony and as the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies. This is both the deepest and highest experience of Christ. When we enjoy Christ as God's testimony and as the throne of grace where God meets with us, we can commune with God, and He can infuse us with Himself.

VII. THE SHINING LIGHT BECOMING THE SHEKINAH GLORY FOR OUR CLOSEST FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

When we experience Christ in the Holy of Holies and enjoy Him there to the uttermost, we no longer need the

shining of the lampstand. The shining light now becomes the shekinah glory for our closest fellowship with God. The shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies equals the light from the lampstand in the Holy Place. This means that the light from the lampstand and the shekinah glory are synonyms and both refer to God Himself.

Although both the light and the glory are God Himself, there is a difference between them. At the lampstand, God shines, but on the throne of grace, God appears. God's appearing is different from His shining. God's appearing is always in glory. In the meetings we often have the sense that God is shining and that the meeting is full of light; however, there may not be much of God's glory in the meeting. However, at other times we have the sense not only of light shining, but also of glory dawning.

The difference between light and glory can be illustrated by the difference between electricity and lightning. Through electricity we have the shining of light. But this shining is not the appearing of electricity. The appearing of electricity is lightning. We may sit peacefully under the shining of a lamp powered by electricity, but when lightning appears, we may be terrified.

Because the appearing of God's shekinah glory can be awesome and frightening, we need the redeeming blood sprinkled on the propitiatory cover, the throne of grace. Apart from the sprinkling of the redeeming blood of Christ, no one can withstand the appearing of the shekinah glory. Whenever the glory of God is manifest to our sight, we immediately sense the need for the blood. This experience, along with all the others described in this message, comes by means of Christ as the lampstand shining through us, with us, and in us in the church life.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINETY-FIVE

THE COVERING OF THE TABERNACLE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 26:1-14; 36:8-13

I. THE FIRST LAYER OF THE COVERING

Exodus 26:1 and 6 speak of the tabernacle. Verse 1 says, "And you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet." The latter part of verse 6 says, "The tabernacle shall become one." In this message we shall begin to consider the four layers of the covering of the tabernacle. The first layer, the innermost layer, was made of ten curtains of fine twined linen.

Most translations use the word tabernacle in 26:1 and 6. However, some versions use the word tent. Actually, the tabernacle was a tent. A tent is a temporary, movable dwelling place used primarily for camping. According to the record of the Bible, the tabernacle, God's tent, did not have a floor. Because the tent was portable, it was set up on the ground. For a period of forty years, the children of Israel were camping in the wilderness, and God was camping with them. The tents belonging to God's people were erected around the tabernacle. In the first chapters of Numbers we see that the twelve tribes were camped in four directions around the tabernacle. Hence, in the wilderness both God and the people dwelt in tents.

We know from 26:1 that ten curtains were used in making God's tent, the tabernacle. Verse 2 gives the dimensions of the curtains: "The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits—one measure for all the curtains." These ten curtains

were arranged in two sets of five curtains each. Verse 3 says, "Five curtains shall be joined one to another, and the other five curtains joined to one another." In verse 4 the "one set" refers to the first five curtains, and the "second set" to the second group of five. Verse 4 says, "And you shall make loops of blue upon the edge of the outermost curtain in the one set, and likewise you shall make them at the edge of the outermost curtain in the second set." The outermost curtain in each set refers to the edge of the last curtain in the set. Verses 5 and 6 indicate how these two sets of curtains were joined together: "You shall make fifty loops in the one curtain, and you shall make fifty loops at the end of the curtain which is in the second set; the loops shall be opposite to one another. And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and join the curtains to one another with the clasps, and the tabernacle shall become one." When the two sets were coupled together, the result was a large sheet which measured forty cubits by twenty-eight cubits. When the tabernacle was erected, this sheet of linen curtains was spread upon the standing boards. Then the linen sheet became a tent.

The tabernacle itself was thirty cubits in length and ten cubits in both width and height. We have seen that the linen sheet measured forty cubits by twenty-eight cubits. This indicates that there was an overhang at the rear and at the sides of the tabernacle. (There was no overhang at the front, for that was the entrance of the tabernacle.) Therefore, there was an overhang of ten cubits at the rear of the tabernacle and of nine cubits on each side. In the Bible the number nine is composed not of four plus five, but of three times three. This points to the Triune God in resurrection. When we visualize the linen sheet spread over the standing boards, we can see a tent with an overlapping on the sides and at the rear.

A. Typifying Christ's Humanity

The first layer of the covering, the ten curtains of fine linen, typifies Christ's fine humanity. We may also say that it typifies Christ as a fine and perfect man.

B. Ten Curtains

The number ten in the Bible signifies human perfection and completion, a completion without defect. Our ten fingers illustrate this human completion and perfection. If we had four fingers on one hand and five on the other, there would be a defect instead of completion. Furthermore, God gave man the Ten Commandments. These commandments were given for man's completion and perfection. It is significant that God did not give nine commandments or eleven, but gave ten in order to signify human perfection.

Furthermore, the number ten is composed of five times two. Five is the number of responsibility, and two is the number of testimony. Thus, five times two signifies two times of responsibility for a testimony. As we have pointed out, the number five is composed of four plus one. The number four signifies the creature, and one signifies God, the unique Creator. Hence, God plus man equals five, the number of responsibility.

The ten curtains typify Christ as a man, a man who is perfect and complete. With Him there is no defect or bias. As typified by the ten curtains, Christ is a perfect and complete man.

We have seen that with the tabernacle there was an overflow of curtains on each side. No doubt, this overflow was balanced; it was the same on both sides. This balanced overflow can be illustrated by the parts of our physical body which are arranged in twos. We have two eyes, ears, shoulders, arms, hands, legs, and feet. In all that we do, seeing, hearing, sitting, standing, and walking, there must be two. For example, if we had only one foot, we could not walk properly. Instead of walking step by step, we would need to hop on one foot. Likewise, if we had only one ear, hearing would be difficult. As a perfect and complete man, Christ has a balanced overflow, an equal overflow on both sides.

We have pointed out that the linen sheet draped over each side a length of nine cubits. We have also seen that the number nine signifies the Triune God in resurrection. The Lord Jesus is a true man, but His overflow is the Triune God

in resurrection. Furthermore, this overflow is not unbalanced or one-sided; on the contrary, it is even and balanced in every way.

We must remember that the ten linen curtains signify Christ's humanity and that the overflow signifies the Triune God in resurrection. This reveals that in His humanity Christ expresses the Triune God in resurrection. The four Gospels record that during the course of His life on earth, the Lord Jesus was a perfect and complete man with a balanced overflow. Even His overflow reveals that He is a man, but a man expressing the Triune God in resurrection. As a man, the Lord is the number ten, but His overflow is number nine. This means that He is a man overflowing with the Triune God in resurrection.

C. Fine Linen

The ten curtains were made of fine linen. According to Revelation 19:8, fine linen signifies righteous conduct. Exodus 26:1 says that the linen was not only fine, but was also twined. Fine signifies evenness, and twined indicates that the linen was not loose in any way. Christ's conduct was never coarse; rather, it was always fine. However, our conduct is often coarse, rough, or tough. Christ's conduct was also twined; that is, it was never loose. Our conduct, on the contrary, is often loose; it has not been properly dealt with to make it twined.

The more we consider the Person of Christ revealed in the four Gospels, a Person who is fine and perfect in every way, the more we realize that the Gospels were written according to divine inspiration. Nevertheless, some unbelievers have argued that it is not possible for a person such as the One described in the Gospels to have ever lived. A certain French philosopher once said in response to this charge that if the Gospels were not true and trustworthy writings, that is, if they did not describe a person who actually lived, then the writer of the Gospels is qualified to be this person. The human mind is not capable of composing writings such as the Gospels, for in these writings we see

portrayed a man who is fine, perfect, and complete. The human mind could never conceive of such a person. Furthermore, the mind of man does not have the wisdom to compose the Gospels.

The Gospels reveal that the Lord Jesus is very fine and does everything in a meaningful way. He is never unbalanced, but is always restricted and controlled. It is impossible to find the slightest trace of coarseness with Him. No one can compare with the Lord Jesus in His fineness. Paul was very good, but there were times when he was somewhat coarse. For example, in 1 Corinthians 4:21 he says, "What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of meekness?" It seems to me that Paul's expression here is a little coarse. I doubt whether the Lord Jesus would ever utter such a word. Although the sayings of the apostles are quite fine, on occasion they are coarse. The words of the Lord Jesus, however, are always fine. If you compare the sayings of the Lord recorded in the Gospels with those of Paul recorded in the Acts and Epistles, you will see that the Lord Jesus was always fine and that Paul, at least on certain occasions, was a little coarse.

D. Blue

Exodus 26:1 mentions the colors blue, purple, and scarlet. Blue signifies something heavenly in both nature and appearance. As revealed in the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus in His humanity and human living was altogether heavenly. He lived not as an earthly man, but as a heavenly man, both in nature and in appearance. For this reason, He could say that He came down from heaven and that He was the heavenly bread, the bread of life (John 6:32, 35).

E. Purple

Purple is a kingly color. It denotes that which is kingly both in position and behavior. Although the Lord Jesus was a Nazarene, He conducted Himself as a king. The Gospel of Matthew portrays the Lord Jesus as One who acted and behaved like a king.

F. Scarlet

Scarlet is a dark red color. This color signifies sin and also signifies the shedding of blood for redemption. Isaiah 1:18 speaks of the people's sins being as scarlet. This shows that scarlet signifies sin. But as illustrated in the Gospel of Luke, scarlet also signifies the shedding of blood for redemption for sinners. Therefore, the scarlet in the first layer of the covering of the tabernacle signifies the shedding of the blood of Jesus for redemption.

G. Cherubim of the Work of an Embroiderer

Verse 1 also speaks of "cherubim, the work of a skilled workman." The cherubim signify God's glory manifested in Jesus as shown in the Gospel of Mark. Cherubim denote God's glory manifested in the creature. The fact that we are not told how many cherubim were embroidered on the linen curtains indicates that God's glory manifested in His creature is immeasurable. God's immeasurable glory is also indicated by the fact that the dimensions of the cherubim on the propitiatory cover of the ark are not given. We are not told the size of the cherubim on the ark, and neither are we told the number of the cherubim on the curtains. The silence of the biblical record in both cases indicates that the manifestation of God's glory is beyond measure.

We know from the book of Ezekiel that the cherubim are living creatures in whom the glory of God is seen. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He as a man was a creature manifesting the divine glory. The Bible reveals that Christ is both the Creator and a creature. According to Colossians 1:15, Christ is the Firstborn of creation. As a genuine man, the Lord Jesus had a body of blood, flesh, and bones. Are these not the elements of a created being? Therefore, in His humanity Christ was a creature, but a creature upon whom the glory of God was manifested. This is the significance of the cherubim embroidered on the linen curtains.

In the Gospel of Mark we see that the Lord Jesus was a slave-man. But upon this slave-man God's glory was

manifested. How wonderful that the four Gospels cover the aspects of Christ's humanity as typified by the colors blue, purple, and scarlet and by the cherubim!

The cherubim on the linen curtains were the work of a skilled workman, or of an embroiderer. The workman here denotes one skilled in the art of embroidery. The work of an embroiderer signifies the constituting work of the Holy Spirit in the Lord Jesus. Thus, it is the Holy Spirit who is the skilled workman, the embroiderer. Today the Holy Spirit is doing the work of embroidery on us. He uses many "needles," both large and small, to accomplish this work.

H. The Measurement

Verse 2 says that the curtains were twenty-eight cubits in length and four cubits in width. The number twenty-eight is composed of four times seven, with four being the number of the creature and seven also being a number of perfection. Thus, the length of each curtain also signifies the perfection of the Lord Jesus as a man.

We have pointed out that the number four signifies the creature. Since there were ten curtains, each four cubits in width, we also have here the number forty. In the Bible forty is the number of testing and trial. This indicates that as a man the Lord Jesus was tested. Because His completion and perfection have been tested, He is a man approved by both God and man.

I. Two Sets of Five Curtains Each

Verse 3 says, "Five curtains shall be joined one to another, and the other five curtains joined one to another." Thus, there were two sets of five curtains each. Five is the number of responsibility. Five curtains joined one to another signify a continuous life. These sets signify the responsibility shown in the continuous life. A set was not composed of just one curtain, but was made up of five curtains, with each continuing the other. This portrays that the life of the Lord Jesus as revealed in the four Gospels was a continuous life. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all

agree that in the life of the Lord there were not any gaps. Furthermore, two groups of five curtains indicate a testimony of a continuous life, testifying that the Lord Jesus is a complete and perfect man.

J. Blue Loops

Verses 4 and 5 tell us that on the edge of the outermost curtain in each set, there were fifty loops of blue. Loops signify availability for joining, and the color blue points to that which is heavenly. The fact that these loops were on the edge of the outermost curtain on each set indicates that they were the issue of the life of responsibility for a testimony.

These loops apply to our spiritual experience. For example, a certain brother may have the virtues of boldness and stability. However, there may be a gap between these virtues which makes it difficult to connect them. But with the Lord Jesus boldness is connected with humility, humility with patience, and patience with kindness. All the virtues of the Lord Jesus are connected; there are no gaps between them. However, because there are gaps between our virtues, it is difficult for us to be joined to others. If there is no connection between a brother's boldness and stability, it will be difficult for him to be joined to others.

There were fifty loops at the edge of each set of curtains. Fifty is composed of ten times five and denotes a complete responsibility. Ten is the number of human completion, and five is the number of responsibility. Therefore, fifty composed of ten times five means complete responsibility. Furthermore, since there were fifty loops on each set of curtains, there was a total of one hundred loops, indicating a full testimony of the complete responsibility. This reveals that the life of Jesus satisfied the requirement of the Ten Commandments ten times.

According to verse 5, the loops on each set were opposite to one another. This signifies confirmation for testimony. In the humanity of the Lord Jesus there is much confirmation. All His virtues—His kindness, His righteousness, His

patience—are confirmed. This confirmation is for the testimony.

K. Fifty Clasps

Exodus 26:6 says, "And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and join the curtains to one another with the clasps, and the tabernacle shall become one." Clasps of gold signify the joining power of the divine nature. The number fifty here signifies full responsibility. The joining of the curtains to each other makes the tabernacle one, signifying that it makes the testimony one.

The joining power of Jesus' humanity is of His divine nature. Likewise, in the church life today we have the joining power only in the divine nature; we do not possess it according to our human life.

The four Gospels reveal that all the virtues of the Lord Jesus form one testimony. This is the significance of the joining of the curtains that makes the tabernacle one. As a result of this joining, there is one perfect, complete, and whole testimony.

In light of all the points covered in this message, I would like to say a word concerning our need to know the Lord Jesus in His humanity. From the time we were very young, many of us heard about the Lord Jesus. However, because we are familiar with the stories in the Bible about Christ, we should not think that we have a proper and adequate knowledge of Him. If you consider all the matters signified in 26:1-6, you will realize that you actually have very little knowledge of the Lord Jesus. In these verses we see a detailed portrait of the complete and perfect humanity of the Lord. Because many aspects of Christ's humanity are indescribable, we need the portrait afforded by these verses. We need to see the picture of the Lord's humanity portrayed by the first covering of the tabernacle. Although we do not have words to describe the details of Christ's humanity, we can gain some understanding of them by praying over these verses. The more we consider the significance of the details here, the more we shall realize what a wonderful Person the

Lord is in His humanity. We see Him in the fine twined linen, in the colors of blue, purple, and scarlet, in the cherubim, and in all the loops and clasps. We all need to know the Lord Jesus in such a detailed way.

As we consider the first layer of the covering of the tabernacle, we shall see that the curtains clasped together are not simply a covering, but are a protective covering. This covering protects everything underneath it. The tent, the tabernacle, is not simply a dwelling place; it is also a container. It contains the ark, the table, the lampstand, and the incense altar, and it covers all the standing boards. Since we are typified by the boards and the boards are covered by the curtains, we may say that the first layer of covering covers and protects us. This covering also embraces us. Thus, the humanity of the Lord Jesus covers us, protects us, and embraces us. Daily I am under the covering of God's tent and protected by it. Furthermore, I am embraced by this covering and even contained within it. Here, under the covering, protection, and embrace of the Lord Jesus, I enjoy Christ as the ark, as the table with the bread, and as the lampstand.

We do not gain an adequate understanding of Christ by reading only the Gospels and the Epistles in the New Testament. We also need the types, the pictures, in the Old Testament, especially the types related to the tabernacle. I hope that all the saints will come to appreciate the fine points of the Lord's humanity signified by these types. When we come into the tabernacle, we see that the ceiling, the first of the coverings, is the inward expression of the Lord Jesus in His humanity. The linen, the blue, the purple, and scarlet, the cherubim, the loops, and the clasps are all parts of this expression. Those who have not come into Christ cannot behold Him in such beauty and glory. As we shall see in the next message, outwardly Christ has the appearance of tough porpoise skin, something which can withstand all the storms and weather all the elements. But when we see Christ from within, we know that He is heavenly, He is kingly, He is the redeeming One, and He is glorious. Praise

the Lord for the portrait of Christ in the first covering of the tabernacle!

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINETY-SIX

THE COVERING OF THE TABERNACLE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 26:7-14; 36:14-19; 40:19

In the previous message we considered the first layer of the covering of the tabernacle. As we pointed out, that layer is itself called the tabernacle. Exodus 26:1 speaks of making the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine linen. In this message we shall consider the second, third, and fourth layers of the covering.

Verses 7 and 8 say, "And you shall make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle: you shall make eleven curtains. The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits—one measure for the eleven curtains." In the last message we pointed out that the tabernacle is a tent. Now we see from verse 7 that the second layer of the cover is a tent over the tabernacle. Thus, the second layer is a tent which covers the first layer, which is the tabernacle. The tabernacle was made of ten curtains, each measuring twenty-eight cubits by four cubits. The second layer is made of eleven curtains, each measuring thirty cubits by four cubits. The first layer is called the tabernacle, and the second layer is called the tent.

It is significant that there are ten curtains in the first layer and eleven in the second layer. In the Bible ten is the number of human completion and perfection, and twelve is the number of perfection in the divine administration. Furthermore, ten is composed of two times five. For example, the ten virgins in Matthew 25 are in two groups of five, and the Ten Commandments were inscribed in groups of five on

two tablets of stone. As we have seen, the number five is composed of four, signifying the creature, plus one, signifying God the Creator. The number eleven falls between ten and twelve. It is more than human completion and less than the perfection of the divine administration. Thus, the number eleven in the Bible indicates something sinful. On the one hand, it points to something in excess of human completion; on the other hand, it indicates something short of the perfection in the divine administration. Therefore, this number indicates sinfulness.

The ten curtains which make up the first layer of the tabernacle indicate that the Lord Jesus as a human being was complete and perfect. He is the true number ten, for with Him there is no defect, bias, shortage, or excess. He also has the colors of blue, purple, and scarlet which, respectively, signify heavenliness, royalty, and redemption. Furthermore, the golden cherubim embroidered on the linen curtains signify that in Christ as a creature God's glory is expressed. Therefore, the ten linen curtains of the first layer reveal that Christ is a perfect, complete, and altogether beautiful human being.

The second layer of covering typifies a very different aspect of Christ. In this layer we have nothing blue, purple, or scarlet, and there is no embroidery. Instead, there are eleven curtains of goats' hair. Everything is plain, natural, and without beauty. Furthermore, the number of the curtains is eleven instead of ten, something more than human completion, but below the perfection of God's government. The eleven curtains of goats' hair signify that Christ was made sin for us. During the last three hours He was on the cross, from noon until three o'clock in the afternoon, He was judged just as if He were a sinner in the eyes of God. This was the time He cried out and said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). In these hours He was forsaken by God because God regarded Him as a sinner, as the One who was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). The perfect and complete Lord Jesus thus became a sinner

under God's judgment. He, the righteous One, was judged by God on behalf of the unrighteous.

In the Bible fine linen signifies the proper conduct of a pure and perfect human being. However, goats signify those who are evil and condemned by God (Matt. 25:33, 41). Thus, goats signify sinners, and goats' hair signifies the sins, the evil deeds, of sinners. Thus, the second layer is composed of sinners with all their sins.

Having considered the number of curtains in the first two layers, let us now turn to their measurements. Each curtain in the first layer was four cubits wide. Ten curtains times four cubits gives us the number forty. In the Bible forty can be a positive number. Perhaps the most impressive use of this number concerns Moses staying with God on the mountain for forty days. We have seen that the number forty signifies tests and trials. The forty days Moses was on the mountain were a test both to him and to the children of Israel. Although Moses was approved by God during this period of time, the children of Israel were exposed. In addition, they were tested during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. The Lord Jesus also spent forty days in the wilderness. This signifies that He was One who was tried, tested, and eventually approved. According to the four Gospels, the Lord was tested and tried throughout His life. At the very end of His life, He was tried both according to God's law and to the law of the Roman Empire. Three times He was tried by Jewish authorities according to God's law, and three times He was tried by officials of the Roman Empire according to the Roman law. Thus, during the last night of His life, He was tried a total of six times, but no wrong could be found in Him. He was fully approved. Thus, He was a perfect number forty. As far as the Lord Jesus is concerned, this number is very positive.

When the ten curtains of the first layer are joined, they form a rectangle measuring forty cubits by twenty-eight cubits. Of these forty cubits, twenty covered the Holy Place, ten covered the Holy of Holies, and ten hung down over the

rear of the tabernacle, covering the back side. Furthermore, as we pointed out in the foregoing message, there was an overhang on two sides of the tabernacle of nine cubits. Nine, composed of three times three, signifies the Triune God in resurrection. Christ, the perfect One, has an overflow on each side, and this overflow is the Triune God in resurrection. As we consider the Lord Jesus revealed in the Gospels, we see that He is truly such a person. He is a perfect human being with an overflow of the Triune God in resurrection.

Each of the curtains in the second layer measured thirty cubits by four cubits. When all the curtains were joined, there was a rectangle measuring forty-four cubits by thirty cubits. This second layer completely covered the first layer and protected it. Fine linen cannot protect anything, but goats' hair can serve as a protection. According to verse 9, the sixth curtain was doubled over at the front of the tent. This was for protection and strengthening. The overhang at the rear completely covered the first layer. Furthermore, with the second layer of covering there was an overhang of ten cubits on the two sides. Since the first layer had an overhang of only nine cubits, it was completely covered by the second layer. This means that no part of the linen curtains was exposed to the sun, wind, or rain.

The number thirty in the Bible is composed in two ways, of five times six and three times ten. Five is the number of responsibility, and six is the number of sinners. Thus, thirty composed of five times six signifies responsibility for sinners. When the Lord Jesus was made sin for us, He bore all the responsibility for us as sinners. But when the number thirty is composed of three times ten, it signifies resurrection life in human completion. As the One who became sin for us, the Lord Jesus is full of resurrection life in His human completion. In His human completion, signified by the number ten, we see resurrection, which is actually the Triune God Himself, signified by the number three.

With the Lord Jesus as the One made sin for us, we have the numbers thirty and forty-four. Forty-four was the length

of the second layer when all the curtains were joined. This number signifies that Christ was tried as a sinner.

We need to be impressed with what is portrayed by these first two layers of covering. The first layer signifies that in Himself the Lord Jesus is glorious and wonderful. The second layer signifies that this wonderful One was made sin for us. In His being, Christ is wonderful, but as our substitute, He became sin in the eyes of God. We have pointed out that the second layer protects the first layer. By this we see that Christ protects us by being our substitute, by being judged for us, and by dying for us. Christ's substitution, therefore, becomes our protection.

The numbers in each layer are significant. God is the best designer, and the numbers were all determined by Him. Thus, it is meaningful that the dimensions of the first layer of ten curtains are forty by twenty-eight, whereas the dimensions of the second layer of eleven curtains are forty-four by thirty. It is no accident that the first layer was made of fine linen and the second layer, of goats' hair. In brief, these two layers signify that the perfect man, the Lord Jesus, was made sin in the eyes of God for our redemption. Now, as our substitute, He is our covering and protection. As we shall see in the next message, under these two layers of covering were the standing boards, which typify us as believers. We are the boards standing under the covering and protection of Jesus Christ, the perfect man, who was made sin for us.

If we did not have this type, we would not be able to know the Lord Jesus in such a detailed way. We could not see so clearly how He is a perfect man, and that He became our substitute to die on the cross for our sins and to be judged by God for us.

The many details of these two layers of covering—the fine linen, the goats' hair, and all the numbers—are related to Christ. For example, we have seen that six is the number of sinners. It points to something in excess. Surely hatred and theft are things which are in excess. Thus, the number six is the number of sin. According to the New Testament, the

antichrist, the man of sin, will be the number six hundred sixty-six. This reveals that he will be completely constituted of sin. The Lord Jesus, by contrast, is eight hundred eighty-eight, for He is a Person constituted of resurrection. He was resurrected on the eighth day, the first day of a new week. If we do not accept this understanding of the details of the coverings, how should we understand them? The proper way to interpret them is as types of Christ.

Many Christians follow the teaching which says that we should not regard anything in the Old Testament as a type unless it is explicitly referred to as a type in the New Testament. According to this view, we should only accept as types those things which the New Testament clearly says are types. For example, because John 1:29 speaks of Christ as the Lamb of God, we may then regard the lamb in Exodus 12 as a type of Christ. However, when Paul was interpreting the typology of the tabernacle in Hebrews 9, he told us that he had a great deal more to say, but did not have the time. This indicates that those matters which Paul does not refer to as types may also be types. Thus, many persons and things in the Old Testament may also be genuine types, even though they are not denoted as such in the New Testament. Take Joseph as an example. A great many Christians recognize that Joseph is a type of Christ. However, the New Testament does not say that Joseph is a type of the Lord Jesus. Many Christians neglect important Old Testament types by holding to the view that only what the New Testament indicates is a type should be regarded as a type.

Many readers of the Bible think of the tabernacle as a type of the church. However, where does the New Testament say directly that the tabernacle typifies the church? Although this is not stated directly, implications of this can be found. If we infer from these implications that the tabernacle typifies the church, how shall we understand the first two layers of the tabernacle? What place do they have in our inference? To be sure, it is necessary to make proper inferences concerning these two layers and interpret them as types of Christ.

The Old Testament is a picture book, and the New Testament is a book of interpretation. In principle, what is revealed in the New Testament corresponds to what is contained in the Old Testament. It is not always necessary for the New Testament to say definitely that a certain thing in the Old Testament is a type. It is adequate and proper to find in the New Testament the meaning of all the aspects of the Old Testament types. All these matters pertaining to the tabernacle should be understood according to the New Testament principle. We understand the Old Testament in a New Testament way and thereby see a detailed picture of both Christ and the church.

I can testify that after I came to know more details of the Lord from studying the types in the Old Testament, I began to love the Lord more. In addition, this understanding of the Bible strengthens my faith that the Bible is truly inspired by God. It is impossible for anyone other than God to design such a structure as the tabernacle and to give us such a record concerning it.

II. THE SECOND LAYER OF THE COVERING

A. Typifying Christ Being Made Sin for Us

We have seen that the second layer of the covering, a tent of goats' hair, typifies Christ being made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21).

B. Goats' Hair—Sins of Sinners

According to Matthew 25:33 and 41, goats typify sinners. Goats' hair signifies the sins of sinners.

C. Eleven Curtains

We have pointed out that eleven is more than ten, the number of human completion, and less than twelve, the number of perfection in the divine administration. We have seen that eleven is composed of five plus six, with five being the number of responsibility and six indicating an excess. The sixth curtain being an excess signifies that Christ was made sin for us. Although He Himself did not have anything

excessive, He bore our sins. He was made sin to bear our sins. That was Christ's excess.

D. The Measurement

The length of each curtain of goats' hair was thirty cubits. On the one hand, thirty is composed of five times six, indicating responsibility for sinners. On the other hand, it is composed of three times ten, indicating the Triune God as resurrection life in human completion.

Each curtain was four cubits in width. The number four signifies the creature. Eleven curtains each having a width of four cubits gives us the number forty-four. This number signifies that Christ was tried as a sinner; He was tried as a man with excess.

E. Two Sets of Curtains

Exodus 26:9 says, "And you shall join five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves." The first set of five curtains signifies responsibility, whereas the second set of six curtains signifies sinners. Because Christ bore the responsibility of sinners, He became number eleven.

F. Fifty Loops

Verse 10 says, "And you shall make fifty loops upon the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the one set, and fifty loops upon the edge of the curtain which is outermost in the second set." These fifty loops were the same as the loops of the first layer of the covering except for the fact that they were not blue. As a perfect man, Christ is heavenly. But when He became a sinner for us, He was not heavenly. For this reason, the loops on the second layer are not blue.

G. Fifty Clasps

Exodus 26:11 says, "And you shall make fifty clasps of bronze, and you shall put the clasps into the loops and join the tent together, and it shall become one." These clasps signify the joining power. Bronze, or copper, signifies the judgment of God (Exo. 27:2; Num. 16:39; 21:8-9). The altar

of burnt offering was covered with bronze. Sinners and all evil things are judged at this altar. The censers of bronze belonging to the two hundred fifty rebels were used to cover this altar. This strengthens the thought that bronze signifies divine judgment and that the altar is a place of judgment. At the altar a sacrifice was judged in place of the person offering it. Furthermore, the bronze serpent on the pole typifies judgment; it is a type of Christ being judged by God for us. As a sign of judgment, the clasps in the second layer are bronze, whereas the clasps in the first layer are gold.

Verse 11 says that the clasps joined the tent together and caused it to become one. This signifies that even when He was under God's judgment, Christ was still a whole piece. If we were placed under God's judgment, we would be broken into pieces. However, God's righteous judgment holds together the judged and tried Christ as a complete person. In other words, after being judged by God according to His righteous law, the Lord Jesus was still whole.

Finally, the number fifty signifies full responsibility. This is the responsibility for joining the tent together and keeping it complete under the judgment of God. Actually, the more the Lord Jesus was tried and judged, the more manifest it became that He was a whole person.

H. Doubling Over the Sixth Curtain at the Front of the Tent and the Overhanging Half Curtain at the Back of the Tabernacle

Verse 9 says, "And you shall double over the sixth curtain at the front of the tent," and verse 12 says, "And the overhanging part that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle." This indicates that after Christ became sin and was judged by God for us, He became the covering and protection of the believers, who are the components of God's dwelling place.

I. One Cubit Hanging Over Each Side of the Fine Linen Tabernacle

Verse 13 says, "And the cubit on the one side, and the cubit on the other side, of that which remains in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall be hung over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side to cover it." One cubit hanging over each side of the fine linen tabernacle signifies the redeeming Christ becoming the protection of the tabernacle on its two sides, north and south, under any situation. North implies hardship, and south implies ease. Thus, under any situation, whether hardship or ease, the redeeming Christ is our covering. No matter what the circumstances may be, Christ is our protection.

III. THE THIRD LAYER OF THE COVERING—A COVERING OF RAMS' SKINS

Verse 14 says, "And you shall make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of porpoise skins over that." Rams are males and signify Christ as a strong man. The covering of rams' skins dyed red typifies Christ's suffering death and shedding His blood. Before there could be rams' skins for the third layer, these rams had to be put to death. Furthermore, the rams' skins were dyed red. This signifies the shedding of blood for redemption.

Although there was scarlet on the first layer of covering, neither the first layer nor the second layer was dyed red. The third layer, however, is completely red. This indicates that because the perfect man, Jesus Christ, was made sin for us, redemption has been accomplished. Thus, the first layer signifies the perfect man, Jesus; the second layer, Christ as our substitute; and the third layer, redemption. The perfect man Jesus was our substitute to bear our sins. This made it possible for redemption to be accomplished. Now Christ's redemption covers God's chosen and redeemed people. Praise the Lord that today we are under the rams' skins dyed red! We are covered by the full and complete redemption of Christ. Christ Himself is our redemption; He is the covering of rams' skins.

The tent of goats' hair is stronger than the tabernacle of fine linen, and the covering of the rams' skins is stronger than the tent of goats' hair. First Christ was a perfect man. Then on the cross He became our substitute. After that, He became our redemption to cover us before God.

IV. THE FOURTH LAYER OF THE COVERING— A COVERING OF PORPOISE SKINS

According to verse 14, the fourth layer, the outermost layer, was a covering of porpoise skins. These porpoise skins typify Christ as the One who is able to withstand any attack. They also signify that toward Satan, the principalities, and the demons, Christ is rough and tough. As the rams' skins, Christ enables us to stand before God, but as the porpoise skins He enables us to stand against Satan and all his attacks. He also protects God's dwelling place from storms, rain, and snow. Water can penetrate rams' skins; however, it is impossible for it to permeate the layer of porpoise skins. The function of the porpoise skins is to protect us not from God's judgment, but from the attack of the enemy. As the porpoise skins, Christ is without comeliness or beauty (Isa. 53:2). In the face of Satan's attack, He truly is rough and tough.

V. ONE LAYER OF PLANT LIFE AND THREE LAYERS OF ANIMAL LIFE

The first layer of the covering is of the plant life, but the other three layers are of the animal life. The fine linen comes from plants, whereas the goats, the rams, and the porpoises are all animals. This indicates that Christ's life is composed of the plant life for living and producing and the animal life for redeeming. Furthermore, the animal life from the sea is for protection.

We thank the Lord for the details concerning Christ revealed in the four layers of the covering of the tabernacle. As we consider these details, our appreciation for the Lord is greatly increased.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINETY-SEVEN

THE BOARDS OF THE TABERNACLE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 26:15-25; 36:20-30; 40:18

According to the sequence of the divine revelation, the covering of the tabernacle is mentioned before the boards. This is opposite to the human way of speaking about a building, which is to begin with the bottom and proceed upwards toward the roof. The divine way of revealing the tabernacle is to begin with the top, with the four layers of covering. Furthermore, according to Exodus 36, the roof of the tabernacle was also made before the boards. As we apply this to Christian experience, we should consider whether in our Christian life we begin from the bottom of the tabernacle or from the top.

The roof, or covering, of God's habitation in the wilderness was of four layers. The first layer was fine linen, the second of goats' hair, the third of rams' skins dyed red, and the fourth of porpoise skins. In typology these layers do not refer to the believers, but only to Christ. The first layer typifies Christ as a perfect and complete human being; the second layer typifies Him as the One who was made sin for us and who died on the cross for our sins; the third layer typifies Him as the One who accomplished redemption to meet both God's need and ours; and the fourth layer typifies Him as the One who is strong toward the enemy and who is able to resist all his attacks. No aspect of these four layers signifies the believers in any way. Therefore, the believers do not have any part in the layers of the covering. This covering is absolutely and thoroughly Christ Himself.

I. TYPIFYING THE BELIEVERS BUILT TOGETHER TO BE THE DWELLING PLACE OF GOD

Under the covering of the tabernacle there were the walls composed of standing boards of acacia wood overlaid with gold. These boards typify the believers built together to be the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:22). Therefore, we have the assurance to say that the tabernacle typifies not only the individual Christ, but also the corporate Christ. The believers, typified by the boards overlaid with gold, are covered with Christ Himself. Although the believers are not included in the four layers of the covering, Christ is involved with the boards which form the walls of the tabernacle. We know this by the fact that the boards were made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, the same materials used to make the ark, which is a type of Christ.

Before we were saved, we were not the boards in God's tabernacle. We did not have acacia wood, and we were not overlaid with gold. According to the natural life, we are not boards. But according to the divine life in resurrection, we are the standing boards of the tabernacle. Now we have become acacia wood overlaid with gold.

Just as the ark was made of two elements, acacia wood and gold, so are the boards constructed of the same two elements. This indicates that the boards are the enlargement and extension of the ark. They are the same as the ark in substance, with the two natures of wood and gold. This portrays the fact that we the believers, who are the components of the wall of the tabernacle, are the enlargement of Christ, His extension. Do you realize that you are part of the extension of Christ? As members of the Body, we are His reproduction, continuation, increase, duplication, and spread. We are also His enlargement and extension. Just as a person's body is the extension and enlargement of his head, so we, the Body of Christ, are the enlargement, continuation, extension, and spread of Christ the Head. Therefore, all the boards in the tabernacle are the extension and enlargement of the ark.

The dimensions of the ark were two and a half cubits in

length and one and a half cubits in width and height. The dimensions of the tabernacle were thirty cubits in length and ten cubits in both width and height. As we compare the tabernacle and the ark, we see that the tabernacle is truly the enlargement and extension of the ark. In the same principle, we, the believers, are the enlargement and extension of Christ. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He lived and traveled in a very restricted area. But today the corporate Christ covers the entire earth.

II. THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE ARK

The tabernacle includes not only the individual Christ, but also Christ and the believers in a corporate way. On the one hand, the boards typify the believers; on the other hand, the boards are also related to Christ. The reason for this is that Christ has made us part of Himself. We are no longer in Adam; we are in Christ and have even become part of Christ. The corporate Christ is under the covering of the individual Christ. We do not have any part in the ark or in the four layers of the covering. However, although we are not the enlargement of the covering, we are the enlargement of the ark. The covering is mainly for redemption, but the ark is mainly for testimony. We do not have any part in Christ's redemptive work. It would be blasphemy to say that we share in Christ's work of redemption. But we can say that we have a part, a share, in Christ's testimony, for we are joined to the witnessing Christ and have become His enlargement.

At this point let us return to the question we raised at the beginning of the message: In our Christian experience do we begin with the top of the tabernacle or with the bottom? The tabernacle typifies the church. Does the church come into existence from the top down, or from the bottom up? The Bible does not reveal a church that comes into being from the bottom up. On the contrary, according to the Bible, the church comes into existence from the top downward. This is indicated by the fact that the record in Exodus begins with the roof of the tabernacle, not with the boards.

Therefore, the fact that the covering comes before the boards indicates that the redemption of Christ must come first. This reveals that our Christian experience begins with the top, with the roof, not with the bottom. If Christ had not become a man to die on the cross for our sins in order to accomplish redemption, fulfill God's requirements, and withstand the attacks of the enemy, there would be no way for us to be God's people. The gospel is actually Christ typified by the four-layered covering of the tabernacle. When we preach the gospel, we preach this four-layered Christ. When we heard the gospel and believed into Christ, our Christian life began from above, with the roof. Our natural life, on the contrary, began from the bottom, in fact, from the very lowest level. This is the reason the layers of the roof are revealed first. Before we were regenerated, the roof, the four-layered Christ, was already in existence. Therefore, our Christian experience begins not from the bottom, but with the roof. When we believed in the Lord and received Him, we immediately found ourselves under the roof, under the covering.

III. ACACIA WOOD OVERLAID WITH GOLD

After I was saved, I knew I had been regenerated, but I had no understanding of what had taken place within me. I did not know that I had become a board of acacia wood overlaid with gold. I realized simply that I had been saved and that henceforth I should do my best to glorify God. This concept, of course, is positive. It is wonderful to know that we have been saved and to desire to bring glory to God. However, this knowledge is natural; it does not contain any divine light. It is merely to know that once we were sinners bound for hell, but now, as saved ones destined for heaven, we should behave ourselves properly for the glory of God. It is crucial to realize that when we were saved and regenerated, a change took place in our being. We were fallen and were sinking lower and lower. But when we believed in Christ, He came into us, and we became buoyant. We experienced a change in nature, for a new element was added into our being. This element is nothing

less than Christ Himself. Thus, through regeneration we have become acacia wood overlaid with gold. We have the uplifted humanity of Jesus and His divine nature. Now our new being is part of the enlargement of the ark.

As Christians, we have been not only saved, but also changed in our nature and being. Within us we have the uplifted human nature signified by acacia wood and the overlaying divine nature signified by the gold. Anyone who does not possess such a new being is not our brother or sister in Christ. All those who have been chosen by God and regenerated by Him have these two natures—acacia wood and gold.

Through regeneration our humanity has been renewed and reinforced. For example, regeneration causes us to be wiser and more prudent and understanding. If I had never been saved and regenerated, I would not have the understanding I possess today. Furthermore, many believers were like jellyfish before they were regenerated—they seemed to be people without a backbone. They could easily be defeated by anyone or anything. But now, through regeneration, they have become acacia wood. Their will is very strong to resist sin. According to 2 Timothy 1:7, God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, love, and a sober mind. Power is related to the will, and love to the emotion. God's salvation has indeed changed us; it has made us a new being.

Through regeneration we have the uplifted humanity of Jesus. One of our hymns speaks of being "Jesusly human." Because we have the uplifted humanity of Jesus, others may find it difficult to understand us. On the one hand, we seem to be ordinary human beings; on the other hand, we are different from others because we have the divine life and the divine nature. The divine nature is expressed in our humanity. This is typified by the gold overlaying the acacia wood.

I appreciate the three words God, good, and gold. True gold and true goodness are both God Himself. This means that if we would be a good man or a gold-man, we must first be a God-man. The acacia wood should express the gold which covers it. If we are not gold-men, we cannot express God. As

boards of acacia wood, we should express not ourselves, but the gold which overlays us. This means that what others see in us should be the expression of God.

When you hear about acacia wood overlaid with gold, you may find it difficult to believe that, as a Christian, you are such a board. You may be tempted to say that you are still weak. If you think you are weak and then proclaim that you are weak, you will in fact be weak. In experience what you are will be according to what you think and say. Thus, it is crucial for you to change your thinking. No longer should you consider yourself a jellyfish. In faith you should proclaim that you are a board of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Do not speak according to what you are by nature, but speak according to your faith. If you say that you are weak, you will be weak. If you say that you have no way to handle a particular situation, you will not have a way to handle it. But if you declare that you are strong and have the best way to handle a difficult situation, you will be strong and you will also have the way.

To speak in this way is to fan into flame the gift of God we have received. Recently we have seen in the Life-study of 1 Corinthians that all believers in Christ have received the initial gifts, the gifts of the divine life and the Holy Spirit. Now we must fan these gifts into flame, realizing that God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but a spirit of power, of love, and of a sober mind. We must see what we are through regeneration and then declare this. Do not look at yourself, but stand on the Lord's word and act on it. When the Lord Jesus told Peter to step out of the boat and come to Him on the water, Peter did so (Matt. 14:28-29). He walked on the water according to the word of Christ. But when he looked at the environment, his faith disappeared. We should be like Peter in the first matter, but not in the second. According to the Lord's word, we should say in faith that we are boards of acacia wood overlaid with gold.

Acacia wood signifies the regenerated and uplifted humanity of the new creation in Christ as the basic material, strong for standing. Acacia wood is thus the basic material of the standing boards. The ability to stand does not depend on

the gold; it depends on the acacia wood. Although gold is precious, it is too soft to have the necessary standing power. As boards, our standing power is the acacia wood. We stand because we have a regenerated and uplifted humanity. However, we do not express this humanity. Instead, we express divinity. Thus, gold is the church's expression. The fact that the acacia wood was overlaid with gold signifies that the divine nature of Christ has become one with our human nature to be the expression of God.

IV. THE MEASUREMENTS

The length of each board was ten cubits. Ten is composed of two times five. Since five signifies the number of responsibility, ten is two times responsibility. As standing boards in the church, we need to bear a double responsibility. Furthermore, the number two stands not only for doubling, but also for testimony. Our double responsibility is a testimony. If we all bear responsibility in a double way, we shall have a testimony.

The width of each board, one and a half cubits, is the same as the width of the ark and its height. The length of the ark is two and a half cubits. This means that the dimensions of the ark are all in half units. This is also true of the width of each standing board. One half of three cubits indicates that every believer is a half needing to be matched by another to form three cubits for the building of God's dwelling place.

According to the Old Testament, the numbers three and five are the basic numbers of God's building. With the tabernacle there are many instances of the numbers three and five or of multiples of these numbers. We have seen that five is the number of responsibility and that three is the number of the Triune God in resurrection. Hence, the use of the numbers three and five in God's building indicates that the building requires much responsibility in resurrection by the Triune God.

As boards, none of us is complete. In the church life, as in married life, we all are halves. We are one and a half cubits,

and we need another board to make a complete unit. Throughout the years in the church life I have learned that I cannot be independent, that I cannot be a single board. I need to be coupled; that is, I need another half, another board, to make a complete unit.

Married life can be illustrated by a three-legged race. In this race each pair of runners has one leg free and the other tied to one of his partner's legs. Running the race successfully depends on each pair working together in good coordination. The two must run as if they were one person. However, in married life it is not easy for a husband and wife to be one. The wife may freely express her opinions, and the husband may be difficult and demanding. Thus, instead of a couple living in true oneness, there is division. The same problem is often found in the church life. What is most damaging to the service of the church is the expression of opinion. Even in the matter of vacuuming the carpets in the meeting hall, saints may have many different opinions. In the church life it is very difficult to be coupled, to be matched, with others. We can be matched with other boards only when we experience the acacia wood overlaid with gold.

Certain saints are willing to serve in the church, but they want to do things all by themselves. Some may even say, "If the brothers want me to do a certain thing, they should let me do it alone. Don't let anyone interfere with what I am doing." Those who serve the church in this way make their area of service their private possession. However, we all must learn to do things in the church in the way of sharing. Nothing should be kept in our hands in a private way. A brother may bear the responsibility for a certain matter faithfully and diligently. Nevertheless, he may be too individualistic and keep the matter of service too private. He may not be willing to allow others to share in this aspect of the church service. At times I have advised the saints not to take care of church matters in their homes, but to do everything in the meeting hall in a public way. To serve the church privately and individualistically is to serve as a single board which is not joined to another. The tabernacle, however, was

built of many boards which were connected. We need to realize that we are just one of many boards, that we are only half a unit, and that we need another board to complete us.

We thank the Lord that during the last ten years the situation and condition among us regarding the standing boards has improved. But we still need more improvement. I hope that everyone who serves in the church will serve in a corporate way, realizing that he is a half unit and needs another to match him.

V. THE NUMBER

Verse 18 says, "And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the south side southward." According to verse 20, there were to be twenty boards also on the north side, the second side of the tabernacle. On each side there were ten pairs forming ten times three cubits. To repeat, three signifies the Triune God in resurrection, and ten is the number of human completion. Therefore, ten times three gives us the complete and perfect humanity in resurrection with the Triune God. This is the testimony of the built up church.

Verse 22 says, "And for the rear of the tabernacle westward, you shall make six boards." The number six refers to man who was created on the sixth day and then became fallen. In the Bible six signifies the natural, fallen man. In ourselves we are the number six, for we are fallen and natural. But when we are coupled together, we form three pairs of boards, each three cubits in width. This means that when fallen, natural persons are coupled together, they become three times three, three pairs of three. They become persons in resurrection with the Triune God.

Verse 23 says, "And you shall make two boards for the corners of the tabernacle at the rear." The tabernacle was ten cubits wide. According to verse 22, there were six boards for the rear of the tabernacle. These boards covered nine cubits of the width of the tabernacle, leaving a gap of less than one cubit, when the thickness of the side boards is taken into account. We simply do not know how this gap was

filled. There is something here in God's building which we cannot figure out.

Verse 24 is difficult to understand: "And they shall be double from below, and in like manner they shall be complete at its top to the first ring; thus it shall be for both of them; they shall be for the two corners." The word "they" refers to the two boards mentioned in verse 23. They were to be doubled from below, and this doubling was to be complete at the top to the first ring. As we shall see in the next message, each board had three rings into which the connecting bars were inserted so that the boards could be joined together. It is very difficult to determine where to put the top ring on the corner boards. Because these boards were doubled in thickness, we are left with the problem of how the ring would be in line with the rings on the other boards and also how the bar could fit into it.

Although we cannot understand all the details concerning the corner boards, we can appreciate something of the spiritual significance of these boards being doubled. The corner is a place of turning. Whenever there is a turn in the Lord's move, there is the need for doubling, strengthening, reinforcing. For example, the church life spread from Jerusalem to Antioch. Antioch was a corner, a place of turning toward the Gentile world. If you study Acts 13, you will see that an important turn took place at Antioch. However, just as we cannot have a thorough understanding of the corner boards of the tabernacle, so we cannot have a complete understanding of the turn which took place at Antioch. Likewise, we do not have a full understanding of the turns the Lord has made in His recovery. In 1949 there was a turn from the mainland of China toward Taiwan. Even though I participated in that turn in a full way, I cannot adequately explain what took place. No one among us can fully figure out this turn. But we do know that when that turn took place, there was a doubling, a strengthening, a reinforcing. The fact that we cannot figure out all the details of the corners of the tabernacle indicates that we shall always be somewhat puzzled by the turns the Lord makes in His

recovery. In 1970 there was a migration for the spreading of the church life in the United States. Those who shared in this migration know that it was a turning. Nevertheless, this turn was puzzling and difficult to understand. Although it is difficult to explain, we know this turning involved a doubling, a strengthening. Today there are corners in the Lord's testimony. Every corner needs to be strengthened and doubled. This strengthening is immeasurable, and we have no way to understand it in full.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINETY-EIGHT

THE BOARDS OF THE TABERNACLE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 26:15-30; 36:20-34; 40:18

Before we consider the tenons, sockets, rings, and bars, I would like to say a word about the corner boards and also about the total number of boards in the tabernacle. I appreciate the concept that there must be strengthening at the corners of the tabernacle. As we pointed out in the foregoing message, a corner is where a turn is made. Whenever the Lord makes a turn, there is the need for strengthening and reinforcement.

The Lord Jesus is not only the foundation of the church; He is also the cornerstone connecting the walls. He joins the Gentile wall to the Jewish wall. At Antioch there was a turn toward the Gentile world. Thus, there was a need for Christ to be the cornerstone to embrace the two sections of the church wall, the Jewish wall and the Gentile wall. At this corner there was the need for strengthening. If we read Acts 13 carefully, we shall see that there definitely was a strengthening when the Lord made a turn at Antioch. We are told that in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers. As they were praying and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (v. 2). These brothers were burdened by the Lord to take the testimony to the Gentile world. To be sure, both Barnabas and Saul were corner boards. They were doubled and strengthened in order to become stronger boards for the building of the church.

From 1922 until 1949, the Lord used China as a nursery for the planting of His recovery. But in 1949 the Lord took a

major turn from the mainland of China to Taiwan. As one who participated in this turn in a full way, I was put under immense pressure, and I could say that I was thereby condensed and doubled. I can also testify that in this turn there was the strengthening. In the years to come, the Lord will probably make other turns in His recovery. Certain saints will be doubled, condensed, and strengthened in order to be the corner boards for such a turn.

There was a total of forty-eight boards in the tabernacle. The number forty-eight can be formed with either four times twelve or six times eight. I believe that with the tabernacle the correct way to make this number is six times eight. In the record concerning the boards there is no mention of the number twelve, but there is mention of the number six and an indication of the number eight. The number six refers to man created on the sixth day. This man became fallen and was later redeemed. Therefore, six refers to created, fallen, and redeemed human beings. The number eight is the number of resurrection. Thus, six times eight means that, as the standing boards in the tabernacle, the believers have been created, have become fallen, and then have been redeemed and resurrected. We all have the same history. We were created, we became fallen, we were redeemed, and now we are in resurrection. Thus, we are a redeemed people in resurrection. This is the significance of the number of the boards being forty-eight.

VI. THE TENONS

There must be a way for the forty-eight boards of the tabernacle to stand up. For God's building, the boards must be vertical. They cannot lie flat. Lying flat would be a sign of defeat. In order for the boards to stand upright, there is the need for the tenons, the sockets, the rings, and the bars. The tenons and the sockets are for standing, whereas the rings and the bars are for uniting. The individual boards of the tabernacle must become a corporate entity. This requires a uniting power to join them and make them one. The tenons

and the sockets are for us individually, but the rings and the bars are for us to be joined together corporately.

Verse 17 says, "Two tenons shall be in each board, connected one with the other; thus you shall make for all the boards of the tabernacle." We do not know the details concerning the size, the shape, or the material of the tenons. The Hebrew word rendered tenons is difficult to translate. This word actually means a hand. Thus, the two tenons are two hands. The number two here signifies testimony and confirmation for coordination.

VII. THE SOCKETS

Verse 19 says, "And you shall make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards, two sockets under one board for its two tenons, and two sockets under another board for its two tenons." These sockets signify stability for standing. They were made of silver, signifying the redemption of Christ as the base for the believers' standing for God's dwelling place (30:12-16). There were two sockets under each board for its tenons, which made forty on the north side and forty on the south side, signifying being tested and tried for a testimony. Altogether there were ninety-six silver sockets for the boards. This number, composed of twelve times eight, signifies the completion of the divine administration in resurrection.

Just as we are not told the size and shape of the tenons, neither are we told the size and shape of the sockets. According to 38:27, each socket was a talent of silver, weighing approximately one hundred pounds. But we do not know if the sockets were round, square, or rectangular. I prefer to believe that they were square in order to bear the weight of the building with its four layers of covering.

At this point we need to ask what the two tenons on each board signify. These tenons were not merely connected to the sockets, but they fit into the sockets and actually became one with them. The sockets were solid and weighty and had holes to contain the tenons. Because the sockets were made of silver signifying redemption, I believe that the

two tenons refer to our faith. In Exodus 30 the children of Israel were commanded to pay a half shekel each for redemption (vv. 12-16). This silver was used to make the sockets. As we have pointed out, there were ninety-six sockets for the standing boards. Later we shall see that there were four additional sockets of silver used to support the pillars which held up the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. Thus, there were one hundred sockets of silver, each one weighing about one hundred pounds. This means that the base of the tabernacle consisted of ten thousand pounds of silver. In typology, silver signifies redemption. All the sockets of silver typify the solid redemption of Christ as the base of our standing in God's building. We do not stand on sinking sand—we stand on Christ's redemption. Christ has redeemed us, and now His redemption is our solid standing. Christ's redemption is a socket in which the two tenons are placed.

I believe that the two tenons on each board signify our faith in Christ's redemption. Our standing is by faith. In 2 Corinthians 1:24 Paul says, "In faith you stand." In Romans 5:2 and Galatians 5:1 Paul speaks of standing. Romans 5:2 says, "Through whom also we have the access by faith into this grace in which we stand." Galatians 5:1 says, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore." The tenons signify our faith by which we stand.

Now we must go on to ask why there are two tenons on each board. If the tenons signify our faith, why are there two instead of just one? The answer is that these two tenons signify a complete faith. A simple illustration will help us in our understanding. In a pair of eyeglasses there are two lenses, one for each eye. But these two lenses make up one pair of glasses. Although we have two eyes, we have one field of vision. It would certainly be a serious problem if we had double vision. When a pair of glasses is properly prescribed, we have one clear field of vision. As the two lenses make one pair of glasses, so the two tenons are one complete faith.

We have seen that the number two signifies confirmation, testimony, and coordination. Genuine faith always

includes these three aspects. If our faith in the Lord Jesus is genuine, it will have a testimony, confirmation, and coordination. Otherwise, our faith is questionable. A proper faith is one that is testified and confirmed and that has a proper coordination. Just as it takes two half-steps, one with each foot, to make a complete step, so we need two tenons in order to have a complete faith.

I have known some Christians whose faith was incomplete. They had what we may call a one-tenon faith. On the one hand, they believed, but on the other hand, they doubted. They seemed to say both yes and no at the same time. This is to have a board with one tenon. If the standing boards had only one tenon, the boards could easily be shaken. To be shaken is to doubt. It is to question whether it is right to believe in Christ. Those with this kind of faith, a faith of one tenon, cannot stand firmly. Both for standing and for walking we need two feet. Our faith must have two tenons placed firmly in the silver sockets. We must have a complete faith in the redemption of Christ. Then we shall have the proper standing.

When I was in organized Christianity, I saw many so-called believers who did not have a proper faith. Some seemed to be standing not even on one foot but on one toe. They claimed to be Christians, yet they did not believe many things that are in the Bible. We, however, believe whatever the Bible says. Thus, our faith has two feet, two tenons. To have complete faith means to believe everything in the Bible without a trace of doubt.

Perhaps you feel that because you sometimes have doubts, you do not have true faith. In the past I also had doubts. However, if you consider your situation, you will see that what you doubted was your experience, not the Bible. It is common for believers to have doubts about their Christian experience. Some may question if they have really been forgiven or regenerated. Others may doubt that they love the Lord. There was a time when I had doubts about my love for the Lord. One day I knelt down and told Him that I asked heaven and earth to witness that I loved Him with all my heart. I went on to say,

"Lord, You have heard my word. From now on I shall never doubt that I love You." Nevertheless, as soon as I finished my prayer, I began to doubt once again. I did not doubt the Word of God; I doubted my experience of loving the Lord.

In the past I also had doubts about the way of the church in the Lord's recovery. When I decided to take this way, I had the assurance that it was right. I had determined that to be a proper human being I must be a Christian, and that to be a Christian I must take the way of the church. Otherwise, it seemed to me that it was meaningless to live. Sometimes I praised the Lord for showing me the way of the church. I thanked Him not only that I was a Christian, but also that I was one taking the church way. However, when other Christians refused to greet me because I had turned from the denominations to the church, I began to doubt whether or not I was actually taking the right way. I asked myself, "If the church is right, why don't other Christians greet me?" What I doubted was not the Bible—it was my experience.

Because we have genuine faith, we do not doubt the Bible. For example, we do not doubt that God created the heavens, the earth, and us. Our faith is of two tenons, and we are standing steadfast in Christ's redemption. Praise the Lord that we are standing in two hundred pounds of silver! We do not simply stand upon the redemption of Christ; we stand in it. Our faith is firmly set in the silver sockets of Christ's redemption.

We in the local churches have a firm and stable standing. We all are standing in Christ's redemption. The reason the churches in the Lord's recovery are so strong is that we all have a firm standing. Many Christians in other groups, however, can easily be shaken. They do not have a firm standing.

Our firm standing is demonstrated when it is necessary for us to have a funeral. Friends and observers who have attended our funerals have sometimes been surprised that there is not much weeping. At most funerals there is weeping without restraint or control. In our funerals, on the contrary, we do not weep very much, because we have a firm standing.

We believe in God and we believe in His Word. This gives us a firm, unshakable standing.

VIII. THE RINGS

The standing of the boards depends on the tenons and the sockets, whereas the linking, or the uniting, depends on the rings and the bars. Exodus 26:29 speaks of the rings: "And you shall overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold, as receptacles for the bars." In typology golden rings signify the initial gift of the Spirit. When Rebekah became engaged to Isaac, she received a golden ring. Likewise, when the prodigal son came home to his father, the father gave him a robe signifying Christ as righteousness and also a ring signifying the Spirit. Today rings are used as a sign of engagement and marriage. The main aspect of many wedding ceremonies is the exchanging of rings. When we were saved, we received the initial gift of the Spirit as a golden ring. We received the Spirit as a seal, pledge, down payment, guarantee, and foretaste of God as our eternal portion. The Spirit has been given to us as a pledge and guarantee. This is signified by the golden rings.

We know from verse 29 that the rings of the boards were receptacles for the bars. But how many rings were on each board? Although we are not told explicitly, we can determine the number accurately. According to verse 26 there were five bars for the boards on each side of the tabernacle. Verse 28 says, "And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall go through from end to end." From this we infer that there were three lines of bars connecting the boards. The middle bar stretched from end to end, and was twice as long as the other bars. The lines of bars above and below the middle bar each were made of two bars, with each bar going only half the way from end to end. This gives a total of five bars. Since these bars went from end to end in three lines, there must have been three rings on each board to serve as receptacles for the bars.

The three rings on each board are for the uniting of the believers in the Triune God in resurrection. The number

three signifies the Triune God in resurrection. As boards we do not have two rings or four rings; we have three rings indicating the Spirit of the Triune God in resurrection. Before Christ's resurrection and His glorification, "The Spirit was not yet" (John 7:39). But now that Jesus has been glorified through resurrection, the all-inclusive Spirit is within us. This Spirit is the Spirit of the Triune God in resurrection.

IX. THE BARS

The Spirit is both the rings and the bars. These bars are made of acacia wood (v. 26) for the connecting strength and overlaid with gold (v. 29) for uniting. This is related to the oneness of the Spirit spoken of in Ephesians 4:3.

There were five bars on each of three sides, north, south, and west. Five, the number of responsibility, is composed of four plus one. This signifies the initial Spirit becoming the uniting Spirit bearing responsibility in resurrection by the Triune God. Concerning the bars, we have three times five—five bars on three sides. This signifies responsibility in resurrection by the Triune God. Furthermore, on each side, the middle bar went from end to end. Thus, there were five bars in three lines. Here again we have five in three, signifying responsibility in the Triune God in resurrection.

The standing of the boards is a matter of silver for redemption, and the uniting of the boards is a matter of gold signifying the divinity of Christ. Christ's redemption is related to His work, but His divinity is related to His Person. We stand on Christ's redemptive work, and we are united by His divine Person. Therefore, with the boards of the tabernacle we see both the Person and work of Christ. His Person is divine, and His work is redemptive. Today as the church, we are one entity, one building, for God's habitation, because we stand on the silver of Christ's redemptive work and are united by the gold of His divine Person.

The uniting bars were made of acacia wood. In Ephesians 4 the oneness of the Spirit is mentioned in the context of

human virtues such as humility and love. These virtues are signified by acacia wood. The oneness of the Spirit not only involves Christ's divinity, but also includes His humanity. For God's building we must have humility, kindness, and love which are according to Christ's standard. In other words, if we would be the acacia wood within the uniting bars, we must be Jesusly human. Then we shall have real oneness. Whereas the rings are purely of gold, the bars are of two natures—acacia wood overlaid with gold. This indicates that the uniting Spirit is mingled with the virtues of our redeemed and uplifted humanity.

We have seen that we stand on Christ's redemption and that we are united in His divinity. Christ's divinity is for our expression. If we enter the church as God's tabernacle today, we shall see gold everywhere. Even on the ceiling of the tabernacle there are the golden clasps. Gold is for expression, but silver is for standing. We stand on Christ's redemption, but we express His divine Person. Those who visit the churches can see both this standing and this expression. They can behold a people who have such a firm standing that they are unshakable. They can also see among those in the church a marvelous expression of the divine gold.

Among many Christian groups today, we cannot see the proper standing or expression. On the one hand, those in these groups are very easily shaken; on the other hand, they may fail to express the gold. This to a large extent is the situation of today's Christianity. But in the proper church life in the Lord's recovery, we have a firm standing, and we also have the expression of Christ. Even those who oppose us admit that we are unshakable. We have the silver sockets and a golden expression. As God's habitation, the church must have a silver base and a golden expression. Not only is the church God's dwelling place, but it is also our dwelling place, our home. This mutual dwelling place of God and the believers is solidly grounded on Christ's redemption and brightly expresses the Person of Christ Himself.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE NINETY-NINE

THE VEIL WITHIN THE TABERNACLE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 26:31-35; 36:35-36; 40:3, 21

It is difficult to understand why there was a veil within the tabernacle. If we consider the situation of the tabernacle as a whole, we may be puzzled by the fact that there was a veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The tabernacle was a tent thirty cubits in length, ten cubits in width, and ten cubits in height. The veil served as a partition between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. This veil was a curtain of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen. It was the work of a skillful workman, and it was made with cherubim. In color and design it was exactly the same as the ceiling of the tabernacle, the first layer of the covering. Whenever a priest came into the tabernacle, he would immediately notice that the ceiling and the veil were the same.

The Holy of Holies was a cube measuring ten cubits in each direction. The Holy Place was twenty cubits in length and ten cubits in both width and height. The term Holy of Holies is a Hebrew expression meaning the most holy place, the holiest of all. The crucial question is why there had to be a separation between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. For what purpose was the tent divided into two rooms? Whenever we build a house with rooms or erect a partition in a room, we have a specific purpose. The various rooms in a house each have a particular purpose, and each room contains furniture suitable to it. For example, the furniture in the bedroom is very different from that in the living room. The Holy of Holies contained only one piece of furniture—the ark. In the Holy Place there were the table of the

bread of the presence, the lampstand, and the incense altar. Whenever a priest came into the Holy Place, he first went to the table for nourishment. After being nourished at the table, he would go to the lampstand to trim it and add oil to it so that it would shine brightly. Following this, he would go to the incense altar. As we shall see in a later message, both the incense altar and the incense offered at this altar are types of Christ. Through Christ as the sweet fragrance to God typified by the incense, we can enter into the Holy of Holies, the very place where God stays, where He meets with us, and where He communes with us. In the Holy of Holies, where God's shekinah glory is, we have fellowship with Him. Although we know what was in the Holy Place, we still need to see why there was the need to have a veil, a curtain, separating the ark of the testimony in the Holy of Holies from the table and the lampstand in the Holy Place. We still need to find out why there was the need of a partition to separate the tabernacle into two sections.

TYPIFYING THE FLESH OF CHRIST

According to Hebrews 10:20, the veil signifies the flesh of Christ. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. This means that through death the veil of Christ's flesh was cleft. What is difficult to understand is the significance of the veil within the tabernacle being placed on four pillars. The pillars are different from the boards. We have seen that on the north, west, and south sides of the tabernacle there was a total of forty-eight boards. On the east side, instead of boards, there was a curtain, called the first veil. Thus, the veil within the tabernacle may be called the second veil. The first veil was put on five pillars, and the second veil was put on four pillars.

As we have pointed out, the forty-eight boards of the tabernacle are not types of Christ. The most we can say is that they are types of the enlargement of Christ, or types of the enlarged Christ. We cannot say that the boards typify Christ directly, for these boards are types of the believers who are

the enlargement of Christ. Likewise, the four pillars upon which the second veil was placed are not types of Christ. Although the pillars differed from the boards in shape, they were made of the same materials—acacia wood overlaid with gold. Furthermore, they stood on a base of silver. Underneath each standing board were two sockets of silver in which the two tenons were firmly placed. There was a total of ninety-six sockets, two for each board. Each of the four pillars was placed in a silver socket. Thus, with the tabernacle there was a total of one hundred sockets of silver.

The fact that the pillars rest in sockets of silver is a further proof that the pillars typify the believers and not Christ Himself. Christ has no need of redemption to be His standing. However, the believers must have a firm standing, and this standing, as signified by the silver sockets, is the redemption of Christ. Both the boards and the pillars are believers who stand on Christ's redemption.

THE BOARDS AND THE PILLARS

Since both the boards and the pillars typify the believers, we may ask what is the difference between the pillars and the boards. The pillars typify believers, but extraordinary believers, not ordinary ones. The forty-eight boards typify ordinary believers. According to Galatians 2:9, Peter, John, and James were pillars. These extraordinary disciples of the Lord Jesus were pillars in the church. In Revelation 3:12 the Lord says that the overcomers will become pillars in the temple of God.

In every local church there should be some pillars. In God's house, God's dwelling place, there is the need not only for boards, but also for pillars. In the tabernacle the pillars were one-twelfth the number of the boards. I hope that all the elders in the churches are pillars.

Now we come to another difficult question: Why was the veil, a type of Christ, placed on pillars, which typify extraordinary believers? According to the picture portrayed by the type, when Christ became flesh, He was placed on the believers. But why was Christ in the flesh put on the believers? Now we

have two difficult questions to answer, one concerning why there was a separation within the tabernacle and the other concerning why Christ was put on the believers.

Exodus 26:31 says, "And you shall make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen; the work of a skillful workman shall it be made, with cherubim." We have pointed out that the veil is the same as the first layer of the covering of the tabernacle. This means that the separation is the same as the ceiling in material, color, workmanship, and embroidery. Blue means heavenly (1 Cor. 15:47-48), purple signifies royalty (John 19:19-22), scarlet typifies the shedding of blood for redemption (Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:18-19), twined linen signifies the fine living of Christ manifested through suffering and trials, and the embroidered cherubim typify the work of the Spirit on Christ to make the glory of God manifested in the creature. When Christ was on earth, He lived a very fine human life. This living was manifested through sufferings and trials.

Exodus 26:32 goes on to say, "And you shall put it upon four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold; and their hooks shall be of gold, upon four sockets of silver." In the Bible the number four signifies creatures. The four pillars standing on four sockets of silver signify the redeemed creatures.

We have seen that these pillars typify extraordinary believers, whereas the boards signify ordinary believers. Do you prefer to be a board or a pillar? Most believers may prefer to be boards. To be a board in the tabernacle is comfortable, but to be a pillar is quite difficult. Wherever a board may be placed, it enjoys comfort. Pillars, however, face hardships. If you desire to be a pillar, you must be ready to face difficulties. The pillars were first ordinary believers, as typified by the boards. After being dealt with and experiencing a certain amount of cutting or pressure, they became pillars. Thus, it takes more work to produce a pillar than it does to produce a board. Moreover, the workmanship on the pillars is more skillful than that on the boards. To overlay a board with gold is easier than to overlay a pillar with gold.

The pillars are not only redeemed, but they have been dealt with. They have suffered a great deal and have passed through many trials in order to become pillars. Hence, they signify believers strong to bear the testimony of Christ's incarnation and crucifixion (Gal. 2:9; Rev. 3:12; 1 Tim. 3:15).

The pillars bear the testimony of Christ's incarnation and crucifixion. First the veil indicates the incarnation of Christ, that Christ, the living Word, became flesh (John 1:1, 14). According to Hebrews 10:20, this flesh is the veil. Ultimately, through crucifixion, this veil was rent. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, the veil was rent from the top to the bottom. The fact that it was rent in this way indicates that it was torn by God. As a type, the veil signifies Christ's incarnation and crucifixion. These are the main aspects of Christ who is put on the believers who have been redeemed and dealt with.

HOOKS OF GOLD AND SOCKETS OF SILVER

Verse 32 mentions that the pillars had hooks of gold. These golden hooks signify the holding and connecting strength of the divine nature. Only the divine nature can connect the pillars to the incarnated and crucified Christ. Only through the holding strength of the divine nature can we bear the testimony of Christ's incarnation and crucifixion.

We have seen that the four pillars stood upon four sockets of silver. These sockets indicate Christ's redemption for the creatures. With the tabernacle there was a total of one hundred silver sockets, ninety-six for the boards and four for the pillars. The number one hundred is composed of ten times ten. Ten is the number of human completion and perfection. Ten times ten signifies the full and complete fulfillment of the requirements of the Ten Commandments according to what God is. The number ten is also seen in the Holy of Holies, a cube measuring ten cubits in each direction. According to 38:27, the silver for the redemption of the lives of the children of Israel was a little more than a hundred talents. All the children of Israel were God's redeemed people.

For this reason, each had to pay a piece of silver as a symbol of God's redemption. Everyone had to pay the same amount. From the silver collected from the people, one hundred talents were used to make the one hundred silver sockets for the tabernacle. This no doubt signifies that as the boards for the building up of God's dwelling place, His redeemed people stand on the solid redemption of Christ.

Each of the children of Israel paid a half-shekel of silver. Since a shekel is twenty gerahs, a half-shekel is ten gerahs. Thus, we once again have the number ten signifying human completion. God's commandments for man are also ten. Ten commandments signify a full and complete demand on man. Because God's people must bear the complete responsibility and have a complete fulfillment of God's requirements, each must pay ten gerahs. The total of so many gerahs of silver is a little over a hundred talents. All these cases of the number ten, indicating complete demand, requirement, responsibility, and fulfillment, are related to Christ and to Christ's redemption. Christ's redemption is in the number ten. Ten is composed of two times five, with five being the number of responsibility and two the number of testimony. Thus, two times five signifies two times responsibility for a testimony. This is Christ with His redemption.

The veil covered the ark of the testimony (Num. 4:5). Those who entered the Holy Place could see the table, the lampstand, and the incense altar. However, they could not see the ark of testimony. Not only did the veil separate the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies; it also covered the ark. This signifies the separation between man and God (Gen. 3:24). Now we can answer the question we raised at the beginning of this message: Why was there the need of a separating veil within the tabernacle? There had to be a separation because fallen man in his nature is separated from God. Because we are still in our fallen nature, there is a separation between us and God. Fallen human beings cannot come to the ark in the Holy of Holies to contact God, converse with God, or have fellowship with God. Although God loves us and desires to have

fellowship with us, our fallen nature does not allow Him to do this. We are sinful, but He is righteous. We are unjust, but He is just. A just and righteous God cannot meet with unjust and unrighteous people. There must be a separation between Him and them, a separation signified by the veil within the tabernacle.

This veil was broken at the Lord's death (Matt. 27:51) to open a new and living way for us to contact God (Heb. 10:19-20). Because of the fall, we became sinful in nature. For this reason, there had to be a separation of the ark in the inner chamber of the tabernacle from the outer chamber. As a result of the fall, man has become flesh. For the most part, in the Bible flesh is a negative term; it denotes the fallen man. We fell and became flesh. Now this flesh is a veil separating us from God.

The ark is of a different category of furniture from the table, the lampstand, and the incense altar. At the table, the lampstand, and the incense altar, we have something of God, but we do not have God Himself. God Himself is at the ark in the Holy of Holies. Although fallen persons may receive God's supply and see His light, they cannot contact Him. To receive supply and enlightenment from God is one thing; to have direct contact with Him is another thing. Suppose, for example, that a son offends his father in a certain way. Although the father still desires to give the son something to supply him, he cannot see him until the barrier, the separation, between them has been removed. The father may say, "He is my son, and I want to supply him with my riches. But I cannot see him until the barrier is removed." This illustrates the fact that God will not see us and have fellowship with us or speak with us face to face until our flesh is broken. God loves us, and He will supply us with His riches. Nevertheless, until our flesh is broken He will not speak to us face to face from the ark. There is a veil separating us, and this veil is the flesh, our fallen being.

The problem of the flesh, our fallen being, is different from the problem of sins. This is a matter of our being, of our

person. Our sins have been forgiven, but we ourselves remain a problem. Even though our sins have been washed away, we are still with the flesh, and the flesh may be unbroken. This unbroken flesh is the veil.

Exodus 26:33 and 34 say, "And you shall put the veil under the clasps, and you shall bring in there, within the veil, the ark of the testimony; and the veil shall make a separation for you between the holy place and the holy of holies. And you shall put the propitiatory cover upon the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies." The clasps under which the veil was put are the clasps on the first layer of the covering. We have seen that this layer, made of ten pieces, each four cubits wide, was forty cubits long. Fifty clasps of gold connected the two main sections of the covering, each of which measured twenty cubits in length. Twenty cubits of this layer covered the Holy Place, ten cubits covered the Holy of Holies, and ten cubits hung down over the back side. Because the curtain, the veil, was under the line formed by the fifty clasps of the ceiling, we know that the Holy of Holies was a cube measuring ten cubits in each direction. There were ten cubits of the first layer to cover the area from the veil to the standing boards at the rear of the tabernacle. Thus, the Holy of Holies measured ten cubits in length, width, and height.

The fact that the Holy of Holies was a cube measuring ten cubits in three directions signifies completion in completion. The Holy Place, measuring twenty cubits by ten cubits by ten cubits, was twice as large as the Holy of Holies. Furthermore, the veil was a square, ten cubits by ten cubits. It was a square in full completion.

PLACED ON FOUR PILLARS

At this point we need to consider further the significance of the veil placed on four pillars. We have pointed out that these pillars signify extraordinary believers, those who have been not only redeemed, but also dealt with. The veil signifies the flesh of Christ. We know that Christ is typified by the Passover lamb, the manna, the ark, and the good land. What kind of Christ is typified by the veil? The lamb is the redeeming

Christ, the manna is the nourishing Christ, and the veil is Christ in the flesh crucified for us. With Christ in the flesh we have incarnation and crucifixion. Yes, Christ Himself was cleft, riven. But now the pillars, the extraordinary believers who have been redeemed and dealt with, must bear a testimony in the tabernacle, the habitation of God, of the incarnated and crucified Christ. Only by being dealt with can we become such pillars. To be dealt with here means to experience the crucifixion, the rending, of our flesh. Those who are pillars, the extraordinary believers, in the church, God's dwelling place, must bear the testimony that their flesh has been crucified. Peter, John, Paul, and the overcoming believers throughout the generations and centuries have borne such a testimony. They have been pillars testifying that their fallen being with its fallen nature, that is, their person and their flesh, has been rent. The concept here is deep and the thought is profound.

The tabernacle is the dwelling place of God. But within God's dwelling place there is a separation. In a human dwelling place a separation may be a positive thing, but in God's dwelling place the separation is a negative matter. Thus, the veil is negative, for it conceals God's presence from His people. Before the veil was rent, only the high priest was qualified to enter the Holy of Holies once a year. This proves that the veil was something negative. Today this veil is our flesh. Some may argue that the veil signifies Christ's flesh, not our flesh. But when Christ, the eternal Word of God, became flesh, He became identified with us. This means that the flesh which Christ became actually denotes our fallen nature. Furthermore, when He was crucified on the cross, our fallen nature, that is, our natural being, the flesh, was crucified with Him. When He was cleft, our flesh was cleft also, for our flesh was cleft with Him. Yes, in God's dwelling place Christ has been crucified, and the veil has been rent. Now the pillars must continue to bear this testimony. With Christ, the flesh has been crucified, and the veil has been rent. But with us the veil may not yet have been cleft. Because with Christ the veil has

been cleft, the separation between God and man has been broken. Now those who have been redeemed by Christ can commune with God directly. However, many believers still have not experienced the crucifixion of their flesh. Thus, their flesh remains as a separation between them and God. The pillars within God's dwelling place must now bear the testimony that the veil of their flesh has been cleft with Christ. In other words, those who are pillars in the church should no longer live by their flesh. Instead, they must bear the testimony that their flesh has been crucified with Christ. This is the meaning of Galatians 5:24.

When we consider the veil from the standpoint of experience, we see that there is an identification of Christ as the veil with those believers who are pillars. This means that the pillars are closely identified with Christ Himself. The veil was put on the pillars. This implies the identification of the veil with the pillars and the oneness of the veil and the pillars. We may say that the veil was the clothing, the covering, of the pillars. Clothing signifies identification. When we put clothes upon our body, these clothes become one with us. In like manner, the veil clothing the pillars became one with the pillars. Therefore, the veil and the pillars were identified.

A WAY OPENED

The deep significance of identification is that whether or not the way can be opened for people to contact God depends on the experience of this identification. If the veil is rent, then the way will be open for fallen people to contact God. Otherwise, the way will be closed. This means that when the flesh is dealt with, there is an entrance for fallen man to contact God and have fellowship with Him.

Before the veil was broken, there was no entry into the Holy of Holies. The priests could come into the Holy Place and approach the table, the lampstand, and the incense altar, but they could go no further. When the veil was rent, three entries were opened up. We say this on the basis of the probable location of the four pillars. It is likely that two were on each end,

next to the standing boards, and that two were in between. This would make three entrances into the presence of God. If two pillars were not next to the standing boards, there would be no way to support the corners of the veil. Spiritually speaking, these three entrances typify the Triune God. In the New Jerusalem there are three gates on each of the four sides. These gates typify the Triune God as the entrance into the holy city. We see these gates in the three parables in Luke 15: the Son as the Shepherd, the Spirit as the woman lighting a lamp, and the Father receiving the returned prodigal son. Also, in Ephesians 2:18 we read that in one Spirit we have access through Christ unto the Father. Therefore, the Triune God Himself is signified by the three entrances.

Once again we see that through the types in the tabernacle we can know Christ in a very detailed way. It is difficult to find words to convey what is portrayed by all these types. But even though we may not be able to utter what we see in these figures, deep within we can have a proper realization. This will strengthen us, nourish us, and help us to grow.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED

THE VEIL WITHIN THE TABERNACLE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Heb. 9:1-12; Exo. 26:33-35; 40:3, 21; Num. 4:5; Matt. 27:51; Heb. 10:19-20

As we have pointed out a number of times, our aim is to study the book of Exodus in the way of experience and to apply the points as much as possible to our spiritual experience. It is not our purpose simply to know the pattern, materials, and measurements of the tabernacle in a doctrinal way. In the New Testament Paul established a good example of studying and interpreting the Old Testament types. Instead of applying these types in a doctrinal way, Paul applied them in an experiential way, either to Christ Himself or to the believers. Following his example, our emphasis will not be on the doctrinal significance of the types. Rather, we need to pray that we may be brought into the proper spiritual understanding of the types so that we may receive help in our spiritual life. In this message we shall consider the spiritual significance of the veil hanging on the pillars within the tabernacle.

TWO TABERNACLES

Concerning the veil hanging on the pillars, we need to consider further why there was the need to have a veil separating the tabernacle into two parts. The Old Testament speaks of just one tabernacle. But when Paul refers to the tabernacle in Hebrews 9, he speaks of a first and a second tabernacle. If Paul had not written these words, we would not have the boldness to speak of two tabernacles. Instead, we would say that there was one tabernacle with two sections, an inner section

called the Holy of Holies and an outer section called the Holy Place. Hebrews 9:2 and 3 say, "For a tabernacle was prepared, the first, in which were both the lampstand and the table and the loaves set forth, which is called the Holy Place; and after the second veil, a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies." According to verse 2, the Holy Place was the first tabernacle. Paul's reference to "the second veil" indicates that he must have regarded the curtain at the entrance to the Holy Place as the first veil. The first veil was at the entrance to the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, and the second veil was at the entrance to the second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies. In Hebrews 9:6 and 7 Paul speaks of the first and second tabernacles. Why did he regard the one tabernacle as two tabernacles? When Paul was writing the book of Hebrews, he was heavily burdened by the fact that the Hebrew Christians still held the Old Testament concept regarding many things. Therefore, Paul was burdened to show them that the old tabernacle was absolutely over. He considered that the tabernacle was actually two tabernacles, not one tabernacle with two sections.

There is an important difference between two tabernacles and one. For example, there is quite a difference between a duplex and two houses. According to the Old Testament, the tabernacle was a duplex. But according to Paul's writing in Hebrews, it was two houses. There is nothing contradictory here, for both the Old Testament and the New Testament are accurate. The crucial matter is our understanding. When Paul was writing Hebrews, his feeling was so strong and his understanding was such that he considered the tabernacle in the Old Testament as two separate tabernacles, just as the old covenant and the new covenant are two distinct covenants. We cannot say that the two covenants are one covenant with two sections. In like manner, Paul regarded the tabernacle as two tabernacles, not as one tabernacle with two sections.

Hebrews 9:8 and 9 say, "The Holy Spirit showing by this, that the way of the Holy of Holies has not yet been manifested while the first tabernacle still has its standing; which is a figure for the present time." Here Paul does not say "the

first section of the tabernacle"; he speaks of "the first tabernacle" having its standing. The relative pronoun "which" in verse 9 refers not to standing, but to the first tabernacle. This pronoun is emphatic and refers definitely to the first tabernacle. This clearly indicates that the first tabernacle is a figure for the present time.

Bible translators and expositors have debated the meaning of the phrase "the present time." This expression refers to the New Testament age. Thus, the first tabernacle was a type of the New Testament age. It was a figure, not the reality. Likewise, the table and the lampstand in the first tabernacle are also types, figures, not realities. Those in the Old Testament did not have the reality in the first tabernacle. What they had was only a type, a figure. We today have the reality. The first tabernacle was a picture, a figure, a type, of the present time, of the New Testament age.

Although the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, was a type, Paul does not say that the second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, was a type or figure. The reason for this is that the first tabernacle was a figure of the New Testament age, but the second tabernacle was the reality of the New Testament age. The showbread on the table in the Holy Place was not a reality; it was not Christ Himself. Rather, it typified Christ. Hence, it was a figure. Likewise, the lampstand shining in the Holy Place was also not Christ Himself shining. It was a figure, a type, of Christ. However, the shekinah glory of God in the Holy of Holies was a reality, not a type or a figure. God was actually in the second tabernacle. Therefore, when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, he could actually see the glory of God and receive a word from God. Hence, the second tabernacle was not a figure of the New Testament age. Instead, to some extent, it was the reality of the New Testament age.

The two tabernacles also typify the two covenants—the old covenant and the new covenant. The first tabernacle, a type of the present age, signifies the old covenant. The second tabernacle, the reality of the New Testament age, signifies the new covenant.

SOUL OR SPIRIT?

According to the entire book of Hebrews, the first tabernacle, or the Holy Place, is a type or figure of our soul, whereas the second tabernacle, or the Holy of Holies, is a type of our spirit. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help." We have seen that the throne of grace is the propitiatory cover upon the ark within the veil. To come forward to the throne of grace is to come forward to the propitiatory cover on the ark in the Holy of Holies. The word about the dividing of soul and spirit in Hebrews 4:12 is related to this: "For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, both of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." When our soul is divided from our spirit, we are at the threshold of the spirit. This means that we are at the threshold of the Holy of Holies within which there is the throne of grace. The soul and the spirit are not two aspects of one thing, but are two distinct matters. The soul is typified by the first tabernacle, and the spirit is signified by the second.

We all need to ask ourselves whether experientially, actually, and practically we live in the soul, the first tabernacle, or in the spirit, the second tabernacle. A certain brother may truly love the Lord and may be burning for the Lord. But to love the Lord and to be burning is one thing, and to be in the Holy of Holies may be an absolutely different thing. There is a great difference between living in the first tabernacle and living in the second. To be sure, these tabernacles were right next to each other. But no matter how close they may be, we should not confuse them. There must be a clear distinction between the old covenant and the new covenant and between the soul and the spirit. However, the Hebrew Christians were not clear regarding this distinction, and for the most part were living in the soul, in the first tabernacle. In like manner, we may be very zealous for the Lord, but nevertheless still be living in the soul, in the

first tabernacle. To be in the first tabernacle means that we are actually still living in the old covenant. Furthermore, to remain in the old covenant experientially and practically means that we are still in the Old Testament age. This is the situation of many Christians today. The Catholic Church has confused the New Testament and the Old Testament in the matter of ritual, but many in Pentecostalism have confused the Old Testament and the New Testament in the way of speaking for the Lord. Instead of speaking in the way exemplified by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7, they follow the Old Testament pattern to prophesy by saying, "Thus saith the Lord." Even many of us in the Lord's recovery are still living in the first tabernacle and thus are living in the Old Testament age.

DIRECT CONTACT WITH GOD

As we consider the two tabernacles, we shall see that in the first we do not have God Himself. We may have the enjoyment of the life supply and the shining of the lampstand, but we do not have God Himself. We may feel that we are very close to God. This is true, because He is in the house, the tabernacle, next door. In a very real sense, God is our next-door neighbor. But although He is nearby, in the first tabernacle we do not have God Himself as our enjoyment. Some may find this difficult to understand. They may ask, "When we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, don't we enjoy the Lord Himself?" This enjoyment, however, may not be the direct enjoyment of the Lord Himself. Yes, in the first tabernacle we have spiritual enjoyment. We have the life supply and the light of life. We are nourished and we are enlightened. This may cause us to feel quite satisfied. We are not hungry, and we are not in darkness. We enjoy the Lord's nourishment and enlightenment. But this does not mean that we have God Himself or the direct speaking of God. The oracle, God's speaking, is in the second tabernacle, not in the first. This means that we may have light in the first tabernacle, but may not have God's direct speaking.

Many believers today are still in the outer court. They

have not yet come into the Holy Place. Their experience is limited to the altar and the laver, for they are yet outside the realm of God's dwelling. Are you still in the outer court with the altar and the laver? Most of the saints in the Lord's recovery have come into the Holy Place and enjoy the Lord's nourishment and enlightenment. Although they have not passed through the second veil, they have passed through the first veil. But now we all must realize that next door to the Holy Place there is a place which has something richer and higher. In this place is God Himself.

It is very difficult to explain doctrinally how God can be in the Holy of Holies, but not in the Holy Place. Experientially we know that it is possible to be close to God and experience things of God without experiencing God Himself directly. Many of the Hebrew Christians to whom the Epistle of Hebrews was addressed were very good. They suffered much persecution, including the plundering of their possessions (Heb. 10:32-34). Nevertheless, as Paul points out, they were still in the Holy Place, still in the soul. They had not experienced the dividing of soul and spirit. As a result, they remained in the old covenant. Some even went to the temple to offer sacrifices. Even though they were genuine New Testament believers, experientially they remained in the Old Testament age. The same may be true of some in the Lord's recovery today. We need to recognize, admit, and confess that even we are not absolutely in the spirit, not absolutely in the Holy of Holies. In a certain sense, we may remain in the Old Testament age. We may enjoy the supply of the Lord and walk in the light of the Lord without being in the Holy of Holies. I do not care to argue this matter doctrinally. I simply wish to testify of what I have learned through years of experience. Experience has taught me that we may enjoy something of the Lord without having direct contact with Him.

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

Not long after I was saved, I read books which pointed out that, according to Romans 6:6, our old man was crucified with Christ. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with

Christ." I fully believed these verses and was happy to learn that I had been crucified with Christ. However, although this was accurate doctrinally, according to my spiritual experience I was not crucified. I wondered what was wrong, since my experience did not correspond to biblical doctrine. Experientially speaking, have you been crucified with Christ? The New Testament says clearly that we *have been* crucified. Sometimes we may echo these words and declare, "I have been crucified with Christ!" But in your practical living day by day, have you really been crucified? Many of us must admit that experientially we have not been crucified. We need to understand this matter both according to the Bible and according to experience. According to the New Testament, we are in the Holy of Holies simply because we are believers. We are in Christ, and in Christ we have been crucified, buried, and resurrected. Surely, as those in resurrection, we are in the second tabernacle. But according to our actual living day by day, we may in fact still be in the first tabernacle.

THE VEIL SIGNIFYING CHRIST'S FLESH

It was the veil within the tabernacle which made a separation between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. Since this veil signifies the flesh of Christ, this separation between the two tabernacles involves the flesh. Hebrews 10:20 says, "By a new and living way, which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh." Was the veil within the tabernacle a positive thing? We must answer that in a sense it was positive, for it was exactly the same as the first layer of the covering. It was made of fine linen, blue, purple, and scarlet, and embroidered with cherubim. But Paul says that this veil is the flesh of Christ. Is this flesh positive or negative? We must answer this question very carefully. We know from John 1:1 and 14 that Christ, the eternal Word of God, became flesh. Ordinarily we say that Christ became a man. This, of course, is true and accurate according to the Bible. Nevertheless, the Gospel of John says that the Word, who is God Himself, became flesh.

Furthermore, according to Romans 8:3, God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin. Then was Christ's flesh sinless or sinful? We may say that in nature it was sinless, but in form it was in the likeness of sinful flesh. Let us use as an illustration a serpent made of gold. We all appreciate gold, and we may value a golden serpent because it is made of gold. However, we may feel uncomfortable because although the gold is valuable, it is in the form of a serpent. Thus, the form of the golden serpent, but not its nature, may bother us. This illustrates the fact that in nature there was nothing wrong with Christ's flesh. He did not have the flesh of sin, but He was in the likeness of the flesh of sin. In nature His flesh was not of sin, but in form it was in the likeness of the flesh of sin.

THE BREAKING OF THE FLESH

We have pointed out that the veil, the flesh, was the factor which made the one tabernacle two tabernacles. This is true even today in our experience. Doctrinally speaking, the flesh has been crucified on the cross by God. When Christ was crucified, the flesh was crucified also. This is indicated by the tearing of the veil in the temple from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). Although the flesh was riven when Christ was crucified, experientially our flesh may still be whole. It may not yet have been cleft or torn. The reason we may still be in the soul, the first tabernacle, is that our flesh has not yet been broken.

It is quite possible that in doing spiritual things our flesh may still not be broken. We may call on the Lord in an outward way in the flesh, instead of calling from deep within in the spirit. Sometimes when a brother and his wife are arguing, one of them may say, "Praise the Lord!" However, such an utterance in this case may not come from the spirit, but from the flesh. Thus, we may be in the flesh not only when we are gossiping and criticizing, but even when we are calling on the Lord and praising Him. The reason that as New Testament believers we remain in the soul, in the Old Testament age, is that our flesh has not been broken.

The veil within the tabernacle was placed on four pillars. We have pointed out that the pillars represent the extraordinary believers, who are the stronger members of the church. The pillars in the tabernacle were stronger than the boards. The boards were flat, but the pillars were thick. Applied to our experience, this means that when a board has been dealt with, it becomes a pillar. Among all the saints in the church, the pillars, the stronger ones, bear the testimony of God manifested in the flesh. No doubt, the leading ones in the church should all be pillars. According to 1 Timothy 3:15, the church must be the pillar of the truth of God manifest in the flesh.

If the flesh of the leading ones, the stronger ones, in the church, has not been broken, the entire church will be kept in the first tabernacle and frustrated from entering the second tabernacle. Whether or not an assembly can enter into the Holy of Holies depends on whether or not the flesh of the leading ones has been cleft. Galatians 5:24 says that those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh. If we are Christians walking by the Spirit, our flesh has been crucified. Romans 6:6 says that our old man, the self, has been crucified. Although we cannot crucify ourselves, we can crucify the flesh, and we must do this. If our flesh is crucified, it will become a riven veil as an entrance for the entire church to come into the second tabernacle and have the direct enjoyment of God. By this we see that the situation of the church depends on the breaking of the flesh of the leading ones. This exactly corresponds to what I have observed throughout the years. Whether or not the church in a particular locality can enter into the Holy of Holies depends entirely on the brokenness of the flesh of the pillars, on the brokenness of the flesh of the leading ones.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED ONE

THE CURTAIN FOR THE DOOR OF THE TENT

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 26:36-37; 36:37-38; 40:5, 28

In this message we shall consider 26:36 and 37. We may think that these verses are easy to understand. Verse 36 says, "And you shall make a curtain for the door of the tent of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of an embroiderer." This verse speaks of a curtain for the door of the tent. Verse 37, however, speaks of the screen: "And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold; and their hooks shall be of gold; and you shall cast five sockets of bronze for them."

THE COVERING, THE VEIL, AND THE SCREEN

The curtain for the door of the tent was made of the same material as the first layer of the covering and the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. Thus, the ceiling, the inner veil, and the curtain for the door were made of the same material and of the same colors, design, and workmanship. Whenever a priest came into the tabernacle, he could see above, at the front, and at the rear curtains or a veil of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen. The inner curtain is called the veil, whereas the curtain for the door is called the screen.

In his translation of verse 36 J. N. Darby says, "And thou shalt make for the entrance of the tent a curtain." Darby uses the word entrance instead of door. You may think that there is no difference between an entrance and a door. Although these words are similar in meaning, nevertheless an entrance denotes something more specific than a door. A

door may be used both as an entrance and an exit, but an entrance is not an exit. It is for going in, but not for going out. The door in verse 36 serves both as an entrance and an exit. However, its primary purpose is to serve as an entrance, not an exit.

I agree with Darby's rendering of verse 36. Actually the front of the tabernacle did not have the appearance of a door. There were no doorposts, and there was no lintel. Instead, there was a curtain supported by five pillars to serve as an opening for an entrance. For this reason, I prefer to speak of a curtain for the entrance, instead of a curtain for the door.

We have pointed out that the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place was the same in material and workmanship as the curtain, or screen, at the entrance of the tabernacle. But although they were the same in design and appearance, the one is called the veil and the other is called the screen.

It is significant that the matters related to the tabernacle are described not from the outside in, but from the inside out. For example, the four layers of the covering are described from the innermost layer, that of the fine twined linen, to the outermost layer, that of the porpoise skins. Likewise, concerning the two curtains, the inner veil and the screen, the divine record first describes the inner veil and then the screen at the entrance of the tabernacle. It is important to understand the significance of both the veil and the screen.

A veil hides something from our sight and keeps that thing away from our presence. Often a veil is used to conceal things that are very precious. When something is covered by a veil, we are separated from that thing. The precious things are not invisible, but we cannot see them because of the veil. In the tabernacle, certain precious things were covered with a veil, and fallen people could not see them. The ark in the Holy of Holies was the first of the precious things hidden from God's people. We have seen that the ark signifies Christ as the embodiment of God. This ark is related to God's history. God's history includes all that He is and all that He has

accomplished, obtained, and attained. All this is embodied in Christ as the ark. Furthermore, upon Christ as the ark there is a place called the propitiatory cover, where God can meet with us and speak to us. This is where God's glory is expressed, as signified by the cherubim. In addition, the redeeming blood was sprinkled on this propitiatory cover, the lid of the ark. Therefore, with the ark we have God with His history, His embodiment, His expressed glory, and Christ's redemption. How precious is the ark and all the things related to it!

In the Holy Place we have the table of the bread of the presence, the lampstand, and the incense altar. At the table we receive the life supply for our nourishment, at the lampstand we are enlightened, and at the incense altar we have Christ as the frankincense, which signifies Him as the sweet fragrance for God's acceptance of us. Thus, in the Holy Place we have supply, enlightenment, and acceptance. Now we must go on to see that the contents of the ark—the tablets of the law, the hidden manna, and the budding rod—correspond to the three items in the Holy Place. In the Holy Place we have the bread, but in the Holy of Holies, the manna. This indicates that the bread in the Holy Place becomes the hidden manna in the Holy of Holies. Also, in the Holy Place we have the lampstand with its light, and in the Holy of Holies we have the law as God's testimony. Thus, at one end, in the Holy Place, we are enlightened by the lampstand, but at the other end, in the Holy of Holies, we are enlightened by the law as God's testimony. Furthermore, in the Holy Place we have the frankincense at the incense altar for our acceptance. But within the Holy of Holies we have the budding rod signifying the resurrection life becoming our acceptance. Thus, the incense in the Holy Place becomes the budding rod in the Holy of Holies. The budding rod and the frankincense both signify the resurrected Christ.

The correspondence between the manna, the law, and the budding rod and the bread, the lampstand, and the incense altar can be illustrated by the correspondence between grace and truth in the Gospel of John and love and light in the

First Epistle of John. On our side we have grace, but on God's side grace is love. Likewise, on our side we have truth. But when we trace this truth to its source on God's side truth is light. Therefore, at our end we have grace and truth; at God's end there are love and light. In like manner, the bread corresponds to the manna; the lampstand, to the tablets of the law; and the incense, to the budding rod. In the Holy Place we have the life supply of Christ, the light of Christ, and the incense, the acceptance, of Christ. But in the Holy of Holies, we have Christ Himself as our life supply, enlightenment, and acceptance. However, as long as we remain in our fallen nature, the ark with its precious contents is veiled from our sight and kept away from our presence.

It is significant that the outer veil, the curtain at the door of the tabernacle, is called in verse 37 a screen. The function of a screen is, on the one hand, to allow air to come in, but, on the other hand, to keep out insects and other pests. If we did not have screens on our windows, the way would be open for flies and mosquitoes to come in. As we shall see, the screen at the entrance to the tabernacle serves to keep all negative things out of God's dwelling place.

We have seen that the first layer of the covering, the veil, and the screen were all made of the same material with the same colors, design, and workmanship. However, this material is called by three different terms: the covering, the veil, and the screen. Material of the same color and with the same embroidery has three functions. First, it covers the standing boards; second, it veils the preciousness of the processed Triune God; and third, it keeps away negative things from God's dwelling. We have seen that both the covering and the veil are Christ. With this understanding of the covering and the veil as a basis, we may rightly conclude that the screen also refers to Christ.

ENTERING THE TABERNACLE

The first layer of the covering of the tabernacle has nothing to do with our entering into God's dwelling place. But

both the veil and the screen are related to entering into the tabernacle. If there were no way for us to come into God's dwelling place, we could not have any experience of God's dwelling place. This means that the tabernacle would have nothing to do with us in our experience; it would simply exist objectively apart from us. But if we enter the tabernacle, the tabernacle will become experiential and subjective to us. We shall not only come into God's dwelling place, but we shall even become identified with it. Therefore, when we enter into the tabernacle, we become one with it. The crucial problem we face is how it is possible for us to enter God's dwelling place.

How can we enter the dwelling place of the holy and righteous God, the God who is love and light? If we examine ourselves, we shall realize that we are not holy or righteous. Along with Isaiah, we shall declare, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). Because we are of unclean lips, we are not qualified to be in God's dwelling place. God is holy, but we are unclean. God is righteous, but we are altogether unrighteous. God is love, but we are full of hatred. God is light, but we are darkness. How then can we enter into the dwelling place of the holy and righteous God? How can we come into the dwelling place of the God who is love and light? It is impossible for us as fallen people to enter into God's dwelling place.

Christ is a twofold barrier keeping us out of God's dwelling place. If we would come into the tabernacle, we must match the curtain at the entrance. Within the tabernacle dwells the holy and righteous God, the God of love and light, as signified by the fine twined linen, the heavenly blue, the royal purple, and the gold typifying the expression of God. If we do not correspond to this curtain, we do not match God. The curtain is actually a marvelous description of God and of what He is. But this curtain becomes the barrier which keeps us away from God's dwelling place. Furthermore, there is a twofold barrier, for both the veil and the screen keep us away from God's presence.

How can we pass through this twofold barrier so that we can come into God's dwelling place? Compare yourself with the screen at the entrance, a screen which is the description of God. This screen indicates that God is fine, heavenly, royal, divine, and glorious. Actually, this screen signifies Christ in His humanity as God's description. But because we are sinful, this screen, this description, is a barrier between us and God, a separation between us and Him. If you compare yourself with the screen, you will realize that you cannot match it in any way. Far from being heavenly and royal, you are a pitiful, unclean, unjust sinner. How then can you pass through this barrier and come into the dwelling place of the holy and righteous God?

God definitely wants us to come into the tabernacle. This is indicated by the fact that His dwelling place has walls made of boards only on three sides. One side has no standing boards, but is instead covered by a curtain, a screen. This indicates that God's expectation is that His people would be able to come into His dwelling place. Nevertheless, as we have seen, if we would come into the tabernacle, we must match God's description. We must match what He is.

CHRIST DYING FOR OUR SINS

Because we are sinful, we need to be judged by the holy and righteous God. Because we are full of hatred and darkness, we need to be judged by the God of love and light. This judgment took place when Christ died for our sins. In 1 Corinthians 15:3 Paul tells us that Christ died for our sins. This is the first aspect of the basic truth of the gospel. We have stolen, we have hated others, we have told many lies, and we have done many evil things. Nevertheless, Christ was judged by God on our behalf; He died for our sins.

That Christ was judged for us is indicated by the five sockets of bronze under the five pillars which support the curtain. Brass signifies God's righteous judgment exercised upon rebels (Num. 16:38-39). The two hundred fifty who

rebelled against God were judged by Him. God told Moses to take the brass censers belonging to those rebellious ones and make them plates to cover the altar upon which sacrifices were offered to God for His judgment upon redeemed sinners. Another case showing that brass signifies God's judgment is the lifting up of a brass serpent on a pole (Num. 21:9). Because the children of Israel were sinning against God, they were sentenced to die. But God told Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it on a pole to indicate that it would be judged by God for them. The five sockets of brass indicate that Christ was judged for our sins.

The Christ who died for our sins, being judged for us, has become the screen at the door of the tabernacle. On the one hand, this Christ is a screen keeping us away; on the other hand, He is an entry allowing redeemed sinners to come into God's dwelling place. Once we were kept away from the tabernacle. We were altogether screened out. But because Christ has died for our sins and has been judged by God for us, we can now enter into God's dwelling place. How wonderful!

CHRIST DYING FOR US

When we come into the tabernacle, we find ourselves in the Holy Place, which is far better than the outer court. Many Christians today are still in the outer court; they have not yet come into the Holy Place. Praise the Lord that through the death of Christ we have come into the Holy Place where we enjoy the supply of Christ, the enlightenment of Christ, and the acceptance of Christ! However, even though we enjoy all this, this does not mean that we enjoy Christ Himself. Rather, it means that we enjoy something of Christ, for example, the nourishment of Christ. But to enjoy something of Christ is different from enjoying Christ Himself as that thing. For instance, to enjoy the nourishment of Christ is not the same as enjoying Christ as nourishment. Yes, the Holy Place is a good place, and we should praise the Lord that we are able to be here. Nevertheless, the Holy

Place is not the best place. There is an inner chamber, the Holy of Holies, which is much better than the Holy Place.

Have you entered into the Holy of Holies? Along with most Christians, you will probably have to admit that you have not yet come into the inner chamber. The reason you have not yet entered the Holy of Holies is that although your sins have been forgiven, your flesh remains untouched. It is still the same. Therefore, you need the death of Christ not only for your sins, but also for your self. According to 1 Corinthians 15:3, Christ died for our sins. But according to 2 Corinthians 5:14, Christ died for all, not merely for the sins of all. This verse says clearly that Christ died for us. Christ died for our sins so that we may be forgiven, and He died for us so that we may live to Him. There is a great difference between being forgiven of our sins and living to the Lord.

Second Corinthians 5:21 says that Christ became sin for us. From Romans 8:3 we learn that sin is in our flesh. This verse declares, "God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Furthermore, according to 2 Corinthians 5:21, Christ became sin so that we may become the righteousness of God.

TWO ASPECTS OF CHRIST'S DEATH

If we would understand this matter, we must realize that there are two aspects to Christ's death. On the one hand, He died for our sins so that we may be forgiven; on the other hand, He died for us so that we may be terminated. God's judgment upon us is signified by the brass sockets under the five pillars supporting the screen. The veil which was rent at the time of Christ's death indicates that Christ died for us so that our flesh might be torn and that we might live Him. On the one hand, Christ died for our sins under God's judgment. On the other hand, He died for us so that we may be terminated.

We have pointed out that the revelation of the tabernacle is not merely according to doctrine, but also according to spiritual experience. First we experience Christ as the One who

died for our sins. Realizing this aspect of Christ's death, we may come into the Holy Place, where we can be nourished and enlightened and where we can pray with Christ as our incense. For a long period of time, perhaps years, we may be satisfied. But eventually we shall realize that we should not be content simply to be in the Holy Place. There is an inner chamber into which we must enter. However, because we are still in the flesh, we cannot come into the Holy of Holies. When we realize that we are still in the flesh, we need to see that Christ died not only for our sins, but also for us. When He died for all, we died with Him. When He was terminated on the cross, we were terminated also.

Now we can see why there were two veils in the tabernacle. Both veils signify the unique Christ, the Christ who died for our sins and also for us. He was judged by God for us, and He was terminated with us. Therefore, through Him we have been judged. God forgives those whom He judges. God forgives us so that we may enter into the Holy Place of His dwelling. Furthermore, God looks upon us as terminated persons, as those who have been put to death so that they may live another life in the Holy of Holies of His dwelling.

Suppose a sinner hears the gospel and comes to the altar in the outer court. At the altar he receives Christ as his Redeemer, as the One who died for his sins. Immediately he passes through the curtain supported by the pillars in the brass sockets. This means that he passes through the Christ who is supported by the judgment of God. Now this redeemed sinner can come into the Holy Place and enjoy the supply of Christ, the life of Christ, and the sweetness of Christ as His acceptance. Eventually, after a certain time, he comes to realize that Christ died not only for his sins, but died also for him. Now he understands that on the cross Christ not only was judged by God for him, but also was killed and terminated with him. This means that when Christ died, the redeemed one died with Him. Moreover, as a terminated person he should experience the rending of his flesh. This means that, according to Galatians 5:24, he should crucify

the flesh. This is to have the veil torn and thereby experience Christ's subjective death in dealing with the flesh.

The outer veil signifies Christ's objective death. Christ died for our sins in an objective way. But the inner veil signifies Christ's subjective death. When Christ died, He died with us, and we died with Him. Now we need to realize that we are terminated persons. As such, we should no longer live to ourselves, but instead should live to Christ. Then immediately, we shall no longer remain in the Holy Place; we shall enter into the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies we not only enjoy certain things that are of Christ; we enjoy Christ Himself as everything. We experience Christ as God Himself embodied in humanity shining forth the divine nature.

THREE ENTRANCES

Let us now consider the matter of the entrances. There were five pillars supporting the screen. There must have been one pillar next to a board on the north side and another pillar next to a board on the south side. The remaining three pillars must have been spaced evenly along the screen. This would give four entrances. In the same principle, the four pillars supporting the veil must have been placed two at the edges near the standing boards and two spaced along the veil, providing a total of three entrances. Thus, with the screen there were four entrances, and with the veil there were three entrances. This corresponds to the twelve gates in the New Jerusalem. There are three gates on each of the four sides of the city, indicating that the Triune God Himself is the entrance for His redeemed people to enter not only His dwelling place, but also Himself. As mentioned in the preceding message, this is illustrated by the three parables in Luke 15. According to these parables, the Son seeks the lost sheep, the Spirit enlightens, and the Father receives the returned prodigal. Furthermore, Ephesians 2:18 says that through the Son we have access in the Spirit unto the Father. Once again we see that the Triune God is the entrance.

On the one hand, the entrance is three because it is related to the Triune God; on the other hand, it must be four because it is related to the creatures, signified by the number four. The fact that the screen has four entrances indicates that God's dwelling place is open to all people from the four corners of the earth. Revelation 5:9 tells us that God's redeemed come out of every nation, tongue, tribe, and people. Here the word every is repeated four times, not five or six times. The reason is that the number four signifies God's creation in a positive way. We have come from the four corners of the earth as redeemed creatures to enter into God's dwelling place for the enjoyment of Himself. When we pass through the four entrances of the screen, we come into the Holy Place. Eventually, we must pass through the Triune God, through the Son, the Spirit, and the Father, signified by the three entrances in the veil, and enter into the Holy of Holies.

TWO KINDS OF PILLARS

Now we come to a matter which is difficult to understand—the identification of the five pillars with the outer curtain and the four pillars with the inner veil. We have seen that both the veil and the curtain were attached to pillars. This attachment indicates identification. The veil is identified with the pillars, and the pillars are identified with the veil. We have pointed out that the veil is Christ. However, the pillars supporting the veil cannot be Christ Himself, for they are plural in number, whereas Christ is singular. The same is true of the screen and its five pillars. Both the five pillars and the four pillars refer to believers. This means that Christ is identified with us and that we are identified with Christ. When we become attached to Christ and identified with Him, we become pillars.

We all believe that Christ died for our sins and that He also died for us. However, in our experience we may not yet be thoroughly attached to Christ in this matter. We may say, "Yes, I believe that Christ died for me. Praise the

Lord! Hallelujah! Thank You, Lord." After declaring this, we may go about our daily affairs. But some Christians are beside themselves regarding this. Day and night they desire to preach the gospel and tell others that Christ died for them. Those who are so zealous to preach the gospel that they even seem to be crazy are the pillars attached to the curtain. D. L. Moody was such a person. After he was saved, he became this kind of pillar. He was beside himself for the gospel. D. L. Moody truly was a pillar attached to the redeeming Christ.

The pillars attached to the curtain are evangelists, bold preachers of Christ standing at the front of the church. Other pillars stand inside the church, in the inner chamber. These are those, especially the elders, who experience Christ in a deeper way. They daily attach themselves to the rent veil, the broken veil, to the very Christ who was terminated in His flesh. Because they attach themselves to such a terminated Christ, they bear the testimony that they themselves have also been terminated and that their flesh has been crucified on the cross. Therefore, they become pillars not in front of the church, but inside the church.

In the Lord's recovery today we need both kinds of pillars. We need the evangelists standing at the front of the church life zealously preaching Christ, declaring to all that Christ died for their sins. We also need the inner pillars, those who realize that Christ died not only for their sins, but also for them and with them, and who bear the testimony that they have been crucified with Christ and that their flesh has been torn, cleft, rent.

It is not easy to gain the increase in the church. But if there are some who are bold evangelists, knowing nothing except to preach Christ and His death for people's sins, I believe that a good number of sinners will be saved and brought into the church. If we are short of these evangelists, we shall not have the front pillars, and if we are short of those like Paul, Peter, and John, we shall not have the pillars within the church. We need those who are identified with the judged Christ and also those who are identified with the

terminated Christ. If we have both the pillars at the front and the pillars in the inner chamber, God's dwelling place will have entrances. Then there will be a way to enter into the church life.

IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST

Do you know why rather few have entered into the church life? It is because we are lacking the pillars attached to and identified with the judged Christ and also the pillars attached to and identified with the crucified, terminated, Christ. We need pillars bearing the testimony that Christ died for our sins and also pillars bearing the testimony that Christ died for us. When we have both kinds of pillars, there will be entrances for sinful people to be saved into God's dwelling place and then to be terminated so that they may come into God's Holy of Holies to enjoy God Himself in His fullness. Then we shall have the church life as a tabernacle for God's testimony.

We all need to attach ourselves to the judged Christ and the crucified Christ. Then we shall be not only boards, but also pillars. Both the boards and the pillars have their function. However, if we are boards, it is not necessary for us to be quite so closely attached to the judged and crucified Christ. But if we would be the pillars, we must be specifically attached either to the judged Christ or the crucified Christ. The church is built up with the boards and with the pillars. But it is the pillars who open the way and form the entrances for others to come into the church life, God's tabernacle, His dwelling place.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWO

THE CURTAIN FOR THE DOOR OF THE TENT

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 26:36-37; 36:37-38; 40:5, 28

We have seen that in the tabernacle there were two curtains, one called the veil and the other called the screen. We need to pray for spiritual understanding concerning the veil and the screen, for they imply some very important things. They indicate that through His all-inclusive death Christ has become the entrance for God's chosen people to come into the enjoyment of God.

A PLACE FOR ENJOYMENT

The tabernacle signifies God's dwelling place. But if we see only that the tabernacle is the dwelling place for God, our understanding will be superficial. We must go on to realize that a dwelling place is a place for enjoyment, not only for living. Your home is not simply the place where you live; it is also a place for enjoyment. To live without enjoyment is actually to suffer the killing of death. The reason people commit suicide is that they feel their living is meaningless, without any enjoyment. God's dwelling place is the place for Him to be the enjoyment for His people. We may also say that it is the place where God's chosen people participate in the full enjoyment of God Himself. It is crucial to see this matter.

THE ENTRANCE INTO THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD

The two curtains, the veil and the screen, signify Christ in two aspects of His humanity. Through His all-inclusive death, this Christ has become the entrance for God's people

to come into the enjoyment of God. The two curtains signify the unique Christ and also Christ's all-inclusive death. Christ died to take away our sins through the judgment of God He suffered. This judgment is indicated by the brass sockets under the pillars supporting the screen. Christ was fully judged by God on our behalf. Of course, in Himself Christ had no reason to suffer God's judgment. In every way He was right with God and with man. He never did anything to deserve God's judgment. But He was judged by God because of our sins. He died for our sins. The judgment through which He passed has become the brass sockets as the base on which we stand. This means that we stand on the judgment Christ suffered for our sins. Paul preached this as the first aspect of the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 15:3 he says, "For I delivered to you, among the first things, that which also I received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Thus, in the gospel preached by Paul we see, as the first item, that Christ died for our sins.

In the book of 2 Corinthians Paul goes deeper. We may say that 1 Corinthians is partially in the outer court and partially in the Holy Place. Second Corinthians, however, is in the Holy of Holies. In 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul says that Christ died for all. Not only did He die for our sins—He died for us. In His death we also were crucified. His crucifixion thus included all His believers. For this reason, Paul concludes that because One has died for all, then all are dead. This is not the first item of the gospel. It is more of an inward matter than the outward matter of Christ dying for our sins. This outward matter brings us into the Holy Place, but the inward matter brings us into the Holy of Holies.

In contrast to 1 Corinthians, the book of 2 Corinthians does not reveal a life partly in the outer court and partly in the Holy Place; it reveals a life in the Holy of Holies, a life which has passed through the riven veil. Second Corinthians is a book of a life in the Holy of Holies. This life is a life of resurrection through crucifixion. As ministers of the New Testament, the apostles lived a crucified life for the manifestation of the resurrection life. Thus, they could enter the

Holy of Holies, for they had passed through the two curtains; they had passed through the screen and the veil. This means that they had passed through the judgment of God upon Christ for their sins and also through the crucifixion of the flesh by the death of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 4:11 and 12 Paul says, "For we who live are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death operates in us, but life in you." Paul was daily delivered to death so that the resurrection life might be manifested in him. This indicates that he had passed through the riven veil in order to live in the Holy of Holies.

CHRIST AS A SCREEN

One aspect of Christ's humanity is that of a screen. In His humanity the Person revealed, described, and portrayed in the four Gospels was a screen. If we read the Gospels from this angle, we shall see that Christ is a screen keeping all the negative things away from God's dwelling place. The life described in the four Gospels is such a screen. Every negative thing and every negative person is screened out. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were screened out by the Person of Jesus Christ. Because the Lord Jesus was a screen, the Pharisees and Sadducees could not enter into the enjoyment of God.

Whenever a sinner meets the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus, he is either screened out, or he is subdued and convinced to believe in Christ. If he believes in Him, the screen will immediately become an entrance through which he may come into the Holy Place, where he begins to enjoy God in Christ and to participate in the rich enjoyment of what Christ is. In the Holy Place such a redeemed sinner can enjoy Christ as the life supply, as enlightenment, and as his acceptance by God. This is not a mere doctrine; rather, it is a description of our experience. From experience we know that redeemed sinners can pass through the screen, enter the Holy Place, and enjoy all the riches of God in Christ.

CRUCIFYING THE FLESH

After a period of time enjoying the riches in the Holy Place, a believer begins to realize that behind the veil there is something deeper, richer, and higher. He also realizes that his fallen nature, the flesh, is a separation, a veil. Even though he has enjoyed a rich portion of the Lord, now he knows that there is something richer that he is not yet able to touch because of this separating veil. Eventually, he sees in the Bible that Christ's death not only deals with his sins, but also deals with the flesh. The Lord's death has rent, torn, the flesh. Spontaneously, by the indwelling Spirit, such a believer crucifies his flesh; that is, he puts his fallen nature to death. Furthermore, the Spirit works to arrange circumstances which will cause him to be put into death. In this way he experientially passes through the riven veil. The chorus of a hymn says,

> Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
> I have passed the riven veil,
> Here the glories never fail.
>
> *Hymns,* #551

We may sing these words in a very superficial way without realizing what they mean. If we would pass through the riven veil, we need both the Spirit working within and the coordination of the circumstances outwardly. This is why in Romans 8 we have the Spirit and also all things (v. 28). The Spirit and all things work together to put us into the death of Christ so that we may pass through the riven veil and thereby enter into the Holy of Holies to enjoy God in full.

PILLARS BEARING THE TESTIMONY

We have pointed out again and again that the two curtains, the screen and the veil, were attached to pillars. This indicates that today people can have an entrance into the enjoyment of God. Yes, Christ in His all-inclusive death is the entrance. Nevertheless, the entrance requires pillars to bear the testimony of the incarnated and crucified Christ. Without these pillars there is no way for the Christ who is the entrance into

the enjoyment of God to be revealed to man. This means that there would be no place where He could show Himself to others. In the four Gospels Christ was the entrance into the enjoyment of God. But on the day of Pentecost the testimony of this Christ was borne by the one hundred twenty in Jerusalem. If it were not for the believers who bore the testimony of the incarnated and crucified Christ on the day of Pentecost, how could Christ reveal Himself to the people, and where could He be revealed? Would He be revealed on a mountain, or on the throne in the heavens? It is a fact that if there were no pillars to bear Him, He could not reveal Himself. Thus, on the day of Pentecost Christ was attached to the one hundred twenty, and they became pillars bearing the testimony of Christ. Therefore, it was possible for Christ to reveal Himself to sinners.

The three thousand who were added to the Lord on the day of Pentecost entered into the dwelling place of God, that is, into the enjoyment of God, not only through Christ Himself, but also through the one hundred twenty. These one hundred twenty had been attached to Christ, identified with Him. Thus, they and Christ were one. For this reason, the three thousand who believed on the day of Pentecost could enter into the enjoyment of God through Christ and through the one hundred twenty.

In the book of Acts we have the experience of the Holy Place and also the experience of the Holy of Holies. The so-called communal life recorded in chapters two and four is a life in the Holy Place. The first several chapters of Acts are a description of the enjoyment of Christ in the Holy Place. We know this by the fact that the flesh, the fallen nature, of certain believers still had not been dealt with. For example, Acts 6:1 says that "there was a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows were overlooked in the daily dispensing." Even though the believers had all things in common, they were still murmuring and striving. Having all things in common did not prevent quarreling and fighting. Thus, after chapter six of Acts, there is no further mention of the communal life. Because of the flesh, the

communal living did not last. Furthermore, in Acts 5 we have the record of what was done by Ananias and Sapphira. We could say that they did not remain in the Holy Place, but went back to the outer court. Eventually, after a long period of time, we can find in Acts the implication that certain believers became not only the pillars at the entrance of the church life, but the pillars in the inner chamber. Through these pillars the saints who were living in the Holy Place had a way to enter into the Holy of Holies.

THE GOAL—THE HOLY OF HOLIES

The Epistles written by Paul all had the Holy of Holies as the goal. In his Epistles Paul was trying to bring God's people either from the outer court into the Holy Place or, as was more often the case, from the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies. Take the church in Corinth as an example. The majority of the saints were still in the outer court, and a minority were in the Holy Place. In 1 and 2 Corinthians Paul was endeavoring to bring all the saints into the Holy of Holies through the crucified Christ, the Christ who is the riven veil. Paul and his co-workers were the pillars on which Christ as the riven veil was hanging. They were the pillars not only at the entrance, but also in the inner chamber. On the one hand, they bore Christ as the first curtain, the screen; on the other hand, they bore Christ as the second veil, the riven veil. Therefore, with them there was an entrance for God's chosen people to enter into the enjoyment of God.

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE DEATH OF CHRIST

It is crucial that we see the all-inclusive death of Christ. In particular, we need to see Christ's death as portrayed in the tabernacle. To repeat, the record of the tabernacle is presented not only according to doctrine, but also according to spiritual experience. Christ's unique death, as indicated by the two curtains, has two aspects: the objective aspect related to our sins and the subjective aspect related to our flesh. Writers such as Mrs. Jesse Penn-Lewis speak of the subjective death of Christ; that is, the death of Christ for us.

In the book entitled *Gospel Dialogue* (p. 90), Brother Nee answers a question concerning the difference between Christ dying for us and Christ dying for our sins. The following is his answer:

> "Christ died for us" means that Christ died for us sinners. The purpose of His death is to save us sinners. What He has accomplished is for us; that is, to gain us, and to deliver us from ourselves.
>
> "Christ died for our sins" signifies that He died for the sins committed by us sinners. The purpose is to take away our sins so that they may be forgiven, and to save us from the penalty and the power of sin so that we are no longer under its dominion.

Generally, today's Christians know only the first aspect of Christ's death, that He died for our sins that we may be forgiven by God. They are not as familiar with the second aspect of His death, that He died for us that we may live to Him in the resurrection life (2 Cor. 5:14-15). In the first aspect of His death He bore our sins (1 Pet. 2:24); in the second He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). This was the reason Mrs. Penn-Lewis was burdened to put out message after message concerning the subjective experience of the cross. To speak of the cross in this way is to speak of the subjective aspect of Christ's death.

A. B. Simpson also knew the subjective aspect of the death of Christ. One of his hymns opens with these lines:

> I am crucified with Christ,
> And the cross hath set me free.
>
> *Hymns,* #482

Both the writings of Mrs. Penn-Lewis on the subjective experience of the cross and the hymns of A. B. Simpson on being crucified with Christ are neglected by Christians today. This indicates that a great many believers have only a superficial understanding of Christ's death. Therefore, in His recovery the Lord is leading us into a deeper experiential understanding of the all-inclusive death of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THREE

THE CURTAIN FOR THE DOOR OF THE TENT

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 26:36-37; 2 Cor. 5:18-21

In the tabernacle there were two veils, or two curtains. The first veil, located at the entrance to the Holy Place, was called the screen; the second curtain, separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, was called the veil. Chapter twenty-six of Exodus speaks first of the inner veil and then of the screen. Verse 31 says, "And you shall make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen; the work of a skillful workman shall it be made, with cherubim." This was the veil which made a separation between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (v. 33). Verses 36 and 37 say, "And you shall make a curtain for the door of the tent of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of an embroiderer. And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold." As we have pointed out in the foregoing messages, these two veils signify two aspects of the all-inclusive death of Christ. The screen indicates that Christ died for our sins so that our sins may be forgiven and that we may be justified by God. The inner veil indicates that Christ died for us so that our flesh, our fallen nature, may be rent, or torn, and that we may enter the Holy of Holies to enjoy God to the uttermost.

TWO ASPECTS OF RECONCILIATION

Recently I have seen that the screen and the veil in the tabernacle are related to Paul's word concerning reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5. For many years I was puzzled by this chapter, especially by Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to be

reconciled to God. In this chapter Paul is definitely dealing not with unbelievers, but with believers. Nevertheless, he concludes this chapter with a word about reconciliation. Why in speaking to believers does Paul refer to his ministry as a ministry of reconciliation? Had those in Corinth not already been reconciled to God? Since they were genuine believers, they no doubt had been reconciled. Second Corinthians 5:19 says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not accounting their offenses to them, and putting in us the word of reconciliation." Then in verse 20 Paul goes on to say, "On behalf of Christ, then, we are ambassadors, as God entreating through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God." We need to see that here Paul speaks of reconciliation in two ways, or in two aspects. One aspect is related to sinners; the other aspect, to believers.

If we know the significance of the veil and the screen in the tabernacle, we shall be able to understand how Paul deals with the Corinthian believers in 2 Corinthians 5. The Corinthians had passed through the first veil, the screen, at the entrance to the tabernacle. But they had not yet passed through the second veil, the inner veil, the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This means that they had not experienced both aspects of the reconciliation between us and God. Before the Corinthians believed in Christ and were saved, they were enemies to God. But when they believed in Christ, they were reconciled to God. They were forgiven, they were justified, and they could enter into the Holy Place to have a certain enjoyment of the Lord. However, although the Corinthians had experienced this aspect of reconciliation, they had not entered into the Holy of Holies. They had been reconciled to God to some extent, but not to the extent of being able to come into the Holy of Holies to enjoy God in full. For this reason, they needed a further reconciliation, the reconciliation Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 5:20.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3 Paul says, "For I delivered to you, among the first things, that which also I received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Here

Paul emphasizes the basic gospel truth that Christ died for our sins. This is related to the first aspect of reconciliation. The goal of reconciliation is to take away the barrier between us and God. When we experience forgiveness and justification and enter the Holy Place, the barrier is taken away to a certain extent. However, a particular aspect of the barrier remains, and this aspect is our flesh, our fallen nature. Concerning our sins, we have been forgiven and reconciled to God. But concerning our flesh, our fallen nature, we may not yet be reconciled to God. Rather, we still may be separated from Him, unable to enjoy Him in the Holy of Holies.

The Corinthian believers were genuine brothers in Christ, and Paul repeatedly addressed them as such. Nevertheless, in 2 Corinthians 5:20 he beseeches them to be reconciled to God. Then in verse 21 he goes on to say, "Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf, that we might become God's righteousness in Him." This is deeper than Christ dying for our sins. For Christ to be made sin for us so that we may become the righteousness of God is different from Christ dying so that we may have our sins forgiven and be justified by God.

If we read 2 Corinthians 5 carefully, we shall see that there are in fact two aspects of reconciliation. In verse 19 Paul says that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Notice that concerning the reconciling of the world to God, Paul does not tell us that Christ was made sin. On the contrary, he simply says that God did not reckon their offenses unto them. This aspect of reconciliation involves sinners, as indicated by Paul's use of the word "world." But according to verse 20, even the reconciled ones, the believers, still need to be reconciled. In these verses we see three classes of people: the apostles, sinners, and believers who have not been fully reconciled to God.

Most Christian preachers today speak only of the first aspect of reconciliation, the aspect of God not reckoning sinners' offenses against them. Few, if any, speak of the second aspect of reconciliation, the aspect related to Christ becoming sin so that we may become the righteousness of God in Him.

This aspect, which is much deeper than the first, is signified by the second veil in the tabernacle. Only when we pass through this veil are we thoroughly reconciled to God and able to enjoy Him in full.

GOD CONDEMNING SIN IN THE FLESH

This second aspect of reconciliation corresponds to what Paul says in Romans 8. Romans 8:3, a verse that is very similar to 2 Corinthians 5:21, says, "God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh." This corresponds to the word in 2 Corinthians 5:21 about Christ being made sin for us. The Son of God was sent in the likeness of the flesh of sin and then, on the cross, He was made sin for us. When Christ was on the cross, God condemned sin in the flesh. This means that God crucified, killed, the flesh, including sin, which is actually Satan himself. God condemned sin in the flesh so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to flesh, but according to spirit. The flesh dealt with in Romans 8 and 2 Corinthians 5 is illustrated by the inner veil in Exodus 26. If we did not have the veil in the tabernacle as a type, we could not have a full understanding that the flesh must be dealt with. We have seen that the rending of the inner veil signifies the tearing of our flesh.

A NEW CREATION

Second Corinthians 5:16 says, "So that we, from now on, know no one according to flesh; even if we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know Him so no longer." Those who know Christ according to the flesh are, at best, in the outer court. In many cases, they may not even be in the outer court. It is possible that the Corinthians knew the apostles according to their soulish understanding, for many of them were in the Holy Place, which signifies the soul. In verse 17 Paul speaks of the new creation: "So that if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed

away; behold, they have become new." To be a new creation means to be absolutely new. This is to be in the Holy of Holies.

LIVING TO CHRIST

In 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul says that One, that is Christ, died for all. This verse does not say that Christ died for our sins so that we may be forgiven. As we have seen, the forgiveness of sins is the first aspect of reconciliation. Christ died for us so that we may live to Him. Living to Christ in 2 Corinthians 5 is equal to walking according to spirit in Romans 8. Living to Christ by walking according to the spirit is much deeper than simply having our sins forgiven.

In the past I was troubled by certain matters in 2 Corinthians 5. For years, I did not know the real significance of this chapter. Although I had a clear view of chapters two, three, and four, I did not have a proper understanding of chapter five. For this reason, in the past nineteen years I have not given many messages on this chapter, especially on the last few verses. But now my view of this chapter is becoming clearer and clearer. As we shall see when we come to this chapter in the Life-study of 2 Corinthians, here we have a dealing which brings the believers into the second aspect of reconciliation. This aspect is to have our flesh torn so that we may enter the Holy of Holies and have the full enjoyment of God.

PAUL'S USE OF METAPHORS

Captives in Christ's Procession

In 2 Corinthians Paul uses many metaphors. For example, in 2 Corinthians 2:14 through 16 he says, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ, and manifests through us the savor of the knowledge of Him in every place; for we are a fragrance of Christ to God in those who are being saved and in those who are perishing: to the one a savor from death unto death, to the other a savor from life unto life." There are two metaphors in these verses. The first is that of the triumphal procession. Paul regarded himself and the other apostles as captives in such

a procession. They had been fully captured by God, and now they were marching in Christ's procession. The Corinthians, however, had not yet been wholly captured by the Lord.

Bearers of Incense

The second metaphor in these verses is the bearers of incense. On the one hand, the apostles were captives; on the other hand, they were those bearing incense, the fragrance of Christ. As the apostles marched in Christ's procession, they bore the fragrance of Christ as incense.

Living Epistles

In 2 Corinthians 3:2 and 3 Paul uses the metaphor of living epistles: "You are our letter, inscribed in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ ministered by us, inscribed not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart." Here we see that Paul and his co-workers were writing living epistles. These epistles were their letters of commendation. The apostles were the writers, and the believers were the epistles written by them.

Uncovered Mirrors

A fourth metaphor is that of a mirror. Paul refers to this in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "And we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit." According to this verse, the believers should be mirrors without any kind of veil covering them. This means that we should no longer be covered by the veil of the law. As uncovered mirrors we should behold the glory of the Lord and thus be transformed.

Earthen Vessels

In 2 Corinthians 4:7 Paul uses yet another metaphor, that of earthen vessels: "But we have this treasure in earthen

vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." When we consider this verse in the light of what Paul says in verse 6, where he speaks of God shining in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, we realize that the vessel in verse 7 may be likened to a camera. What Paul describes in these verses is actually the experience of spiritual photography. As believers, we can be compared to cameras. The divine light shines through the lens and causes an image, a figure, to be imprinted on the film of our spirit. Originally this film was blank. But now, through the shining of God, the film has the glorious image of Christ imprinted on it. This image on the film of our spirit is the very treasure in the earthen vessel. Furthermore, this treasure is a dynamo, the source of spiritual power. Nothing, including the things described in verses 8 and 9, can defeat this dynamo.

THE NEED FOR FURTHER RECONCILIATION

Chapter five of 2 Corinthians is an excellent continuation of chapters two, three, and four. In chapter five Paul indicates that the believers at Corinth had not yet entered into the situation described by Paul in the foregoing chapters. This means that they had not yet come into the Holy of Holies; they were still separated from it by the second veil. Thus, they needed further reconciliation. This is the reason Paul entreated them to be reconciled to God. To be reconciled in the second aspect is to have our flesh rent, torn into pieces.

We thank the Lord for what He has shown us concerning the veil and the screen and concerning the necessity to have the flesh rent so that we may experience God in the Holy of Holies. Having seen these things, we can no longer be content with the outer court or even the Holy Place. In a very real sense, the more we see concerning spiritual things, the more we are spoiled for anything else. The more we enjoy the Holy Place, the less we want to return to the outer court. Only those who live on the border between the Holy Place and the outer court would ever consider leaving the

Holy Place and returning to the outer court. In the same principle, if we are in the Holy of Holies, there will be no way for us to go elsewhere. We can never again be content to live in the Holy Place. The vision we see in the Holy of Holies will imprison us.

We praise the Lord for showing us the two veils, the inner veil and the screen, and for revealing the two aspects of reconciliation. We all need to pass through both veils and experience both aspects of reconciliation so that we may enter into the Holy of Holies to enjoy the Lord to the uttermost.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FOUR

THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 27:1-8; 38:1-7; 40:6, 29; Heb. 13:10

The record concerning the altar in Exodus is very difficult to understand. As far as the tabernacle itself is concerned, the most difficult matter is the corner boards. No one has been able to solve the problem of these corner boards. The record concerning the altar is even more difficult to understand. However, we have a way to escape this problem: it is to follow the spiritual and experiential way. Literally, according to the record in black and white, certain points are extremely difficult for anyone to understand. But if we come into the realm of spiritual understanding and experience, we can be saved from this trouble. Therefore, I would remind you once again that our approach to the book of Exodus in this life-study is not doctrinal; on the contrary, it is experiential. This means that we want to consider every matter from the standpoint of our spiritual experience. If a particular matter does not apply to our Christian experience, I would prefer not to talk about it. What is the profit of speaking about something that has nothing to do with our experience of Christ? We do not want to speak in a vain way. Instead, we want to utter what is real and understandable according to our experience.

Let us first consider the position of the altar. There were two altars, one inside the tabernacle, and the other outside the tabernacle, in the outer court. The altar inside the tabernacle was called the incense altar and was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. It was much smaller than the altar of the burnt offering in the outer court. The incense altar

was more vertical than horizontal; that is, it was taller than it was wide. At this altar those who came into God's dwelling place could have a very close relationship with God, for there the incense was burned to Him. At this altar there was no shedding of blood. Instead, there was the burning of incense to offer a sweet-smelling savor to God. At the altar of the burnt offering, however, sacrifices were offered with the shedding of blood. Furthermore, the offerings were burned there. The burning of the sacrifices at the altar in the outer court was for redemption, but the burning of the incense at the incense altar was for God's acceptance. It was necessary for fire to be brought in from the outer altar to burn the incense on the inner altar. Hence, these two burnings are by one kind of fire. The fire on the altar of the burnt offering burns the sacrifices; the fire at the incense altar burns the incense. One kind of fire, therefore, burns two kinds of substances. Since there were two altars related to the tabernacle, we need to understand what altar is referred to whenever we read about the altar in the Old Testament.

In the Holy of Holies there was just one item of furniture—the ark. In the Holy Place there were the table, the lampstand, and the incense altar. In the outer court the altar of the burnt offering and the laver were located. According to the interpretation given in the New Testament, the outer court signifies the earth, and the entire tabernacle, including both the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, signifies the heavens. Thus, to be in the outer court is to be on earth, but to be in the tabernacle is to be in the heavens. Do you know how you can be in the heavens? Do not listen to the superficial teaching that you can be in the heavens only after you die. Actually, the tabernacle is Christ. As long as you are in Christ, you are in the heavens. But whenever you are outside of Christ, you are on earth. Based on this principle, we may say that daily we may go to the heavens a number of times. Perhaps before coming to a church meeting you are, experientially speaking, on earth. But when you are in the meeting, you get into the heavens.

If we consider a diagram of the tabernacle and the outer court, we see that the ark and the altar of the burnt offering are at two ends. In the universe there are actually just two parties: God and man. (Satan, who may be considered the third party, will ultimately be cast into the lake of fire.) The two ends are related to these two parties, to God and man. God's end is at the ark, and man's end is at the altar of the burnt offering.

Does the record of the tabernacle in Exodus begin from God's end or from man's end? The record begins from God's end, for it begins with the ark. The description of the ark begins the divine record concerning the tabernacle. This indicates that the record begins from God and proceeds toward man. However, when man comes to the tabernacle, he does not begin from God's end. He begins at the altar, that is, he begins from man's end. Whenever a person comes to the tabernacle, the first thing he meets is the altar.

God does not dwell at the altar, but He dwells at the ark, where the throne of grace is. Anyone who wanted to meet God would have to travel through all the items of the tabernacle until he comes to the ark. However, God has already come to us. He came from the heavens to the earth, and the altar was the destination of His coming. Christ came from the heavens to the earth, and during His last hours on earth He went to the cross. On the cross He terminated the old creation and redeemed His chosen people. As we have pointed out, redemption implies termination, replacement, and being brought back to God. As the book of Hebrews indicates, Christ's coming to the earth in this way was once for all. But man's going to God is not once for all. Rather, it is a continual matter, a daily matter.

When God came from His dwelling place to the earth and went to the cross, what was His main intention, His main goal? His main goal was to bring man to Himself. This means that God came out of the tabernacle to bring man into the tabernacle. However, most believers still linger around the cross; few have been brought into the tabernacle. Every week a great many sermons are given to Christians,

yet few of these sermons are a means to bring saved sinners into the tabernacle. At best, such sermons may bring people to God at the altar. Some may argue that God is omnipresent and that as long as a person repents and believes in the Lord Jesus, he turns to God. In a sense, this is correct. But the New Testament indicates that if we are still around the altar, we are not in the tabernacle with God. We need to go to the showbread table, the lampstand, the incense altar, and eventually reach the ark. There on the ark we have the propitiation-cover, the throne of grace spoken of in Hebrews 4:16: "Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help."

When we reach the throne of grace, we are not only in the presence of God—we are even in God Himself. There we and God are one. In the words of Colossians 3:3, our life is hidden with Christ in God. The God who hides us is not at the altar; He is at the ark. Furthermore, we are hidden in God not at the altar, but at the ark. God has come out of the tabernacle in order to bring us into the tabernacle, to bring us to the very place where He dwells.

The Lord Jesus came from heaven to earth and visited the earth for thirty-three and a half years. Although He visited the earth, He dwells in the Holy of Holies, and He wants to bring us there. He went to the altar, to the cross, with the intention that we, fallen sinners, might be brought back to Himself in the place where He dwells. To have this understanding is a great help to us in our experience.

In Exodus the record concerning the incense altar is given last. The reason for this is that only after we have experienced all the other items can we have a full acceptance from God. This acceptance by God is the result of all the other items. Moreover, in the Bible it is not easy to tell definitely the position of the incense altar. It may be positioned outside the veil, in the Holy Place, or inside the veil, in the Holy of Holies. This indicates that our acceptance by God depends on our condition. How much we are accepted by Him depends on how close we are to Him. Perhaps at

one time during the day the incense altar in your experience is very close to God. But at another time, it may be somewhat removed from Him. Then when you come to the meeting and exercise your spirit, spontaneously the incense altar in your experience comes close to God.

The position of the altar of burnt offering is settled; it cannot be changed. But the location of the incense altar may change, based on our condition. Again I say, in our experience the incense altar appears only after we have passed through the altar of burnt offering, the laver, the showbread table, and the lampstand. Sometimes we may go to the ark and then go to the incense altar. The record in the Old Testament regarding the tabernacle with its furniture and utensils is very meaningful. It corresponds to the sequence of our experience.

It is impossible for anyone to enter the tabernacle from the rear. There is no back door. But there is an entrance at the front of the tabernacle. We need to experience the items of the outer court and the tabernacle until we come to the Holy of Holies. To repeat, it is difficult to determine whether the incense altar is inside the veil or outside the veil, whether it is in the Holy of Holies or the Holy Place. (See note on Hebrews 9:4 in the Recovery Version of Hebrews.)

If we have such a view of the tabernacle and the outer court, we are qualified to understand the altar of the burnt offering. This altar is the largest item of the tabernacle. All the furniture and utensils of the tabernacle—the ark, the incense altar, the table, the lampstand, and the laver—could fit inside the altar of burnt offering. This altar is five cubits in length and width and three cubits in height. The fact that the altar can contain all the items of the tabernacle indicates that the cross of Christ contains all the spiritual experiences. This means that the experience of the cross is the basis for all spiritual experiences. Our spiritual experience begins from the cross, from the altar. Furthermore, the principles related to all other spiritual experiences are implied in the experience of the cross. For example, even though you may not have received adequate instruction at

the time, when you first believed in the Lord Jesus, you had some experience of the showbread, the lampstand, the incense altar, and even the ark. All these experiences are implied in the basic experience of the cross. Resurrection, anointing, and enlightening are all implied there.

I often like to recall my experience when I was saved. I was fresh and new, and all the spiritual experiences were fresh and tasteful. Like many others, I surely had a sweet time with the Lord Jesus when I was saved. The reason for this is that all spiritual experiences are initiated by the experience of the cross and implied in that experience. Apart from the cross, we cannot have any experience in the Spirit. The cross is the base, the ground, the initial factor, of all spiritual experience. Thus, the cross is vitally important.

I. TYPIFYING THE CROSS OF CHRIST

The altar of the burnt offering typifies the cross of Christ. Referring to this, Hebrews 13:10 says, "We have an altar, from which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle." The altar among the Israelites in ancient times was a type of the cross as the real altar. Today we have an altar. We are not speaking about something that we do not have. On the first day of every week, we come together to eat the sacrifice on this altar. This altar refers to the Lord's table. On this table we can see the shed blood and the slain body represented by the cup and the loaf. Concerning the table, the Lord Jesus said that we should take and eat of His body and drink of His blood. The altar is the cross, and the cross is the table for our enjoyment.

We need to have a fuller comprehension of the significance of the Lord's table. Now we see that this table is an altar, not just a feast. In the Old Testament certain offerings, after being presented on the altar to God, became the food for God's people. When the children of Israel came together in ancient times to keep the feasts, what they feasted on was first offered to God and then it became food for their enjoyment. We need to realize whenever we come to

the Lord's table that the table is an altar where Christ presents Himself to God. Then we may share in what Christ has offered.

II. MADE OF ACACIA WOOD

The altar was made of acacia wood (27:1a), signifying the Man Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5) being judged as our Substitute by God. At this point we need to ask an important question: Is the cross, the altar, a person, or is it a thing? The reason we must raise this question is that the substance of the altar is acacia wood, and acacia wood signifies the Lord's humanity. The acacia wood used in making the altar was overlaid with bronze. The basic substance, the basic material, of the altar, however, was acacia wood, not bronze. This acacia wood signifies the Man Jesus. This implies that the altar, the cross, is related to a man.

Suppose there was an altar, but there were no sacrifices on it. Could the altar itself save anyone? Certainly not. In like manner, suppose that there was the cross, but no one dying on the cross for us. Could the cross in itself save us? Again, the answer is no. The saving element is not in the cross as a thing; it is in the Person who was crucified on the cross for us. In the same principle, when we come to the Lord's table, we do not partake of the table itself, but we eat the food on the table. We eat what is offered on the altar, the table. Thus, when we speak of the altar, we do not mainly refer to the altar itself; we mainly are speaking of what is offered on the altar. When we say that the cross saves us, we do not mean the cross as an instrument of execution used by the Roman Empire. Rather, we mean the Christ who died on the cross. Actually, it is not the cross itself that saves us. The One who saves us is the Lord Jesus Christ who suffered God's judgment for us.

In typology, the Lord used acacia wood as the material for the building of the altar. This indicates that the effectiveness of the cross is not in the cross itself, but in that humanity which is related to the cross and which was crucified on it. This humanity is the same as that indicated by

the ark, which was also made of acacia wood. Acacia wood is the essence and substance of both the ark and the altar. Only that humanity which is up to the standard of the ark can be our substitute on the cross to save us. This humanity, of course, is found only in the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the only One who has this humanity.

III. MADE SQUARED

Exodus 27:1 says, "The altar shall be squared." To be square is one thing; to be squared, or made squared, is another thing. The fact that the Lord Jesus was squared means that with Him there was a great deal of testing or proving. To be made squared means that He was tested and proved. Not only was He square; He was squared. He was tested, He was tried, He was proved. To be square means to be upright, perfect, without any deficiency. One who is upright in this way would be called a square person. The Lord Jesus was square, and He was also squared. He was proved by means of many testings to be upright and perfect. Therefore, He was equipped to be our Substitute, qualified to be our Redeemer. He was qualified to fulfill the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. God's requirements are related to His righteousness, holiness, and glory. Only by fulfilling all these requirements of God could the Lord Jesus be qualified to be recognized by God as the Substitute for us sinners. Oh, how we must thank and praise the Lord that He was tested and was found to be such a qualified One! By both man and God Christ was proved to be upright and perfect. Therefore, He was squared.

IV. FIVE CUBITS LONG AND FIVE CUBITS WIDE

According to verse 1, the altar was five cubits long and five cubits wide. Five times five signifies Christ bearing full responsibility on the cross to fulfill all the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. Five is the number of responsibility, and five times five indicates full responsibility, responsibility upon responsibility. The Lord Jesus

bore such a responsibility on the cross in fulfilling God's threefold demands.

V. THREE CUBITS HIGH

Verse 1 also indicates that the height of the altar was three cubits. Why was the altar three cubits high? Why was the height less than the length and the width? This is not easy to understand. The fact that the height is less than the length and width indicates that the Lord's redemption is spreading in a wide way. Furthermore, the altar is all-inclusive. If it were too narrow, it could not include so much. Also, if it were too high, we could not reach it.

The number three refers either to the Triune God or to resurrection. I do not believe that the thought of resurrection is appropriate here. Thus, the number three here should refer to the Triune God.

The redemption accomplished on the cross was not only by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; it was accomplished by the Triune God. Hebrews 9:14 says that the Lord Jesus offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit. According to Colossians 2, God the Father was busy when Christ was crucified on the cross. While God the Son was dying an all-inclusive death, God the Father was very active. As we pointed out already, the evil spirits were also busy. Hebrews 9:14 shows that the Triune God was involved in the accomplishing of redemption: It tells us that Christ offered Himself to God through the Spirit. This is the Triune God signified by the three cubits as the height of the altar. Thus, the Triune God is the standard of redemption. Redemption was accomplished by the Triune God according to the standard of the Triune God.

The three parables in Luke 15 also show that the Triune God is involved in man's redemption. The Son, signified by the shepherd, seeks out the lost sheep; the Spirit, signified by the woman lighting a lamp, searches for the lost coin; and the Father, signified by the father of the prodigal son, receives the returned prodigal, covers him with the best robe, and feeds him with the fatted calf. Here we see that

the Triune God is involved in receiving back a repentant sinner. This is the significance of the height of the altar being three cubits.

From our experience we know that the Triune God was involved in our redemption. When as sinners we heard the gospel, the Spirit was working within us. When we repented, we began to appreciate the Lord Jesus. At the same time, the Father also was working. Thus, the Spirit, the Son, and the Father all worked together to redeem us, bring us back, and accept us. This is the meaning of the height of Christ's redemption. The three cubits as the height of the altar signifies that it is built by the Triune God and according to the Triune God. I believe that this is the true significance of the height of the altar. The redemption accomplished on the cross was by the Triune God, by the Son, the Spirit, and the Father.

VI. WITH HORNS UPON FOUR CORNERS

Verse 2 says, "And you shall make its horns upon its four corners." The horns upon the four corners of the altar signify the power of the cross of Christ (see Psalm 92:10a) to reach the four corners of the earth. The horns at the corners were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices (Lev. 4:25, 34). I believe this was the reason someone could take hold of the horns of the altar and be forgiven. An example of this is found in 1 Kings 1:50. In contrast, another verse, Exodus 21:14, says that even if a certain kind of sinful person does lay hold of the horns on the altar, he will not receive forgiveness.

The horns signify strength, and in typology the four corners signify the four ends, or corners, of the earth. This means that the redemptive work of Christ is so effective that it can spread throughout the earth. It has the strength, the power, to reach the four corners of the earth. In history, especially today, it has been seen that the efficacy of Christ's redemption has reached the uttermost part of the world. This indicates the power of the redemption of

Christ. Therefore, the horns on the four corners of the altar signify the power and strength of Christ's redemption.

VII. THE HORNS BEING ONE WITH THE ALTAR

Verse 2 says that "its horns shall be from it." This indicates that the horns were one with the altar. The horns were not made separately and attached to the altar. Instead, they were made of one piece with the altar. This indicates that the power and strength of Christ's redemption cannot be separated from Christ's cross. Without the altar there would be no horns, no power or strength. Do not think that you can have any strength or power in the spiritual realm apart from the cross of Christ. This power can never be separated from the cross. The horns must be one with the altar.

VIII. OVERLAID WITH BRONZE

Verse 2 says concerning the altar, "And you shall overlay it with bronze." This signifies God's righteous judgment on Christ as our Substitute (Num. 16:37-38). In Numbers 16 we see that the bronze used to overlay the altar came from the censers of two hundred fifty rebellious ones who were judged by God with fire. After God judged them, He charged Moses to take the bronze censers and use them to overlay the altar. Thus, the bronze overlaying the altar indicates judgment. In typology, copper, bronze, and brass all signify God's judgment.

When Christ was on the cross, He was a man, signified by the acacia wood. But He was overlaid with bronze, with God's judgment. Unlike the ark, which was overlaid with gold signifying God's nature, the altar was overlaid with bronze, signifying God's righteous judgment. Thus, as the Man who died on the cross, Christ was fully judged by God as our Substitute. He bore for us the judgment which we should have borne. He was fully covered, overlaid, by God's judgment. On the cross He was the Man judged by God.

IX. ALL UTENSILS MADE OF BRONZE

Verse 3 says, "And you shall make its pots to remove its ashes, its shovels, and its sprinkling bowls, and its flesh-forks, and its fire pans; you shall make all its utensils of bronze." The pots for receiving ashes, the shovels for removing ashes, the sprinkling bowls for receiving blood (Zech. 9:15), the flesh-forks for turning meat, and the fire pans for containing charcoal were all made of bronze, the same material as that used to overlay the altar. The fact that all the utensils were made of bronze signifies that all things related to the cross are for God's judgment.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIVE

THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 27:1-8; 38:1-7; 40:6, 29; Heb. 13:10

In the foregoing message I pointed out that it is not easy to understand the record in Exodus concerning the altar. Certain aspects of this record are very puzzling. Exodus 27:5 speaks of "the ledge of the altar beneath." It is difficult to decide how to translate the Hebrew word for ledge. The King James Version says compass, another version says border, and still other versions speak of a margin or rim. A ledge serves to hold something and is a protection. Some students of the Bible think that the ledge was outside the altar. According to their understanding, the ministering priests stood on the ledge which went around the altar. Those who hold to this view appeal to Leviticus 9:22, a verse which says that Aaron "came down from offering of the sin offering." They also refer to 2 Chronicles 30:16, saying that the priests stood in "their place," that is, on the ledge. Therefore, with these two verses as their basis, they understand the border or ledge to be outside the altar and to be a place where the ministering priests could stand.

X. A BRONZE GRATING OF NETWORK

What was the ledge, and where was it located? These questions are not easily answered. I am quite sure, however, that the ledge was inside the altar. Verse 4 says, "And you shall make for it a grating, a network of bronze; and you shall make upon the net four rings of bronze upon its four ends." According to verse 5, the network was to reach "unto the half of the altar." The altar was three cubits high,

five cubits long, and five cubits wide. The grating, the network of bronze, inside the altar stretched horizontally from side to side at the middle of the height of the altar. The wood was placed upon this grating, and the sacrifices were put upon the wood. As the wood and the sacrifices burned, the ashes fell through the grating to the bottom of the altar. Furthermore, verse 5 tells us clearly that the grating was put under the ledge of the altar beneath. The composition of this verse is rather unusual, but the Hebrew does say "under the ledge of the altar beneath." The fact that the grating was under the ledge indicates that the ledge could not have been outside the altar. The grating was not only under the ledge; it was beneath the ledge. If the ledge had been outside, how could the grating inside the altar have been beneath the ledge? Therefore, I believe definitely that the ledge was inside the altar.

The altar was made with acacia wood overlaid with bronze. The fire on the altar was to burn without ceasing. Does it not seem that the heat of the fire would pass through the bronze covering and cause the acacia wood inside to become charred? To be sure, this would have been the situation. For this reason, I believe that the ledge protected the four walls of the altar from the heat of the fire on the grating.

The Bible does not tell us of what material the ledge was made. I believe, however, that it must have been made of bronze. Therefore, I believe that above the grating and around the four walls there was a ledge of bronze protecting the walls from the heat of the fire. This may be the reason verse 5 says that the grating was not only under the ledge, but also beneath the ledge.

One writer has suggested that the network was actually at the bottom of the altar and reached halfway up the sides of the walls. Moreover, this writer supposes that when the altar was set up, it was placed on two heaps of dirt to allow air to reach the fire. However, such an interpretation involves too much guesswork. But if you would ask me how the air could get in, I would have to answer that I do not know, for the Scripture does not give us this detail.

The very fact that the altar has certain puzzling elements has a spiritual significance. The altar should actually be very easy to describe, easier to describe than the other items of furniture. But as we have pointed out, the record concerning the altar is rather puzzling. Although it is simple, it is nevertheless hard to understand. The significance of this is that it is not possible for us to understand thoroughly the mystery of the cross of Christ. Yes, in the New Testament the cross is revealed. We are told clearly that Christ was crucified, and in 1 Corinthians 1 Paul uses the expression "the word of the cross," telling us that the word of the cross is the power of God (v. 18). But we are unable to apprehend the mystery of Christ's redemption thoroughly. When I first came into the ministry fifty years ago, I tried many times to give messages on the cross. However, each time I rose up to speak, I did not have much utterance. The reason was that it is very difficult to speak about the cross of Christ.

Are you able to speak about the cross of Christ in an adequate way? Of course, you can declare that the cross was the place where Christ was put to death. You can also say that on the cross Christ bore our sins, that we were crucified with Him, and that even the Devil was destroyed on the cross. But how about the mystery of Christ's death? Even those who have been teaching the Scriptures for years will find it difficult to speak concerning the mystery of Christ's all-inclusive death. Christians may place a cross on top of their places of worship, and some may even wear a cross. However, they cannot speak about the cross adequately. We can read the verses in the New Testament which refer either to the cross or to Christ's crucifixion. Nevertheless, after reading these verses, we still are not able to apprehend the mystery of Christ's death thoroughly. The death of Christ is a great mystery. Because it is such a mystery, we do not have a way to describe it adequately.

Another puzzling matter is related to the grating, or the network, within the altar. The grating has four rings at its four ends. However, these rings are also for the poles used in

carrying the altar (38:5). The grating is on the inside, but the rings are on the outside. How, then, could the rings be attached to the grating? We are told clearly that the rings are upon the four ends of the network, and the rings must be outside the altar. Otherwise, the poles could not be put into the rings. It is puzzling how the rings could be attached to the network and yet be outside the altar.

If there were only the four walls of the altar without the grating inside the altar, the altar would be empty. The significance of the altar depends completely on the grating, the network, with the four rings. Yes, the rings are for the move of the altar, but they are connected to the grating inside the altar. Without the grating, there would be no rings, and without the rings, the altar could not move. This brings us to a very important matter: Without the grating there would be no way to have the fire used in burning the sacrifices. Thus, both for the burning of the sacrifices and for the move of the altar, the grating with the four rings is necessary.

We may compare the grating and the rings to the inward parts of our physical body. Our inward parts are more vital than our skin and hair. In the same principle, the grating is the important part of the altar. If the grating were removed, the altar would become an empty box, not useful for anything. The content of the altar is the grating with the rings.

It is important to find out the significance of the grating. The grating was made of bronze. In typology, bronze signifies the righteous judgment of God. This should also be the significance of the grating being made of bronze. In the foregoing message we pointed out that the altar should be related to a person, for it was made of acacia wood overlaid with bronze. This signifies that Christ became a man to die on the cross to bear the judgment of God for us. The cross is not merely a thing; it is related to a person, as indicated by the fact that the altar, a type of the cross, was made of acacia wood, which signifies the humanity of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, the cross is related to a person, and this person is Christ.

The bronze grating within the altar signifies that God's judgment reached the inward parts of Christ. God's judgment upon Christ as our Substitute was not merely outward. The holy fire of God's judgment was not just outside of Christ, but also burned within Him. This is indicated in Psalm 22, a psalm concerning the sufferings of Christ on the cross. Verse 14 says, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." This indicates that when Christ bore God's judgment, that judgment reached His heart, His inward parts. His bones were out of joint, but His heart melted in His inward parts. This means that God's judgment upon Christ was experienced more inwardly than it was outwardly.

Not many Christian preachers have given messages concerning the inward aspect of Christ's sufferings on the cross. Most of those who preach about the sufferings of Christ speak about the outward aspect of His sufferings. To repeat, Christ bore God's judgment not only outwardly, but also inwardly. In fact, He suffered more inwardly than He did outwardly. The grating was not outside of Him; it was in Him. Therefore, the place where the holy fire of God's judgment burned was in the inward parts of the Lord Jesus.

XI. FOUR RINGS OF BRONZE UPON THE FOUR ENDS OF THE GRATING

We have pointed out that at the four ends of the grating, the network, there were four bronze rings. In typology these rings refer to the eternal Spirit spoken of in Hebrews 9:14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Christ's blood is effective because He offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit. The eternal Spirit, typified by the rings on the network, is the source of the efficacy of Christ's cross. The eternal Spirit is the power, the strength, of the cross of Christ. Apart from the eternal Spirit, the redemption of Christ could not be effective; it

could not be powerful and full of strength. Again I say, the eternal Spirit is the power, the strength, the efficacy, of Christ's redemption.

If the four bronze rings had been taken away from the grating, the grating would have fallen down. It was held to the altar by the four rings. This is full of spiritual significance. We may talk about the cross, about the death of Christ on the cross, and about the fact that we have been crucified with Christ. But without the Spirit, all this talk would be vain. Apart from the eternal Spirit, the death of Christ is not effective. It is very crucial that we realize that the efficacy and power of Christ's redemption depend upon the eternal Spirit.

If the altar did not have the four rings, the grating could not stay in place. Then the altar would not have any content. Furthermore, there would be no way for the altar to move. Thus the four rings are very crucial. Because of the four rings, the grating could be held in place at half the height of the altar. Because of the four rings, there was a way for the altar to be carried. But although the rings were so important to the altar, they were not the sacrifice. Christ Himself is the sacrifice, but the saving and moving power of this sacrifice is in the Spirit. Without the rings, the grating would lose its effectiveness. There would be no power in the cross to save, and there would be no strength for the move of the altar.

The death of Christ is far beyond our understanding. Christ's death is a mystery. We should not think that we can comprehend it in full, for we have no way to do so.

Although we cannot fully understand the mystery of Christ's death on the cross, we do know that redemption was accomplished through the eternal Spirit. Do you know why the preaching of Christ's death today is often powerless? It is because in this preaching there is a lack of the eternal Spirit. Christ offered Himself as the sin offering through the eternal Spirit. Therefore, because of the Spirit, what He accomplished on the cross is powerful and effective. But if we preach the cross of Christ without the Spirit, we shall not

have the power to move others, to touch their heart and their spirit. This must be the work of the eternal Spirit.

In Exodus 27 the ledge is not spoken of in detail. But the four rings are clearly described. Nevertheless, it is somewhat mysterious how these rings could be connected to the grating inside the altar and yet themselves be outside the altar. This signifies that although the Spirit is truly manifest, it is also mysterious. The Spirit is manifested outwardly, but it is connected to something inside the altar. The rings were outside the altar, yet they were connected to the grating inside the altar.

The death of Christ cannot be fully understood by us. On the one hand, the Spirit is manifest; on the other hand, it is mysterious, for the Spirit is connected to Christ's redemption. The four rings signifying the eternal Spirit are connected to the grating, which signifies the inner content of Christ's redemption. This indicates that the Holy Spirit is connected to the inner content of Christ's redemption. If we have the redemption of Christ in reality, then we also have the Spirit. The Spirit is connected to this reality. In other words, if we have the four rings, we have the grating. If we have the eternal Spirit, we also have the full redemption of Christ.

I am very thankful for the picture in Exodus 27. Through this picture we can see that the eternal Spirit is linked to the full redemption of Christ. What is the grating? The grating is the inner content of Christ's redemption. What are the four rings? The four rings are the type of the eternal Spirit, who makes Christ's redemption effective and who is the power for the move of the cross of Christ. The word of the cross is powerful because it is joined to the eternal Spirit. When we preach the cross with the redemption of Christ, this preaching must be connected to the eternal Spirit. Then in our experience we shall have a grating with four rings, the redemption of Christ connected to the eternal Spirit.

For more than thirty-eight years, the altar traveled with the children of Israel through the wilderness. While the altar was being carried, the fire inside it was still burning. The

fire on the altar never ceased. That fire did not come as a result of human initiative. The Bible tells us that it came from the Lord (Lev. 9:24). Thus, it was a heavenly fire that burned continually as the altar was carried in the wilderness. While the altar was moving, the fire was burning. This indicates that while the redemption of Christ on the cross is being preached, the fire burns. Wherever the altar goes, there the fire burns.

The move of the altar does not depend on the fire; it depends on the four rings. This means that the move of the altar is by the eternal Spirit. The burning, however, is by the fire, not by the Spirit. We need to see that two things take place simultaneously: the burning of the fire and the moving of the Spirit. The four rings on the altar are related both to the burning and to the moving. We have seen that if it were not for the rings, the grating could not be held in place at half the height of the altar. If there is to be a burning on the altar, the four rings are necessary to hold the grating in place. Furthermore, in order for the altar to move, the four rings are also necessary. Both the burning and the moving are dependent on the four rings.

XII. THE LEDGE OF THE ALTAR UNDER WHICH THE GRATING OF BRONZE IS HUNG

Concerning the ledge, we may also say that the ledge signifies the strengthening power upholding Christ under God's judgment. Christ was upheld by this strengthening power while He was on the cross suffering the judgment of God. The acacia wood overlaid with bronze signifies Christ in His humanity under God's judgment. No doubt, at the time of the crucifixion, the Lord Jesus needed strengthening, upholding, covering, and protection. I believe that the ledge in the altar served this purpose.

We have seen that the ledge probably protected the acacia wood inside the bronze covering from the heat of the fire. Without some kind of protection, the acacia wood certainly would have been charred by the heat transmitted through the bronze. The fire in the altar was burning

continually, week after week and month after month. It would be impossible for the heat not to damage the acacia wood unless the wood was protected in some way. Therefore, I believe that the ledge also served the purpose of protecting the acacia wood. This may be the reason that in Exodus 27 we are told that the grating was under the ledge of the altar. The fact that the acacia wood could withstand the burning indicates that it was possible for Christ in His humanity to bear the judgment of God.

XIII. THE POLES OF THE ALTAR

Exodus 27:6 and 7 say, "And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood; and you shall overlay them with bronze. And its poles shall be put into the rings, and the poles shall be upon the two sides of the altar when it is carried." The poles were for the move of the altar. They were made of acacia wood overlaid with bronze, signifying Christ as a man under God's judgment. These poles were put into the rings, signifying the move of the cross by the power of the Spirit. Moreover, the poles upon the two sides of the altar were to be carried by men. This signifies the move of the cross by the coordination of the believers as a testimony.

The poles in the rings are a strong evidence that the altar was to be carried by men. It was not to be placed on a wagon or carried by animals. The altar was to be borne on men's shoulders. Today the preaching of the cross must be done by human beings. But those who preach the cross must do so in coordination as a testimony. This was the reason the Lord Jesus sent out His disciples to preach two by two. Two is the number of testimony. In coordination and as a testimony, the believers are to carry the redemption of Christ by the power of the Spirit to the four corners of the earth.

XIV. MADE WITH PLANKS TO BE HOLLOW: ITS SIZE SUFFICIENT TO CONTAIN ALL THE UTENSILS OF THE TABERNACLE

Verse 8 says, "You shall make it hollow with planks; as it was shown to you in the mountain, so they shall make it."

The altar was made with planks to be hollow and of a size sufficient to contain all the utensils of the tabernacle. This signifies that the cross of Christ contains all our experiences of Christ. The initial experience of the cross of Christ at the time we were regenerated is the base of all our subsequent experiences of Christ. All our experiences of Christ are based upon the principle of the cross of Christ.

The burden in this message is related to the Spirit for both burning and moving. It is very meaningful and significant that Christ bore God's judgment inwardly even more than outwardly. Furthermore, the eternal Spirit is linked to Christ's full redemption. This Spirit is for the burning within and also for the moving without. Today the cross must be preached in the way of burning and moving through the eternal Spirit. We who preach the cross must be living persons in coordination bearing a testimony. Then we shall be qualified to carry the altar in its journey on earth.

The altar is still being carried today. It has the burning inwardly, and it is moving outwardly. Praise the Lord for the grating, signifying the inner content of Christ's redemption! Praise Him also that we have the grating and the rings! We have the eternal Spirit for burning and moving.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIX

THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 27:1-8

A TYPE OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST

When we read the record concerning the altar of the burnt offering in 27:1-8, it seems that there is not much for us to say regarding the altar. However, as I was considering this matter, I realized that, in principle, there must be something very important here, because the altar is a type of the cross of Christ.

In the New Testament the cross is not revealed in a way which corresponds to our natural, human understanding. If the cross were presented in this way, probably one of the main writers in the New Testament—Paul, John, or Peter—would have given us a lengthy definition of the significance of Christ's cross. From the human point of view, we sense the need for this kind of definition. But such a definition cannot be found in the New Testament. In the New Testament the revelation concerning the cross is given piecemeal; that is, various parts of the revelation, like the pieces of a puzzle, are found here and there throughout the New Testament. For example, there is something about the cross in Galatians 2:20, and something else in John 12:24, 1 Peter 2:24, and Hebrews 2:14.

Many of the verses related to the cross are understood by Christians in a superficial way. For instance, 1 Peter 2:24 says, "Who Himself carried up our sins in His body onto the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed." Preachers often

quote the first part of this verse, pointing out that Christ bore our sins in His body on the tree. But they may not go on to consider the deeper matters covered in this verse.

Neither in the Old Testament typology nor in the New Testament revelation is the cross described in a detailed way. There must be a reason for this lack of detail concerning the cross of Christ.

THE GRATING AND THE FOUR RINGS

A very significant point in the record in Exodus 27 concerning the altar is the four rings. At first I thought that there might have been two sets of rings, one inside the wall of the altar and the other outside. As we have seen, the grating is inside the wall. However, the four rings, which would have to be outside the wall, were at the four corners of the grating. Thus, it is possible to think that there were two sets of rings: the first set at the ends of the grating inside the wall, and the second set outside the wall for the two poles. This might be a possibility, if the only record concerning the altar were that found in 27:1-8. But 38:5 and 7 clearly say, "And he cast four rings for the four ends of the grate of brass, to be places for the staves.…And he put the staves into the rings on the sides of the altar, to bear it withal." In light of these verses, we cannot hold the concept that there were two sets of rings, one inside the altar and the other outside. There must have been only one set of rings. These rings were at the four ends of the grating inside the wall, but they nevertheless were outside so that the two poles could be put into them.

Even now, I do not know how to explain this. The Scripture does not tell us how the rings could be attached to the grating and yet still be on the outside of the altar. But as I considered this matter, the light began to shine, and then the revelation in the New Testament concerning the relationship between Christ's redemption and the eternal Spirit began to open up. Concerning this relationship, the New Testament has some important things to say.

In the four Gospels we have a picture of the grating. If

we would understand the grating, we need to understand the Gospels. Do you know what is presented to us in the four Gospels? The Gospels present a redemptive grating, a grating where redemption was accomplished.

Then in the book of Acts we have the Spirit as the four rings. Acts 1:8 says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the remotest part of the earth." The four rings are for reaching the four corners of the earth.

Then in the Epistles we have the definition of these four rings. According to Hebrews 9:14, Christ offered Himself to God and accomplished redemption through the eternal Spirit. By means of this eternal Spirit the redemption accomplished by Christ will be brought to the ends of the earth. By this we see that almost the entire New Testament is needed to define the grating with the four rings.

To repeat, the grating is presented in the Gospels; the connection of the four rings to the grating is seen in Acts; and in all the following Epistles we have a definition of the four rings. For example, 1 Corinthians 15:45 reveals that Christ became a life-giving Spirit. In the Epistles we see the Spirit through whom Christ accomplished the all-inclusive redemption.

THE RINGS DIVORCED FROM THE GRATING

Do you realize what is the situation in today's Christianity with respect to the grating and the rings? The situation is this: the rings have been divorced from the grating. The fundamentalists have the grating without the rings; the Pentecostals have some kind of rings separate from the grating. In the Lord's recovery the four rings are brought back to the grating.

For the most part, we are opposed not because of the grating, but mainly because of our testimony concerning the rings. There has been some opposition because of our teaching concerning the grating. You know that I have given messages on Christ being made in the likeness of the flesh of sin. In these messages I pointed out that on the cross

Christ was in the form of the serpent (John 3:14). Some opposing ones, twisting my word, accused me of teaching that Christ had the nature of the fallen flesh. Such an accusation comes from their blindness. Have these opposers never considered Paul's strong word in 2 Corinthians 5:21? In this verse Paul says that Christ was made sin. In my messages I emphasize the fact that, according to Romans 8:3, Christ was in the likeness of the flesh of sin. Furthermore, referring to the type of the brass serpent lifted up on a pole by Moses in the wilderness, I said that the brass serpent was in the form of an actual serpent, but that it did not have the poisonous nature of the serpent. Likewise, Christ was in the likeness of the flesh of sin, but He did not have a sinful nature. Those who oppose this truth have only a shallow understanding of Christ as our Savior and Redeemer. They have not been enlightened from the Word to see that Christ was in the likeness of the flesh of sin and even became sin.

As we have pointed out, most of the opposition is related to our testimony that Christ today is the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. Regarding the mingling, some have gone so far as to accuse us of teaching pantheism or the deification of man. The accusations concerning Christ being the Spirit involve the Trinity, the Person of Christ, and the mingling. All these matters are related to the four rings, the Spirit.

Many Christians today have an altar that lacks the proper connection between the four rings and the grating. Some have the grating without the rings, but others have the rings without the grating. Those who have the grating may have it only in a superficial way without the connection of the rings, and those who have the rings may actually have the wrong kind of rings and without the connection to the grating.

GOD'S REQUIREMENTS FULFILLED

We have pointed out that the grating is at half the height of the altar, halfway between the top and the bottom. This means that there were one and one-half cubits above the

grating and one and one-half cubits below it. This was equal to the height of the ark of the testimony. The dimensions of the ark were two and one-half cubits in length and width and one and one-half cubits in height. Thus, the height of the ark was half the height of the altar. Therefore, the grating signifying Christ's all-inclusive and completed redemption was placed on a level with the height of the ark.

On top of the ark of the testimony was the propitiation-cover. On this cover all the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory were fulfilled. This enabled God to come to commune with man on the propitiation-cover. Because God's requirements had been fulfilled, this place was called the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). The fact that the grating of the altar was level with the cover of the ark indicates that Christ's redemption was accomplished according to the standard of God's requirements. There were one and one-half cubits both above and below the grating. This indicates that the redemption of Christ was not accomplished according to a standard lower than the requirements of God. Rather, it was accomplished at a standard which was up to the height of God's requirements. Moreover, the fact that there were one and one-half cubits above the grating indicates that the effectiveness, the efficacy, of Christ's redemption also comes up to the standard of God's requirements.

To repeat, with the altar of the burnt offering we have a height of three cubits in two sections, with each section measuring one and one-half cubits. The one and one-half cubits below the grating signify that Christ's redemption was accomplished according to the high standard of God's requirements. The one and one-half cubits above the grating signify that the effectiveness of Christ's redemption is also according to the standard of these requirements. Therefore, we have two crucial matters: the eternal Spirit and the standard of God's requirements. Christ offered Himself to accomplish redemption through the eternal Spirit, and the standard for this accomplishment of redemption was the standard of God's requirements. And the

standard of the efficacy of Christ's redemption also is equal to the height of God's requirements.

The two matters of the eternal Spirit and the standard of God's requirements are covered in the New Testament. The redemption of Christ is powerful because it is linked to the eternal Spirit. The redemption of Christ is also effective because it was accomplished according to the standard of God's requirements, and its efficacy matches these requirements. This is the revelation concerning the cross of Christ in the New Testament.

Although the record of the altar in Exodus 27 is simple and brief, it is very rich in spiritual significance. The significance of the altar is seen in the four rings connected to the grating, and in the location of the grating at half the height of the altar. Because these points are important, they are emphasized in the divine record. The ledge, on the contrary, is not given much emphasis.

I definitely believe that the ledge protected the four walls of the altar from the heat of the fire burning on the grating. Otherwise, the wood inside the overlying brass would be scorched by the constant heat. For this reason, I do not believe that the ledge was made of wood. Instead, I believe it was made of bronze.

The ledge on the four sides of the altar may also have limited the space used for burning. Since the altar was five cubits wide and five cubits long, the ledge on each side could have been a half cubit in width. This still would have left an area four cubits by four cubits for burning the sacrifices. Furthermore, it would then have been possible for certain utensils to be kept on the ledge.

Although I feel quite sure concerning the significance of the four rings, I certainly do not insist on my understanding of the ledge. Regarding this, I simply make an inference, since there is no sure evidence in the written Word. But if the ledge did not serve as a protection, how would the walls have been protected from the heat of the fire? There must have been some kind of protection, and this protection may have been afforded by the ledge.

We need to have more understanding, more apprehension, of the cross and of Christ's redemption according to the New Testament. Because the revelation concerning the cross is presented piece by piece, it is not easy to see a complete picture. We can see such a picture only when all the pieces of the puzzle are put together. We praise the Lord for helping us to see more concerning the cross!

What we understand of the cross of Christ should not simply be a doctrine to us. We need the real experience of this. Hallelujah, we have Christ, and we have the eternal Spirit! Actually, Christ Himself is the eternal Spirit. On the cross He was the redeeming Christ. But in our experience He is the life-giving Spirit. The four rings were closely connected to the grating. Furthermore, the grating and the rings were of the same material, bronze. Thus, there was a true identification of the bronze grating and the bronze rings. This indicates that the grating is identical to the four rings, that Christ today is identical to the life-giving Spirit.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVEN

THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

(4)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 27:4-7; 38:5; Isa. 53:8, 10a; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:23-26; Heb. 9:14; Gal. 3:13-14; Acts 1:8; 2:38; Eph. 1:13-14; Gal. 3:3

In 27:1-8, verses 1 through 3 are on the outward appearance of the altar, but verses 4 through 8 are on the inward contents of the altar. What is difficult to understand concerning the altar is not the outward appearance; it is the inward contents. The contents of the altar are the grating and the four rings, through which were placed the poles used in carrying the altar.

A part of the altar that is related to the inward contents is the ledge. We have pointed out that the Hebrew word may also be rendered border, margin, or rim. No one can say definitely what this ledge was. I believe that it was used to protect the four walls of the altar from heat. The Bible does not tell us how wide the ledge was. I believe that it went down to the grating, which was at half the height of the altar. There were one and one-half cubits above the grating and another one and one-half cubits below it. Thus, the grating divided the altar in half.

The more I study the portion in Exodus 27 concerning the altar, the more assured I am that the ledge protected the walls from the scorching heat of the fire burning on the grating. The fire burned continually for years. If there had been no protection for the walls, the acacia wood underneath the bronze would have been charred. Therefore, the ledge must have served as a protection. The grating used for holding the wood and the sacrifices was underneath the ledge.

In the foregoing message we pointed out that the four rings typify the Spirit. These rings have two aspects. The first is that they were connected to the grating. This means that the rings were one with the grating. Therefore, the grating was not separate from the four rings. Rather, the rings belonged to the grating and with it formed one piece of work. Second, according to 38:5, these four rings were for the poles used in carrying the ark. There were two rings on each side of the altar.

THE CONTENTS OF THE ALTAR

I would emphasize the fact that the contents of the altar are the grating with the four rings. Some expositions of Exodus speak of the acacia wood and the bronze. These matters, however, are somewhat superficial. It is common for expositors to point out that the acacia wood signifies the humanity of the Lord Jesus, that the bronze signifies the righteous judgment of God, and that the four horns of the altar signify the power and strength of the redemption of Christ. The redeeming blood was sprinkled on these horns. Furthermore, the blood of the same sacrifice was brought into the Holy Place and sprinkled on the four horns on the incense altar, and also brought into the Holy of Holies to be sprinkled on the propitiatory cover of the ark. Since such matters are not so deep or mysterious, it is somewhat easy for expositors to understand their significance. But expositors may not have much to say concerning the grating and the four rings. In this message I am burdened to speak regarding the mysteries of the redemption of Christ as signified by the grating and the rings, which are types, or figures, of these mysteries.

In the human body, the skin, the flesh, and the bones are not as mysterious as the inward parts, especially the soul and the spirit. Our psychological part, the soul, is made up of the mind, the emotion, and the will. The soul, although not as deep as the spirit, is mysterious. Inside the soul and surrounded by it, we have the spirit. Thus, our psychological and spiritual parts are the true mysteries of our being. The inner content of every person is the soul and the spirit. In

the same principle, the inner content of the altar is the grating with the four rings.

The grating depicts the mystery of Christ's redemption. The wood and the sacrifices were placed on the grating to be burned. The grating was the place where the fire was burning. Without the grating, there could be no burning, for the burning was on the grating. Furthermore, we have seen that the grating was at half the height of the altar, reaching from side to side halfway between the top and the bottom. The fact that there were one and one-half cubits below the grating indicates that it was on the same level as the propitiation-cover on the ark in the Holy of Holies. This indicates that the grating comes up to the standard of the propitiation-cover. When Paul speaks of the redemption of Christ in Romans 3:24-25, he definitely says that God made the redeeming Christ our propitiation-cover.

When the altar was carried, the poles were on the shoulders of a number of persons. These poles were placed in the rings. The weight of the grating with the wood and the sacrifices rested upon these four rings. This indicates that the entire redemption of Christ is upon the four rings, which are a type of the eternal Spirit. This should help us to have a clear understanding of the Spirit. Because of shallow, inadequate teaching, not many Christians realize that the redemption of Christ rests upon the power of the eternal Spirit. The wood and the sacrifices were on the grating. Thus, the grating bore the weight to accomplish the burning. This burning signifies the accomplishment of redemption. The weight of accomplishing redemption was on the grating. But what bore the weight of the grating? This weight was borne by the four rings, a type of the eternal Spirit.

REDEMPTION ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE SPIRIT

It is correct to say that it was not the four rings that accomplished redemption. The burning for the accomplishment of redemption took place on the grating. The grating signifies Christ, and the rings signify the Spirit. Christ, not the Spirit, was the One who accomplished redemption. We have

absolutely no doubt concerning this. But where does the grating stand? Is it supported by its own strength? Apart from the four rings, the grating had no support. Both when the altar was at rest and when it was carried, the grating was upheld by the rings. There was no other support, no other upholding power. To repeat, the grating was upheld by the four rings. Yes, the burning was accomplished by the grating. But the upholding power is in the rings, not in the grating itself. Hebrews 9:14 speaks concerning this: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." It was through the eternal Spirit Christ offered Himself to God as our sin offering.

During the years I was with the Brethren, I was never told that Christ offered Himself by the Spirit and through the Spirit. Have you ever heard a message on Christ offering Himself to God by and through the eternal Spirit? Christians do not ordinarily speak this way, for not many have this knowledge. Because they do not have the knowledge, they do not use the language of Hebrews 9:14. Nevertheless, such a word is found in Hebrews 9:14.

The all-inclusive Christ died an all-inclusive death through the eternal Spirit. He died through the Spirit who is eternal, the Spirit who is without beginning or ending. Such a mysterious event actually took place in human history, but it is neglected by unbelieving historians. No history book will ever tell you that the all-inclusive Christ offered Himself through the eternal Spirit.

I first came to know Hebrews 9:14 many years ago. However, I did not understand the meaning of this verse. What does it mean to say that Christ offered Himself to God as a sin offering through the eternal Spirit? This is not easy to understand.

WHY CHRIST OFFERED HIMSELF THROUGH THE ETERNAL SPIRIT

What is the significance of the phrase "through the eternal Spirit"? Why was it necessary for Christ to die on the

cross through the Spirit? Was Christ not almighty, and was He not able to do everything necessary to accomplish redemption? Why then did He need the eternal Spirit in order to die on the cross? My burden in this message is to present a picture concerning this matter. This picture will lead to a conclusion, and the conclusion will then become the answer to the question of why Christ offered Himself through the eternal Spirit.

Christ is both God and man. Christ did not become a man suddenly. Rather, He became a man according to the normal process of conception and delivery. He was conceived in the womb of Mary, and nine months later He was born. Then for thirty-three and a half years the Lord Jesus lived on earth as a man. Eventually He went to the cross and died there as a man. But although He lived and died as a man, He was also God; hence, He was a God-man. According to Isaiah 9:6, the Lord as the child born to us in a manger was called the mighty God. But although He was God, He lived on earth not as God, but as a man. Furthermore, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. According to Matthew 1 and Luke 2, the man Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. When He came forth to minister as a man from Nazareth, He was anointed by the Spirit. At the time of His baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him (Matt. 3:16). In all His life He was full of the Spirit and continually under the leading of the Spirit (Luke 4:1). He lived, moved, acted, worked, and ministered altogether under the leading of the Spirit. He did not do anything apart from this leading Spirit.

Elsewhere I have pointed out that the Lord Jesus lived a crucified life. Now we must see that He lived such a crucified life according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, in Matthew 12 we see that He cast out demons by the power of the Spirit. Therefore, the Lord was a man who did everything under the leading of the Spirit and by the power of the Spirit. He did not act according to His own will, wishes, or desires. He lived, moved, and acted according to the Spirit.

When the time came for the Lord Jesus to die on the

cross, He did not go to the cross according to His own wishes or desire. Rather, His going to the cross was according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. His entire life had been lived according to the Spirit. Thus, His going to the cross was also according to the Spirit's leading. On the cross the Lord Jesus died an all-inclusive death, a death that took away the sin of the world, destroyed Satan, judged the world, terminated the old creation, and abolished the handwriting of the law. Such an all-inclusive death was accomplished through the eternal Spirit.

During His life on earth, the Lord would not do even a small thing apart from the Spirit. Even His going to the wilderness was under the leading of the Spirit. Certainly when He died an all-inclusive death on Calvary, He would not do this apart from the leading of the Holy Spirit. Thus, when Christ died on the cross, He died through the Spirit.

In Hebrews 9 there is a comparison between the animal sacrifices offered by the priests in the Old Testament and the unique sacrifice of Christ offered to God through the eternal Spirit. When the priests offered the sacrifices, they did not offer them through the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, they did it by themselves. Therefore, what they did was of little effect; it could not be powerful. This was the reason the sacrifices needed to be offered again and again each year on the day of atonement. But Christ as the High Priest offered Himself to God as the sin offering through the eternal Spirit once for all, through One who is without beginning or ending. Therefore, what Christ offered is powerful and efficacious.

Now we have an answer to the question of why Christ needed to offer Himself through the eternal Spirit. We have seen that as a man He did not do anything on His own. Everything He did was under the leading of the Spirit and by the power of the eternal Spirit. This is signified by the four rings on the grating. The full weight of the grating was borne by the rings. Therefore, what is accomplished by the grating is powerful and efficacious. This means that the power, the strength, and the efficacy of the redemption accomplished by

the grating depends on the four rings. The power of Christ's redemption depends on the eternal Spirit.

THE ISSUE OF CHRIST'S REDEMPTION

In the New Testament whenever the redemption of Christ is preached, it is preached with the power of the Holy Spirit. It is never proclaimed apart from the Spirit. If we had the grating without the four rings, the grating would lose its strength and power. I repeat, the power of the grating relies on the four rings. This signifies that the power, strength, and effectiveness of Christ's redemption relies on the Holy Spirit.

Although I was born into Christianity and raised in Christianity, I never heard a message telling me that Christ's redemption is linked to the Holy Spirit. I heard many messages on Christ's accomplishment of redemption, but not a word on the connection between redemption and the Holy Spirit. This preaching of the gospel is very different from that of Peter, John, and Paul. When Peter preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost, he did not say that those who were baptized would receive redemption. He said that the ones baptized would receive the promise of the Spirit. God in ancient times promised a great blessing to our forefather, Abraham. That great blessing is the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:14). We need to be baptized because we need to receive this blessing. This was the reason Peter told the people to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ in order to receive the promised Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). Paul preached the gospel in the same way. In Galatians 3 he says that Christ bore our curse on the cross so that through Him we may receive the promise of the Spirit.

When I was young, I never heard a message saying that Christ died for our sins so that we might receive the Spirit. I never heard such a gospel. I only heard that Christ died for our sins so that we might be forgiven and one day go to heaven. Those who preached this gospel knew about Christ dying for our sins and they knew about heaven, but they did not know the Spirit.

It is crucial for us to realize that apart from the Spirit the redemption of Christ is a lifeless redemption, a dead redemption. Even a human being is dead apart from the spirit. The reason we are alive is that we have the spirit. As soon as the spirit leaves a person's body, the body becomes a corpse. The Bible regards sinners as dead ones because their spirit is dead. But we become alive when our spirit is enlivened and recovered. Just as a person is dead apart from the spirit, so the redemption of Christ is dead apart from the Holy Spirit. Many Christians today are preaching a dead redemption. They have a grating without the four rings. The Bible, however, declares a living redemption, a redemption typified by the grating with the four rings.

The redemption of Christ accomplished under the righteous judgment of God was signified by the bronze grating upheld by the four rings at its four ends. Christ's redemption was accomplished not only through the Spirit but also unto the Spirit. This means that Christ's redemption has an issue, a result. The result of the redemption of Christ is not merely the forgiveness of sins; it is not simply redemption itself, or salvation through redemption. The unique issue of the redemption of Christ is the Spirit.

In the Gospels Christ spoke of the coming of the Spirit. The Gospels even open with a word about Christ being the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel of John Christ spoke of the Spirit as another Comforter who was to come (14:16). Christ was the Forerunner who cut the way so that the Spirit, the other Comforter, could come. This was the reason that when He was about to die, He told the disciples that He would pray for the coming of the Spirit of reality.

The Gospel of John also tells us that the Spirit was not yet until Christ was glorified (7:39). After Christ's resurrection, that is, after His glorification, He came to the disciples, breathed on them, and told them to receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). He told them to receive the second Comforter, the holy *pneuma*. Actually, this second One was the first. Christ Himself became the life-giving Spirit. Thus, the

second is the reality of the first. Now this One has come into all the redeemed ones and is present with them, as revealed in Acts and the Epistles.

The Epistles speak of the Spirit in our spirit, the Holy Spirit in the human spirit. This is the main subject of the Epistles. Nevertheless, it has been neglected by most Christians and allowed to lie buried in the pages of the New Testament. When we bring forth such a "diamond" and minister concerning it, many oppose us and even call us heretical, insisting that it is contrary to the creeds and the councils to say that Christ is the life-giving Spirit. We have dug away many things to uncover this diamond. However, others value the very things dug away, the "dirt," and depreciate the diamond. By this we can see the difference between the Lord's recovery and today's Christianity: they treasure the things that cover the diamonds, the "dirt," but we sweep the dirt away in order to recover the diamonds. Hallelujah, my pockets are full of diamonds!

The book of Revelation speaks not only of the Spirit, but also of the seven Spirits, the sevenfold Spirit. This sevenfold Spirit can be compared to a seven-way lightbulb, a bulb with a sevenfold brightness. The Lord's recovery is under a sevenfold light. The churches as the lampstands are under the sevenfold Spirit. How wonderful! Some Christians avoid the book of Revelation, thinking that this book is too mysterious and bothersome. But we are not bothered by this book—we are blessed and enlightened by it. Hallelujah, we have the Spirit, the life-giving Spirit, even the sevenfold Spirit!

According to Revelation 22:17, the Spirit and the bride speak as one. If I had been the writer of Revelation, this verse would have said, "Jesus Christ and His church say, Come." But this verse clearly says, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come."

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S REDEMPTION

My burden in this message concerns the relationship between the redemption of Christ and the Spirit. If we preach the redemption of Christ without the Spirit, we are

pitiful preachers, and we are preaching a dead redemption. Where is the power of Christ's redemption? The power of the redemption of Christ is in the Spirit.

We have pointed out again and again that the grating was connected to the four rings. These rings were also for the move of the altar. The altar was very heavy. If it were not for the poles in the rings, it would have been difficult to move it. This indicates that the Lord's move depends on the Spirit. For this reason, the Lord Jesus told the disciples to wait at Jerusalem until they received power by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them (Acts 1:8). Then they would be witnesses of Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and in the uttermost part of the world. This is the redemption of Christ, the cross of Christ, moving by the power of the Spirit upon the shoulders of human beings.

THE GRATING, THE RINGS, AND THE POLES

If we analyze the situation among Christians today, we shall see that there are the fundamentalists and the Pentecostalists. The fundamentalists have the objective redemption of Christ. This means that they only have the grating; they lack the four rings. The Pentecostalists, on the contrary, have some kind of rings, but the rings are not connected to the grating. The rings they have may be broken or may not be genuine. Thus, on the one side we have fundamentalists with the grating and no rings; on the other side, we have Pentecostalists with rings but no grating. But in the Lord's recovery we have the grating, the four rings, and the two poles. Because we have the grating, the rings, and the poles, we can be bold and full of joy.

I would encourage you to read the New Testament again in the light of this picture of the altar with the grating, the rings, and the poles. In the Gospels we see Christ as the grating and the rings in the process of being formed. In the book of Acts the four rings appear. Then all the Epistles from Romans through Revelation reveal more concerning the rings, concluding with the sevenfold Spirit. This is the revelation in the New Testament. By this we see that the

contents of the altar require the entire New Testament to be defined. The four Gospels portray the grating, and all the Epistles present a full picture of the four rings with the two poles. Praise the Lord for this clear picture showing how the redemption of Christ is living, powerful, and full of strength and efficacy before God and man!

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED EIGHT

THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

(5)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 27:4-7; 38:5; Isa. 53:8, 10a; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:23-26; Heb. 9:14; Gal. 3:13-14; Acts 1:8; 2:38; Eph. 1:13-14; Gal. 3:3

Some readers of the Bible may think that the altar of the burnt offering was a table or stand on which the offerings were placed, some kind of box with the sacrifices placed on top. Actually, the altar was somewhat like a shell. It had four sides and a grating in the middle, but no top or bottom. We know from Exodus 27 that the altar was five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high. Exodus 27:4-7 speaks of the grating, the rings, and the poles. If the grating with the four rings and the two poles which were placed in the rings were removed from the altar, the altar would be an empty shell, an empty box. Years ago, I paid attention to this "box"; yet I have no memory concerning the grating, the rings, and the poles. It seems that these three things did not impress me very much. Whenever I thought about the altar of the burnt offering, I would picture a shell, a box. The grating, the rings, and the poles, however, are the contents of the altar. Furthermore, these things are the reality, strength, and power of the altar. The power, strength, and reality of the altar depend on the contents of the altar.

We have pointed out that the grating is located at half the height of the altar and reaches from one side to the other. The grating must have been heavy and strong. Otherwise it could not have borne the weight of the wood and the sacrifices. It must have been made with bronze and thus able to withstand the heat.

THE REDEEMING CHRIST

Let us consider the picture portrayed by this type and ask what it signifies. Within the shell of the altar there was a grating, a network, and upon this grating were the wood and the sacrifices which were burned. As the offerings and the wood burned, the ashes fell down to the ground, but the smoke ascended as a sweet savor to God for His satisfaction. Thus, the sweet savor was for God's satisfaction, and the ashes were a proof that the offering had been accepted by God. When God smelled the sweet fragrance, He was satisfied and pleased. When the one who presented the sacrifice saw the ashes, his conscience could be at rest, for the ashes were proof that the sacrifice had been accepted by God and that the one who presented it had been forgiven. The grating was related to both the fragrance and the ashes. The fragrance was above the grating, and the ashes were below it.

The grating signifies more than just the redemption of Christ. According to the Bible, Christ and His redemption cannot be separated. Christ Himself is our redemption. Redemption is not merely a matter—it is also a Person. Yes, the grating does signify the redemption of Christ. However, it actually signifies the redeeming Christ. The grating is a type of Christ in His redemption.

To understand how the grating typifies the redeeming Christ, it would be helpful to compare the grating to the propitiation-cover on the ark. According to Romans 3:25, the propitiation-cover is Christ Himself. Propitiation is not merely an action accomplished by Christ; propitiation is Christ. The One who accomplished propitiation is Himself the propitiation-cover. The cover of the ark is a Person—Christ—in His accomplishment of propitiation. In the same principle, the grating signifies Christ, the Redeemer, in His redemption; that is, it signifies Christ Himself in His redemptive work.

We have seen that the ashes were evidence, a proof, a confirmation, that one's sacrifice had been acceptable to God and that his sin or sins had been forgiven. As a result,

God enjoyed the savor of Christ's redemption, and the offerer enjoyed peace.

It is important to see that the grating was not at the bottom of the altar or at the top. On the contrary, it was in the middle, halfway between the top and the bottom. This indicates that the judgment of God upon Christ was an inward matter and not only an outward one. Christ bore the judgment of God not only upon His shoulders; He also bore it within His heart. Psalm 22:14, which speaks of the sufferings of Christ on the cross, says, "My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." This indicates that when Christ suffered the judgment of God, He suffered this judgment not only outwardly, but also inwardly. This is the significance of the grating being within the altar and in the middle of it, neither at the top nor the bottom. Christ's suffering of God's righteous judgment was an internal matter and not only an external one.

We do not have the utterance adequate to speak of Christ, His cross, and His redemption. We are short of understanding, and we lack the ability to speak adequately concerning what we do understand. Therefore, we are thankful for the picture afforded by the altar of the burnt offering. This picture reveals details that are not clearly mentioned in the New Testament.

AN ETERNAL DEATH

If you would read through all twenty-seven books of the New Testament and study each verse related to Christ's redemption, the death of Christ, or the cross of Christ, you still will not have a clear view of what the death of Christ is. Christ's death is great and all-inclusive. According to the Bible, it is not simply a temporal death—it is an eternal death. According to Revelation 13:8, in the sight of God, Christ was slain from the foundation of the world. Hence, He is the eternal Redeemer, and His death, unlike that of sinful human beings, is an eternal death.

We cannot understand the death of Christ in full. Certain aspects of the redeeming death of Christ simply cannot

be explained. But the grating signifies the all-inclusive Christ with His eternal death. He bore the burning and the weight of the righteous judgment of God exercised upon Him. But although the picture of the altar portrays this, we still cannot understand in full all the details related to Christ's death.

THE ASHES AND THE FRAGRANCE

One matter related to the altar that I do not fully understand is the ledge. Regarding the ledge and the grating, the two words "under" and "beneath" are used. I believe that the ledge with the grating beneath it formed a hearth, a place of burning. As I have pointed out previously, the ledge may have protected the acacia wood inside the bronze covering on the four sides of the altar from being scorched by the intense heat. However, I cannot say exactly what the spiritual significance of the ledge is. It may signify the support given to Christ as He bore God's judgment on the cross. As He was bearing the burning of God's righteous judgment, He, as a human being, certainly needed something to sustain Him. The ledge may signify the support given to the redeeming Christ.

I would ask you to consider again the picture of the altar with the grating. As the wood and the sacrifices burned on the grating, the sweet fragrance ascended to God, and the wood and the sacrifices were reduced to ashes. To repeat, ashes are a strong confirmation that we have been accepted by God and that our sins have been forgiven by Him. Therefore, we can have peace. Ashes are a sign of this. The ashes, therefore, are for us, whereas the sweet fragrance is for God. May we all be impressed with the redeeming Christ as signified by the grating and the altar of the burnt offering.

THE REDEEMING CHRIST ISSUING IN THE SPIRIT

The grating issues in the four rings. The rings were not added to the grating; neither were they welded to it. According to the record, the four rings came out from the grating. I believe that the four ends of the crossbars of the grating

were inserted into holes in the side. I also believe that the ends of the bars projecting out through the holes in the altar were fashioned into rings. Thus, the rings were not separate from the grating, but formed one piece with it. I do not believe that after the grating was made, four rings were fashioned and then connected to the grating.

The rings forming one piece with the grating indicates that the redeeming Christ issues in the Spirit. The Spirit is not added to Christ. Certain Christians have a concept that the Spirit has been added to Christ. But the revelation in the Bible is that Christ issues in the all-inclusive Spirit. In other words, the all-inclusive Spirit is identical to Christ, and Christ is identified with the all-inclusive Spirit.

The four Gospels present the grating, the redeeming Christ. The redeeming Christ is absolutely a Person of the Spirit. He was born of the Spirit, He was filled with the Spirit, and He was always under the leading of the Spirit. Eventually, this redeeming Christ issued in the all-inclusive Spirit. In other words, according to the New Testament, the redeeming Christ became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45).

On the night before His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus told His disciples that another Comforter would come (John 14:16). In this prophecy the Lord indicated that this Comforter would be Himself. He, the Lord Jesus, would be the second Comforter. When He was speaking regarding this, He was the first Comforter. Thus, the first Comforter is the redeeming Christ; the second Comforter is the life-giving Spirit. The second Comforter is not another one. Rather, the first Comforter came back in another form as the second Comforter. This is signified in typology by the grating issuing in the four rings.

Many years ago, when I was in organized Christianity, I held the concept that Christ and the Spirit were separate. According to this concept, Christ has ascended to heaven and remains there, and the Spirit has come to earth in His place. This means that the first has gone and that the second is here. But through the study of the Bible and through more experience, I began to realize that these two,

Christ and the Spirit, are one. The second, the Spirit, issues out of the first, Christ, and Christ issues in the Spirit.

The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:45 that the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. Who is this last Adam? The last Adam is the redeeming Christ. Now this last Adam, the redeeming Christ, is a life-giving Spirit.

Concerning the altar, the burning depended on the grating, but the moving depended on the four rings. The rings, however, were not separate from the grating. As we consider this picture, we see that Christ, the Redeemer, is the grating, and the Spirit, typified by the rings, is for strengthening and moving. We have seen that the entire grating with the weight of the wood and the sacrifices was upheld by the four rings. If the four rings had been taken away, the grating and everything on it would have fallen down. Apart from the four rings, the grating had no support, no strength. The grating could stand in place and bear a heavy load for the burning judgment of God because the grating was upheld by the four rings. Therefore, the rings were not only the power for moving, but also the strength for upholding the grating.

A PERSONAL CHRIST AND A PERSONAL REDEMPTION

If we do not have a Christ who issues in the Spirit, then to us Christ is merely a historical figure, and His redemption is nothing more than a doctrine. For many Christians today, Christ is just a historical Person, and Christ's redemption is only a doctrine. They do not have any personal experience of Christ or of His redemption. On the contrary, to them, Christ and His redemption are strictly objective. Christ is historically objective, and redemption is doctrinally objective.

I can testify that, before I was saved, I also was a person for whom Christ and redemption were objective matters. At that time, I did not have any experience of Christ or of His redemption. Nevertheless, because Christianity was my family religion, I defended it. I defended Christ and the cross. But one day, I was genuinely saved. I contacted

the Lord Jesus in a real way, I received Him, and I had a personal experience of His redemption.

Today there are millions of so-called Christians who have Christ only as a historical Redeemer and redemption only as a doctrine. They do not have a personal Christ or a personal redemption. Do you know the reason for this? The reason is that for them Christ and His redemption have been separated from the Spirit. Therefore, in the Lord's recovery we must touch Christ in the Spirit and minister Him in the Spirit. Whenever we preach the gospel, we must do so in the Spirit. Our grating must have four rings. Our redeeming Christ must issue in the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit.

The New Testament is composed in such a way that it reveals the grating issuing in the four rings. In the four Gospels we see the redeeming Christ issuing in the Spirit. At the end of the Gospels and in the Acts, we have the Spirit. Furthermore, throughout the Epistles the Spirit is emphasized. For example, Paul charges us to walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). Finally, in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, we have the sevenfold, intensified Spirit (Rev. 1:4). According to Revelation 22:17, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Therefore, according to the New Testament, the Spirit is the issue of the redeeming Christ. This is the grating with the four rings.

THE MOVE OF THE CROSS BY THE CHURCH IN THE SPIRIT

Now we need to say a word concerning the poles. The poles were staves. Both the rings and the poles must have been very strong in order to bear the weight of the altar. Remember, the altar was about seven and a half feet square, and it was made of acacia wood overlaid with bronze. Thus, it must have been very heavy. Because of the weight of the altar, more than four men must have been needed to carry it. Perhaps as many as sixteen persons were needed to move the altar. The Bible, of course, does not tell us the number. The point here is that the carrying of the altar was done by a corporate body.

By using the words "corporate" and "body" I wish to point out that the move of the cross is by the church. The company of men bearing the altar signify the move of the cross by the church. And what kind of church is this? It must be a church with the four rings, not a church which has been deprived of the Spirit, but a church that remains in the Spirit.

The picture of the altar portrays the redeeming Christ, the all-inclusive Spirit, and the church. It is not sufficient for the cross of Christ to be preached by individuals. If we are individualistic, we lose the power necessary to preach the cross. The cross of Christ must be preached by the church. In other words, it is the Body which carries the cross of Christ, which carries the redeeming Christ in the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit.

As we consider the type of the altar, we see that the altar with the grating, the rings, and the poles signifies the entire New Testament. The New Testament reveals the redeeming Christ, the Spirit, and the church. According to the New Testament, Christ, the redeeming One, issues in the all-inclusive Spirit, and in this Spirit, the church, the Body, bears Christ and His cross. The altar moves by the poles in the rings upon the shoulders of a corporate body. We today are included in the number of those carrying the altar. We have put our shoulders under the poles, and we are carrying the redeeming Christ in the all-inclusive Spirit.

What we need today is the full realization of the redeeming Christ and the genuine experience of the Spirit. We need to realize Christ and His redemption, and we need to experience the Spirit who is the issue of the redeeming Christ. Then we shall become a living church carrying this testimony to the four corners of the earth.

THE SPIRIT MOVING WITH THE CHURCH

In Revelation 5 the seven Spirits, which are the seven eyes of the Lamb, are sent throughout all the earth. However, these seven Spirits are not sent alone; the seven Spirits are sent with the churches. Therefore, if we do not go

to a certain place, the Spirit will not have a way to go there either, for the Spirit goes in us, with us, and through us, the members of the Body. If the poles do not go to a certain part of the earth, how can the rings go to that place? The rings go wherever the poles go. When the poles move, the rings move also. Likewise, when the poles stop, the rings also stop. This means that if there were no Christians on earth today, there would be no move of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit moves with the believers. In other words, the Spirit moves with the church. The church bears the power of the Spirit.

Those who carried the altar first carried the poles. When they bore the poles, they also bore the rings, and when they bore the rings, they bore the grating with the entire altar. This is the reason I say that the altar with the grating, rings, and poles covers the whole New Testament. As we consider this picture, we need to ask ourselves where we are today. We all must have our shoulders under the poles that are in the rings bearing the grating. We must be those bearing the redeeming Christ in the all-inclusive Spirit as a testimony.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED NINE

THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

(6)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 27:4-7; 38:5; Isa. 53:8, 10a; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:23-26; Heb. 9:14; Gal. 3:13-14; Acts 1:8; 2:38; Eph. 1:13-14; Gal. 3:3

THE LOCATION OF THE GRATING

In this message we shall consider the matter of the location of the grating inside the altar. In Exodus 27 we are told clearly that the grating was at half of the height of the altar. Since the altar was three cubits high, the grating was positioned one and a half cubits above the bottom of the altar. The ark of the testimony was one and a half cubits high. Therefore, the grating and the propitiation-cover of the ark were on the same level.

In the messages on the ark, I pointed out that the dimensions of the ark were all in halves. The ark was two and a half cubits in length, one and a half cubits in width, and one and a half cubits in height. These dimensions are precisely half of the length and height of the altar. As we have pointed out, the altar was five cubits wide, five cubits long, and three cubits high.

We have seen that there were one and a half cubits below the grating and another one and a half cubits above the grating. The fact that there were one and a half cubits underneath the grating signifies the standard according to which the redemption of Christ was accomplished. The standard of the redemption of Christ was up to the requirement of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. This is signified by the bronze grating of network being at the half height of

the altar and thereby on the same level as the height of the ark of the testimony with the propitiation-cover.

Christ died on the cross to accomplish the all-inclusive redemption for us according to the standard of the ark. The ark was the place where God could meet with man. Man is fallen. He has been distracted from God, and he has deviated from God's way. Nevertheless, God wants to meet with fallen man. To make such a meeting possible, something had to be done according to the standard of God.

If you closely examine the record of the ark in Exodus, you will see that the ark is related to God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. The cherubim signify glory, and the law points to God's righteousness. Furthermore, the gold overlaying the ark signifies God's holiness. The righteousness, holiness, and glory of God all make demands on fallen man. If, as fallen sinners, we want to meet with God, we must fulfill the requirements of His standard. His standard involves His righteousness, holiness, and glory. Romans 3:23 says that we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. This indicates that God's glory is a measuring rod and that, when measured by it, we all come short. Because we cannot reach up to the height of God's glory, we are not qualified to meet with Him.

Christ died an all-inclusive death for the accomplishment of our redemption. This was according to God's requirements, according to the height of God's standard related to His righteousness, holiness, and glory. This is the significance of the grating being at the same level as that of the propitiation-cover on the ark. It is on this level that God can meet with us, and it is on this level that we can be brought back to Him.

God dwells in the Holy of Holies. But one day He came out of the Holy of Holies to the outer court. This means that God came down from heaven to earth to bring man back to Himself. In order to accomplish this, God traveled from the ark to the altar, that is, to the cross. The destination of God's journey from heaven to earth was the altar, the cross. At the altar God seemed to say, "Sinners, I want you to come

back to Me. But if you want to come back to Me, something must take place so that My requirements are fulfilled. Your coming back to Me and My meeting with you must be according to the standard of My requirements." This is the significance of the grating being on the same level as the propitiation-cover of the ark. If it were possible to draw a line from the grating in the altar to the propitiation-cover on the ark, we would see that these two were on the same level. Christ's all-inclusive death for redemption, therefore, matches the standard of God's requirements.

THE EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S REDEMPTION

We have pointed out that the ashes from the sacrifices that burned on the grating fell to the bottom of the altar, whereas the fragrant aroma of the sacrifices ascended to God. Thus, the one who presented the sacrifice could see the ashes and thereby have evidence, confirmation, proof, that he had been forgiven and accepted. As believers, we may have the assurance that because Christ's redemption reaches the level of God's requirements—the standard of His righteousness, holiness, and glory—we have been accepted by God. Now we must go on to see the significance of the height of the part of the altar above the grating being the same as the part underneath the grating. This signifies that the efficacy of Christ's redemption is according to its standard. The fragrant aroma of the sacrifices ascended for God's satisfaction. This refers to the efficacy of Christ's redemption. The efficacy is according to the same standard as the accomplishment of redemption. How is it possible for God to be satisfied with Christ's redemption? God can be satisfied because Christ's redemption fulfills all His requirements. As a result, this redemption has an efficacy, and this efficacy is according to the same standard for God's satisfaction.

These matters are difficult to explain, but we realize them by experiencing them in the spirit. Whenever we enjoy Christ and His redemption, we have the sense deep within that Christ's redemption is fully according to the standard of God's requirements. Moreover, we realize that the efficacy

of Christ's redemption is such that it satisfies God according to His requirements.

You may have had this kind of experience when you were saved, although you may not have had the words to describe it. I can testify that I experienced this when I was saved more than fifty years ago. I had full peace because I realized that Christ's death on the cross fulfilled all of God's requirements. The requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory had been fulfilled by the redeeming death of Christ. Knowing that because of this I was no longer short of God's requirements, I was at peace. No longer could anything condemn me or drive me away from God. I could not be blamed or cast into hell. I had the full assurance that Christ died to fulfill God's requirements for me. What else could God require of me? I had such assurance and peace that I could even challenge God and say, "God, the death of Christ has fulfilled all of Your requirements. What else can you demand of me?" All new believers should issue such a challenge to God, knowing that Christ has fulfilled the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory for us. If you challenge God in this way, asking what else He can demand of you, He may reply, "I have no further demands. The unique death of Christ has fulfilled all of My requirements."

Because the grating is on the same level as the propitiation-cover, God can come to converse with us. Here on the propitiation-cover we can have fellowship with Him. Hallelujah, the requirements have been fulfilled, and we do not have any shortage!

When I was saved, I had a deep realization that God was pleased and satisfied. This is the fragrant aroma ascending to Him for His pleasure and satisfaction. This is the efficacy of Christ's redemption being according to God's standard for His satisfaction. Praise the Lord that we have peace and that God has satisfaction! Therefore, both we and God are happy. This is the enjoyment and experience of Christ with His redemption in the four rings, the Spirit.

Underneath we have the ashes, and above we have the

sweet fragrance. Both the ashes and the fragrance are according to the standard of God's requirements. Furthermore, we are not carrying the altar in an individualistic way, but in a corporate way. The church is bearing the poles in the rings to testify the redeeming Christ in the all-inclusive Spirit.

THE REVELATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

With the altar of burnt offering we have a picture of the entire New Testament. Here we see the redeeming Christ issuing in the all-inclusive Spirit for His move through His Body. This is portrayed, as we have seen, by the altar with the grating, the rings, and the poles. The Body of Christ bears the testimony of Jesus throughout the earth by the all-inclusive Spirit. This is the revelation of the New Testament. The reality of Christ and His redemption are with the Spirit typified by the four rings. Without the rings, the altar would have no power, strength, or reality. In the same principle, without the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, Christ and His redemption would become empty and powerless. They would have no impact and no reality.

It is common among Christians today to have many things without the life-giving Spirit. In Catholicism there are stories and also certain superstitions, but all this is without the life-giving Spirit. In Protestantism there are many scriptural and fundamental things, but the life-giving Spirit may be lacking. For this reason, in Protestantism there is also the shortage of reality. Regarding this matter, what is the goal of the Lord's recovery? The goal of the Lord's recovery is to recover the reality, life, livingness, strength, power, and impact of the matters revealed in the Scriptures.

If you gather together the various matters revealed in the Scriptures without the Spirit, you will have a religion. This religion may be Judaism, Catholicism, or Protestantism. But in each case the principle is the same: there is some kind of ism without the life-giving Spirit. The life-giving Spirit is the life pulse, the reality, the power, and the impact of all the doctrines and stories in the Bible. The Bible contains many

wonderful stories and doctrines. However, if we do not have the Triune God processed to become the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, all these stories and doctrines will be just a religious ism. This is not God's salvation. God's salvation is Christ as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, who is the ultimate expression of the processed Triune God. It is very important to see this.

As I pointed out in the previous message, I believe that the four rings on the four corners were of one piece with the grating, not something added to the grating. This signifies that the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit is the issue of the redeeming Christ. The Spirit is not added to Christ; rather, the Spirit issues out of Christ. On the one hand, we may say that the life-giving Spirit issues from Christ; on the other hand, we may say that Christ issues in the Spirit. Therefore, Christ and the Spirit are one. In nature the rings were the same as the grating. This signifies the identity of Christ with the Spirit.

I have read a number of expositions of the tabernacle with its furniture. Just recently I consulted some books that have pictures of the tabernacle and its furniture. But none of these books covers the crucial significance of the grating with the rings for the poles. If the grating, the rings, and the poles were taken away from the altar, the altar would become a useless, empty shell. The meaning and significance of the altar depend on the grating, the rings, and the poles.

We all need to be deeply impressed with the fact that the grating was on the same level as the propitiation-cover of the ark. This signifies that Christ accomplished redemption according to the requirements of the propitiation-cover. The propitiation-cover represents all the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. The shekinah glory was in the Holy of Holies. Furthermore, the cherubim, representing God's glory, were on the cover of the ark. These cherubim were observing the situation and functioning as guardians of God's glory. These cherubim were made of gold, and the ark of the testimony was overlaid with gold. Gold

here signifies God's holy nature. This holiness also has demands, requirements. In addition, inside the ark was the righteous law of God with its righteous requirements. Therefore, related to the propitiation-cover of the ark there was the threefold demand of God's glory, holiness, and righteousness. However, the grating in the altar was on the same level as the propitiation-cover on the ark, indicating that the redemption accomplished by Christ fully measured up to the standard of God's requirements.

The effectiveness, the efficacy, of Christ's redemption is also according to the standard of God's requirements. On the one hand, the ashes fell down; on the other hand, the fragrant aroma ascended. The ashes are the evidence that we have been accepted and forgiven and no longer have problems with God. The problems have been solved, and the ashes remain as a confirmation that it is now possible for us to be with God. The fragrance that ascended from the altar was for God's satisfaction. Therefore, we are at peace, and God is happy, joyful, and satisfied. This indicates that the cross of Christ meets God's requirements and satisfies God's heart; the cross also meets our need and gives us peace. The more we consider the significance of the picture of the altar of burnt offering, the more we realize something regarding the cross of Christ that is not revealed in plain words in the New Testament.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TEN

THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 27:9-17; 38:9-20; 40:33

In this message we come to the court of the tabernacle. It seems that the court would be easy to understand. Actually, this is not the case. If we try merely to understand the dimensions and materials of the court, we shall not have difficulty. But if we seek to know the spiritual significance of the court of the tabernacle, we shall find that this is not easy to understand.

CATEGORIES OF MATERIALS

As a help to understanding the spiritual significance of the court of the tabernacle, I would like to point out a few matters. First, we need to realize that in the building of the tabernacle, the furniture, and the outer court, there are three main categories of materials. The first category is metal, minerals. Gold, silver, and bronze are all of metal. The second category is plants. The minerals are not related to life, but plants certainly are of life. Both the acacia wood and the linen are of the plant life. The third category of materials is that derived from the animal life. Some of the materials, such as the rams' skin and the goats' hair, come from land animals, but the porpoise skins come from sea animals. The materials taken from animals are also related to life. As we have pointed out elsewhere, the plant life is for generation, for production and propagation, and the animal life is for redemption.

The main metals used in the tabernacle were gold, silver, and bronze. According to the sequence of the record in Exodus, gold is mentioned first, then silver, and then bronze.

From the inside to the outside, the sequence is gold, silver, and bronze. But from the outside to the inside, the sequence is bronze, silver, and gold. God's view is from the inside to the outside, but our view is from the outside to the inside. Therefore, with God the sequence is gold, silver, and bronze. But with us the sequence is bronze, silver, and gold.

Regarding materials taken from the plant life, the record first mentions acacia wood and then linen. However, with the tabernacle and the furnishings, the acacia wood was not visible. It was overlaid by either gold or bronze. The linen, of course, was visible.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS

If we consider the tabernacle, the furniture, and the outer court as a whole, we shall see that the entire situation indicates two important matters: righteousness and holiness. You may think that you know the meaning of righteousness and holiness in the Bible. Christians often talk about holiness, and many Christians desire to be holy. They may not talk as much about righteousness. However, in the Bible righteousness is mentioned not less than holiness. In some verses righteousness and holiness are put together. For example, Ephesians 4:24 says that the new man was created in "righteousness and holiness of the truth." Here we have righteousness and holiness together with truth. According to Colossians 3:10, the new man is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of God. The image of God is related to righteousness and holiness. At this point, we need to ask a crucial question: How can righteousness and holiness be related to the image of God? We should not take what the Bible says concerning righteousness and holiness for granted, or assume that we understand these matters because we have been reading the Bible for years. It is very significant that the new man is being renewed according to the image of God and that this image is related to righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Let us consider some verses which help us to see the

significance of righteousness. In 2 Corinthians 3:8 and 9 Paul says that the ministry of the new covenant is a ministry of the Spirit and also a ministry of righteousness. The ministry of the old covenant was of death and condemnation. Death is versus the Spirit, and condemnation is versus justification. However, here Paul does not say that the new covenant ministry is a ministry of justification. He says that it is a ministry of righteousness. The new covenant ministry is a ministry of the Spirit for life and of righteousness for justification. We need to ask what it means to say that this ministry is a ministry of righteousness.

In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul first says that the ministry of the old covenant was of death and then, that it was of condemnation. But in our thinking condemnation comes first and death follows. Paul, however, mentions death before condemnation. In the New Testament we have righteousness unto life, and also life issuing in righteousness. On the one hand, righteousness may come first and be followed by life; on the other hand, life may precede righteousness and issue in righteousness. Hence, regarding righteousness and life there are two sides: the side of righteousness unto life, and the side of life unto righteousness. In the same principle, in the Bible we have condemnation unto death, and death resulting in condemnation.

When a sinner comes to God, that sinner is condemned, and this condemnation issues in death. This is condemnation unto death. This is one side. The other side is that we may be in a condition of death, and this condition issues in condemnation. This is death unto condemnation. From one side there is condemnation unto death; on the other side, there is death unto condemnation. In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul is speaking from the standpoint of the second side, that is, of a condition, a state, of death resulting in condemnation.

Before we were saved, everything we were and everything we did were in death. That was our condition. The result of such a condition was condemnation. God condemns every aspect of our past. Even today, if we continue to live in the old creation, we shall be in a condition of death, a

condition which is under God's condemnation. The entire old creation is under the condemnation of God. But the new covenant ministry comes to impart the Spirit into us, that is, to regenerate us and make us living. Therefore, the Spirit who imparts life issues in righteousness.

Suppose a sinner repents and believes in the Lord Jesus. Immediately he is justified. No longer is he condemned, for God's righteousness is given to him. This is righteousness unto life. Because such a repentant sinner receives God's righteousness and is justified, he has life. This is one side. Now that he has life, if he lives by this life, the result will be righteousness. This is the other side, the side of life unto righteousness. The new covenant ministry not only brings us to God so that we may be justified; it brings us into a state, a condition, to have a living of righteousness. This means that the ministry of the New Testament ministers the Spirit to us so that we may have a living of righteousness. The Spirit is the life supply, and righteousness is the expression of God.

The Bible speaks often concerning the righteousness of the law. What is the righteousness of the law? In order to answer this question, we need to know what the law is. In this Life-study of Exodus we have strongly emphasized the fact that the law, the Ten Commandments, is a portrait of what God is. The Ten Commandments are of two categories. The first four commandments are of one category, and the last six commandments are of another category. The first four commandments are concerned with God: not to have any god other than God Himself, not to make images or idols, not to take the name of the Lord in vain, and to keep the Sabbath day as a sign of belonging to the Lord. These four commandments are related to God's holy nature. Thus, the first four commandments are concerned with God's holiness.

The last six commandments are concerned with honoring parents, murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, and coveting. According to these commandments, we must have a good relationship with our parents, we

must not murder, we must not commit adultery, we must not steal, we must not give a false testimony, and we must not covet. These six commandments are related to God's deeds, which are a matter of righteousness. Therefore, the first four commandments are related to God's holiness, and the last six commandments are related to God's righteousness. As to His nature, God is holy. As to His deeds, He is righteous. This will help us to understand why the new man must be in the image of God with respect to righteousness and holiness. From God's side, we need holiness and then righteousness. But from our side, we first have righteousness and then holiness. Ephesians 4:24 speaks from our side, saying that the new man is according to righteousness and holiness.

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM

In Romans 14:17 Paul says that the kingdom of God is righteousness. The proper church life is a life of the kingdom of God, and this kingdom is righteousness. In the Bible righteousness is the fulfillment of the Ten Commandments. Our basis for saying this is Romans 8:4. This verse says that when we walk according to spirit, the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us. Therefore, righteousness is the fulfilling of the law, and the law is the image, the expression, of God. This means that righteousness is the expression of God. Hence, righteousness is God's image. When we walk according to spirit, we certainly shall not have any god other than God Himself. Likewise, we shall not have idols, we shall not take God's name in vain, we shall have a sign that we belong to God, and we shall fulfill all the other commandments. This is to live a life of righteousness. This righteousness, the fulfilling of the law, is the expression of God.

To live a life of righteousness is to live in the kingdom. This kind of life is a life that is governed, regulated. Is your daily Christian life a life in the kingdom? Many of us have to admit that our daily life is not a life in the kingdom, a life where everything is regulated, governed, and ruled. How can we say that our life is a life in the kingdom, if we are

careless with material things, not right with others, and loose in the way we talk? Furthermore, we may give testimonies that are not accurate, and we may be covetous. As a result, we are not righteous. There is no rule, regulation, or government in our living. If this is the case, we are not people in the kingdom of God.

Do you know what the kingdom of God is? The kingdom of God means that everything is under God's regulation, rule, and government. This kingdom is righteousness, the expression of what God is. Psalm 89:14 (lit.) says that righteousness is the foundation of God's throne. God's throne is established in righteousness. Moreover, Isaiah says that when the kingdom comes, it will be filled with righteousness. In the Gospel of Matthew, the book on the kingdom of the heavens, the Lord Jesus emphasized righteousness. He said that we must hunger and thirst after righteousness and even be persecuted for the sake of righteousness (Matt. 5:6, 10). He also said that we must first seek God's kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33). He told us that if our righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees, we shall not be able to enter into the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 5:20). According to Revelation, the bride will be adorned with righteousness (Rev. 19:8). The fine linen garments of the bride will be her righteousness. Thus, the appearance of the prepared bride will be of fine linen, of righteousness. Furthermore, 2 Peter 3:13 says that righteousness will dwell in the new heaven and new earth. There will be a kingdom, a government, that will be justified by God. This righteous condition will be the issue of life.

Today on earth, apart from God's people, there is no righteousness that expresses God. There is nothing justified by God which is the issue of life. On the contrary, everything is condemned. When God looks upon this earth, He condemns it, for the entire earth is under death. Because death is everywhere, condemnation comes in. However, with God's redeemed people, the church, the situation is very different. The church is filled with the Spirit of life, and this Spirit of

life issues in a state, a condition, that is altogether righteous. This condition can be justified by God in every way and in every aspect. This is the righteousness that is the expression of God in life. Such a condition of righteousness will continue into the next age. As we have pointed out, the bride prepared for the marriage of the Lamb will wear righteousness. Her entire appearance will be the expression of life. With her, there will be nothing of death or condemnation; everything will be of life and righteousness. This righteousness signifies the fulfilling of God's requirements and also a rule, a regulating, under His government. Again I say, this righteousness is the expression of the righteous God.

THE EXPRESSION OF THE RIGHTEOUS GOD

A person approaching the tabernacle from afar would first see the fine linen. Since linen signifies righteousness, this means that a person approaching the tabernacle from a distance would see righteousness. The appearance of the tabernacle and the outer court to those outside is of linen, of righteousness. Likewise, the appearance of the church today as God's kingdom is righteousness, the appearance of the bride prepared for Christ will be righteousness, and in the new heaven and new earth in eternity there will be the expression of righteousness. Linen is produced from the plant life. Hence, it is an issue of life. This signifies that righteousness is the issue of life.

When others contact the church and examine the church, they should be able to say that in the church life everything is in order and under the rule and regulation of God. This is to see the fine linen, to see righteousness. This is the kingdom of God and the expression of the righteous God.

The tabernacle was set up in a sphere of white linen, that is, in a sphere of righteousness. This means that righteousness became the sphere of the tabernacle. The church also has its existence in a sphere of righteousness. This was the reason Paul charged the church at Corinth to cast out the sinful one from the church life. Because the church is the

kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is righteousness, there should be no disorder in the church. The church must be in a sphere of righteousness.

Furthermore, this righteousness is also the boundary of the church. Outside the church there is confusion, disorder, and uncleanness, but inside the church everything is clean and in a proper order. Outside the church, nothing is under the rule of God, but inside the church everything is under the control and regulation of the Spirit.

The new covenant ministry is a ministry of the Spirit, which ministers the Spirit into the believers. This Spirit brings in the life supply, which issues in righteousness. Righteousness then becomes the expression of the righteous God.

A TESTIMONY OF THE WHOLE

The court of the tabernacle was a hundred cubits long. These hundred cubits were divided into twenty sections by twenty pillars. Thus, regarding the length of the outer court, we have the numbers one hundred, twenty, and five, five coming from a hundred divided by twenty. In the Bible, five is the number of responsibility. One hundred cubits means twenty times responsibility. The width of the outer court was fifty cubits, divided by ten pillars into ten sections measuring five cubits each.

The outer court was a rectangle with the length, one hundred cubits, twice the measurement of the width, fifty cubits. The total area was half a hundred-cubit square. Half a square indicates that another half is coming. (The dimensions of the ark were also in half units.) The New Jerusalem will not be a rectangle. It will be a square, for in eternity everything will have been fulfilled. But now everything has not been fulfilled. There is still something to come. The rectangular area of the outer court testifies of this. This indicates that two halves are needed to make a whole, but we have just one half and are awaiting the second half. This means that what we have now is a testimony of the whole.

BECOMING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

With the outer court of the tabernacle, there was a total of sixty sections, twenty sections on each of the two sides and ten sections at each end. Sixty is half of one hundred twenty, just as six is half of twelve. In the New Jerusalem there will not be the number six. Instead, the number twelve will be there: twelve foundations, twelve gates, twelve pearls, twelve months, twelve fruits. The number six is the number of man, for man was created on the sixth day. Furthermore, the number of the coming Antichrist will be six hundred sixty-six.

How is it possible for man, the number six, to become the righteousness of God? In answering this question, 2 Corinthians 5:21 is a crucial verse: "Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf, that we might become God's righteousness in Him." This verse does not say that we shall become the holiness of God or the glory of God; it says that we shall become the righteousness of God. The new covenant ministry ministers the processed Triune God as the life-giving Spirit into us so that a certain condition may result. This condition is righteousness.

The hangings for the outer court were made of fine linen, signifying the righteousness of God. The linen hung on the pillars, and the pillars stood in the sockets. From a distance, a person would see linen. When he entered, he would see the altar of burnt offerings. This altar, made of bronze, was quite large, five cubits in length and width and three cubits in height. The bronze overlaying the altar came from the censers of two hundred and fifty of the children of Israel who were judged by God. Thus, an Israelite looking at the altar would immediately be reminded of God's righteous judgment. Both the pillars and the sockets in the outer court were also made of bronze (27:10).

RIGHTEOUSNESS COMING OUT OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

The fact that the white linen hung on pillars of bronze indicates that the righteousness of God comes out of God's

judgment. From the outside, the main thing we see is linen. But when we come inside the court, the most striking thing is bronze: the bronze altar, the bronze pillars, the bronze sockets—all signifying the righteous judgment of God. This indicates that the righteous judgment of God issues in His righteousness.

When viewed as a whole, the outer court shows that everything is under God's judgment. But whatever is judged by God becomes righteous. In the church life, everything must be under God's judgment: our nature, our actions, our words. If we are not under the judgment of God, we cannot be right with anyone. If you would be right with your parents, you need to be under God's judgment. If you would be right with your husband or wife, you must also be under God's judgment. Our righteousness, our white linen, must hang on pillars of bronze.

We are the number six, the number of fallen man. Whatever we are, whatever we do, whatever we say, and whatever we have are all the number six, under God's condemnation. Everything related to us must be judged. Whether we have a good temperament or a bad one, that temperament must be judged because we are fallen. Those who are proud and also those who are humble need to be judged. No matter what kind of person we may be, we need to be judged. Those who are obedient and those who are disobedient must all be judged.

If we try to justify ourselves, we shall have difficulties. Those who cause trouble in the church life are those who justify themselves. Instead of justifying ourselves, we need to place ourselves under God's judgment. If we do this, we shall not have problems with others. If we are under the judgment of God, we shall not have problems with our parents, with our wife or husband, with our children, or with the saints in the church. Then wherever we may be, we shall not have problems in the church life. But if we are not under God's judgment, then wherever we may be in the church life, we shall have difficulties. Wherever we go, we shall trouble the church. If we are talkative, we shall cause trouble, and if

we are quiet, we shall cause trouble. Likewise, we shall cause trouble whether we are a quick person or a slow one, proud or humble. Thus, we must be under God's judgment in order to have the white linen. The linen hangs only on the judgment of God.

How can today's Christians have white linen if they do not experience God's judgment? This is impossible. What, then, about the church? The church, including all of us, must be judged. We should not judge anyone else; it is we ourselves who need to be judged. Once again I say that the existence of the white linen depends on God's judgment. The linen must hang on bronze pillars set in bronze sockets.

I can testify that I have experienced God's judgment upon my talking to the saints. Sometimes, after speaking with others, I was judged by God for speaking in a natural way, or with an attitude that was not altogether pure. Then I decided to be quiet and not say anything. However, when I tried to be quiet, I was judged for my quietness, for my silence was natural. At a certain point I should have said something, and I was judged for not doing so. Therefore, whether I spoke or was quiet in the natural life, I experienced God's judgment. I mention this to point out that God's judgment is not a mere teaching; it is very experiential.

It is not a simple matter to be righteous. Being righteous depends on God's judgment. Consider again the picture of the white linen hanging on the bronze in the outer court. Without the bronze, there would be no place for the linen. It simply could not exist. The significance of this is that without God's judgment, we cannot have righteousness. If we are not judged by God, we cannot be right with anyone. We can only be wrong, for we are the fallen number six.

God's dwelling place must be in a sphere of righteousness and have righteousness as its boundary. This righteousness, however, can exist only when we are under God's righteous judgment. It is God's judgment that produces the righteousness which is the expression of God as the boundary and sphere of His dwelling place.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED ELEVEN

THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 27:9-19; 38:9-20; 40:33

I. SIGNIFYING THE SPHERE AND BOUNDARY OF GOD'S BUILDING

The outer court signifies the sphere and boundary of God's building. The tabernacle not only typifies Christ Himself, but also typifies God's dwelling place on earth. God's dwelling place is in four stages: Christ, the children of Israel, the church, and the New Jerusalem. Christ is God's dwelling place, God's building. In the Old Testament Israel also was God's dwelling place. Now in the New Testament the church is the building of God, His dwelling place. In the millennium the New Jerusalem will be God's dwelling place for eternity.

The book entitled *The Vision of God's Building* shows that the entire Bible is a book of building. In the first two chapters of the Bible, Genesis 1 and 2, we have the materials for the building. Genesis 2 mentions gold, bdellium (a kind of pearl), and onyx stones. In the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22, we have a building made of these three categories of material. Between these two ends of the Bible there is the process of God's building.

For the fulfillment of His plan to have an eternal building, God first created all things. Creation was a work of preparation. God's main work is the work of building. When we read the Bible, we may pay attention to God's creation, but not to God's work for His building. God's selection, predestination, calling, redemption, and salvation are all for

the building. Even regeneration is for God's building. Whatever God is doing today—in preaching the gospel, edifying the saints, or establishing churches—is part of His building work. In other words, these activities are part of God's main work, the work of building. God has a goal, and this goal is to build a universal dwelling place for Himself. In the tabernacle in Exodus we have a type, a model, of this building.

Although the tabernacle was rather small, ten cubits wide and thirty cubits long, it is unique in every aspect. It would be difficult to change anything related to it. No human being would make such a design. As we have pointed out, the tabernacle was according to the pattern shown to Moses on the mountain. Thus, the pattern of the tabernacle was a heavenly pattern.

The tabernacle as God's building had a sphere and a boundary. This sphere and boundary were the outer court. I prefer a house with a wall to mark the boundary of the property. Such a dwelling has a boundary with a definite sphere. We know from the book of Revelation that the New Jerusalem will have a wall one hundred forty-four cubits high. This indicates that God's building has a boundary. God likes to have a wall to mark the boundary of His dwelling place.

II. ITS SIZE

The length of the court of the tabernacle was one hundred cubits. The number one hundred is composed of ten times ten. This signifies completion of completion. This expression can be compared to the expressions King of kings or song of songs, indicating that it is the best, the highest, of completion.

The width of the court was fifty cubits. Fifty is composed of ten times five and signifies complete responsibility. Ten is the number of completion, and five is the number of responsibility. Without the five fingers on our hand, it would be difficult to bear responsibility. On each hand we have four fingers plus one thumb. The number four signifies human beings as God's creatures, and one signifies God. Man plus God gives us the ability to bear responsibility. As believers,

we are human beings with God added to us. Our number is now the number five.

The area of the outer court formed a rectangle one hundred cubits in length and fifty cubits in width. This rectangle was half of a square with sides of a hundred cubits. This half of a square signifies one half of a whole unit. It also indicates that another half is necessary. Thus, it implies a testimony.

The outer court was a testimony. One half was present and the other half was yet to come. The New Jerusalem will be a complete whole, a square and not a rectangle. We, of course, are not yet in that age of fullness. We are still in the age of testimony, waiting for the coming of the other half. We are like one half of a married couple that needs the other half for completion.

III. THE HANGINGS

The hangings of the court signify Christ as God's righteousness to be the expression of God's building as its boundary (27:9, 11-12, 14-15). Christ as God's righteousness is both the expression and the boundary of God's building. Here we have three important words: righteousness, expression, and boundary. Christ is God's righteousness, Christ is God's expression, and Christ is the boundary of God's building.

The fine linen signifies God's righteousness, and this righteousness of God is actually Christ Himself. Christ is God's righteousness becoming righteousness to us. Christ is our righteousness, and this righteousness is the righteousness of God. This Christ, who is both God's and ours, is the expression of God's building.

Whenever the tabernacle with the outer court was erected in the wilderness, the people could see white linen as the sphere of God's building. This expression was white, bright, clean, and in order. There was no mixture, and there was nothing dirty. The tabernacle with the outer court portrayed a sphere where everything was righteousness, the righteousness of God lived out through Christ and now also lived out through His church. The church today must have a

proper expression, the expression which is Christ Himself as our righteousness. The boundary of God's building is such a righteous expression. The boundary of the church is the church's expression of Christ to be the expression of God's building. However, often there is a shortage of such a boundary or expression among Christians today because they are short of Christ. They are lacking in the living out of Christ to express God in righteousness.

In Ephesians 4:24 Paul speaks of the new man. This new man is actually the building of God. When we compare Ephesians 4:24 with Colossians 3:10, we see that the new man will be renewed in the image of God in righteousness and holiness of the truth. The image of God has a twofold expression—righteousness and holiness. The new man is renewed in the image of God, which bears the expression of righteousness and holiness.

In the tabernacle the expression of God's building was righteousness outwardly and holiness inwardly. In the outer court there were the hangings of linen signifying God's righteousness. Inside the tabernacle there was gold. The boards and the furniture were overlaid with gold. The gold signifies God's nature, which is holiness. Holiness is God's nature, and righteousness refers to God's deeds. Whatever God says and does is righteous. All God's acts are righteous. Hence, righteousness is the expression of God in His doings, whereas holiness is the expression of God in His nature.

The church today as God's building should have this twofold expression of God. The outward expression of the church should be righteousness, and the inward expression should be holiness. On the outside of the church, others should be able to see an expression of God in righteousness. But from inside the church everything should be golden; that is, there should be the expression of God in His holy nature.

The types in the Old Testament give details concerning spiritual things that cannot be described in words. A picture is often better than words. For example, you may use

thousands of words to describe a person's face and yet still not be able to describe it adequately. It would be much better to have a picture of the face. In the same principle, the books of the New Testament may not describe in detail certain spiritual things. For the details it is helpful to consider the types. In the types we can see many points that we cannot find in the New Testament. In particular, with the tabernacle and its court, we see the expression of God in righteousness outwardly and holiness inwardly.

A. Of Linen

The fine linen signifies the human living of Christ. Our expression of righteousness should be the expression of Christ's human living.

The linen used for the hangings was fine. It was even, not coarse or rough. If we read the four Gospels, we shall see that Christ's human living truly was fine, even.

The linen was also twined. This signifies dealt with through sufferings. As a result, it was not loose. While Christ was living on earth, He was dealt with through sufferings.

B. The Size

Now we come to the size of the hangings. The length of the curtains on each side was one hundred cubits, the width of the back side was fifty cubits, and the length of the hangings on each side of the gate at the front was fifteen cubits. This made a total of two hundred eighty cubits. This was equal to the total length of the ten curtains of the tabernacle (26:1-2). The fact that the length of the hangings and the total length of the ten curtains above the tabernacle were the same indicates that what made the boundary of the outer court of the tabernacle equaled the covering of the tabernacle. Likewise, today the expression of the church outwardly should also be the covering of the church. Both this expression and this covering are Christ. Furthermore, both the curtains over the tabernacle and the hangings around the outer court were made of linen. The only difference was that the hangings around the outer court were

without color or embroidery, whereas the curtains over the tabernacle were embroidered and had different colors.

The number two hundred eighty is composed of forty times seven. In the Bible forty is the number of trial and testing, and seven is the number of completion in this age. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He experienced intense trials and tests. He was tried everywhere, and He was tested by everyone. His tests and trials surely were sevenfold, fully complete; they were forty times seven.

According to 27:18, the height of the hangings was five cubits. We have pointed out that five signifies responsibility. With the hangings we see two main things: righteousness signified by the white linen, and responsibility signified by the number five.

Righteousness can never be separated from responsibility. If you do not bear responsibility, you cannot be righteous. You are righteous only when you fulfill your responsibility. We all have certain responsibilities. As a husband or wife, as a parent or child, as an employer or employee, and even as a neighbor, we must fulfill our responsibilities. Otherwise, we cannot be righteous. If we would be right with others, we need to bear our responsibilities and fulfill them.

We in the Lord's recovery all must express God in Christ as righteousness. We can do this only by bearing our responsibility in every way. Wherever we are, at school, at home, at work, in our neighborhood, or with our relatives, we must bear our responsibility. If we are careless and neglect our responsibility, we are not righteous. If we do not have righteousness, then we shall be short of the expression of God in Christ as our righteousness. Therefore, we must express righteousness by fulfilling our responsibility.

IV. THE PILLARS AND THEIR SOCKETS

A. The Sockets of Bronze

The sockets of bronze (38:29-31) signify Christ judged by God being the base of the separation of God's building. This is not easy to understand. We have seen that God's building has a boundary, and this boundary is a separation.

Furthermore, this separation, this boundary, has a base—the sockets of bronze. The Christ who has been judged by God is now the base of this separation.

The fine linen hangings were on pillars of bronze, and the pillars stood in sockets of bronze. Therefore, with the outer court we can see bronze and linen, bronze signifying God's judgment and linen signifying God's righteousness. This indicates that the linen is the issue of the bronze. This means that the righteousness of God comes out of God's judgment.

We have emphasized the fact that the expression of the church should be righteousness. But where does this righteousness come from? It comes from God's judgment. Every aspect of our living needs to be judged by God. Anything we do that has not been judged by God cannot be righteous.

The Christ who lives in us is the One who has been judged by God. The bronze sockets typify this Christ. The Christ who has been judged by God is now our life within. When we live by Him, everything we do and everything we have in our daily life will be judged. Our speaking will be judged, and our attitudes will be judged. Our memory, intention, thoughts, inclination—all these must be judged by God. The Christ living in us is the judged Christ.

Such a Christ is the base for the separating boundary of righteousness. When everything in our daily life is judged by God, the result will be righteousness. Many brothers and sisters in the Lord, however, do not live a judged life. They do not live a life always under the judgment of God.

We need to experience God's judgment upon our talking. Whenever I open my mouth to speak, my speaking must be under the judgment of God. Because of God's judgment, certain words will not be uttered. Eventually, I shall say certain things, but these words, having passed through God's judgment, will be righteous.

Do you know what the source of gossip is? Gossip comes from talk that has not been judged by God. Suppose I am tempted to gossip about a brother. If I am under God's

judgment, I shall not be able to gossip. Furthermore, the person who may enjoy hearing that gossip also needs to experience God's judgment. This judgment is implied by the bronze sockets upholding the bronze pillars.

Married brothers need God's judgment on the way they talk with their wives. Sometimes their talk is too free, and things are spoken which should not be uttered. If we are living Christ, we shall experience in His life a judging element, an element that puts us under the judgment of God. The Christ by whom we live is a God-judged Christ, and His life is a God-judged life.

Some may think that God's judgment is the same as the inner sense which keeps a saved person from doing certain things. Actually, this sense is a prohibition; it is not the judgment of God. As we grow in the Lord, we shall go from the stage of prohibition to the stage of judgment. Then we shall realize the difference between prohibition and judgment.

We need to experience Christ as righteousness and also as the life which has been judged by God. Hallelujah, we have a righteous life and also a judged life! It is out of this judged life that the righteous life issues forth. This is the experience of the bronze sockets as the base for the boundary and separation of God's building.

B. The Pillars

Verse 11 says, "And likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings a hundred cubits long, and its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their connecting rods shall be of silver." The phrase "of bronze" governs both the sockets and the pillars, just as the phrase "of silver" refers both to the hooks and the connecting rods. Therefore, both the sockets and the pillars were of bronze. Because they have followed a rather ambiguous translation, some Bible teachers may think that the pillars were made out of another material, perhaps silver or acacia wood. However, neither silver nor acacia wood fits the picture, and neither of these matches the spiritual significance here.

The bronze pillars signify Christ judged by God being the standing and supporting strength of the separation of God's building. Christ is not only the base of the separation; He is also the standing and supporting strength of the separation. Thus, both the sockets and the pillars are Christ. But this Christ is not a glorified Christ—He is a judged Christ. Today we need to live this judged Christ. In order to express Him to others, especially to outsiders in the world, we need to be judged in our daily living. If we are judged in everything day by day, we shall express Christ as the righteousness of God.

My intention here is not simply to give teachings from the types as admonitions or exhortations to good behavior. No, here we have something more basic, more crucial. If we live Christ, we shall find that His life is a judged life. In Him there is an element of judgment. Therefore, the more we live Him, the more our daily life will be judged. This judgment will give us the base and the supporting strength to bear the righteousness of God as His expression.

C. Sixty, the Number of Both the Pillars and the Sockets

With the court of the tabernacle there was a total of sixty sockets and sixty pillars: twenty on each side, ten at the rear, and ten at the front. (The front ones were arranged in two groups of three and one group of four.) The number sixty here signifies Christ in the likeness of the man of flesh (Rom. 8:3; John 3:14) being judged by God according to His righteousness. The number six is implied here. Christ was judged by God in the likeness of the man of flesh, or in the likeness of the flesh of man. In other words, Christ was fully judged by God in the flesh of man. This does not mean that Christ had fallen flesh. No, He had the likeness of fallen flesh and He was judged in this flesh. This also is an element of the judged life of Christ. In this judged life there is an element of the flesh of man being judged by God. We all are men of flesh. Our flesh must be

judged, and in Christ it has been judged already. When we live Christ, we experience God's judgment on the flesh.

The number sixty implies the number six. But if we add sixty pillars and sixty sockets, we have the number one hundred twenty. This means that eventually sixty is swallowed up by one hundred twenty. In the number one hundred and twenty we do not have the number six. How can the number six be swallowed up? This happens by having the pillars standing in the sockets. The point here is that if we live Christ, the judged life of Christ will make us sockets and also standing and supporting pillars. If we are sockets without being pillars, we are still in the number six. Likewise, if we are pillars without being sockets, we also remain in the number six. But if we are both pillars and sockets, we no longer have the number six. Instead, the number sixty is swallowed up by the number one hundred twenty.

When we live Christ, His judged life will bring our daily life under the judgment of God. Daily we shall be judged in every way. Then we shall have the sockets and also the pillars to bear the righteousness of God as His expression. This is not a teaching for the purpose of exhortation. On the contrary, this is a revelation in the Bible to show us where our salvation is. Our salvation is in the judged Christ.

D. The Area between Two Pillars Equaling That of the Top of the Altar

The area between two pillars was five cubits by five cubits. This equaled that of the top of the altar (27:1). The area of the top of the altar was a square five cubits long and five cubits wide. Likewise, the area between any two of the pillars was five cubits wide and five cubits high. This means that the area between the pillars matched the area of the top of the altar. This signifies that Christ's redemption for us matches the requirements of God's righteousness. We can have the "square" righteousness of God because of Christ's "square" redemption. Christ's redemption matches the righteous requirements of God.

E. The Capitals, the Hooks, and the Connecting Rods of the Pillars

The capitals, the hooks, and the connecting rods of the pillars were all of silver. This signifies Christ's redemption issuing out of God's righteous judgment. The sockets and the pillars were of bronze, but the capitals, the crowns of the pillars, were overlaid with silver, and the hooks and the connecting rods were of silver. This indicates that Christ's redemption comes out of the righteous judgment of God. This redemption is our crown and also our holding power (the hooks), our connecting strength. We, the pillars, are joined together by the strength of the redemption of Christ, which comes out of God's righteous judgment.

We should not know all this merely as a doctrine. We must see that we can be linked together only by having a life that has been judged righteously by God. This life is also a redeeming life. Hence, we have the redemption that comes out of God's righteous judgment. This redemption then becomes our linking power and connects us with one another. It also becomes our glory, our crown, our capitals. Therefore, first we are judged, then we are redeemed, and then we are connected and have a glorious crown. The capitals signify glory, whereas the hooks signify holding power, and the rods, joining strength.

The matters in God's plan and economy are not simple. For instance, the expression of the church toward the world is not a simple matter. To understand this we need the type in Exodus 27.

There is another important matter here. If we would enjoy the inner aspect of the tabernacle, we must have all the details of the outer court. Unless we have come into the sphere of the outer court, there is no way for us to enter into the Holy of Holies.

Moreover, first we must enjoy Christ and experience Him as our righteousness. Then we can enjoy Him and experience Him as our holiness. This is the reason 1 Corinthians 1:30 says that first God made Christ our righteousness and

then our sanctification, that is, our practical and experiential holiness. Thus, righteousness comes first and then holiness. If we would enter the innermost section of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, we must first pass through the section of God's righteousness.

Finally, in the outer court what we bear, what we express, is linen. But as standing boards of the tabernacle, what we bear, express, is gold. We all want to express gold. But in order to express gold, we must first bear the linen. This means that we must have the outer expression of righteousness before we can have the inner expression of holiness. The outer expression is for others, but the inner expression is for God. Without holiness, no one can see God. This is the reason Hebrews 12 charges us to pursue holiness, for without it we cannot see God. Holiness is for us to fellowship with God, to contact God, and to enjoy God. We need righteousness outwardly and holiness inwardly. We need to have the outward expression of righteousness toward all human beings, and the inward expression of holiness toward God so that we may see Him, enjoy Him, absorb Him, and have fellowship with Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWELVE

THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exodus 27:14-16, 19

In this message we come to the gate of the court of the tabernacle. We may think that the gate is the most simple aspect of the outer court. However, when we begin to consider this matter, we find that it is not simple at all. Some of the points in this message may be quite new in concept to us all.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE GATE

The first thing I wish to do is to give you an impression related to the appearance of the gate. In studying the types in the Old Testament, we need to pay attention both to the contents and to the appearance. The types in the book of Exodus have these two aspects—the aspect of the contents and the aspect of appearance. For example, the altar of burnt offering has a certain appearance. Furthermore, the grating, the rings, and the poles are the contents of the altar. In the previous messages concerning the outer court, we saw the contents and the appearance of the outer court.

The gate of the court of the tabernacle, like the entrance of any kind of building, has a particular appearance. The front gate or door of a building bears an appearance that attracts people's attention. This was also true of the tabernacle. When someone approached the tabernacle from a distance, he could see the gate of the outer court. With this gate there was something representing the appearance of God's building. The first impression one would have of the tabernacle and the court was that of the gate and the hangings on the two sides of the gate.

It is not difficult to remember the description of the front of the court. The front side was fifty cubits in width and had ten pillars. On each side of the gate was a hanging of linen fifteen cubits long. Exodus 27:14 and 15 say, "And the hangings for the one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three. And for the second side shall be hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three." Verse 16 describes the gate with its curtain: "And for the gate of the court there shall be a curtain of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of an embroiderer; their pillars four, and their sockets four." As we consider the front of the court of the tabernacle, we should pay attention to the numbers three and four. On each side of the gate, there were three pillars and three sockets. Furthermore, on each side there were three spaces covered by a hanging of linen fifteen cubits long. The number fifteen, composed of three times five, signifies the responsibility borne by Christ matching the requirements of the Triune God. The fact that there were three pillars and three sockets on each side signifies that both the base and the standing matched the Triune God. Moreover, the two sides of the gate signify a testimony, since two is the number of testimony.

As we have seen, the gate itself was twenty cubits in length. There were four spaces for the four openings, and there were four pillars and four sockets. The number twenty here, composed of four times five, signifies Christ bearing the responsibility for men, the creatures. The four openings with the four pillars and the four sockets signify the gate being open toward men from the four ends (corners) of the earth (see 27:2, 4).

The curtain itself signifies the redeeming Christ as our entrance into God's building. The blue signifies something heavenly; the purple, something royal; the scarlet, something of redemption; the fine twined linen, something even and of a strong human life; and the work of an embroiderer, the constituting work of the Holy Spirit.

Here we are emphasizing the numbers three and four. On

each side there were three groups of three: three pillars, three sockets, and three spaces. In the gate there were four groups of four: four pillars, four sockets, four spaces, and four openings.

INTERPRETING THE PICTURE

Now I would ask you to interpret this picture. What is the significance of the front side of the tabernacle with the gate? Actually, it does not require very much skill to interpret this picture, since the spiritual alphabet is right before our eyes. Four signifies the creature, and three signifies the Triune God in resurrection. The two sides, each with the number three, signify a testimony. In the entrance we have the number four, signifying the creatures. Therefore, on each side we have the number three signifying God, and in the middle we have the number four signifying man, the creature. This means that the Triune God is borne by man, or that man bears God as a testimony. The appearance of the front side of the outer court is that of man bearing the Triune God as a testimony. This is very meaningful.

Now we must see that this Triune God whom we bear as a testimony is involved with man. Rather, He is in man. The very Triune God whom we bear as a testimony is no longer just the number three itself, but the number three with the number four, that is, three joined to four. This indicates that we bear the Triune God in man as a testimony. No doubt, the main number here is three. The number four is subordinate. God with man, or God in man, is the One we bear as a testimony.

Now we must go on to see why such a picture is portrayed at the front of the gate of the tabernacle. In this regard, John 16:8-11 is helpful. Speaking of the Spirit of reality, these verses say, "He will convict the world concerning sin, and concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged."

Chapter sixteen of John is, of course, a continuation of chapters fourteen and fifteen and is itself followed by chapter seventeen. These four chapters go together. If we have the proper knowledge of these chapters, we shall see that they depict God as a testimony. Moreover, God in these chapters is the Triune God involved with man. In this portion of the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus speaks of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. These three are one. All those who believe in Christ are to be perfected into one in the Triune God (John 17:23). Hence, in these chapters we see the Triune God involved with man and man bearing the Triune God as a testimony.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE GOSPEL

If we have a deeper experience of Christ's redemption, we shall not preach the gospel in a superficial way. Instead, we shall preach the gospel in a way that will cause the listeners to know that they need to repent and become those who bear the Triune God as a testimony, bearing the Triune God who is involved with man. In our gospel preaching we need to say, "Do you intend to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus? Will you now receive Him as your Savior? If you intend to repent, believe in the Lord, and receive Him as your Savior, you must become a person bearing the Triune God as a testimony. You must realize this is the purpose of receiving the gospel." If a person does not repent for this purpose, then he should not try to enter the gate of the court of the tabernacle. This is a basic principle of the gospel.

There are terms, conditions, of believing in the Lord Jesus and entering into Him, according to chapters fifteen through seventeen of the Gospel of John. However, at the time of our repentance, hardly any of us knew of these terms or conditions. I certainly was not told anything about them. Because we have this shortage, we need to go back and make up certain spiritual lessons that we should have learned at the very beginning of our Christian life. For this reason, in this message I am actually preaching the basic principles of the gospel.

Some may think that this understanding of the gospel is too deep for most people to understand. Actually, it is not deep at all. If it appears to be too deep, it is because of today's shallow gospel preaching. This kind of preaching spoils our God-given talent to understand spiritual things. A new believer is able to understand much more than we realize.

The changes in elementary education over the years illustrate the capacity of young ones to understand many things. When I was in elementary school, the concept was that certain matters were very difficult to understand. But today children learn things in first grade that I did not learn until later grades. Things that we thought could only be understood later in school can actually be learned by younger children. In the same principle, much of today's preaching of the gospel is too shallow and gives others a very superficial understanding of the gospel. The newly converted ones know only the ABC's of the gospel. If you try to teach them something more regarding the gospel, they may say that it is too deep, when what is presented actually is simply more letters to complete the alphabet, perhaps the letters, L, M, and N. Most of today's gospel preaching gives people only the first three letters of the spiritual alphabet—A, B, and C. But the preaching of the gospel in the Bible contains all the letters of the spiritual alphabet. However, many who have been Christians for years have not yet learned all the letters in the alphabet. Spiritually speaking, they do not know what is signified by the letters X, Y, and Z.

The basic gospel includes the matters signified by the gate of the court of the tabernacle. Do not think that these matters are not part of the gospel. For what purpose should a sinner repent, believe in the Lord Jesus, and receive Him as Savior? He should do these things for the purpose of entering God's building. But hardly any of us heard such a word when we were saved. We were never told that the goal of salvation is to bring us into God's building. Among Christians today, there is a lack of such a concept. But if I were preaching the gospel to sinners, I would tell them that they

need to enter into God's building. God's unique enterprise in the universe is to have a building. This is God's eternal purpose. Thus, the purpose of God's salvation is to bring us into His building.

THE GOAL OF GOD'S GOSPEL

What is God's building today? God's building is the church. God's economy, salvation, and redemption are to bring us into His building, the church. This is not my particular emphasis; it is the emphasis in the Bible. Christ Himself emphasized this. He tried to help others to know Him. According to Matthew 16, one day He asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" When Peter confessed that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lord went on to speak concerning the church: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). The purpose of knowing Christ is that we may be built into the church. Furthermore, in the book of Acts we see that thousands were saved for the purpose of the raising up and the building up of churches. Then in Romans Paul indicates that we sinners have been justified, transferred out of Adam into Christ, and are now walking according to spirit so that we may become full-grown sons to be proper members built up in the Body. For this reason, at the end of the book of Romans we have local churches. This is the ultimate goal of God's revelation and also the goal of God's gospel. The entire book of Romans, according to Paul, is the gospel of God. Entering into the building of God, therefore, is the goal of God's salvation.

To enter into God's building is to be saved. When we were outside the building of God, we were lost. But when we repented and believed in the Lord Jesus, we came into God's salvation and also entered into God's building. From the very beginning, we should have realized that to enter into the building of God is to bear the Triune God involved with man as a testimony. This is what we all should be doing today. Once again I say that this concept is not deep.

As part of the twenty-six letters of the spiritual alphabet, it is something we should have learned at the beginning. However, we were not taught this, and we did not learn it.

THE ALPHABET OF GOD'S SALVATION

More than fifty years ago, I learned some letters of the Greek alphabet, but at that time I did not learn them very well. I had trouble, for instance, with the Greek letter gamma (γ), which resembles a lower case *y* in the English alphabet. Also, an upper case *y* (Y) in the English alphabet looks somewhat like an upper case upsilon (Υ) in Greek. Today many believers have learned the alphabet of God's salvation in much the same way I learned part of the Greek alphabet years ago. On the one hand, they are like those who do know some Greek letters. On the other hand, they are like those who confuse Greek and English letters, perhaps taking a lower case English *y* for a lower case Greek gamma. For example, they may think that certain aspects of our culture are the same as God's salvation. This can be compared to saying that an upper case Greek eta (Η) is the same as an upper case English *h* (H), or that a lower case English *p* is the same as a lower case Greek rho (ρ).

Those who confuse aspects of culture with God's salvation have not learned thoroughly the alphabet of God's salvation. They know something about justification, regeneration, and forgiveness. But they also know many things of their culture. As a result, they unconsciously mix certain aspects of their culture with God's salvation and confuse human culture with the salvation of God. Furthermore, when someone speaks about a certain aspect of God's salvation, they may be very confident that they understand. Actually, they do not understand at all and have confused something of God with their natural concept and the cultural elements that have saturated them. This can be compared to thinking that a lower case Greek nu (ν) is a lower case English *v*. I use this illustration of Greek and

English letters to point out our need to know the complete alphabet of God's salvation.

What we see signified at the front of the court of the tabernacle is man bearing as a testimony the Triune God involved with man. Whenever a person repents, believes, and enters into God's salvation, that person should realize that he is entering into God's building and that this building is God's testimony. The entire realm of the tabernacle, including the tabernacle itself and the outer court, is a constitution of the Triune God with His chosen and redeemed people. Therefore, it is God's testimony. God is the One testified, and we are those testifying Him. Thus, from God's side, it is a testimony. From our side, it is a matter of bearing the testimony. This bearing of the Triune God as a testimony is signified by the door, the gate, of the court of the tabernacle.

The gate or entrance of any building expresses the purpose of that building. For example, the entrance of a bank indicates clearly that that building is a bank. Likewise, the entrance of a stadium has a different kind of appearance, indicating that it is a gateway into a stadium. The same is true of the entrance of a school. In keeping with this principle, the gate of the court of the tabernacle also has a particular appearance: it signifies man bearing as a testimony the Triune God involved with man. If this part of the alphabet of God's salvation can be impressed upon us, this message will have been helpful.

BRONZE, THE BASIC MATERIAL

Having considered the appearance of the gate, let us now see what is the basic material used to produce such an appearance. The basic material here is bronze. Both the pillars and the sockets for the court of the tabernacle were made of bronze. Bronze, as we have pointed out, signifies God's judgment. According to John 16:8, when the Spirit of reality comes, He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Whoever would enter into God's building must be fully judged. He must pass through the bronze gate, a gate of judgment. Although the pillars are covered with linen, linen is

not the basic material of the court. The basic material is bronze, signifying the righteous judgment of God.

We who would come into the building of God must realize that everything we are, everything we have, everything we do, and everything we are able to do must be judged. This means that good things as well as bad things must be judged. Our good behavior and our bad behavior both need to be judged. In like manner, our hatred and our love, our pride and our humility, along with all of our virtues, must pass through the gate of God's judgment.

Passing through the bronze gate can be compared to passing through the checkpoint in an airline terminal. Anyone who would pass through that point must be examined. Likewise, if we would come into God's building, we must pass through the gate of judgment and experience God's judgment on everything we are, have, and do.

When we heard the gospel and repented, we were not told anything about this. I never heard that I needed to be judged, that my being, my behavior, my speaking, my doings, and my ability needed to pass through God's judgment. As a result, I brought certain good aspects of my natural life and ability into the so-called church. I believe many of us did this. Some even came into the church life and brought with them a number of worldly things that had not been judged. This is to have a gate made with something other than bronze as the basic material. But the gate of the court of the tabernacle is a bronze gate, the gate of judgment. If we have not experienced this judgment in a thorough way, we must make up this lesson and pass through the bronze gate.

BEARING GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

The expression of the outer court is linen signifying the righteousness of God. After we have been judged, we bear God's righteousness. Therefore, what we bear is not our natural virtue or our outward behavior—it is the righteousness of God. This also is a basic truth of the gospel. In preaching the gospel we need to declare, "Sinners, people of

this world, you need to be judged. When everything about you, both good and bad, has been judged, you will bear the righteousness of God."

How can the righteousness of God be linked to us? According to the typology in Exodus 27, it is linked to us by the silver hooks and connecting rods. This indicates that out of God's judgment comes Christ's redemption, and this redemption is the holding power and the linking strength. How can we, sinners and enemies of God, be linked to God's righteousness? How can God's righteousness be held onto us? This is possible only through the redemption of Christ, which comes out of God's judgment. As fallen people, we need to be judged in every way. But whatever God judges, Christ redeems. Praise the Lord, God's judgment produces Christ's redemption! If we would enjoy the redemption of Christ, we first need the judgment of God.

The true meaning of repentance is that we are judged. To repent is to judge ourselves and condemn ourselves. Whenever a person repents, he condemns himself and places himself under God's judgment. This is the experience of bronze.

But since Christ redeems whatever God judges, this redemption will link the judged one to God's righteousness. Furthermore, this redemption also joins us to one another. The pillars in the court of the tabernacle each stood separately. However, by the connecting rods they were joined into one unit. Hallelujah, whatever God judges, Christ redeems, and whatever Christ redeems is linked by this redemption to God's righteousness! The redemption of Christ joins us to God's righteousness and to one another. Therefore, with the outer court we have three important matters: judgment, redemption, and righteousness. God's righteousness is for the expression of His testimony.

A SCENE OF BRONZE

When in our experience we enter into the outer court of the tabernacle, we find that the most striking element is bronze. As we look around, we see sixty pillars of bronze and

sixty sockets of bronze. Furthermore, 27:19 says, "All the utensils of the tabernacle in all its service, and all its pegs, and all the pegs of the court shall be of bronze." The pegs are for holding the fence of the outer court and also for the tabernacle. Verse 19 indicates that there were two sets of pegs, one for the tabernacle and the other for the outer court. Even these pegs were made of bronze. The altar of burnt offering and the laver were also covered with bronze. Therefore, whoever came into the outer court beheld a scene of bronze.

This scene filled with bronze portrays the judgment of God. God's judgment can be seen everywhere in the outer court. Everything in the realm of God's building is under God's judgment. Everything related to us must be put under God's judgment. Our cleverness and all our natural ability, to say nothing of our shortcomings, need to be judged.

We have pointed out that the utensils, the furniture, and the pegs in the outer court, along with the pillars and the sockets, were of bronze. The pegs signify the standing and holding power. This power is of bronze, of judgment. If we would have a solid base in God's building, we must be under judgment. If we would have the standing strength, we must also be under God's judgment. In order to be strong and stable, we need to be judged. The more we are under God's judgment, the more stable we shall be.

STABILIZING THE CHURCH LIFE

Do you know why certain saints come into the church life and after a short period of time become unstable and then disappear? The reason for their instability is that they do not have the bronze pegs; they lack God's judgment as their strength and stability. From the day a saint comes into the church life, he should place himself under God's judgment. Then he will be strong and stable in the church. Judgment truly stabilizes the church life.

Some brothers and sisters criticize others and condemn them. In particular, the elders in a local church are often

condemned by the critical ones. Those who criticize others are not under God's judgment. If we are under the judgment of God day by day, we shall not be critical of others. We shall not judge them or condemn them. Those who judge others are those who have not been judged. But those who have been judged do not judge others.

I can testify with a pure conscience that I judge myself much more than I judge anyone else. When I am tempted to talk about the shortcomings of anyone else, I become conscious of a sense of judgment within. This inner sense causes me to realize that I am not better than others. Rather, I am worse. I believe that many of us have had this kind of experience. Being judged closes our judging, criticizing mouth. But if we are not under judgment, it will be easy for us to speak critical or judging words regarding others.

I would encourage you to consider the scenery of the outer court. It is a scene filled with bronze, with God's judgment. Everywhere we see bronze signifying judgment: bronze sockets, bronze pillars, bronze pegs, bronze furniture, bronze utensils. Without judgment, there is no boundary, no base, no strength for standing, and no stability.

JUDGMENT AND REDEMPTION

As we have seen, Christ's redemption comes out of God's judgment. Redemption is signified by the silver overlaying the caps, the capitals, of the pillars. All the pillars of the fence of the court were overlaid on their caps with silver. These capitals overlaid with silver signify glory. Thus, Christ's redemption coming out of God's judgment becomes our crown, our boast, our glory. This is the significance of the silver capitals on top of the bronze pillars.

Furthermore, there were the silver hooks, the silver connecting rods, and the silver sockets for the tenons of the standing boards of the tabernacle. This signifies that the redemption of Christ becomes the solid foundation for the standing of all the members of God's building. What a

beautiful picture we have here! First we see God's judgment and then Christ's redemption.

The redemption of Christ becomes our crown, our holding power, our connecting strength. It also becomes our foundation on which to stand as members of the building of God. This is the judgment of God bringing forth the redemption of Christ, the bronze bringing forth the silver.

BRONZE, SILVER, AND GOLD

Following the bronze and the silver, we have gold. By the bronze, we enter into the court. Then through the silver, we enter into the Holy Place. In the Holy Place, and especially in the Holy of Holies, everything is of gold. This signifies that the divine nature is our portion, our enjoyment, and our experience. Everything in the tabernacle is gold: golden boards, golden utensils, a golden showbread table, a golden lampstand, and a golden incense altar. In the Holy of Holies we have the golden ark with the golden cherubim and utensils. Everything inside the tabernacle is gold. Therefore, bronze brings forth silver, and silver brings us into the gold. This signifies that everything must be judged in order to be redeemed. Then after we have been redeemed, we are brought into the nature of God. This is our destiny, our destination; it is also our portion, enjoyment, and experience. Once we are brought into the gold, we should stay here. Even we need to touch the very depths in the Holy of Holies and to be with God, and also to become one with Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEEN

THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE

(4)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 27:14-16, 19

ENJOYING THE DIVINE NATURE

With the tabernacle and the court of the tabernacle, there are two aspects of God's expression. Outwardly, God's expression is righteousness, signified by the linen. Inwardly, God's expression is holiness, signified by the gold. How can we enter into the realm, the sphere, of God's righteousness? We enter into this realm only by passing through the gate of God's judgment, where everything related to us is judged. Then we are qualified to bear God's righteousness as His expression.

Furthermore, we also have the ground, the way, and the means to enter into the gold, into God's nature, and to enjoy the divine nature as everything to us. As we have pointed out, in the Holy Place and in the Holy of Holies everything is golden. This signifies that God's nature is everything to us. By enjoying the divine nature, we have the inward expression of God, that is, holiness as the expression of God's nature, of God's being. God's outward expression is related to what He does, His doings. God's inward expression is related to what He is, to His being. To be in the Holy of Holies is to be in God's golden nature.

THE EXPERIENCE OF JUDGMENT

I hope that we all shall realize something vital concerning God's judgment. Everyone who desires to come into God's building must be judged. Apart from the gate of judgment, there is no way for us to enter into God's building. It

is through the judgment of God that we enter into His house.

John 16:8 says that the Spirit of reality "will convict the world concerning sin, and concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment." This means that He will exercise God's judgment on the world in a positive way, not that people may perish, but that they may be saved. True repentance is to be under God's judgment. Whenever a person repents, he places himself under the judgment of God. Only the experience of judgment can keep our spiritual life and our church life stable.

A LIFE UNDER GOD'S JUDGMENT

A proper human life is a life constantly under judgment. In order to have a pleasant married life, both the husband and the wife need to live a life that is always being judged. But if a husband tries to justify himself all the time, he will have problems with his marriage. A basic cause of separation and divorce is self-justification. Whenever a husband feels that he is justified, that he is right in every way and in everything, he will automatically condemn his wife. If she is one who has such an attitude, she will condemn her husband. As a result, it will be impossible for them to stay together any longer. The husband justifies himself and condemns the wife, and the wife justifies herself and condemns the husband. This makes a pleasant married life impossible.

But suppose the husband condemns himself and feels that there is nothing good in him, that not even his good intentions are acceptable to God. By the Lord's mercy and grace, he remains under God's judgment. Then he will say to himself, "Whether or not my wife is wrong is not my business. My concern is to remain under God's judgment." If both the husband and wife have this attitude, they will have a good feeling toward each other, and they will enjoy a very pleasant married life.

In the church life we also need to be under God's judgment. If we justify ourselves, we shall not be able to stay in the church life. The more I justify myself, the more I shall

condemn others. Eventually, I shall leave the church. Those who justify themselves and condemn others are not able to stay with others. In the church God's way is the way of judgment.

EXPRESSING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

After we have been under God's judgment in a full way, the righteousness of God will be expressed upon us. This is true both in the church life and in married life. If a brother and his wife are willing to be under God's judgment, spontaneously God's righteousness will be upon them. Others who visit their home will be able to see the righteousness of God. But if the husband justifies himself and the wife justifies herself, then visitors in their home will not see anything of God's righteousness. Instead, they will see two strong expressions of the self.

BRONZE, SILVER, AND LINEN

The elements of the gate of the court of the tabernacle are bronze, silver, and linen. The gate is constituted of these three elements. The bronze used in the sockets and the pillars is the basic material. The sockets are for the base, and the pillars are for standing. We have seen that the capitals on top of the pillars were overlaid with silver. These capitals were a crown and indicate that redemption crowns God's judgment. God's judgment brings forth redemption, and redemption crowns God's judgment with glory. Furthermore, the hooks used for holding the linen to the pillars were of silver, and the connecting rods were also of silver. By means of these hooks and rods, the pillars could stand as one entity to hold the linen.

We have emphasized the fact that the linen signifies the righteousness of God. Therefore, here we have God's judgment with the redemption of Christ as a crown to hold God's righteousness. This is the front of God's building.

When sinners outside this building hear the glad tidings and repent, they experience an inward convicting through the Spirit of reality. The Spirit of reality works on them to

convict them and to cause them to condemn the self. This leads them to repent before God; they realize that, because they are fallen, they must be under God's judgment.

With us fallen creatures, there is nothing that can be justified by God. For this reason, Paul says in Romans that no flesh shall be justified before God (Rom. 3:20). Rather, the entire old creation must be judged, condemned, by God. If we submit to this divine judgment and condemnation, we shall simultaneously experience the redemption of Christ. Then we shall see that Christ died not only for our sins, but also for us. When we realize this, redemption crowns us and links us to God's righteousness. In other words, redemption brings in the righteousness of God as our expression.

First we are judged by God and then redeemed by Christ. Christ now hangs upon us as God's righteousness. We bear the righteousness of God as the expression and testimony of God. Therefore, we are those judged by God and redeemed by Christ. With others, we are the church to become a testimony of God. We remain human beings, but we are human beings who have been judged, redeemed, and linked to God's righteousness, bearing Christ as God's expression. Now we bear the Triune God as our testimony.

PREACHING AN UPLIFTED GOSPEL

We all need to learn to preach the gospel according to what is revealed in the typology of the gate of the outer court. We must exercise our faith to preach such an uplifted gospel. We should not preach a gospel that has been lowered down to what we think is the level of people's understanding. Instead of bringing people up to the level of the gospel, many of us have lowered the thought of the gospel when presenting the truth to unbelievers. For years, I did this when I preached the gospel. I realized that many of those in the audience were pagans. Some were Buddhists. They did not know God, they did not know anything about the gospel, and they had never heard the name of Jesus Christ. Because I considered their situation, I did not preach an uplifted gospel. Missionaries to China also had this practice. Deep

within, they had the thought that the Chinese people were not able to understand such matters as redemption, justification, and regeneration. This caused them to lower the level of their gospel preaching. This is a mistake. We need to realize that within man there is a God-created talent, ability, to receive God and to receive and understand His gospel.

People in the educational sphere have learned that children have the ability to understand more than teachers formerly thought they could understand. Just as children are often able to understand more than their teachers realize, so unbelievers can understand more of the gospel than we realize. Whenever we preach the gospel, we must believe that those listening were created by God with a certain ability, a talent, to receive and understand the message of the gospel. We need to improve our gospel preaching. We should preach an uplifted gospel and never lower the concept.

Sometimes our preaching of the gospel has been too simple. We may emphasize one point: without Christ life is vain and people are empty, but with Christ there is reality. We need to preach an uplifted gospel, a gospel that covers more than the ABC's of God's salvation. This will satisfy the hunger and thirst that is within man because of the way God created him. It will also stir up the interest of those who hear to come again to hear the preaching of the gospel. Otherwise, they may come just once. Having received a cup of plain, tasteless water, they will not care to come again.

I would encourage the leading ones in all the churches to fellowship concerning the presentation of the gospel, especially how to enrich and uplift our gospel messages. I am not saying that it is necessary to give a long lecture or sermon. Even in a rather short message we can present something solid and uplifted.

Man was created for God, and within him there is the ability to understand the things of God, and there is a hunger for these things. Therefore, as we preach the gospel

in an uplifted way, we must believe that the hearers have the ability to understand what we are saying.

Gospel preachers such as George Whitefield and Charles Finney had the ability to awaken people to God. Whitefield prayed daily, sometimes for hours. As a result, the people who came into contact with him experienced an awakening. The same was true of Charles Finney. I was told that once he visited a factory. As soon as he entered a certain room and looked at the workers, some of them began to weep. This is the awakening power. However, in this message I am speaking not about the power of the gospel, but about the content of the gospel messages. We need to enrich and uplift the word of our gospel preaching.

KNOWING AND EXPERIENCING THE GOSPEL

If we would preach an uplifted gospel, we ourselves must know and experience all the contents of the gospel. In particular, we need to know the truths of the gospel typified by the gate of the court of the tabernacle. We need to know the significance of the numbers three and four and of the materials, the elements, of bronze, silver, and linen. We need to know judgment, redemption, and righteousness, and to know that the Triune God is a God of judgment, redemption, and righteousness. As the gate of the court indicates, the Triune God is involved with man. This involvement has the elements of judgment, redemption, and righteousness. As we preach the gospel, we need to declare that God is such a God.

With this message we conclude our study of the tabernacle itself. Next we shall consider the lighting of the lamps and the priestly garments. I hope that we shall all be impressed with a clear picture of God's building. This picture will be more helpful than thousands of words. Not only should we see this picture; we should have it impressed deeply into our being. Then we shall have the proper understanding of the bronze, the silver, the gold, and the linen. Hallelujah for this picture of the tabernacle, the court, and the gate!

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FOURTEEN

THE LIGHTING OF THE LAMPS AND THE GARMENTS FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 27:20—28:5

With the foregoing message, we finished the life-study of the tabernacle with its outer court. After completing the section on the tabernacle, we would expect to come next to the priests, especially to the garments of the priests. But chapter twenty-seven concludes with two verses on the lighting of the lamps on the lampstand in the tabernacle: "And you shall command the sons of Israel that they bring you olive oil, pure, beaten, for the light, to light the lamps continually. In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall set them in order from evening until morning before Jehovah; it shall be a statute forever for their generations by the sons of Israel." If these two verses were not included at the end of chapter twenty-seven, probably none of us would miss them. Years ago, I was bothered by the fact that after such a long portion concerning the tabernacle with its court, the divine record inserts these two verses related to the lighting of the lamps. Because I do not take anything in the Word for granted, I have brought this matter to the Lord and spent time with Him regarding it, seeking to find the reason for the insertion of these two verses at this very point. Why is this matter, which does not describe any aspect of the tabernacle or its furniture, included here? Why does this chapter end with a word about lighting the lamps?

A PRIESTLY SERVICE

In reading chapters twenty-seven and twenty-eight of

Exodus, I have noticed that chapter twenty-eight also begins with the conjunction "and." Chapter twenty-eight is concerned with the garments for the priesthood. Although these garments do not seem to have anything to do with the lighting of the lamps, chapter twenty-eight begins with the conjunction. This indicates that the divine record puts these two matters together. After the lengthy record concerning the tabernacle with its furniture and outer court, Moses adds a short section on lighting the lamps, and then follows with a portion on the priestly garments. We need to find the reason for this sequence, especially why Moses links together the lighting of the lamps and the priestly garments.

To understand this matter, we need to realize that there were no windows in the tabernacle. In particular, there was no sky light, no window in the roof. Therefore, it was impossible for light to get in. If there had been no light inside the tabernacle, the tabernacle would have been filled with darkness. When we are in the dark, we are not able to do anything. If we try to do something, we may cause damage or injure ourselves. Because there were no windows in the tabernacle, there was the need for the lighting of the lamps inside the tabernacle.

The activity of lighting the lamps was holy. These lamps were not in a common or ordinary place; they were the lamps in the sanctuary, in the Holy Place. Because it was a holy task to light these lamps, the common people were not qualified to do this. They may have been good people and well-educated, but they were not holy. There was the need for holy persons to light the holy lamps in the Holy Place. Thus, for the lighting of the lamps there was the need of the priesthood. The lighting of the lamps was a priestly service.

The priestly service involved three main items. The first was to offer the sacrifices at the altar in the outer court. All the sacrifices had to be offered to God by a priest. A person coming to offer something to God was not able to do this himself. He had to offer his sacrifice through a priest. Thus, the priestly service first included the offering of the sacrifices. This aspect of the priestly service was rather rough or

coarse, for it involved the sacrifice of large animals. The altar was a place of slaughter, and it was the duty of the priests to slaughter the animals and offer them to God as sacrifices.

The second and third items of the priestly service were the lighting of the lamps and the burning of the incense. These matters were fine and delicate. As we have seen, the lighting of the lamps could not be done by common people, but could be done only by holy ones, by priests.

According to the Bible, spiritually speaking, a priest is one who has been fully possessed by God. In the New Testament sense, a priest is not only possessed by God in full, but is entirely filled and saturated with God. The priests in the Old Testament were types, shadows, of the real priests in the New Testament. Today we who believe in Christ are true priests. As priests, we should be possessed by God, filled with God, and saturated with God. Furthermore, a priest is a person who is absolutely for God. His life and living are wholly for God. He lives and has his being for God. He does not care for anything on earth except God. Hence, a priest is a person possessed by God, saturated with God, and living for God. He has no other interest. In every respect and in every way, his unique interest is God. Because a priest is filled and saturated with God, he is a man of God. The lighting of the lamps in the Holy Place requires the service of this kind of person. For this reason, we emphasize the fact that the lighting of the lamps was a priestly service, a service of the priests.

LIGHT FROM THE LAMPSTAND

The light in the Holy Place was a particular light. It was not a natural light, that is, a light that comes from the sun during the day or from the moon and the stars at night. Neither was the light in the Holy Place a man-made light. Neither a natural light or a man-made light, it was a light that came from the golden lampstand. In other words, it is a light that comes from the divine nature.

In the messages on the golden lampstand we pointed out

that the lampstand is made purely of beaten gold. No substance or material other than gold is used. The light comes out of the gold. This indicates that the light in the Holy Place comes purely out of the divine nature of Christ.

The lampstand is the embodiment of the Triune God. With the gold we have the nature of the Father, the divine nature; with the form, the shape, of the lampstand, we have the Son; and with the lamps of the lampstand, we have the expression of the Spirit. Therefore, the lampstand is the embodiment of the Triune God, and the light in the Holy Place issues from the Triune God. With this golden lampstand, there is no mixture. With the exception of the wick, everything is golden.

The light of the lampstand comes from the burning of the wick. In ancient times the wick was made of materials from plants. The wick signifies Christ's humanity. Yes, Christ is divine, golden. But it is His humanity, signified by the wick, that burns with oil. If the wick had not been saturated with oil, it would give off smoke instead of light. This is the reason 27:20 speaks of bringing "olive oil, pure, beaten, for the light, to light the lamps continually."

OLIVE OIL

We need to dwell on this matter of the olive oil used in lighting the lamps. Christ, as signified by the lampstand all of gold, is the embodiment of the Triune God. But in the center of the lamps there were the wicks. These wicks were not of gold; on the contrary, they were of the plant life. Because gold does not burn, it cannot give light. It is the wicks that burn to give light. However, in themselves it is very difficult for the wicks to give off light. Instead of giving off light, they give off smoke. This is the reason it is necessary to saturate the wicks with oil in order to have light.

In typology oil signifies the Spirit of God. Oil comes from olive trees, and the olive tree signifies Christ. In the sight of God, Christ is the real olive tree.

Chapter nine of Judges speaks positively of three kinds of trees: the olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine tree.

According to Judges 9:9, the fatness of the olive tree is used to honor God and man. According to verse 11, the fig tree is known for its sweetness and good fruit. This fruit is for man's nourishment. Verse 13 says that the vine produces wine which cheers God and man. All three of these trees typify Christ. Christ is the olive tree, Christ is the fig tree, and Christ is the vine tree. In John 15 the Lord Jesus clearly said, "I am the vine." In this message we are concerned with Christ as the olive tree.

We have seen that the lampstand is Christ as the embodiment of God, that within the lamps are the wicks, and that the wicks signify Christ's humanity. The wicks burn with oil, and the oil signifies the Spirit of God. What we have today is not only the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of God has become the Spirit of Christ. Just as olives pass through a process to produce olive oil, so the Spirit of Christ has passed through a process. For us today, the oil with which the wicks burn signifies the Spirit of Christ.

Putting all these matters together, we have the gold to make the lampstand signifying Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God; we have the wick, Christ's humanity burning with oil; and we have the oil signifying the Spirit of Christ. As the olive tree, Christ grew on earth and then passed through a process that included incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. When all these matters are put together, we have the coming forth of the light.

LIGHTING THE LAMPS IN THE MEETINGS

The lighting of the lamps by the priests in the Holy Place implies a great deal. As the fulfillment of the type of the tabernacle, the church today is the real tabernacle, God's dwelling place. The Holy Place is within the church, and the church is God's sanctuary. However, it is possible for a group of believers to come together to meet as the church, and yet these believers may meet in darkness. They may meet in a sanctuary, but that sanctuary is dark. I once attended that kind of Christian meeting. Because I had such an experience,

I can give an experiential message on this portion of the Word.

For years I met with others in a dark sanctuary. All who came together for the meetings were genuine Christians. Nevertheless, there was no divine light. We met in darkness. In the meetings I sometimes had the sense that we were in darkness. At certain times, there was a kind of light in the meetings, but it was a natural light, the light of the sun, moon, or stars. This light was given off by those who talked about culture or philosophy. In addition to such natural light, there was sometimes a man-made light, a light that comes from someone's concept. But although there was a natural light and a human light, there was no holy light. There was no light that comes out of Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God, with His humanity burning with the Spirit of Christ who has passed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection.

As we consider the scene of the lampstand in the Holy Place, we see the embodiment of God, the divine nature, the humanity of Christ, and the Spirit of God who is now the Spirit of Christ with incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. Furthermore, the one who lights the lamps is a holy person, a priest, a person possessed by God, saturated with God, and living absolutely for God. Whatever such a person does in the Holy Place is the lighting of the lamps. He gives light in all he says and does. All his actions are the lighting of the lamps.

Whenever a group of believers comes together for a meeting without any who are holy priests, that meeting will be in darkness. Some may utter something according to the human concept, and others may speak according to natural thoughts. As a result, in that meeting there will be natural light or man-made light, but no divine light, no holy light.

Suppose when believers come together, everyone in the congregation is a priest. When they open their mouths to speak, that will be the lighting of the lamps. A young sister may give a short word of testimony, and in her testimony

there will be the lighting of the lamps. The saints in the meeting may be surprised, and the meeting itself will be full of light. Then the gathering, the sanctuary, will be full of divine light. This light comes out of the embodiment of the Triune God, out of the divine nature, out of Christ's humanity, and out of the Spirit of God becoming the Spirit of Christ with the elements of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. What we say and do in the meetings should always include these elements.

Certain elements must be involved whenever we experience the genuine lighting of the lamps in the meetings. These elements are the embodiment of the Triune God, the divine nature, the uplifted humanity of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ with Christ's process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. If we have these elements, then whatever we say and do in the meetings will give forth light. This is the lighting of the lamps in the Holy Place.

It is easy to understand typology in a doctrinal way. According to this way, the types in the Old Testament are merely shadows of various matters in the New Testament. But to interpret the real significance of the Old Testament types requires much spiritual experience. More than fifty years ago, I heard teachings concerning the lampstand, the lighting of the lamps, and the oil used to produce light. However, I did not hear a word regarding the experiential significance of these things. As a result, those teachings did not have any effect on me. All they did was fill my mind with concepts. Furthermore, when I passed on these teachings to others, they were not affected either. There was no result in life. We thank the Lord that He has been merciful to us in that we are touching the experiential aspect. Now concerning the lighting of the lamps, we are covering the experiential matter of functioning as priests whenever we come together to meet as the church.

THE PRIESTHOOD

In the church life the saints are of different ages. Some

are very young, and others are old enough to be grandparents. Moreover, the younger ones among us are students, and others have various occupations and professions. But regardless of our age or occupation, when we come together in the meetings, we all should be priests. We have heard the terms clergy and laity, and we often declare that we do not want anything of the clergy-laity system. In the church meetings we are neither the clergy nor the laity—we are priests. Individually we all are priests, and corporately we are priests also. We are the priesthood; we do not have the clergy-laity system.

In the Bible the word priesthood has two meanings. First, it denotes a priestly body, that is, a group of priests. Second, it means the priestly service, the service of the priests. We are not only priests; we are a priesthood. We are priests together, priests in a corporate way. Because we are a priesthood, when one brother gives a message in a meeting, he is not speaking alone. Rather, the entire body of priests is speaking with him. Whenever such a speaking takes place in the meeting, the lamps are lighted, and the meeting is full of divine light.

We have emphasized the fact that the divine light, the holy light, includes the embodiment of the Triune God, the divine nature, the humanity of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ. Christ is the One who has passed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. When we light the lamps, using the oil of the Spirit of Christ, we cause the lamps to ascend. Literally, "to light" the lamps means "to cause to ascend" (v. 20). It is to cause the lamps to arise. When the holy priests speak in the church meeting, the light ascends, and the sanctuary is full of light.

THE EXPRESSION OF CHRIST

Exodus 28:2 says, "And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty." As those who are part of the priesthood, we need to know what these priestly garments are and to have the reality of these garments in our experience. Verse 4 says, "And these are the

garments which they shall make: a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a tunic of woven work, a turban, and a girdle; and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, and for his sons, to serve as priests to Me." What is the spiritual significance of all these garments? The significance of the priestly garments is the expression of Christ in the priesthood. This means that the garments signify Christ lived out of the priesthood. We have not only Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God, the divine nature of Christ, the uplifted humanity of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ with all the steps of Christ's process, but we have also the expression of Christ.

If in our daily living we do not have the expression of Christ, then whatever we do in the church meetings will be hypocrisy. Our speaking and activities in the meetings will be hypocritical. If we do not have the priestly garments, we are not qualified or equipped to light the lamps. The qualification for a priest to light the lamps in the Holy Place is the expression of Christ. As priests who would light the lamps, we need the adequate expression of Christ. The conjunction "and" at the beginning of chapter twenty-eight indicates that the priestly garments are needed for the lighting of the lamps.

As a priest, what kind of garments, what kind of expression, do you have in the church meetings? If you try to light the lamps in the sanctuary without the adequate expression of Christ typified by the priestly garments, you will suffer spiritual death. This means that you will experience a divine killing because you are not properly clothed in the sight of God. Priests need a long robe to cover them completely. This priestly robe is Christ.

If our speaking in the meetings is hypocritical, not genuine in expressing Christ, we shall experience death, and this death will bring in darkness. Therefore, if we would light the lamps in the sanctuary, we must wear the priestly garments. In forthcoming messages we shall consider in detail the significance of the different garments. We shall see that they describe various aspects of the expression of Christ. In

this message my aim has been to point out in a general way that we need the expression of Christ so that we may be equipped and qualified to light the lamps in God's dwelling place. We all must wear a priestly robe.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIFTEEN

THE LIGHTING OF THE LAMPS AND THE GARMENTS FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 27:20—28:5

MEETING TO LIGHT THE LAMPS

Throughout the centuries, especially since the Reformation, Christians have been debating the matter of how to meet. The various denominations and Christian groups all meet in their particular way. For example, the Presbyterian way of meeting is different from the Baptist way. What is your way to meet? The proper way of meeting is related to the Old Testament type of lighting the lamps in the Holy Place. We should never think that lighting these lamps is an insignificant thing. In typology, the lighting of the lamps at least implies the proper way to meet.

The lighting of the lamps always took place in the tent of meeting. The tabernacle was not only God's dwelling place; it also was a place of meeting. Hence, it was a place both for God's dwelling and for the meeting of the children of Israel.

The lighting of the lamps is related to the meeting of God's people. If we are asked in what way we meet in the church life, we should reply that we meet in the way of lighting the lamps. To meet properly as Christians is to light the lamps. Whenever we come together for the church meetings, we need to light the lamps. Furthermore, everything we do in the meetings should cause the lamps to

shine. All the singing of hymns and the giving of testimonies must be the lighting of the lamps.

THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Meeting together to light the lamps in the sanctuary comprises every aspect of our spiritual experience in the Christian life. It includes our experience of Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God, our experience of the divine nature, our experience of the uplifted humanity of Jesus that burns to give light before God and before His testimony, our experience of the Spirit of God as the oil pressed out of the fruit of the olive tree, and our experience of Christ in His process with the steps of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. Furthermore, it includes our wearing the priestly garments, that is, our expression of Christ.

As we have pointed out, in order to be qualified to light the lamps in the Holy Place, we must have every aspect of the priestly garments. If we have the priestly robe but not the ephod or the breastplate, we are not qualified, for we are lacking in the expression of Christ. Due to such a lack, certain ones who attend the meetings are not able to light the lamps.

Do you know what it means to light the lamps in the sanctuary? To light the lamps is to give off light. When some dear ones open their mouths to speak in the meeting, we all have the sense that the light is ascending and that the darkness is vanishing. Those who shine forth light in this way are surely those with the priestly garments, the expression of Christ. How much light there will be in the sanctuary depends on the extent to which we are qualified to light the lamps by wearing Christ as the priestly garments. In order to light the lamps, we must express Christ, and we must have the experience of the embodiment of God, the divine nature, the humanity of Jesus, and the Spirit of Christ with the elements of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. All these elements need to be the ingredients of our Christian life. If this is the case, then we are qualified to light the lamps in the sanctuary of God.

PURE OLIVE OIL

When we come to the meetings to light the lamps, we may be short of the real experience of Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God. We may also be lacking in the experience of the divine nature and the humanity of Christ. Furthermore, we may not have the oil of the Spirit of Christ. Instead, we may try to light the lamps with something other than olive oil. Sometimes in the pray-reading of certain saints and in their calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, there is no olive oil. They do not have the oil which comes from Christ as the olive tree, but they have oil from some inferior source. Should someone pray-read or call on the Lord in a light way, he certainly is not lighting the lamps with pure olive oil. When some saints hear this word, they may be disappointed and say, "Now I feel condemned for the way I pray-read, call on the Lord's name, and shout praises to the Lord. From now on I'll be silent in the meetings. I don't want to use oil that is not olive oil." There is no need for us to be discouraged, but there is the need for us to be purified. Young brothers, you must admit that sometimes when you shout, "Praise the Lord!" there is no olive oil in your shouting. We need to praise the Lord in a proper way, with the pure olive oil of the Spirit.

I do not agree with pray-reading, calling, or shouting that brings in some impure, natural element. The pure and holy pray-reading, calling on the Lord's name, and praising should not be mixed with lightness or joking. Whenever there is such a mixture, there is darkness instead of light. Whatever we utter in the meetings must be with the pure oil of the olive tree. This is the only oil that will burn to give light in the Holy Place. Pray-reading, calling, or shouting in a natural way never causes the holy light to ascend, and it never enlightens the other saints.

We need the cross to work in us. The pure olive oil is oil that has passed through incarnation and crucifixion, and has entered into resurrection. In this oil there is no mixture, no natural element. Certainly we need to be released in the meetings and also full of joy. Sometimes we may even laugh.

But our release, enjoyment, and laughter must always be with pure olive oil.

Whenever we come together to meet as the church, that meeting is in God's dwelling place. It is very important to remember this. Our gathering is a sanctuary. Therefore, we should not behave as if we were in a stadium. We need to remember that we are in a holy gathering of the saints. As those whose gathering is the sanctuary of God, we need to light the lamps in the sanctuary, that is, in the tent of meeting. Of course, the physical building in which we meet is not the sanctuary, or the Holy Place; it is the gathering which is the sanctuary. No matter where we may meet, in a building or in the open air, our gathering is the Holy Place. For this reason, we should not meet in a natural way or in a secular way. Everything we do in the meeting—our speaking, singing, praising, calling, shouting, pray-reading—must cause the holy light to ascend. This is to light the lamps in God's sanctuary so that the light may swallow up the darkness.

BEFORE THE TESTIMONY

Exodus 27:21 says, "In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall set them in order from evening until morning before Jehovah; it shall be a statute forever for their generations by the sons of Israel." This verse speaks of "outside the veil which is before the testimony." The reason we still need the lighting of the lamps is that, for the most part, we are not yet in the Holy of Holies. Our gathering is in the Holy Place, not in the Holy of Holies. This means that the veil still separates the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. Behind the veil there is the ark with the law, called the testimony. The phrase "before the testimony" means before the law in the ark. Even though we have the light ascending in the Holy Place, we are still in the Holy Place, not yet in the Holy of Holies. But we are in the Holy Place with a view to entering the Holy of Holies. Even though we are still in the Holy Place, we are before the testimony. We have the expectation that we shall enter the Holy of Holies. We are lighting the

lamps before the testimony, which is on the other side of the veil, hoping that the veil will be taken away. Therefore, whenever we come together to meet in the sanctuary of God, we light the lamps, causing the light to ascend before the testimony, with the expectation of entering the Holy of Holies. Once we enter the Holy of Holies, the shekinah glory will replace the light we cause to ascend in the sanctuary. This is to light the lamps with the qualifications of the priesthood. We need to have these qualifications in order to be before the testimony with the expectation of coming into the Holy of Holies. By lighting the lamps we can see the way leading into the Holy of Holies, the way leading into the depths of Christ within God.

I hope that we all shall be impressed that in the meetings, the gatherings, we need to light the lamps and that lighting the lamps is a matter of the priesthood. In our gatherings we should cause the divine light to shine so that the darkness may vanish and that we may be brought into the light with the expectation of stepping into the Holy of Holies, where the testimony of God is. Perhaps we are still in the Holy Place. Nevertheless, we are very close to the testimony, and we have the expectation of coming into the Holy of Holies.

SEEING DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF CHRIST

Another reason for lighting the lamps in the Holy Place is that when there is light in the sanctuary, we can see the different items of furniture in the Holy Place. This means that we can see the different aspects of Christ in the holy sphere. Whenever we light the lamps in the church meetings, we can see some aspect of Christ. However, if instead of seeing an aspect of Christ, we see something common, natural, or worldly, there must be something wrong with the light. What we should see under the shining of the lamps in the sanctuary is Christ in His different aspects. By our singing, testifying, speaking, and sharing, the light must shine to present the various aspects of Christ. Furthermore, we see the way into the Holy of Holies. Our experience in the

church meetings proves that whenever the lights are shining, we see Christ and we also see the way to enter the Holy of Holies.

According to 27:21, the priests were to set the lamps in order "from evening until morning." Nothing is said here about the day. During the Christian life, we are in the night, not in the day. Because we are in the night, we need the light to shine until the day dawns. By the light shining in the meetings during this age of night, we are enlightened to see more of Christ and to see more clearly the way into the Holy of Holies.

Today many who come to the meetings do not know how to light the lamps. They need to learn how to light the lamps in order to enlighten the meeting. When we were in Elden hall in the years from 1969 to 1971, the lamps were lighted long before the announced time for the beginning of the meeting. But in some of the meetings today the lamps are not lighted until well after the announced time of meeting. Moreover, during those years in Elden hall, the saints prepared to light the lamps while they were still at home or while they were on the way to the meeting. During those years, the saints wrote many living songs and hymns, such as "Now Christ is the life-giving Spirit," one that I especially like. This song brings in light. Many saints have been stirred in their spirit by singing it.

A SERIOUS MATTER

Lighting the lamps in the Holy Place is a serious matter. It requires certain basic things: the lampstand, the wicks, and the olive oil. Furthermore, in order to have the oil, it is first necessary to have the olive tree with olives. As we consider the picture of the lighting of the lamps with olive oil, we have a portrait of spiritual experience. If we would light the lamps, we need much experience. We need the experience of Christ as the olive tree in His incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. These aspects of Christ's process need to become our experience. This means that what is His must become ours. If we do not have the experience of Christ's

process, we do not have the olive tree with the olive oil. Then we shall be empty-handed when we come to light the lamps. We shall be short of olive oil. Therefore, we need the adequate experience of Christ. We also need the lampstand as the embodiment of the Triune God. We need this lampstand not merely doctrinally, but also experientially. Furthermore, we need the experience of dressing the lamps, that is, setting them in order, and also the experience of trimming them and filling them with oil. As we have pointed out, we also need the priestly robes, the expression of Christ.

Many who attend the meetings cannot light the lamps because they do not have the oil. They do not have the necessary experience of Christ, and they are lacking in the expression of Christ. They are not qualified to serve as priests to light the lamps in the Holy Place. By this we can see that the lighting of the lamps is serious and important.

Many years ago I was taught that the lampstand typifies Christ and that the oil signifies the Holy Spirit. But there was no emphasis on spiritual experience. Our understanding of the lighting of the lamps is not mainly doctrinal; rather, it is very much related to our Christian experience. In our experience we need to be priests, we need to have the lampstand with the wicks, and we need to have the oil. The oil is especially important. This requires that we experience Christ as the olive tree in His incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. Then we shall have the necessary substance for lighting the lamps. Only when we experientially have the lampstand, the wicks, and the oil are we qualified to light the lamps.

In addition to all these experiential matters, we need the further experience of the priestly garments. Only those who have these garments are qualified to light the lamps. If we do not have these garments, this means that we are lacking in the experience of Christ and in the expression of Christ. If we try to light the lamps without the proper expression of Christ in different aspects typified by the garments, we shall experience spiritual death in the Holy Place. This is not mere doctrine, but is actually the case in experience.

When they come into the meetings, many saints suffer a spiritual killing because they are not clothed with priestly garments.

We have pointed out that when we light the lamps in the Holy Place, we see the furniture signifying different aspects of Christ: the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar. By the proper vision under the lighting of the lamps in the sanctuary, we see the different aspects of Christ and also the way which leads into the Holy of Holies. Although we may not be in the Holy of Holies, we have the view and the expectation of entering into this inner place to touch the deeper things of Christ.

I hope that through these messages on the lighting of the lamps and the garments for the priesthood many of us will understand the real meaning of the gathering of the believers. The purpose of the meeting is to have the proper sanctuary with the lighting of the lamps by qualified priests so that we may have a vision of the different aspects of Christ and see the way to enter into the depths of Christ with God.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTEEN

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:9-10

If we would understand any book of the Bible, or any chapter, either in the Old Testament or in the New, we need to know the underlying thought of that book or chapter. We need to know what concept is beneath the surface. In particular, we need to know the underlying thought connecting Exodus 27 and 28. Why does the divine record speak of the priesthood immediately after the description of the tabernacle? It is rather difficult to find the reason. I have never read a book which tells us why, after the record concerning the tabernacle ending in chapter twenty-seven, we have a long section concerning the priesthood. Therefore, we need to find out why, in the sequence of the record in Exodus, the priesthood follows the tabernacle.

THE TABERNACLE AND THE PRIESTHOOD

The last two verses of chapter twenty-seven speak of the lighting of the lamps in the tabernacle. These verses give us the reason that these two sections of Exodus are put together. Here is the reason: we cannot have the tabernacle without the priesthood, and neither can we have the priesthood without the tabernacle. The last two verses of chapter twenty-seven indicate that immediately after the tabernacle came into existence, there was the need of the priesthood for the lighting of the lamps. This indicates that, spiritually speaking, the priesthood and the tabernacle are one entity. In the typology of these chapters, God reveals that His

redeemed people are both the tabernacle and the priesthood.

The tabernacle is a dwelling place. But how can such a dwelling place be a living people? With the fulfillment of these types in the New Testament, the tabernacle and the priesthood are put together. First Peter 2:5 says that we are built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. In this verse, according to the grammar, the spiritual house and the holy priesthood are in apposition. This means that these terms refer to the same thing. Therefore, the spiritual house is the holy priesthood.

In English the word priesthood refers to two things. First, it denotes a body of priests, a group of priests who work and serve together. Second, the word priesthood denotes the priestly service, the work or ministry done by the priests. Many readers of the Bible emphasize the second meaning of this word. Whenever you read 1 Peter 2:5 in the past, what did you understand by the word priesthood used in this verse? The Greek language has two different words to denote the priesthood as a body of priests and the priesthood as a priestly service.

In 1 Peter 2:5 the priesthood is not the service of the priests; rather, it is a group of priests who live, serve, and work together. The priesthood here is not a service; it is a body of priests built together to live and serve as one entity. This priesthood is the spiritual house. Hence, the body of priests is also a house. In like manner, the saints who are built together are a spiritual house. This spiritual house is a collective people. My point here is that the house and the priesthood are one entity.

The church today is first the house of God. We the believers are being built together into a spiritual house. This spiritual house is a serving body, a serving unit, a serving people. The biblical term for this unit is the priesthood.

A LIVING HOUSE

We are not a lifeless house. On the contrary, we are a house full of life. Although I appreciate the meeting hall in Anaheim

very much, it cannot be compared to God's spiritual house on one point: it is not living. The meeting hall is lifeless. The acoustics are excellent, and the stairways are very adequate. But in this building there is no life. As God's spiritual house, the church certainly is not lifeless. However, for generations Christians have not realized that the church must be something living. Some even speak of a material building such as a chapel or cathedral as a church. The church is not a lifeless entity. Rather, the church is a constitution of Christ with His redeemed people. This means that the church is living. Therefore, we should never refer to a material building as a church. A chapel, a cathedral, or a meeting hall is not a church. We all must be delivered from tradition and never speak of the meeting place as the church. The church is a house built with life, filled with life, and constituted of life.

If the church as the house of God were not constituted of life and built with life, how could it be the priesthood? It would be impossible for a lifeless house to be the priesthood. The priesthood is a group of people who are full of life.

On the one hand, we, the believers, are a spiritual house; on the other hand, we are a priesthood, a body of priests. The house and the priesthood are one. To use a new term, the house is the "-hood." The spiritual house is the priesthood, and the priesthood is the spiritual house.

THE NEED FOR THE BUILDING

If we are not a spiritual house, we cannot be the priesthood. Likewise, if we are not the priesthood, we cannot be a spiritual house. But if we are the dwelling place of God, the tabernacle, then surely we are a body of priests. In like manner, if we are not a body of priests, then we are not God's dwelling place.

In order to have a house, materials of different kinds must be built together. If the materials are simply piled up on the building site, it would be impossible to have a house. We would only have a heap of materials. These materials may be arranged in a very nice way to show forth their

excellence. Nevertheless, there would not be a house. A house comes into existence only when the materials are built together.

Suppose when we were building the meeting hall in Anaheim, we did nothing more than pile up all the materials. We may have appreciated the beauty of certain materials, but we would not have a meeting hall, a building in which to meet. In the case of both a house and a meeting hall, there is the need for the materials to be built together.

The principle is the same with the priesthood. Since the priesthood equals the house, and the house depends on the building up of the materials, the priesthood also requires the building up of the saints. When I was with the Brethren, I heard a number of messages on the priesthood. The Brethren strongly oppose the clergy-laity system and declare that all believers are priests, that they are neither the clergy nor the laity. The Brethren put a strong emphasis on what is called the universal priesthood. According to this concept, the priesthood is universal because every believer is a priest. But although Brethren teachers emphasize this matter, I never heard a message saying that all the priests need to be built up together in order to have the priesthood, the body of serving priests. Some of their teachers emphasize 1 Peter 2:5 and 9. I heard several messages on these verses, and I was helped by these messages. However, there was no emphasis on the fact that the priesthood is a building.

We know that the priesthood requires the building up of the believers because the priesthood is a spiritual house. We need to remember that in 1 Peter 2:5 the spiritual house and the priesthood are in apposition. In the matter of the spiritual house we can clearly understand the need for building. But with the priesthood the need for the building up is not apparent.

We all are the materials for God's spiritual house. But have we been built up together to be God's house? Do you have the assurance and the peace to say that you are part of God's house? Are the believers in your locality built up

together as a spiritual house? Deep within, you may not have the assurance that you have truly been built into the local expression of the Body of Christ. You may not have the peace to say that you have actually been built into God's house.

In 1 Peter 2:5 Peter writes in a way to charge us and encourage us to be built into a spiritual house. As we have emphasized, this spiritual house is a holy priesthood. You may wonder why in this verse the house is mentioned first and then the priesthood. This sequence is based upon that in the book of Exodus, where we first have the tabernacle and then the priesthood. The priesthood must come after the tabernacle, the house. Why must the spiritual house also come first? Why must the church first be God's dwelling place and then the priesthood? The answer is found in our need to be built up together. Because of the need of the building up, the church must be the house of God before it can be the priesthood.

As the materials for God's building, we have been chosen, predestinated, called, saved, forgiven, justified, reconciled, and regenerated. Although we are such materials, we must still ask ourselves if we have been built up with others into God's house. Today there is much teaching among Christians about being spiritual, powerful, or victorious. More than forty years ago, I read books about how to be victorious, how to be powerful, and how to be sanctified. Today there may not be as many "how-to" books as there were years ago. Many Christians have learned that the methods taught in these "how-to" books do not work. The emphasis in the Bible is not on how to be holy or how to be spiritual. Instead, the emphasis is on God's building.

The materials that have been built into the meeting hall in Anaheim are stable and strong. But suppose instead of being built in, these materials had been left to lie on the ground for years. By now would they not be unclean and unattractive? To be sure, those materials would be in a pitiful condition. Had they been left scattered on the ground, they would certainly have become damaged. But because

they have been built up together, these materials have been preserved, protected, and made stable. Do you want to be protected in your Christian life? Do you want to be stable, preserved, and sanctified? If this is your desire, then you need to be built into God's house.

We have pointed out that without the building up of the saints, there cannot be the priesthood. There would be the priests, but there would not be the "-hood." In the church in Anaheim we may have many priests. But if these priests have not been built up together, we do not have the "-hood." The "-hood" depends upon the priests being built up together. First we must have the building. Then this building will be the priesthood.

SERVING IN COORDINATION

The priests in the Old Testament did not serve in an isolated, individualistic way. On the contrary, they served together in coordination. Their service was not individualistic. Even when a priest did something by himself, what he did was in the priesthood, in the priestly body. His personal service was in the coordination of that group of serving priests.

This coordination can be illustrated by what happens in my body when I use my hand to pick up a book. Yes, it is the hand which grasps the book. But the hand does not act separately or individualistically; it functions as part of my body. The principle is the same with speaking. Although my mouth speaks, it does not speak apart from the body. The mouth speaks in the coordination of the body. I use the function of the hand and the mouth to illustrate the fact that the priests serve together; they do not serve in an individualistic way. They are a coordinated unit, a body, a "-hood." For this reason, they live together, serve together, and work together.

If we read the book of Leviticus carefully, we shall see that the priests also ate together. They were corporate even in their eating. This indicates that they lived in a corporate way. This corporate living of the priests, however, is not

the same as that practiced in so-called communes today. We should not confuse a commune with the corporate living of the priests in the priesthood.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH

When we are built up together, we become the church in the aspect of God's dwelling place. Then we automatically are the church in the second aspect, the aspect of the priesthood. We are a corporate people serving God as priests. Such priests do not serve individualistically; they serve corporately. This is the reason in the New Testament the church is described by terms such as house, priesthood, and Body. We, the church, are the Body of Christ. In this Body there are many members, but none of the members acts individualistically.

In the typology in the book of Exodus, God uses two matters to portray the function of the church. First, the church functions as God's dwelling place. Without the church, God would be homeless. He would be like a person wandering in the wilderness, a person without a home. But with the church God has a home, and He is now in His home. Therefore, the church functions as God's home, His dwelling place. Another function of the church is to serve God. As we afford God a dwelling place, we also serve Him. God's dwelling place is a group of serving priests. This twofold function of the church, that of the dwelling place and the priesthood, is typified by the tabernacle and the priesthood in the book of Exodus. We all need to see that the church has a twofold function, the function to house God and the function to serve Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEEN

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:9-10

LIFE AND BUILDING

In the book *The Vision of God's Building* we pointed out that the main subject of the Bible is God's building. God created man with a spirit to receive Him as life. According to the second chapter of Genesis, the divine life is presented to man in the form of the tree of life. Verse 9 speaks of "the tree of life also in the midst of the garden." Verse 10 goes on to say, "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads." From the place where the tree of life was, a river flowed to reach the four ends of the earth. Verses 11 and 12 speak of gold, bdellium, and onyx stone. As *The Vision of God's Building* makes clear, these matters are related to the crucial points of life and building. In Genesis 2 we have the tree of life and the materials for God's building.

It is very interesting to compare this record with that of the last two chapters of Revelation. In Revelation 22 we also have the tree of life and the river of water of life. But by the time we come to the end of the Bible, the building materials are in the building, the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will contain the same three materials mentioned in Genesis 2: gold, pearl (bdellium), and precious stones.

If the Lord grants us the time to complete the life-study of the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, we shall see that these books are books of building. Furthermore, the historical books, all the books from Joshua through Ezra,

Nehemiah, and Esther, are concerned with the building. In fact, the main subject of these books of history is God's building. When everything was right with God's building, the situation of the children of Israel was very good. But when the building was damaged, the condition of the children of Israel was also very poor.

In the books of the prophets the building is also a major subject. The book of Ezekiel contains many chapters that record a vision of the building. Actually, the book of Ezekiel is a book on God's building. We have much to say regarding this in the book entitled *The Visions of Ezekiel*. Because the building is what God desires, the entire Old Testament is on the subject of God's building.

There is no doubt that the Bible has much to say concerning salvation. Salvation, however, is not the ultimate consummation of the Bible. The ultimate consummation of the Bible is God's building, the New Jerusalem. Throughout the Bible we have various matters related to the building. In Genesis we have the materials for the building, and in Exodus we have the building of the tabernacle.

PRECIOUS BUILDING MATERIALS

The three precious materials in Genesis 2—gold, pearl, and onyx stone—are found in the tabernacle and the priesthood. To be sure, there is an abundance of gold in the tabernacle. We have seen that on the breastplate and the shoulder plates of the ephod worn by the high priest there were precious stones. But instead of pearl, with the tabernacle there is silver. Silver signifies redemption. In Genesis 2 there is pearl, but there is no silver, because at that time sin had not come in. Furthermore, in the New Jerusalem there will likewise be pearl instead of silver, for by then there will be no further need of redemption. But in between Genesis 2 and Revelation 21, there definitely is the need of redemption signified by silver. For this reason, in 1 Corinthians 3:12 Paul mentions gold, silver, and precious stones; he does not speak of pearl. The reason Paul includes silver and not pearl is that in this present age we need redemption. Moreover,

with the building of the temple in the Old Testament, the same precious materials were used.

Paul received a marvelous revelation from the Lord concerning God's building. His mentioning of gold, silver, and precious stone in 1 Corinthians 3 exactly fits in with the thought that in the beginning in Genesis there was no sin and thus no need of silver. But after sin came in, there was the need of redemption. In eternity, however, there will no longer be the need for silver, for there will no longer be any sin. But during the time after the fall and before the New Jerusalem in eternity, we must have silver. Once again we see how consistent the Bible is. What Paul wrote concerning the building is consistent with the full revelation of the Scriptures.

True spirituality is a matter of the building. Without the building, the spiritual house, there is no sanctification, spirituality, or spiritual power. A certain brother may seem to be kind, holy, and spiritual. But if this brother is not built into God's building, his apparent spiritual wealth will become spiritual bankruptcy. The reason for such a condition is that without the building there is no protection or covering.

OUR UNIQUE NEED

We can refer to the meeting hall in Anaheim to illustrate how God's building is our protection. Suppose all the materials used in building the meeting hall were still lying on the ground. Then in case of a storm or heavy rain, the materials would be damaged. They would not have any protection. But since the materials are now part of the building, they are protected from the weather. The principle is the same with God's spiritual building. If we want to be protected, we need to be built into God's building. Our protection is not our spirituality; our protection is the building.

In my early years as a Christian, I did not see the crucial importance of the building. By the Lord's mercy, I have loved the Lord from the time I was saved. For more than fifty years, my love for Him has never ceased. Furthermore, I

have spent much time to seek Him. I have also pursued holiness, spirituality, and power. I read a number of books on these subjects. However, my pursuit of holiness, spirituality, and power resulted in failure. Eventually I learned that the only way to be holy, spiritual, or powerful is to be built into God's building.

In the perfecting training messages we dealt with the problems of opinion and peculiarity. But no matter how much you may exercise yourself to solve the problems of opinion and peculiarity, if you are not built up, none of those messages will be of any help to you. Only as we are built up together can the matters of opinion and peculiarity be dealt with. As long as you are willing to be built into God's building and actually are built in, the problems of opinion and peculiarity will disappear. Do not try to overcome these things by your own effort. Our unique need is to be built in.

NOURISHED FOR THE BUILDING

As one of the leading apostles, Peter certainly learned a great deal in his life with the Lord. In his first Epistle, a short book of only five chapters, he speaks clearly of the building. He tells us that we need to be nourished in order to be built up into a spiritual house. In 1 Peter 2:2 he says, "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word, that by it you may grow." Then in verse 5 he goes on to say, "You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, into a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." According to these verses, the nourishment is for the building, the spiritual house, and the spiritual house is for the holy priesthood. In verse 9 Peter speaks of a royal priesthood: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." When we are nourished and are built up as a spiritual house, a holy and royal priesthood, we shall show forth the excellencies, the virtues, of the One who has called us.

THE SHORTAGE OF THE BUILDING

To a very great extent, the efforts of today's Christians to be holy, spiritual, and powerful are in vain. Many "how-to" books have been written to help believers to be holy and victorious. How much help is actually offered by these books? I would say that the help rendered is very little, if any. I can testify that I have read books in different categories of spiritual and biblical teachings. Furthermore, I tried to practice the methods recommended in these books. As I have already indicated, the result was failure.

Throughout the centuries there have been a number of believers who were truly spiritual. However, many of the biographies of certain spiritual giants are not altogether accurate. A biography does not always present a full and clear picture of a person's life. After a particular spiritual giant dies, someone may write his biography. That biography may exalt that spiritual person too much. This kind of biography is different from that found in the Bible. For example, the Bible speaks of Abraham's shortcomings and even exposes David's sins. If you were to write a biography of David, would you mention his sins? Would you not rather hide them and perhaps exaggerate a little on David's behalf? Sometimes a believer's autobiography is more honest and accurate than the biographies.

Even with those who are pious and spiritual, there have been a number of shortcomings. Failures, of course, are different from shortcomings. A person may not have many failures, but he still may have a number of shortcomings. The shortcomings in the lives of even the most spiritual Christians are due to the lack of building up.

Years ago I stayed for a month at a place in England that was famous for spirituality. Yes, there was a certain amount of spirituality among the believers there. However, there was no building. There was much talk about spirituality, but there was no building at all. The dear ones in that place under the Lord's hand had learned different spiritual lessons and had some spiritual experience. They learned how to trust in the Lord, how to be dealt with by the Lord, and

how to experience the cross. They also learned about the life principles of resurrection. But even though they learned all these things, the result eventually was tragedy because there was no building.

GOD'S GOAL

In the Bible and in the Christian life, life and building are the most basic matters. If we do not allow the Lord to have the building among us, we shall be a failure as far as God's purpose is concerned. The building is God's unique goal. For eternity, He wants the New Jerusalem. Today He wants the church.

Even in the Old Testament we can see that God's goal has always been the building. In the wilderness He required that a tabernacle be set up. Then in the holy land, the land of Canaan, He wanted a temple to be built. Many verses in the Psalms refer to the temple. This indicates that, according to the experience of the psalmists, spirituality, victory, and power were all related to the temple. The principle is the same with us today. For us, the temple is the church. Our spirituality, victory, and power must be related to the church. However, it is very sad, even tragic, that many Christians do not care for the church and some even oppose it.

The situation among the Lord's people is not very encouraging. This is true even of those groups of believers that are spiritual. The reason the situation is disappointing and discouraging is the lack of the building.

The Lord has not yet been able to gain His goal of the building. Without the building, how can we have the priesthood? It is impossible to have the priesthood without the building. The priests are not individualistic believers. On the contrary, the priests are a corporate body; the priesthood is composed of priests who have been built together. Furthermore, the service of the priesthood is a body service in coordination. This corporate priesthood is what the Lord is seeking today.

If we are off from God's goal, what shall we be able to accomplish? We shall not be able to do anything for the fulfillment of God's purpose.

THE BUILDING AND THE PRIESTHOOD

In messages to come we shall consider in detail the priestly garments. Then we shall see that the expression of Christ signified by the garments is actually a building. The ephod was not worn by the high priest to protect him from cold and to keep him warm. Instead, the ephod was altogether for building; it was for the linking together of the breastplate and the two shoulder plates. These plates, no doubt, are a sign strongly pointing to the building. The breastplate worn by the high priest signifies the building. The precious stones on the breastplate were set in gold. Then the breastplate itself was linked to the ephod. The two shoulder plates on which were engraved the names of the tribes of Israel were also connected to the ephod. This shows that the ephod is related to the building.

When the high priest stood before the Lord to seek His leading, he had to wear the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim. This means that he had to wear the building. If the high priest did not have the breastplate, he could still worship God, burn the incense, and light the lamps. However, he would not have the way to receive the Lord's revelation. Receiving revelation from God required the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim.

Without the building the priesthood will collapse. We cannot have the priesthood without the building. Because of the lack of the building, the situation among Christians today is very discouraging.

A PRESERVED REMNANT

My heart is saddened by the condition of the Lord's people. I am disappointed not mainly by the opposition to the Lord's recovery, but by the shortage of the building. But although the situation is not encouraging, we need to believe that just as the Lord preserved seven thousand at the time of Elijah, so He has preserved a remnant today. When Elijah was disappointed, thinking that he alone had remained faithful to the Lord, the Lord told him not to be disappointed, for He had preserved seven thousand who had

not bowed the knee to Baal. Today the Lord has also preserved a number of His people. He is sovereign, and we should worship Him for His sovereignty.

Because of our human frailty, our expectation may be that the Lord's recovery would increase and multiply rapidly. However, a large increase in numbers could corrupt and ruin the recovery. Therefore, in His sovereignty, instead of allowing this to happen, the Lord would permit the recovery to be opposed and also to be purified. The result is that those who do not have a genuine heart for the Lord do not take the way of the recovery. In the past we saw how the Lord came in to purify His recovery. That purification was a test to prove which ones truly have a heart for the Lord's interests.

We all need to see that the goal of the Lord's recovery is to recover Christ as life and everything to us so that we may be transformed and built up. When we are built up together, God will have a building. This building is the priesthood.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEEN

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:9-10; John 1:14; Heb. 1:3; John 17:22; Luke 24:19

SIX ITEMS

According to 28:1-4, the priests were required to wear a particular kind of garment. Today those who serve in the armed forces must wear an appropriate uniform. In the same principle, as a group of serving ones, the priests in the Old Testament had to wear garments that were specially designed for the priests. Exodus 28:4 indicates that these garments included six main items: "And these are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a tunic of woven work, a turban, and a girdle; and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, and for his sons, to serve as priests to Me."

The breastplate was built with twelve precious stones set in gold. The ephod was underneath the breastplate. The Hebrew word for ephod means to bind. The ephod worn by the priest was similar to a vest. To the ephod were attached the shoulder plates and the breastplate. The robe was a long garment that went from the shoulders down to the feet, covering the body of the priest in full. God required that the priests be fully covered, that no part of their body would be naked. It is rather difficult to say what the tunic was. It was shorter than the robe, probably reaching no farther than the knee. Hence, the tunic may be compared to a short coat. In addition to these four items, there were the

turban and the girdle. The turban was a covering for the head, and the girdle was used for the girding of the loins.

THE EXPRESSION OF CHRIST

In forthcoming messages we shall consider these items of the priestly garments in detail. My concern in this message is that we have a general understanding of the significance of the priestly garments.

The priestly garments signify that those who serve God as priests must have a certain kind of expression. The priestly garments can be compared to the uniform worn by a policeman. When we see a man dressed in the uniform of a policeman, we know that this person is a policeman. A policeman's uniform is his expression. The same is true of the garments worn by a judge in a courtroom. A policeman's uniform and a judge's robe illustrate the fact that clothing signifies expression. According to the New Testament, the priestly garments signify the expression of Christ. Every aspect of the priestly garments signifies an attribute or virtue of Christ. Therefore, the priestly garments are the serving ones' expression of Christ.

Qualifying the Priests to Serve

The priestly garments as the expression of the priests were their qualification. If the priests had worn some other kind of garments, they would not have been qualified to serve as priests. Once again we may use a policeman's uniform as an illustration. A policeman is required to wear the proper uniform when he is on duty. It is the uniform which qualifies him to serve. If a policeman wore some other kind of clothing, even very fine, expensive clothing, he would not be qualified. To be qualified he must wear a police uniform. In the same principle, the expression of Christ qualifies us to serve as priests. We may claim to be priests, but do we have the expression of Christ to qualify us to serve as priests? Whether or not we are qualified to be a priest is determined by the expression of Christ. This expression is our qualification.

Sanctifying the Priests

The priestly garments also sanctify the priests. These garments separated them from all the other people. The same is true of a policeman in uniform. A police officer's uniform separates him from others. Should a man wearing a policeman's uniform approach you and speak to you, you would surely respect him. However, if someone without the proper uniform tried to act as if he were a policeman, you would not show him the same respect. That person would not have the qualification signified by the uniform, and he would not be separated by this uniform from others. For this reason, he would be regarded as no different from anyone else. In like manner, the priests were sanctified, separated to God, by their garments. Exodus 28:3 says, "They shall make Aaron's garments to sanctify him to serve as priest to Me." In this verse sanctify means to separate to God for His unique purpose. The priests were sanctified by the expression of Christ. If we express Christ, this expression will both qualify us and sanctify us.

Verses 2 and 4 of Exodus 28 speak of "holy garments." Verse 3 says that Aaron's garments sanctified him to serve as a priest to God. The words "holy" and "sanctify" indicate that a priest of God should be separated to Him, set aside for His purpose. To be separated and set aside in this way is to be holy, sanctified.

FOR GLORY AND FOR BEAUTY

The Glory of Christ's Divinity

Exodus 28:2 says, "And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty." The words "glory" and "beauty" are very inclusive. The phrase "for glory" means to express Christ's divinity (John 1:14; Heb. 1:3; John 17:22). The phrase "for beauty" means to express Christ's humanity (Luke 24:19). Glory here refers to Christ's divinity. In our expression of Christ there must be something of the divine nature. This divine nature is typified by the gold which was part of the priestly garments. The fact

that the element of gold was part of the garments typifies that divinity, the divine nature, is part of the expression of Christ. A priest must express Christ's divinity.

If we read the four Gospels carefully, we shall see that although Jesus of Nazareth lived a human life, in His humanity there was the expression of the glory of God. This means that in His human living there was divinity, typified by the gold in the priestly garments. The Lord Jesus certainly expressed the glory of God. John 1:14 says, "We beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from a father." The disciples beheld the glory of Jesus, the glory of God's only begotten Son. Furthermore, Hebrews 1:3 says that Christ is the effulgence of God's glory. This means that He expresses God with the divine attributes.

The Beauty of Christ's Humanity

The priestly garments were for beauty as well as glory. Beauty in 28:2 refers to the expression of Christ's humanity. Christ's divinity is for glory, and His humanity is for beauty. The four Gospels reveal that in the life and daily living of the Lord Jesus we can see the divine glory and also the human beauty. With the Lord divinity and humanity are blended in a very positive way. They are woven together like fabric woven to make a particular type of textile. With the Lord Jesus the divine glory has been woven into human beauty. For this reason, with Him we behold both the divine glory and the beauty of His human virtues.

First Peter 2:9 says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." The Greek word rendered "praises" in the King James Version is better rendered attributes, excellencies, or virtues. This includes Christ's divine glory and human beauty. In 1 Peter 2:9 the virtues, or excellencies, are the divine glory, the divine attributes, and the human beauty, the human virtues.

If we live Christ and Christ lives out of us, Christ will be expressed. If we have such an expression, others will realize

that in our living there is something glorious. At the same time, they will sense that in our daily living there is a beautiful expression of human virtues. In the expression of Christ both the divine glory and the human beauty can be seen.

For thirty-three and a half years, the Lord Jesus expressed the divine glory with the human beauty. He bore this expression every hour, in fact every minute, of His life on earth. The divine glory and the human beauty were never absent from Him even for a moment.

A LIFE THAT EXPRESSES CHRIST

We, however, are often different from the Lord Jesus in this regard. Perhaps in the morning we may express the Lord with His glory and beauty. But later in the day, we may express something quite poor or low. Then it seems that the divine glory is gone and that the human beauty has disappeared. In the place of such an expression, we express the fallen natural life. I must confess that this has often been my experience. In this matter, we are all the same and suffer from the same spiritual illness. The only difference there may be among us is a matter of degree.

Because we often express the fallen natural life instead of Christ with the divine glory and human beauty, we need to look to the Lord for His mercy, humble ourselves, and pray, "Lord, have mercy on me. I realize that I should express You with the divine glory and human beauty. But, Lord, You know that often I fail to express You with Your glory and beauty. Have mercy on me, Lord, and grant me grace that I may remain attached to the divine glory and the human beauty. Lord, I don't want ever to be separated from Your divine attributes and human virtues. I need this kind of life to be sanctified and qualified to be in the priesthood."

I wish to emphasize the fact that it is a life that expresses Christ with the divine glory and the human beauty that actually sanctifies us and qualifies us to be the priesthood. Whenever the divine glory and the human beauty are not expressed in us, we are immediately detached from the

priesthood, from the corporate body of priests. If such is the case, then we are not in the building. But whenever we express the divine glory blended with the beauty of human virtues, we are truly in the building. We are built up together as the priesthood.

What is expressed in our living is not merely a matter of doctrine; it is a matter that is very practical and experiential. If you consider your experience, you will realize that whenever you are separated from the other saints and become individualistic, you immediately express the fallen, natural life instead of expressing Christ with the divine glory and human beauty. Those who work in a secular office may not express the divine glory and the human beauty, and even those who serve in the ministry may fail to have such an expression. Even those who love the Lord, who love the ministry, and who are willing to help in the service to the ministry may not be truly built up with others. On the contrary, some may be isolated and individualistic. Whenever we cut ourselves off from the saints, we no longer express the divine glory or the human beauty.

We praise the Lord that in the church life we have truly been graced by Him. The brothers and the sisters in the churches are genuinely one. Therefore, at the Lord's table we can proclaim our oneness. Nevertheless, at least sometimes in our service we do not have an expression of the divine glory and the human beauty. This means that we are not wearing the priestly garments, the holy garments for glory and for beauty. If we are short of the divine glory and the human beauty, this means that we do not have the priesthood, for there is neither the qualification nor the sanctification necessary for the priesthood. I hope that we shall be helped by this word to reconsider our situation and condition.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED NINETEEN

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(4)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:4-14; 39:1-7

The priestly garments described in 28:4-14 were first for the high priest and then for the priests. At the time of Exodus 28, the high priest was Aaron, and the priests were the sons of Aaron. In typology Aaron as the high priest signifies Christ as our true High Priest before God, and the sons of Aaron, the priests, are types of the believers. Therefore, the garments were for two classes of priests. Certain garments were only for the high priest. The other priests were not allowed to wear them. Most of the priestly garments, however, were both for the priests, the sons of Aaron, and for the high priest, Aaron.

THE BREASTPLATE AND THE EPHOD

Exodus 28:4 says, "And these are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a tunic of woven work, a turban, and a girdle; and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, and for his sons, to serve as priests to Me." The first two items, the breastplate and the ephod, were worn only by the high priest. Actually the breastplate may be considered part of the ephod. Three pieces were attached to the ephod: the breastplate and the two shoulder plates. These plates were connected, fastened, girded, to the ephod.

Instead of translating the Hebrew word for ephod, most versions of the Bible simply give an English transliteration. This means that ephod is a Hebrew word, not an English translation. The reason this Hebrew word is brought into

the English translations of the Bible is that there is no word in our vocabulary to describe this item of the priestly garments. There is nothing in our culture that corresponds to it. If there is not such a thing in our culture, then there cannot be a word to describe it. For example, if automobiles did not exist, we would not have in our vocabulary the word automobile. The word automobile came into use to describe vehicles with which we are familiar. But in our culture there is nothing exactly like the garment denoted by the Hebrew word ephod. For this reason, we are not able to translate this Hebrew word into English.

If you were to ask me to explain what the ephod is, I would answer that I cannot describe it with a single word or even with a few sentences. Nevertheless, in this message I shall try to impress you with the matter of the ephod, a matter that was not known in man's culture before the priesthood was set up by God. When the priestly garments were revealed to Moses by God, the ephod was something absolutely new. This matter was completely unknown before Moses received the revelation from God. God spoke to Moses concerning the ephod, and that was the time Moses first learned of it.

According to the dictionaries, the word ephod means to bind, fasten, gird, or link. Hence, the ephod was a part of the priestly garments used for fastening, girding, linking, or binding. The ephod was not a jacket and not exactly a vest. Rather, it was a part of the priestly garments used for fastening or binding. The ephod, therefore, was used for fastening, girding, binding, or connecting.

FOR GLORY AND BEAUTY

There are three main reasons for wearing clothes. In other words, the garments we wear serve three purposes. Before the fall, man did not wear any clothes. But after the fall, Adam and Eve realized they were naked, and they made something to cover their nakedness. Then God provided coats of skins to cover them. Thus, the first reason for wearing clothing is to cover our nakedness. People who are

moral will want to cover themselves properly. They will not want to expose their nakedness. Immorality, on the contrary, encourages nakedness. It is both a sin and a shame to be naked. The priests in the Old Testament were fully covered from head to toe. The first purpose of clothing, therefore, is to cover our nakedness.

The second reason for wearing clothing is related to our health. By wearing the proper garments we are protected from the cold, the wind, and the rain. We are also protected from excessive heat. Some of us are very sensitive to the temperature and need to wear the right clothing to keep us from being too warm or too cold. If we do not wear suitable clothing in every situation, our health will be affected. Thus, clothing also serves the purpose of preserving our health.

Third, people wear clothes to beautify themselves. According to Exodus 28, the priestly garments were for glory and for beauty. The purpose of these garments was not mainly to cover nakedness or to protect the body from the cold. Rather, these garments were for glory and for beauty. The ephod, in particular, was not used to cover the high priest's nakedness or to protect him from cold; it was altogether for glory and beauty.

It is significant that Exodus 28 mentions glory first and beauty second. This indicates that we should first consider glory and then beauty. When we choose our clothes, we should not consider beauty first. Our first consideration should be glory.

We have pointed out that glory here refers to the divine expression, the divine attributes, and that beauty refers to the human virtues. In our dressing we must first take care of God's glory. For example, a sister should ask if a certain garment can be worn for God's glory. If the sisters consider their clothing from this point of view, the style of clothes they wear may be somewhat different. However, most people today care only for their beauty; they do not care at all for God's glory. But the ephod was first for the divine glory and then for human beauty. This piece of clothing used for fastening was composed of the divine glory and the human beauty.

FASTENED TO CHRIST

Only the high priest had the right to wear the ephod. This typifies that we the believers do not have the right to put on what is signified by the ephod. Only Christ wears the ephod. This means that only He has the fastening power and the girding strength. Christ holds us, binds us, and fastens us to Himself. We may say that Christ links us to Himself. The holding power is His divine glory and human beauty.

We need to remember that the ephod was a piece of clothing used for fastening. Three plates were fastened to the ephod—the two shoulder plates and the breastplate. Because these plates were fastened to the ephod, they were also fastened, bound, girded, to the high priest. Having been fastened to him, they could not fall away from him. This is the significance of the ephod.

As the High Priest, Christ has the fastening power, the tying strength, and the binding ability. We do not have this power, strength, or ability.

Sometimes Christians speak of the way the Lord holds us, embraces us, and keeps us. When I was young, I thought that the Lord Jesus held us as a shepherd holds a lamb in his arms. I pictured the Lord as One embracing us and carrying us in this way. But if we consider the picture of the ephod, we shall see that the Lord does not merely hold us; He binds us and fastens us to Himself, just as the plates are joined to the ephod. To hold is not as significant as to fasten, and to embrace is not as significant as to gird or bind. We are fastened to Christ; we are bound to Him. Yes, Christ bears us and carries us. However, He does not carry us like a shepherd carrying a lamb in his arms. Instead, He carries us like the high priest wearing the ephod to which the shoulder plates and the breastplate were securely fastened.

Christ has fastened all of God's people to Himself. This fastening is through His divine glory and human beauty. This means that His divine glory and human beauty are the strength to fasten us to Himself.

Exodus 28:9 and 10 say, "And you shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel:

six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, according to their birth." These onyx stones engraved with the names of the children of Israel symbolize us, the believers. Therefore, they signify all God's redeemed people. Verse 12 says, "And you shall put the two stones upon the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, as stones of memorial for the sons of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah upon his two shoulders for a memorial." This signifies that God's redeemed people are upon Christ's shoulders. We are not held in His arms like lambs; we are upon His shoulders like the pieces of onyx stone. We are the precious stones upon the ephod, the fastening piece, composed of the divine glory and human beauty.

Since the day you were saved, you have been held by Christ. However, do you know what has been holding you all this time? Some would say that Christ is powerful and that we are held by His power. Yes, John 10:28 indicates this: "And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." This does indicate Christ's power to hold us. In John 10:29 the Lord Jesus goes on to say, "My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand." There are two hands holding the believers, the hand of Christ the Son and the hand of the Father. These hands signify power and also love, but they do not imply the divine glory and the human beauty. According to the picture of the plates fastened to the ephod, we are tied to Christ by His divine glory and human beauty. Therefore, Christ's divine glory and human beauty are the fastening strength which binds us to Himself. We are held to Him continually by His divine glory and His human beauty.

THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING HELD TO THE LORD

We need to ask ourselves how in our experience we are held by the Lord. Some may say that they are held by faith. They may pray, "Lord Jesus, I don't have any faith. Please give me the faith so that I can believe that I am in Your

hand and that You are holding me." I have often prayed in this way. I have had many experiences of this kind of prayer and of this kind of believing. But the more I prayed like this, the less I seemed to trust in the Lord. The more I asked for faith, the less faith I had. Many other Christians have had a similar experience. Perhaps you have prayed, "Lord, You are my Keeper. You have the keeping grace, You have the power to hold me, and You love me. Lord, embrace me and preserve me. But You know, Lord, when trouble comes, I seem to forget everything. Therefore, Lord, I ask You to infuse me with Your faith. O Lord, infuse Yourself into me as my living faith." But the more you pray like this, the less it seems that faith is infused into you.

Forty years ago I became seriously ill of tuberculosis. During that time I did not have any faith that the Lord would heal me. Of course, I did not lose my basic faith, the saving faith, in the Lord. But I did lose any faith that the Lord would heal me of tuberculosis. The elders, the co-workers, and the church with all the saints prayed for me. I had given a number of messages to the saints telling them that the Lord is faithful and charging them to believe in Him. I encouraged them to trust in Him, for He would never fail them. Then I became ill and found it difficult to trust in the Lord. A certain sister who brought my food to me three times a day talked with me about faith. She asked me why I did not have the faith that the Lord would heal me. I said to her, "Sister, you are right. I don't have a bit of faith. Can you please help me and tell me what faith is?" It seemed rather strange that I would ask her such a question. She had been saved through my preaching, and now I was asking her to tell me what faith is. She was very surprised and was not able to answer me. Actually, the situation of every preacher is like this.

My point here is that when we realize the divine glory and the human beauty of Christ, we are spontaneously fastened to Him. There is no need for us to try to believe in Him. The fastening power does not come from our faith: it comes from what He is and what He has. The Lord has the

divine glory and the human beauty. He is glorious, and He is beautiful. Whenever we consider Him or gaze on Him, we are fastened to Him in a practical way in our experience. There is no need for us to attempt to believe in Him or trust in Him, for we are already girded to Him.

I enjoy reading and studying the four Gospels. As we read the Gospels, sometimes we can see the glory of the Lord, and sometimes we can see His beauty. Even while the Lord was in the flesh on earth as a man, His glory could be seen. Even in His incarnation He was glorious. When we read the Gospels, we can see that the divine glory was with Him. We can also see the Lord's human beauty, a beauty that is fine and very precious. We do not have the words adequate to describe the human beauty of the Lord Jesus revealed in the four Gospels. But as we read the Gospels, something within our being realizes how beautiful the Lord is. For example, the way He dealt with His disciples and talked with Mary and Martha in John 11 was beautiful. When we consider the divine glory and human beauty of the Lord in the Gospels, we are spontaneously fastened to Him. Then we are held to Him and even carried on His shoulders. His divine glory and His human beauty tie us to Himself.

I believe that many of us have had this kind of experience reading the Gospels. By reading the story of the Lord's life on earth, we see His divine glory and His human beauty, and we are fastened to Him. Then we have the sense that we are safe and secure. We realize that we can never fall away from Him. This is the experience of the ephod.

Do you have such an ephod? I am quite sure that I do not have it. If you would study me, you would not be fastened. I am short both of the divine glory and the human beauty. Christ, however, is different. He has the ephod, and with Him there are the divine glory and the human beauty.

THE MATERIALS OF THE EPHOD

Exodus 28:5 and 6 say, "And they shall take the gold, and

the blue, and the purple, and the scarlet, and the fine linen, and they shall make the ephod of gold, blue and purple, scarlet and fine-twined linen, the work of a skillful workman." Christ has an ephod made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen. Gold here denotes golden thread. Gold was first beaten into thin plates and then it was cut into thread to be woven into a textile. Gold signifies Christ's divinity. The blue signifies His heavenliness, and the purple, His kingliness, His royalty. The scarlet signifies Christ's redemption accomplished by His sacrificing Himself through the shedding of His blood. The fine linen signifies the Lord's human life. The twining points to His sufferings.

The gold, the blue, the purple, and the scarlet were all woven into the fine-twined linen to make the ephod, a piece of clothing used for fastening. This piece fastens, holds, ties, us to Christ. We are bound to Him in a way that is beautiful and glorious. Both divinity and humanity are woven into the ephod. In the ephod we see Christ's heavenliness and kingliness; we also see His redemption. Because the ephod includes all these elements, Christ has the power to hold us. He has the strength to fasten us to Himself.

It may seem that this message contains little more than an objective word concerning Christ. Actually, this matter of the ephod is very subjective and experiential. It shows us how to enjoy Christ and how to experience Him. Christ is the High Priest, and He has an item of clothing called the ephod, a fastening and binding piece used to hold us and carry us by His divine glory and human beauty.

Exodus 28:8, speaking of the ephod, mentions "the band for its fastening, which is upon it." The Hebrew words translated "for its fastening" can also be rendered "of the ephod." Actually the Hebrew word for fastening here is a verbal form of ephod. If we translated it literally, we could coin a new word—"ephoding." However, we use the word fastening; other translations use the word girding. This is a further indication that the ephod was used for fastening, girding, binding. As we have seen, it was composed of Christ's

divinity, His kingliness and heavenliness, His redemption, and His fine humanity. Therefore, in this ephod we see Christ's divine glory and His human beauty.

When the high priest was together with the other priests, he stood out as the most divinely glorious and humanly beautiful one, for only he had the ephod with the shoulder plates and the breastplate. None of the other priests wore the ephod. The ephod was a garment especially glorious and beautiful. If someone were to wear an ephod today with a breastplate containing twelve precious stones set in gold, we certainly would find it striking, attractive, and beautiful. Such a garment would be much more impressive than a uniform worn by a five-star general with many stripes and decorations.

Sometimes we may pray, "Lord, I'm weak. I cannot hold on to You. But, Lord, I know that You hold me." Yes, the Lord holds you, but you may not experience being held by Him, because within you there is no realization of His divine glory and His human beauty. But the more you consider His glory and beauty, the more you are held to Him, fastened to Him, and have the sense within that you are safe.

THE GOLDEN SETTINGS

The ephod was made of two pieces that were held together at the shoulder. Verse 7 says, "It shall have two joining shoulder-pieces at its two ends, that it may be joined." These shoulder pieces joined the front side to the back side. Therefore, the shoulder pieces had the joining power, the binding strength. The golden settings that held the onyx stones were fastened to the shoulder pieces. Thus, the entire ephod was a fastening piece. At the top it had two shoulder pieces. Those pieces were for the purpose of joining the two ends of the ephod and also for holding the golden settings for the onyx stones. This portrays that Christ today is full of holding strength and fastening power because He is composed of divinity, heavenliness, kingliness, redemption, and humanity.

Verse 11 speaks of the golden settings: "With the work of

a stone engraver, like the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones according to the names of the sons of Israel; you shall make them enclosed in settings of gold." The Hebrew word translated settings also means plaited work, plaited settings, filigree settings (see vv. 13, 14, 25). These golden settings can be compared to mountings used by jewelers. A precious stone, perhaps a diamond, needs some kind of setting in order to be placed in a gold ring. The golden settings for the onyx stones were filigree settings, fine work made with golden thread that was plaited together to make a beautiful design. This was the setting that held the precious stones.

The fact that the filigree settings were gold signifies that only the divinity of Christ can hold us. Strictly speaking, we are held by Christ's divinity, by His divine nature. Because we have been regenerated, we have this divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). The divine nature now becomes the power to hold us in a beautiful, glorious way.

Once again I would say that the way Christ holds us is not the way a shepherd holds a lamb in his arms. With that kind of holding there is not any glory or beauty. Rather, we are held by Christ like precious stones held in filigree mountings. Although we do not have the language adequate to speak of such things, by our experience we know that we are held by Christ's divine nature in a glorious and beautiful way. We are not held merely by Christ's power; we are held by His divine nature gloriously and beautifully.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(5)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:4-14; 39:1-7

ONYX STONES

Exodus 28:9-10 says, "And you shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel: Six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, according to their birth." We, the believers, are signified by these two onyx stones.

Adam was made from the dust of the ground. After God created Adam, He placed him in front of the tree of life, from which flowed a river. By the flow of this river there were onyx stones. As Adam stood by the river, he may have looked at himself and then at the onyx stones. Adam was altogether a composition of dust, not of onyx stone. Onyx stone signifies transformation. In our natural life we all are dust. But through regeneration we have become a stone. Now we are in the process of being transformed into the image of the Lord from glory to glory. This transformation is signified by onyx stone.

Exodus 28:12 says, "And you shall put the two stones upon the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, as stones of memorial for the sons of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah upon his two shoulders for a memorial." On his shoulders what the high priest bore was not two piles of dust. On the contrary, there were onyx stones on his shoulders. This indicates that what Christ as our High Priest holds is not dust; He holds the transformed saints, typified

by the onyx stones on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod worn by the high priest.

When some saints hear this, they may feel discouraged, thinking that they have not been transformed. They may say, "If Christ holds only onyx stones, and not dust, then I am through with the experience of being held by Him. I feel discouraged because I have not yet been transformed into onyx stone." Actually you do have the experience of being held by Christ. Furthermore, you do have some amount of onyx stone. Often you may feel as if you are falling away from the Lord. But it is the dust that is falling, not you. Sometimes the Lord raises up an environment which causes us to be shaken. We may be afraid of falling away. However, only the dust is shaken away. We ourselves as regenerated ones will never be removed, for the onyx stone in us will never fall. The onyx stone remains, placed in the beautiful and glorious settings of gold.

FASTENED AND TRANSFORMED

I admit that I am short of utterance to describe the fastening power of the divine glory and human beauty of Christ. If I had more experience and more utterance, I would try to give more illustrations. But because I am short of adequate experience, it is difficult to describe the holding power of Christ portrayed by the ephod.

The ephod with the breastplate and the shoulderplates portrays the fastening power of Christ through His divine glory and human beauty. As we have pointed out, when we read the four Gospels, we can see the Lord with His divine glory woven into His human beauty. We can also see His heavenliness, His kingliness, and His redemption. In other words, every aspect of Christ typified by the materials and colors of the ephod is revealed in the Gospels.

As we behold the Lord in His glory and beauty, we are spontaneously held, fastened, to Him. To be fastened is to be transformed. The more we are transformed, the more we are fastened. The dust is falling away, and the transformed part of our being remains fastened to Christ and upon Him. As a

result, we enjoy Him and experience Him with His fastening power. We are held not only upon Christ's shoulders, but we are also held upon His breast. This means that we are fastened by His love and also by His power. The shoulders signify power and the breast signifies love.

A MEMORIAL BEFORE GOD

According to 28:12, Aaron was to bear the names of the children of Israel before the Lord upon his shoulders for a memorial. A memorial is a matter of joy. When Christ bears us on His shoulders before God, this brings joy to God. When God looks at Christ, He sees His redeemed people, who have been transformed into onyx stones held in settings of gold. Eventually the onyx stones become a beauty added to Christ. This is both a memorial before God and also an additional beauty to Christ. As we look at this picture, we see glory and beauty. This portrait is beyond the ability of human words to explain.

THE BREASTPLATE

The ephod was probably a garment that had one opening for the head and two for the arms. It also served for girding the high priest. The focal point of the ephod was the breastplate. This is the reason that among all the items of the priestly garments, the breastplate is mentioned first (v. 4). This indicates that the priestly garments were for the breastplate. In other words, the high priest wore the various garments in order to bear the breastplate.

As we shall see in forthcoming messages, the breastplate signifies the building together of God's redeemed people upon Christ. Twelve precious stones were upon the breastplate. These stones, signifying all the redeemed people of God, were built together on the breastplate. Therefore, the breastplate is a miniature of the building up of God's people. This means that the breastplate signifies the building. As we shall see, this breastplate was used to express God's will for His people. Before the time of the prophets, God made His will known through the breastplate. It was the instrument and the channel through which God spoke.

MUTUAL BEAUTY

We have pointed out that the shoulder-pieces are Christ's additional beauty. The ephod was beautiful in itself, but the onyx stones fastened to the shoulders of the ephod added even more beauty to it. Likewise, the transformed believers added to Christ are His additional beauty.

The onyx stones were set in plaited gold, in gold filigree. Such a setting added beauty to the onyx stones. This golden filigree setting signifies Christ's divine nature. The way the setting was made signifies the fine work of the Holy Spirit with the divine nature. The words plaited and filigree indicate that the setting was the result of skilled workmanship. That mounting added beauty to the precious stones, just as a proper mounting on a ring adds beauty to a diamond. On the one hand, the diamond is the beauty of the ring; on the other hand, the fine plaited setting adds beauty to the diamond.

The onyx stones set in gold filigree portray the fine work of the Holy Spirit to add the beauty of Christ to the believers as the precious stones. But eventually these stones will be a beauty added to Christ. Therefore, Christ is our beauty, and we become His beauty. This mutual beauty is a memorial before God. Christ and His members are fastened together, and this becomes a memorial before God. When God beholds Christ with His members, God is happy, pleased, and satisfied.

A PICTURE OF MINGLING

As we consider the picture of the ephod with the breastplate and the onyx stones in Exodus 28, we see how Christ and His members are fastened together by His divine glory and human beauty. Furthermore, with the ephod we also have a picture of mingling. The gold, the blue, the purple, and the scarlet are woven into the fine linen. This means that they are mingled with the linen. This mingling, however, does not change the nature of the materials involved. The gold is still gold, and the linen remains linen. But by the mingling of

the gold and the linen, we have a piece of clothing composed of these two materials.

I believe that the blue, the purple, and the scarlet were all threads of different colors. We have seen that the blue symbolizes heavenliness, the purple signifies royalty or kingliness, and the scarlet signifies redemption. I believe that these three colors of thread were all of linen fiber. Thus, although they were different in color, they were all made of linen. This indicates that the basic materials of the ephod were gold and linen. The gold here signifies Christ's divinity, and the linen signifies His humanity. The weaving together of the gold and the linen into one piece of cloth signifies the mingling of divinity and humanity. This mingling then becomes the fastening strength and the binding power to hold us to Christ.

The ephod was a piece of clothing used for fastening. God's redeemed people are fastened to Christ by Christ's processed being. The divine nature, signified by the gold, becomes thread woven into the linen. The gold becoming thread indicates a process. First the gold was beaten very thin, and then it was cut into fine strips. Then it was woven into the linen, which signifies human nature.

The ephod was made of threads of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet. This thread was woven with the fine twined linen. The ephod was made not only of thread, but also of twined cord. It may have been that a few threads were twined together to make cords. This assured that the ephod was strong enough to bear the weight of the onyx stones and the breastplate with their gold settings. In order for the shoulderplates and the breastplate to be attached to the ephod it was necessary to have material that had the fastening strength.

The more we consider the detailed picture of the ephod, the more we appreciate it as a type of Christ. Even though the New Testament reveals Christ in a full way, we do not have in the New Testament the view of Christ presented by the ephod in Exodus 28. But all the elements of the ephod are implied in the New Testament revelation concerning Christ.

ATTACHED TO CHRIST

If we had only the plain words of the New Testament without the picture of the ephod, we could not see how Christ's divinity woven together with His humanity has become the power that fastens us to Him. Furthermore, we would not see clearly how we are fastened to Christ. In 2 Corinthians 1:21 Paul says that we are attached to Christ, the anointed One. Here we see the anointing; however, we do not see that we are attached to Christ by His divine glory and human beauty. Moreover, we do not see that the saints attached to Christ are an additional beauty to Christ. According to the type of the ephod in Exodus 28, we are bound to Christ with His processed divine nature.

The more we see concerning the ephod, the more we shall be fastened to Christ in our experience, and the more secure we shall be. This is related to transformation. Although we do not have words adequate to express it, deep within we appreciate the Lord and treasure Him. This is a sign that we have been fastened to Christ, bound to Him. This involves transformation. Moreover, it signifies the building, for on the breastplate we are bound together with many others. This means that eventually the building is included in Christ's divine glory woven together with His human beauty.

If we have nothing more than our own natural virtues, we shall remain separate and individualistic. But by Christ's divine glory and human beauty we are built together, fastened together, and bound together.

The ephod is also a girdle, girding us all together with Christ. Because we are girded to Him, we cannot fall away from Him. We can never be separated from Christ. Thank the Lord for this picture of the ephod showing that we are fastened to Christ, held to Him, and girded together with Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-ONE

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(6)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:6-14; 39:2-9

I treasure very much the word which the Lord has been releasing from the book of Exodus. This is a book filled with the experiential riches of Christ. Some of the points concerning Christ portrayed in Exodus are beyond our ability to utter. Neither in English nor in my mother tongue do I have the adequate utterance to express what I have seen concerning Christ in this book.

In the New Testament we have plain words concerning Christ, our experience of Christ, and the church. There is even a clear word concerning the preciousness of Christ and concerning our value in the sight of God. However, in the New Testament we do not have the full details regarding these matters. Many of the details are found in the types in the Old Testament. By the Lord's grace, in this message I shall try to point out some of the wonderful details of the preciousness of Christ and of the preciousness of the saints in the sight of God. These details cannot be seen in the New Testament; however, they are found in the picture in Exodus 28.

THE MATERIALS OF THE EPHOD AND ITS COLORS

The main part of the priestly garments was the robe, a long robe reaching almost to the ground. Over this robe the high priest wore a tunic and over the tunic, an ephod. Exodus 28:6 says, "And they shall make the ephod of gold, blue and purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen, the work of a skillful workman." By reading this verse we learn with

what materials the ephod was made and what colors it had. The materials used in making the ephod were gold and linen. Gold is a mineral, and linen is a substance that comes from the plant life. The blue, the purple, and the scarlet indicate colors, not materials. However, we may say that the gold and the linen also have color. Gold, of course, is golden, and linen is white. Therefore, the ephod was a garment made of two materials and it contained five colors.

I do not believe that in the thousands of years of human history there has ever been another fabric composed of golden and linen thread woven together. Have you ever heard of a garment made of golden and linen textiles woven together? As far as the material is concerned, the ephod certainly was an unusual garment. Today some garments are made of dacron and cotton, and others, of wool and polyester. But where is there a garment made of linen and gold? We certainly would think it strange if someone today wore a jacket made of gold and linen containing the colors gold, white, blue, purple, and scarlet. I am certain none of us has ever seen a garment like this. Nevertheless, this is a description of the ephod worn by the high priest.

The ephod was made of linen thread and golden thread and with five colors: golden yellow, pure white, blue, purple, and scarlet. However, there was no black or gray in the ephod. Because it was made in such a fashion, the ephod was extraordinary in appearance. If you could have seen it, what color would you have said it was? Gold? Blue? Purple or scarlet? Since it was a mixture of several colors, it is very difficult to describe its color in a single word. Anyone who looked at the ephod carefully would have seen five different colors. However, he would not have a word to describe the overall color of this garment.

A MINGLING OF DIVINITY AND HUMANITY

We know from the New Testament that the Lord Jesus is a Person with two natures: divinity and humanity. Christ's divinity is typified by the gold in the ephod, and His humanity is typified by the linen. The gold and the linen in the

ephod were not linked together or joined together. On the contrary, they were woven together. This weaving together of the gold and the linen in the ephod typifies the mingling of divinity and humanity in Christ.

Because we use the word mingling in relation to the divine nature and human nature of Christ, we have been condemned as heretical. Some are still falsely claiming that we teach that in Christ the two natures of divinity and humanity were mingled together to produce a third nature, a nature which is neither fully divine nor fully human. I have never said that the mingling of divinity and humanity in Christ produces such a third nature. The gold fibers and the linen thread used to make the ephod were not woven together to produce a third nature, something which was neither gold nor linen. No, neither the gold nor the linen lost its own particular nature when it was used to make the ephod. The gold remained gold, a mineral, and the linen remained linen, a substance derived from plants. The natures of these two materials remained, even though they were woven together, mingled together. The same is true of Christ's divinity and humanity. The divinity and humanity of Christ have not been mingled to produce a third nature. Furthermore, in Christ neither divinity nor humanity has lost its own nature.

John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." According to John 1:14, "The Word became flesh." We may say that the Word, which is God, is golden, and that the flesh in John 1:14 is linen. Thus, when God became incarnate, the gold and the linen, divinity and humanity, were woven together, mingled.

SCHOOLS OF CHRISTOLOGY

From the time of Paul and John in the first century, there have been many different teachings concerning the Person of Christ. In theology there is a special term signifying the study of Christ's Person. This term is Christology. Just as theology is the study of God, so Christology is the

study of Christ. Throughout the centuries, there has been debate concerning Christ's Person. Most teachers have recognized that Christ has two natures, the divine nature and the human nature. However, there have been a number of erroneous teachings concerning the two natures of Christ. Much of the debate has arisen out of this point.

Our book entitled *Concerning the Person of Christ* gives seven different schools of thought regarding the Person of Christ. Of these seven schools, six are heretical and one is scriptural. I would encourage you to read that book. The six heretical schools are the erroneous teaching of the Docetists, those who claimed that Christ has only divinity, but not humanity; the heresy of the Ebionites, who teach that Christ has only humanity, but not divinity; the erroneous teaching of the Arians, who say that Christ's divinity is not complete and that He was merely the highest among the creatures; the absurd teaching of the Apollinarians, who said that Christ's humanity was not complete; the false doctrine of the Nestorians, who maintained that Christ's divinity and humanity were separated; and the wrong teaching of the Eutychians, who denied the distinctness and coexistence of Christ's divinity and humanity and asserted that these two natures were merged into one. The proper, scriptural teaching is that Christ has both divinity and humanity and that His divinity and humanity are complete and united in the body of one Person. We repudiate the six heretical schools and follow the scriptural school.

THE GOD-MAN

In the New Testament we can easily see that our Lord Jesus Christ is both God and man. Because He is God and man, He is a God-man. Nevertheless, we are falsely accused of heresy because we teach that Christ is a God-man. However, a number of sound, fundamental, biblical teachers admit that Christ is a God-man. Some have even put this into writing. For example, in her book *Life on the Highest Plane,* published by Moody Press, Ruth Paxson says, "Such a Mediator must needs be one accepted and trusted by both

parties, one who partakes both of God's nature and of man's nature.…A true Mediator must be a God-man. The Saviour of men must be a God-man. Christ Jesus, the Mediator, is the *God*-man. He is not the man-*God*. He is not a man who became God but God who became man" (p. 101). On page 112 of the same book Ruth Paxson goes on to say, "In the God-man, God made a new union with the human race." Moreover, a note on John 1:14 in *The Ryrie Study Bible,* also published by Moody Press, says, "Jesus Christ was unique, for He was God from all eternity and yet joined Himself to sinful humanity in the incarnation. The God-man possessed all the attributes of deity (Phil. 2:6) and the attributes common to humanity (apart from sin), and He will exist forever as the God-man in His resurrected body (Acts 1:11; Rev. 5:6). Only the God-man could be an adequate Savior.…" By reading the New Testament we know that our Lord is both God and man. Therefore, it is altogether right to call Him the God-man.

DIVINITY AND HUMANITY WOVEN TOGETHER

Although the New Testament reveals that Christ is the God-man, we cannot find a verse telling us that Christ's two natures were woven together. But this weaving together of divinity and humanity in Christ is portrayed by the type of the ephod. The gold and linen materials were not piled together, linked together, or merely joined together. They were woven together. However, many Christians have the concept that Christ's divine nature was added to His human nature much like a piece of gold is wrapped in linen. They may not express themselves this way, but unconsciously many have this understanding.

In the past what was your understanding concerning the two natures of Christ? What was your concept of how divinity and humanity were put together? Did you think that the two natures of Christ were linked together somehow? No doubt you strongly believe that Christ is both God and man, but have you ever thought about how the two natures of Christ are put together? Were these two natures side by

side within Him, or was Christ's divine nature placed on top of His human nature? Was Christ's human nature somehow surrounded by His divine nature, or did His human nature cover His divine nature? The Bible has a picture showing us how the two natures of our Lord have been put together. It is not by adding or linking; it is by weaving together divinity and humanity.

Christ's divine nature has been processed, just as the gold used in making the ephod was processed. First the gold was refined in order to be pure. Then it was beaten into thin plates, cut into threads, twined together, and woven together with the linen. This picture indicates that Christ became a man by passing through a process. He did not become a man by suddenly descending from heaven to earth. No, He, as God, was conceived in the womb of a virgin. For nine months He developed in that virgin's womb. Then He was born in a manger in Bethlehem. When King Herod learned of His birth, he tried to kill Him. Therefore, under the Lord's leading, Joseph took the young child to Egypt. After the death of Herod, Joseph returned with Him to Israel, but he did not dare to stay in Judea. Therefore, he went up to the north to a despised district known as Galilee. As a result, the Lord Jesus grew up in the poor, small village of Nazareth. The Lord was raised in a poor family. In ancient times a carpenter, like Joseph, did not earn very much money. Throughout His years on earth, the Lord experienced the sufferings of human life. His process with all the sufferings is portrayed by the gold becoming the thread woven together with the linen.

As the very God, our Lord went through a process to become one with humanity. Without this process, how could He have become one with man? If He had not experienced this process, the textile needed for making the ephod would not have been produced. In this we see an aspect of the preciousness of Christ that is not clearly revealed in the New Testament.

In this picture of the ephod we also see how Christ's humanity has been wrought into His divinity. This too involved a

process. The linen had to go through a process before it could become twined thread used in making the ephod. Exodus 28:6 speaks of fine-twined linen. This is linen made up of threads wound together. When the cords of linen are twined, they make the thread for weaving. For the linen to become a twined thread, it had to go through a process. Eventually, the two kinds of threads, the gold and the twined linen, were woven together to make the ephod.

Although we cannot explain adequately how Christ's divinity and humanity have been woven together, if we look at the picture of the extraordinary fabric used to make the ephod and realize that it is a type of Christ, we shall say, "Lord Jesus, I worship You. You are portrayed by the gold and linen of the ephod. Your divinity has gone through a process, and Your humanity has passed through a different kind of process. Then both Your divinity and humanity were woven together into one textile. Lord Jesus, this portrays Your Person. How wonderful You are!"

Because they are preoccupied by systematic theology, many Christians are not willing to accept this revelation concerning Christ from the Word. Furthermore, they oppose us when we teach that in Christ divinity and humanity have been mingled, woven together. But no matter how much opposition there is or what others may say about us, I cannot deny what the Lord has shown us from the pure Word of God. I will never change my realization concerning the Person of Christ. I have seen the picture from the types in the Old Testament concerning what kind of person the Lord Jesus is. I could never say that I have not seen this picture of the Lord. Praise the Lord for this portrait in the book of Exodus! In this picture we see precious details that we cannot find in the plain words of the New Testament.

CHRIST'S HEAVENLINESS, KINGLINESS, AND REDEMPTION

Having seen how the gold and the linen are woven together through a process involving suffering, let us now go on to consider the colors of the ephod. The color blue

signifies Christ's heavenliness. Brown, by contrast, is the color of things earthy or dusty. With Christ there is nothing brown. With Him everything is blue, heavenly.

Purple signifies the kingliness of Christ. In all He did the Lord Jesus was kingly. Even as a child growing up in the home of a carpenter, He conducted Himself in a kingly way. If you read the account of the way He spoke to His parents when He was twelve, you will realize that He spoke to them in a kingly manner. Even as a small boy of twelve, He could act and speak with kingliness (Luke 2:46-52). If you read through the four Gospels again, you will see that in everything He said the Lord was a king. He did not assume His kingship; it was manifested spontaneously.

We in our natural life certainly are not heavenly or kingly. Instead of expressing blue, we express brown, the color of dust. Furthermore, instead of conducting ourselves like kings, we may act in a way that is very low. When we lose our temper, we may be "scorpions." Even when we are happy, we still may not have the Lord's kingly manner. But when the Lord Jesus became angry with those in the temple and made a whip of cords to drive them out, He was angry in a kingly way (John 2:15-16). Moreover, when He wept at the tomb of Lazarus, He did so with kingliness (John 11:35). Even in His weeping, the Lord's kingship was manifested.

Scarlet signifies redemption. Throughout His life on earth, the Lord Jesus acted in a redemptive way. For example, He manifested the color red, the color of redemption, when He said to His disciples concerning the multitude, "Give them something to eat" (Matt. 14:16). The Lord did not want to see the people go hungry. This implies redemption. Also, when the Lord Jesus healed the woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years and was bound by Satan, He was acting in the way of redemption (Luke 13:11-16). To those who criticized Him concerning this, He said that He did not want this woman to be bound by Satan any longer.

Along with the colors blue, purple, and scarlet, we have golden yellow and pure white. Golden yellow signifies the

expression of God. When the Lord Jesus fed the five thousand with two loaves and five fishes, God was manifested. The golden yellow color shone forth from Him. Also, when He was angry and cleansed the temple, He manifested both His kingliness and the golden yellow of His divinity. Furthermore, on that occasion the pure linen, signifying the expression of Christ's humanity, could also be seen.

Both God and man, divinity and humanity, were manifested in the life of the Lord Jesus on earth. In the living of this Man we can see heavenliness, kingliness, and redemption. We can see the divine brightness and also a pure humanity. In the living of the Lord Jesus we see all these colors.

TREASURING THE PICTURE OF CHRIST

Can you point to a chapter of the New Testament that portrays the Lord Jesus in the way He is portrayed in the ephod? There is no such chapter in the New Testament, for this kind of description cannot be put into words. It can only be presented by a picture.

Is it possible to describe adequately in words a person's face? Certainly not. You may take a thousand words to describe someone's nose or ear, and still your description would not be complete. But a picture would be better than thousands of words. This is the reason I treasure the picture of Christ in Exodus 28.

It is a sad thing that for centuries Christians, including those who love the Lord and seek Him, have not paid adequate attention to the portrait of Christ in Exodus 28. As a result, their appreciation of the Lord has not been sufficiently high. I can testify that by considering this picture, I appreciate the Lord much more, and out of my appreciation I have given Him new worship. I have said, "Lord, I see You in this picture, and I appreciate You. But I cannot put into words what I see and appreciate. Lord, here in Exodus 28 I see You. Thank You, Lord, for this picture of Yourself. You are the ephod woven with gold and linen. Your divinity and humanity are together in Your one Person, yet the nature of

divinity and humanity remain. They are not lost. Lord, I praise You for the wonderful Person You are!"

We thank the Lord for the marvelous picture of the ephod with all the beautiful colors. These colors, the colors of the rainbow, are the most beautiful colors in the universe. What colors are more beautiful than the five colors of the ephod? I do not believe you can find colors more beautiful than these, for these colors are in a textile signifying the expression of the Lord's Person.

I have not interpreted the picture in Exodus 28 according to my natural cleverness. Furthermore, I am not the one who painted this picture. Rather, I have received the mercy from the Lord to understand it to some degree. Here in Exodus 28 we have a picture showing us that there is a fabric in this universe woven with golden and linen thread and containing the five colors of golden yellow, pure white, blue, purple, and scarlet. This is the ephod that the Lord Jesus is wearing today. He is still clad in a garment made of gold and linen and with five beautiful colors expressing His divinity, humanity, heavenliness, kingliness, and redemption. How marvelous!

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-TWO

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(7)

Scripture Reading: Exodus 28:6-14; 39:2-9

Exodus 28:9 and 10 say, "And you shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel: six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, according to their birth." In verse 12 the record goes on to say, "And you shall put the two stones upon the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, as stones of memorial for the sons of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah upon his two shoulders for a memorial." The two onyx stones must have been very close in size to the size of a man's shoulder. This would be quite likely, since they were put on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. I believe that these two onyx stones were flat and either oblong or rectangular in shape. Each of them had to be large enough for six of the names of the children of Israel to be engraved on it.

The shoulder-pieces were located at the place where the front and the back parts of the ephod came together, where they were joined at the shoulder. This part of the ephod must have been thicker and stronger than any other part. Furthermore, because the shoulder-pieces were of one piece with the ephod, they should not be regarded as separate from the ephod itself. These pieces were one with the ephod as a whole and, joining the two parts together, they were strong enough to bear the onyx stones. In order for the ephod to bear such heavy stones, it was necessary for the shoulder-pieces to be thick and strong.

We have seen that the ephod typifies Christ with His two natures, divinity and humanity. The two natures of Christ

are mingled to bear the expression of God, signified by the gold, and the expression of man, signified by the linen. Christ also bears the expression of His heavenliness, kingship, and redemption typified respectively by the blue, the purple, and the scarlet. It is such an expression that becomes the material that bears the onyx stone.

ONYX STONES SIGNIFYING THE BELIEVERS

What is signified by the two onyx stones borne upon the shoulders of the high priest? These onyx stones signify the believers, including us. When some hear this, they may say, "Perhaps you as an older brother in the Lord are signified by the onyx stone. But I certainly am not. I have been saved for only a short time. I do not have the appearance of an onyx stone. On the contrary, I have the appearance of clay or dust." Perhaps this is your situation. Nevertheless, as long as you have been regenerated, there is at least a small amount of onyx stone within you. If you did not have the element of onyx stone in your being, you would have no interest in hearing this kind of message. The very fact that you love the Lord and are seeking Him and that you want to hear this kind of word is a strong indication that there is at least some onyx stone in you. Eventually, all the clay will be transformed into onyx stone.

With our natural being there are two aspects: the aspect of God's creation and the aspect of the fall. Part of our natural being is the creation of God. Another part is of man's fall. That which has its source in the fall of man will be shaken away, and that which comes from God's creation will remain with us and be transformed. Therefore, God's work on us accomplishes two things. On the one hand, it is shaking away, removing, the fallen aspect; on the other hand, it is uplifting and transforming the aspect of our being that is related to God's creation to become precious stone. Of course, it takes time for the fallen element to be removed and the created element to be transformed and uplifted. Nevertheless, many of those who have been in the church life for a number of years have experienced the shaking off

of the fallen element and the transformation of the created element. The result is that these saints are much weightier in Christ today than they were several years ago. Some of the fallen element has been removed, and quite an amount of God's created element has been uplifted and transformed into precious stones.

We should not doubt the fact that we are signified by the onyx stones on the shoulders of the ephod. One day, we shall be fully transformed into onyx stone. I have the full expectation both for myself and for all the saints that eventually we shall be onyx stones in a pure and complete way. In the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and the new earth, all the believers in Christ will be precious stones.

PLAITED SETTINGS OF GOLD

The main point in this message, however, is not related to transformation. It is related to how the onyx stones were placed on the shoulder-pieces. How were the onyx stones attached to the shoulder-pieces? Exodus 28:11 says, "With the work of a stone engraver, like the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones according to the names of the sons of Israel; you shall make them enclosed in settings of gold." We have seen that the Hebrew words rendered "settings of gold" also mean plaited work of gold, plaited settings of gold, filigree settings of gold. The gold into which the onyx stones were put was not simple in shape. Rather, it was plaited into a very beautiful design. We should not think of these settings merely as sockets of gold formed to hold the precious stones. No, the gold was plaited into a filigree setting.

These filigree settings of gold signify how we are attached, fastened, held, to the Lord Jesus. These settings portray the Lord's divinity after it has been processed and has passed through many sufferings. The sufferings experienced by the Lord Jesus caused Him to be formed into a beautiful setting to hold us as the precious stones.

If we did not have the picture afforded by the type of the ephod with the filigree settings, we would not know simply

by the plain words in the New Testament how we are held to the Lord Jesus. The New Testament indicates that we are held by the power of the Lord. The Bible says this, and we believe it. But have you ever imagined that the Lord Jesus is holding us in beautiful settings of gold filigree? We are being held to Him in a very beautiful way.

We need to take time to pray-read these verses in Exodus 28 and fellowship with others concerning them. This will help us to appreciate the Lord more. The more we behold the Lord's beauty and appreciate it, the more steadily shall we be fastened to Him and by Him.

CHAINS OF GOLD

We have seen that the onyx stones were placed into beautiful settings of gold filigree. Now we must go on to see how these lovely settings were connected to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. Exodus 28:13 and 14 say, "And you shall make settings of gold, and two chains of pure gold, twined you shall make them, a work of cords; and you shall put the chains of cords upon the settings." These verses indicate that the settings are joined to the shoulder-pieces by chains of gold. The chains of golden cords were formed of golden threads twined together. These cords of gold fastened the onyx stones in the golden settings to the shoulder-pieces. Here we have three items: the shoulder-pieces, the onyx stones in the golden setting, and the golden cords used to fasten together the settings and the shoulder-pieces. This portrays the Lord's divinity becoming a golden fastening cord. Once again, it was necessary for Christ in His divinity to pass through a process in order to become such a golden cord.

From reading the New Testament we cannot see the beauty, the filigree, of the Lord's fastening strength and power. But we can see it by considering the picture of the ephod with the shoulder-pieces, settings, and golden cords in Exodus 28. When the onyx stones were fastened to the shoulder-pieces, they formed what we may call the shoulder plates. We have pointed out that the shoulder-pieces were

part of the ephod and therefore were made of the same materials.

HELD TO THE LORD BY HIS EXPRESSION

The Lord Jesus has the strength to bear us as the onyx stones. This strength comes from His divinity mingled with His humanity and having the expression of God, of man, and of the Lord's heavenliness, kingship, and redemption. We are held to the Lord Jesus by such a marvelous expression. If there were not such an expression in this universe, there would be nothing that could either bear us or fasten us to Christ. The only thing in the universe that can hold us and also fasten us to Christ is the very expression of Christ portrayed by the ephod made of gold, linen, blue, purple, and scarlet. I want to emphasize the fact that this is the expression of Christ as both God and man with His heavenliness, kingship, and redemption.

Day by day we eat food and are nourished by it. However, most of us do not know what are the riches in the food that nourish us, strengthen us, supply us with what we need, and even kill the germs within us. We only know that food is necessary to maintain life. Therefore, we eat it and enjoy it. However, dietitians have made a scientific study of food and know much about its ingredients. They not only eat food and enjoy it; they also understand something of its constituents. We may use this as a simple illustration of the fact that we may have the experience of being fastened to Christ and held by Him without realizing what is contained within His fastening strength and power.

What constitutes Christ's strength to fasten us to Himself, to bear us, and to uphold us? We find the answer to this question by considering the picture in Exodus 28. According to the typology of the ephod, Christ's fastening strength, bearing power, and linking ability are all derived from His expression as God and man with His heavenliness, kingship, and redemption. Just as the materials and colors used to make the ephod were woven together, all these aspects of Christ's expression are mingled together.

They are woven into one strong garment that can bear the two onyx stones and fasten them to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod worn by the high priest.

Deep within I have a heavy burden concerning the significance of the ephod with the shoulder-pieces, onyx stones, settings, and golden cords. However, I simply do not have the words to utter what is in me. There are no human words adequate to describe the picture of the ephod in Exodus 28. However, I believe that if we consider this picture, especially if we pray-read these verses and have fellowship over them, we shall be able to realize something that is beyond our ability to describe in words. We shall see a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus. Then we shall say, "O Lord Jesus, You are so beautiful and precious. Lord, what a treasure You are! You are the very God and a real man woven together. Lord Jesus, You are heavenly, You are kingly, and You are the redeeming One. Lord, I am fastened to You and borne by You. How I praise You, Lord!"

MUTUAL BEAUTIFICATION

When we are attached to the Lord like stones attached to the ephod, we become an added beauty to His expression, and His expression becomes our beauty in which we are held. Consider the garments worn by the high priest. If the onyx stones were removed, the beauty of the ephod would be diminished. Here there is a mutual beautification: the Lord is our beauty, and we are a beauty added to His expression. If we realize this, we shall thank the Lord that we can be part of the beauty of His expression.

Furthermore, if the onyx stones were simply fastened to the ephod without being placed in beautiful golden settings, they would be short of beauty. This indicates that the golden filigree settings become the beauty of the onyx stones. Therefore, here we have a mutual beauty. The onyx stones become the beauty of the ephod, and the ephod with the golden settings become the beauty of the onyx stones. This means that the stones and the ephod beautify each other.

AN ETERNAL MEMORIAL

Speaking of the onyx stones on which were inscribed the names of the sons of Israel, 28:12 says, "Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah upon his two shoulders for a memorial." This indicates that the onyx stones became a memorial in the sight of God. Of what were these stones a memorial? They were a memorial of the church set in Christ, a memorial of Christ holding the church, God's redeemed people. This memorial will last for eternity. We shall be fastened to Christ, and Christ will hold us in the presence of God as an eternal memorial. Today we can experience this and enjoy it.

Concerning these matters, I do not have the utterance to say more. I trust that the Holy Spirit will speak to you concerning this. May we all be encouraged to ponder this portion of the Word by pray-reading and by fellowship.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(8)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:15-21; 39:8-14

In this message we come to the breastplate. Exodus 28:15 and 16 say, "And you shall make a breastplate of judgment, the work of a skillful workman, like the work of the ephod you shall make it; of gold, blue and purple, and scarlet, and fine-twined linen you shall make it. It shall be squared and doubled; a span its length, and a span its width." Have you ever thought that the breastplate here is a very fine, even the finest, revelation concerning the church? The ephod refers to Christ, and the breastplate refers to the church. This means that the ephod with the breastplate gives us a picture of Christ with the church, a picture that is very fine. Here I do not speak of Christ and the church, but of Christ with the church, for we do not have the ephod and the breastplate, but the ephod with the breastplate. If we speak in a general way, we may speak of the ephod and the breastplate. Actually what we have here is not two equal items. Rather, one item, the ephod, is basic, and the other item, the breastplate, is subordinate. As the subordinate item, the breastplate belongs to the ephod.

We have pointed out that the ephod depicts, portrays, Christ. Upon Christ, as depicted by the ephod, there is a breastplate, the church.

THE CENTRAL ITEM OF THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

According to Exodus 28, the central item of the priestly garments is the breastplate, not the ephod. Of course, this central item belongs to the ephod. In the description of the

priestly garments, the first thing mentioned is the breastplate.

We have seen that the priestly garments were for glory and for beauty and not merely for the purpose of covering one's nakedness or for preserving one's health. Now we need to see that these priestly garments are basically for the breastplate. Why did God want the priests to wear certain garments? In particular, why was it necessary for the high priest to wear certain garments? The purpose of the various priestly garments was to have the breastplate.

THE LORD'S LEADING

What was the function of the breastplate? According to verse 15, the breastplate was called the breastplate of judgment. We know that the word judgment is related to judging. Furthermore, judgment is often concerned with the difference between right and wrong. However, the judgment here is not mainly to determine what is right or wrong, what is just or unjust. Instead, this judgment is so that God's people could know His leading. Hence, the breastplate of judgment is actually the breastplate of leading. Why, then, does verse 15 use the word judgment with respect to the breastplate? The answer is that if we would know God's leading, we must have a great deal of judgment. We must judge whatever is of the flesh, the self, the old man, and the world. We must judge the things of the flesh and the mind set on the flesh. This judgment clears the way for us to know God's leading.

In a forthcoming message we shall see that the breastplate of judgment actually functioned as a heavenly typewriter. If you use a typewriter when you compose a letter, you will press the typewriter keys in order to impress certain letters on the paper. With the different letters of the typewriter you are able to compose any word you need. The breastplate functions as a heavenly, divine, and spiritual typewriter. Of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, eighteen were contained in the names of the twelve tribes inscribed in the stones set on the breastplate. The remaining four letters were contained in

the Thummim attached to the breastplate. Therefore, with the breastplate there were all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This made it possible for the breastplate to function as a divine typewriter. As we shall see, the Lord's leading could be obtained through the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim much like a word, or a sentence, is composed one letter at a time by using a typewriter.

We shall see that the function of the breastplate depended on the transparency of the stones shining with light. However, if some of the twelve stones on the breastplate were opaque or the letters inscribed on them were not clear, the breastplate could not function properly. Whenever that happened, there was a need to cleanse away whatever caused the opaqueness. Thus, first there was a need for judgment and cleansing. Then it could be possible to obtain a decision concerning God's leading in a positive way.

Strictly speaking, the priestly garments were not merely for covering nakedness, for health, or for glory and beauty. The main purpose of these garments was for the Lord's leading. After the tabernacle was built up and after the priestly garments were made, the children of Israel journeyed in the wilderness according to God's leading. After the death of Moses, the high priest obtained this leading through the breastplate. He would put on the priestly garments with the breastplate and go into the tabernacle. In this way, the children of Israel could act according to God's leading made known through the breastplate.

Much of the talk among Christians today concerning the Lord's leading is very inaccurate, even nonsensical. Many speak about the leading without having any idea what they are talking about. In Romans 8:14 Paul says that as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. In Romans 8 we find the reality of the breastplate. Have you ever thought that the breastplate can be seen in Romans 8?

In typology the breastplate was related to the Lord's leading. Immediately some may say: "You are not being consistent. First you said that the breastplate typifies the

church. Now you are saying that the breastplate is a matter of God's leading. What does the church have to do with the leading?" I would reply that if we do not know the church, we do not know what the Lord's leading is. Actually God's leading and the church are one.

I doubt that during the past fifty years any other Christians have spoken as much concerning the church as we have. I have even received a bad name for talking about the church. But even though we have given so many messages on the church and have published a number of books regarding the church, in this message we have something new to say about the church. We shall cover an aspect of the church typified by the breastplate.

Not only is the breastplate the first item of the priestly garments; it is also the central item of all these garments. First the high priest wore a long robe to cover his entire body. Then over the robe he wore a tunic. This tunic was perhaps the length of a coat that reached to the knee. Upon the tunic the high priest wore the ephod. As we have indicated, we can easily understand what the robe and the tunic are, but the ephod is unique. There is nothing like it in our culture, and thus we have no word to describe it. For this reason, translators of the Bible have found it difficult to translate the Hebrew word for ephod. Therefore, they actually transliterate it. This means that ephod is an anglicized form of a Hebrew word. The ephod was over the tunic, and the tunic was over the robe. In foregoing messages we pointed out that with the ephod there were two shoulder plates, onyx stones, on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. Finally, the high priest wore the breastplate comprising twelve precious stones, each of which was engraved with one of the names of the twelve tribes. We have seen that the breastplate of judgment functioned as a heavenly, divine, and spiritual typewriter to make known God's leading. This heavenly typewriter is the very center of the priestly garments.

We have seen that the breastplate typifies the church, and the ephod typifies Christ. Thus, the breastplate on the

ephod signifies that the church is borne by Christ upon His breast. Furthermore, the fact that God's leading was made known by means of the breastplate indicates that today God reveals what we should do through the church, by the church, and with the church. The church is God's leading, for the church bears the divine alphabet by which God makes known His leading. Once again we see that the types in the Old Testament reveal details that are not found in the New Testament. I can testify that I have come to know God, Christ, the church, and the leading of God not only through what is revealed in the New Testament, but also through the types in the Old Testament.

THE FORMATION AND CONSTITUENT OF THE CHURCH

The workmanship and material of the breastplate were the same as that of the ephod. Verse 15 indicates this: "And you shall make a breastplate of judgment, the work of a skillful workman, like the work of the ephod you shall make it; of gold, blue and purple, and scarlet, and fine-twined linen you shall make it." What is the significance of the workmanship and material of the breastplate being the same as that of the ephod? It is important that we rightly interpret this and understand it. If we can answer this question correctly, it shows that we understand the type here.

I believe that the best answer concerning the significance of the materials and workmanship of the ephod and the breastplate being the same is that the formation and constituent of the church are the same as those of Christ. The phrase "work of a skilled workman" signifies the way the church is formed, that is, the formation of the church. The materials of the ephod and the breastplate signify the constituent of the church, that with which the church is constituted. In its formation and constituent the church is exactly the same as Christ. The church is formed in the way Christ is formed, and the church is constituted of the same elements of which Christ is constituted.

This understanding of the workmanship and material of

the breastplate includes a great deal. It certainly helps us to know the church. The breastplate is not the ephod, but it is the same as the ephod both in materials and in workmanship. This indicates that the church is not Christ Himself. Nevertheless, in its formation and constituent the church is exactly the same as Christ. Otherwise, the church could not match Christ. Just as Eve could match Adam because she was the same as Adam in formation and constituent, so the church can match Christ because she is the same as Christ in formation and constituent.

A PERFECT TESTIMONY

According to verse 16, the breastplate was squared and doubled. This verse says, "It shall be squared and doubled; a span its length, and a span its width." Squared means that there was no defect in the breastplate. The breastplate was a perfect testimony. The word doubled implies something that is twofold, hence, a testimony, since two is the number of testimony. Therefore, squared and doubled signifies a perfect testimony.

CHRIST'S UNLIMITED CARE FOR THE CHURCH

According to verse 16, the breastplate was a span long and a span wide. What is the meaning of this? Why does the record here not speak of cubits, but of a span? A span signifies something that is within the limit of a person's hand, something that does not reach beyond the capacity, the ability, of the hand. Anything that is smaller than the span of our hand can easily be held in our hand. This indicates that it is within our ability to care for that thing. The significance of the breastplate being a span in length and width is that the church is fully within the limit of Christ's hand, Christ's hand is altogether sufficient to take care of the church. As signified by the breastplate, the church is a perfect testimony within the capacity of Christ's care.

In Exodus 28 we have a picture of the church being within the span of Christ's hand, within the capacity of the Lord to care for her. In the New Testament, of course, we see

the care of the Lord, but it is not portrayed in the way found in Exodus 28. In this chapter we have a picture showing that the church is fully within the span of Christ's hand. It is within the capacity of the Lord's care. Actually, the Lord's care and capacity are unlimited, for He Himself is unlimited. Because Christ is unlimited, His care for the church is likewise unlimited. Therefore, the need of the church cannot exceed the span of Christ's hand. It cannot go beyond Christ's unlimited care.

Since Christ's care is unlimited, we should not excuse ourselves for failing to be a perfect testimony. The church has no excuse for failing to be such a testimony. However, Christians often make excuses for themselves. Some may say, "The Lord knows that we are weak and that this modern age is sinful and worldly. Surely He will overlook our failures. Eventually, we all shall go to heaven. But now we are living in a very sinful place. It is impossible for us to avoid temptation. But the Lord knows our weakness and sympathizes with us." This is to make excuses for our weaknesses. Because the Lord's span is immeasurable and His care is unlimited, we should not make excuses. The Lord's hand is much greater than any evil thing on earth. No matter where we may live, even in a very immoral city, the Lord's hand is wide enough to preserve us, large enough to keep us in His care. We need not be contaminated by anything evil. Although you may work in an environment filled with temptations and sinful things, you should not try to excuse your weaknesses or failures. Remember, you are still in the Lord's care. Do not think that because you live or work in an evil environment, it is impossible for you to be holy. If you think that holiness is impossible in such a situation, this indicates that you do not believe that the Lord's hand is greater than that situation.

The span of His hand is unlimited. He has clearly said that no one can snatch His believers out of His hand: "And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28). The evil of this present age is not greater than the

Lord's hand. Actually, the more evil the environment is, the easier it is for us to be the testimony of Jesus. Because the hand of the One who cares for us is wide, strong, and capable, we can be a perfect testimony of the Lord in any situation. The breastplate being a span in length and width indicates that the span of Christ's care for the church is unlimited.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FOUR

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(9)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:15-21; 39:8-14

We have seen that the breastplate was of the same workmanship and material as the ephod and that it was squared and doubled. The breastplate signifies that the church is of the same formation and constituent as Christ and that it is a perfect testimony held in Christ's hand. Now we shall go on to consider the twelve stones on the breastplate.

ONE ENTITY COMPOSED OF TWELVE STONES

Verse 21 says, "And the stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, each according to his name they shall be, for the twelve tribes." The names of the twelve tribes of Israel engraved on the twelve stones signify all the redeemed people of God. These twelve stones do not signify God's redeemed people in a separate or individualistic way, but in a corporate way. The stones are separate pieces, but they are not divided. On the contrary, they are incorporated, put together. Using a New Testament term, the stones have been built together. The twelve stones have been built together to become one entity, and the name of that entity is the breastplate.

The Lord bears us in a corporate way, even in an incorporated way. The Lord Jesus has built us together; He has incorporated us into one entity. The breastplate was one entity composed of twelve separate, individual stones. This indicates that the believers are distinct individuals, but they are not divided. We are separate pieces, but we are not

separated, individualistic pieces. However, today's Christians have been separated and divided. According to their understanding, the Lord bears each one individualistically. If this is the situation, then the Lord's bearing of one believer does not have anything to do with His bearing of another believer. But the Lord does not bear us individualistically. On the contrary, He bears one entity, the church, which is His Body.

If we have received light from the Lord, we shall mourn over the situation among Christians today. We shall grieve over the divisions among God's people.

To be sure, there were twelve tribes of the children of Israel. Each tribe was represented by a stone on the breastplate. But all these stones were built together into one entity. Therefore, the breastplate was actually a building of precious stones set in gold. The gold was the element which enabled the twelve stones to become one building.

SIGNIFYING TRANSFORMATION

The twelve stones on the breastplate were precious stones. These precious stones signify transformation of the human nature by and with the divine nature. How do we know that they signify transformation? We know it by the fact that they were precious stones. Precious stones are not something originally created by God. On the contrary, they are formed into precious stones by a process of transformation. Through this process clay or some other material is transformed into precious stones.

An illustration of the process of transformation can be found in the way wood is changed into petrified wood. Over a period of time, water saturates the wood, carrying away its natural element and replacing it with another kind of element. Eventually, the wood is transformed into stone.

Christian living involves a daily process of transformation. The Bible says that man was created from the dust of the ground: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of

life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). One day the heavenly flow with the divine mineral entered into our being. This divine mineral is the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and the water is the divine life, the divine Spirit. Once this living water came into us, it began to wash away our natural life and to add more of the divine element into our being. This is transformation. Day by day we are living a life of transformation. We are all undergoing God's transforming work.

In the Lord's recovery we have paid a great deal of attention to the matter of transformation. However, not much has been written by others on the importance of transformation. Nevertheless, it is a fact that all believers eventually will be transformed. If the process of transformation cannot be completed in this age, God will have a way to complete it in the next age. In the New Jerusalem all the believers will be transformed precious stones. Babel was built with bricks, but there will be no bricks in the New Jerusalem. This city will be built with transformed material; that is, it will be constituted of God's redeemed, transformed people. What Christians, then, will share in the millennium? It will be those who have been transformed during their lifetime. But in eternity in the New Jerusalem all the people of God will be there as transformed ones. The Christian life is a life of transformation. Daily God is seeking to transform us.

This transformation is a transformation of the human nature by and with the divine nature. This means that a better material is being wrought into us. As a result, although we were made of dust, we are being transformed into something precious and transparent. This comes from being saturated with better materials, with heavenly materials.

I can testify that I still need more transformation. I know that I am certainly not perfect and that the process of transformation has not yet been completed. However, I can testify that I am very different from what I was many years ago. When I was a young Christian, I was a man of clay. But over the years I have experienced much of the Spirit's

transformation. Therefore, I can testify truly that I am more transformed today than I was years ago. Many believers can give such a testimony, for we all are living a life of transformation.

The twelve stones were set in golden mountings (vv. 17, 20). This signifies that the believers are kept in Christ's divine nature.

FOUR ROWS OF STONES

The twelve stones were arranged in four rows. Once again, the number four used here signifies the creatures.

Exodus 28:17-20 says, "And you shall mount it in mountings of stone, four rows of stone: a row of sardius, topaz, and emerald, the first row; and the second row, a carbuncle, sapphire, and diamond; and the third row, a jacinth, agate, and amethyst; and the fourth row, a chrysolite, and onyx, and jasper." From this we see that there were three stones in each of the four rows. We may ask why the twelve stones were arranged in this way, since there were many other ways in which they could have been arranged, many other patterns and shapes. God's way, however, is the most simple way, a way seemingly without artistic beauty, but a way full of spiritual significance.

The four rows of stones with three stones in each row signify the Triune God in resurrection. The number four signifies creatures, and three signifies not only the Triune God, but the Triune God in resurrection. In order to be in resurrection, the Triune God had to be processed. Today the God we enjoy is the Triune God processed to be in resurrection. Now this Triune God is the all-inclusive Spirit dwelling in our spirit as the superior mineral, working in us to saturate our whole being so that we may be transformed. In this way our human, natural being is transformed with divine minerals. This is the significance of twelve precious stones arranged in four groups with three stones in each row. This is not my interpretation. This is the way God planned it, and it fits in with the full revelation of the Bible.

On the breastplate there were a total of twelve stones. Here the number twelve is composed of three times four. The twelve stones signify the mingling of God with man for the completion of God's eternal purpose and the administration of God's government. In the book of Revelation the number seven is often used, especially in the early chapters. We read of seven lampstands, seven stars, seven churches, seven Spirits, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls. But at the end of Revelation, in the description of the New Jerusalem, the number twelve is used: twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve foundations, twelve Apostles of the Lamb, twelve pearls, twelve fruits. The number seven signifies the Triune God (three) added to His creature, man (four). This is merely a matter of joining, of addition; it is not a matter of mingling, of multiplication. Twelve, however, composed of three times four, signifies mingling, multiplication.

I have been condemned as heretical for teaching the mingling of God with man. Most Christian teachers speak only of the union of God and man or the joining of God to man. But the Bible reveals not only the union, the joining, but also the mingling. What we have in the Word is multiplication as well as addition. Three added to four is addition, but three times four is multiplication. Eventually, in eternity, we shall not be the number seven. Ultimately, we shall be the number twelve.

It certainly is not accidental that the number twelve is found both with the breastplate and the New Jerusalem. This surely is according to what God planned in eternity. God's plan is to have something signified by the number twelve, that is, the mingling of the Triune God with His creatures. In the sight of man, the churches today are the number seven. But in the sight of God and according to His eternal view, the churches are the number twelve.

With God there is no time, for He sees matters from eternity to eternity. In the heavens with God there is no clock. There is only eternity. Hence, according to God's sight, the church is the number twelve. Furthermore, according to the significance of the breastplate, what Christ bears on

His heart is an eternal church, not a temporal church. The church Christ bears is a mingling of divinity with humanity.

Today some oppose the revelation of the mingling of God with man. Sooner or later, those opposers who are genuine brothers in the Lord will accept this and enjoy it themselves. I believe the time is coming when they will admit that it is absolutely correct according to the Bible to say that the eternal church, the church Christ bears on His heart, is a mingling of the Triune God with redeemed humanity. Then these dear ones will enjoy the very thing they once opposed.

In the New Testament there are fourteen Epistles written by Paul. To a large degree, these Epistles are concerned with the church. But not even in these fourteen Epistles can we find the details regarding the church that are shown in the type of the breastplate in Exodus 28. For this reason, I encourage you to pray-read 28:15-21. It would be helpful to use this message along with your pray-reading. If you spend adequate time praying over these verses, I believe you will worship the Lord and say to Him, "Lord, I praise You. These verses show me some precious details of the church."

Just as the breastplate was borne on the heart of the high priest, so the church typified by the breastplate is on Christ's heart. The word breast in these verses actually signifies the heart, the loving and caring heart of Christ. The church is on Christ's heart and is within the span of His loving care. Hallelujah, we are being mingled with the divine life and the divine nature, and we are undergoing the process of transformation! As we are transformed and mingled with Him, we spontaneously become parts of the heavenly alphabet signified by the stones on the breastplate. Then we shall all bear the letters that constitute the divine language that reveals God's will.

It is easy to read these verses concerning the breastplate in a natural way and not be very interested in them. If this is our situation, then we shall not care to spend much time on this portion of the Word. But if we read these verses

according to the Lord's revelation and according to the divine view, we shall love them and desire to read them again and again, for in these verses we shall see a vision of some of the finest details of the church.

The points we have covered in this message and in the foregoing message concerning the church are deep. The church is portrayed by the breastplate with twelve precious stones. We have seen that these stones are produced by a process of transformation. This signifies that the church is something produced by transformation; it is transformed from something natural into something divine. The precious stones are not created by God directly. Instead, they are produced through the transformation of other materials created by Him. Today the Lord's desire is to have a group of transformed people, a group of believers signified by the twelve precious stones on the breastplate.

It is difficult for any translator of the Bible to say exactly what precious materials are indicated by the Hebrew words used for the various stones on the breastplate. No doubt, at the time of Moses each word and each stone had a certain significance. But now, thousands of years later, it is difficult for us to explain definitely the meaning of each of these Hebrew words. However, it is certain that these twelve stones are transformed precious stones. We also know that these precious stones signify the believers, God's redeemed people. The precious stones do not signify believers from different nationalities or cultures. No, they denote a group of transformed people, those who have been transformed from something natural into something divine. Furthermore, the fact that the twelve stones were arranged in four rows with three stones in each row indicates that the believers are not only transformed, but also mingled with the Triune God. These transformed, mingled believers are also set in gold, the divine nature of Christ, and thereby built into one entity. These people, being of the number twelve, complete the eternal purpose of God and become the administration of the divine government in the universe. The matter of the administration of God's government is also indicated by

the number twelve. Such a church is on Christ's heart and is in the span of His hand.

Because the type of the breastplate portrays aspects of the church not covered clearly in the New Testament, I encourage you to pay close attention to this matter. We need to see the vision of the church conveyed by the breastplate, and, having seen this vision, we must be faithful to it.

REPRODUCTION IN LIFE

Our concern in the Lord's recovery should not be with numbers or with the outward spreading of the work. That is not the Lord's way. His way is to create Adam and then fill the earth by reproduction and multiplication in life. Out of the life of one man, Adam, billions of human beings have come into existence. This is God's way to replenish the earth. Adam did not form a mission board, and he did not have plans, programs, and schedules for the carrying out of a work. Adam simply lived and produced children. As a result, the earth is filled with people.

We may think that the way of reproduction in life is slow. Today many Christians take the way of work, programs, organizations, and schedules. But that is not the way of life. I urge you to be faithful to what the Lord has shown us and live according to it. If we see the vision and live according to it, the recovery will spread and will replenish the earth.

Thank the Lord that we are genuine Christians. May the Lord have mercy on us so that we may be not only genuine but also valuable—precious stones, transformed, mingled with God, and built together to be God's testimony. This is what the Lord wants today.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(10)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:22-30; 39:15-21

We have seen that on the ephod worn upon the robe of the high priest there were two shoulder-pieces. On the shoulder-pieces were two plates with six of the names of the children of Israel engraved on each plate. On the front of the ephod the high priest wore a breastplate composed of twelve precious stones set in gold. On each of the stones was engraved the name of one of the sons of Jacob. Thus, we have the robe, the ephod, the shoulder-pieces, and the breastplate.

CHRIST WITH THE CHURCH

The ephod signifies the expression of Christ. It portrays Christ expressed in His divinity and humanity with His attributes and virtues. Hence, the ephod is a composition of the expression of Christ in His divinity, humanity, attributes, and virtues. Then upon the ephod, upon the expression of Christ, there is the church. Both the shoulder plates and the breastplate symbolize the church. First, the church is symbolized as a testimony of the Lord Jesus. This is the function of the two shoulder-pieces, for two signifies a testimony. Thus, the two plates on the shoulders of the ephod signify the church as the testimony of Christ. The breastplate composed of twelve stones set in gold symbolizes the saints as transformed precious stones built together in the divine nature of Christ to become one entity. This is the built up church. Therefore, the ephod with all that it bears, the three plates, is actually a picture of Christ and the church. This is a matter of great importance.

What is the ephod with all that it bears? It is Christ with the church. Just as the three plates are the belongings of the ephod, so the church is the belonging of Christ. Without the three plates, the ephod would still be the ephod, but it would not have as much beauty. What beauty there is in the ephod with all it bears! The three plates are simply the additional beauty of the ephod. If these plates were removed, the ephod would still be beautiful. But when the plates are added to the ephod, the ephod has much more beauty. The entire ephod with the shoulder plates and the breastplate is a portrait of Christ with His church.

As we consider Exodus 28, we need to lay hold of this picture in an all-inclusive way. This means that in these messages on the ephod we are speaking concerning Christ with what He is bearing, that is, Christ with the church.

It is not an easy matter to study the types in the Old Testament. It is an especially difficult task to study the typology of the tabernacle, the priestly garments, and the offerings. The Brethren are experts in the areas of typology and prophecy. If you have ever studied the writings of the Brethren, you will see that they pay much attention to the two areas of typology and prophecy. I am thankful to the Lord for the years I was with them and for what I learned from them. However, I was never told that, in typology, the ephod with all it bears signifies Christ with the church.

The ephod is not merely a type of the glory of Christ or of certain of His virtues. Yes, the ephod itself does signify Christ. But what is borne upon the ephod, the shoulder plates and the breastplate, signifies God's redeemed people, for on these plates were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. These names signify the redeemed people of God. For this reason, the ephod with what it bears portrays Christ with the church.

CHAINS OF GOLD

Exodus 28:22 says, "And you shall make upon the breastplate twined chains, a work of cords, of pure gold." These two chains of gold signify Christ's divine nature as the connecting

element. In typology gold signifies the divine nature. The chains, no doubt, served the purpose of connecting, joining. Thus, these two chains of gold typify the divine nature of Christ as the connecting element.

Verses 22 through 27 are not easy to understand. According to verse 23, two rings of gold were put upon the two ends of the breastplate. These two ends were at the top and were connected to the shoulder-pieces. Then two ribbons, made of linen, not of gold, were attached to the two bottom ends of the breastplate and bound the breastplate to the ephod. Therefore, verse 28 says, "And they shall bind the breastplate by its rings unto the rings of the ephod with a ribbon of blue, that it may be upon the skillfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastplate may not come loose from the ephod."

Verse 22 mentions the two chains of gold that connected the top ends of the breastplate to the bottom ends of the two shoulder plates. These chains were made with twined cords of gold. The word twined signifies having passed through sufferings. This indicates that Christ's divinity, having passed through sufferings, has become the connecting element. If there were no twined, golden cords made into chains, there would not be any connecting element. There would be nothing to join the breastplate to the shoulder plates. This necessary connecting element is Christ's divinity. Christ's divine nature is what joins us all together.

We have pointed out that the word "twined" signifies having passed through sufferings. Christ in His divine nature certainly has been twined; that is, He has gone through sufferings. When He lived on earth for thirty-three and a half years, the divine nature within Him was twined. It passed through a great deal of suffering, a great deal of twining work.

RINGS OF GOLD

Verse 23 says, "And you shall make upon the breastplate two rings of gold, and put the two rings upon the two ends of the breastplate." The two rings of gold on the two ends of the breastplate signify the Spirit of Christ as the holding

element. In typology rings signify the Spirit. Now we have the chains signifying Christ's divinity, and the rings signifying Christ's Spirit. Perhaps you are wondering what is the difference between Christ's divinity and Christ's Spirit. Although they are very close, there is nevertheless some difference between them. Christ has divinity, the divine nature. He also has His Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, which is Christ Himself. Romans 8 speaks of Christ and also of the Spirit of Christ. Although it is correct to say that the Spirit of Christ is Christ Himself, there is still a difference between Christ and the Spirit of Christ. However, it is difficult for us to explain what this difference is.

In the picture of the ephod we have the chains and the rings. If we had the chains without the rings, we could not have a complete connection. The chains were the connecting element, but the rings were the holding element. When we have both the connecting and holding elements, we have the proper joining. If you consider your experience carefully in a fine, detailed way, you will realize that, on the one hand, the divine nature of Christ within you is a connecting element and that, on the other hand, the Spirit of Christ within you is a holding element. Because we have both Christ's divinity and Christ's Spirit, we have a complete joining.

Verse 24 goes on to say, "And you shall put the two cords of gold on the two rings at the ends of the breastplate." The two chains of gold put on the two rings at the ends of the breastplate signify Christ's divine nature with Christ's Spirit as the connecting power.

HELD AND UPHELD

Verse 25 says, "And the two ends of the two cords you shall put on the two settings, and put them on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, at its front." One end of the chains was put on the ends of the breastplate, and the other, on the golden settings of the shoulder-pieces. The two chains put on the two settings of the shoulder-pieces signify Christ's divine nature upholding God's redeemed people, held in His

love to His bearing strength. God's redeemed people are held on Christ's heart in His love. They are also held on His shoulders, upheld by His bearing strength. The breastplate without the shoulder-pieces would indicate that we are held by Christ, but not that we are upheld by Him. We would be held in love, but we would not be upheld with Christ's bearing strength. By this picture we can see that we, God's redeemed people, are both held in love and are upheld by Christ's bearing strength. His heart holds us, and His shoulders uphold us.

Holding is a matter of love, and upholding is a matter of strength. Often out of love for his wife, a brother may want to do something special for her. However, he may not have the strength, the ability, to do it. For example, he may want to buy something valuable for her, but he may not have enough money to purchase such an expensive object. He may have the heart, but he may not have the means. Likewise, because we parents love our children, we may desire to do many things for them. But we may not have the means or the ability to do everything we want to do. We have the holding love, but we may lack the upholding strength. Christ, however, has love in His heart and strength with His shoulders. Hallelujah, we are held in His love and upheld by His strength!

RIBBONS OF LINEN

Verse 28 says, "And they shall bind the breastplate by its rings unto the rings of the ephod with a ribbon of blue, that it may be upon the skillfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastplate may not come loose from the ephod." The two chains of gold refer to Christ's divinity, but the two ribbons of linen refer to His humanity. On the top of the breastplate the connecting element is Christ's divinity. But at the bottom of the breastplate the connecting element is Christ's humanity, signified by two ribbons of linen. Therefore, in one sense the church is connected to Christ by His divinity, and in another sense the church is connected to Christ by His humanity. Both His divinity and His humanity are connecting elements.

The blue color of the ribbons signifies heavenliness. Christ's humanity was lived out on earth; nevertheless, His humanity is heavenly. Christ is a man, but He is a heavenly man. His humanity is with the color of blue.

Verses 26 and 27 say, "And you shall make two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the breastplate, upon its edge, which is toward the side of the ephod inward. And you shall make two rings of gold, and put them on the two shoulder-pieces of the ephod underneath, on its front, near its joining, above the skillfully woven band of the ephod." Two rings of gold on the two ends at the bottom of the breastplate and two rings of gold on the two shoulder-pieces of the ephod signify the Spirit of Christ as the holding element.

According to verse 28, the breastplate was bound by its rings to the rings of the ephod with the ribbons. This signifies the joining of the church to the expression of Christ by His Spirit with His human nature. The ribbon was used to bind the golden rings together. Here we have four things: the golden rings, the linen ribbons, the breastplate, and the ephod. All this signifies joining the church (the breastplate) to the expression of Christ (the ephod) by His Spirit (the rings) with His human nature (the ribbons).

A PRECIOUS PICTURE

I appreciate Paul's writings, but not even in them do we have the details concerning the church found in Exodus 28. If we did not have this picture, we could not see so many details about the relationship of the church to Christ. How precious is this picture, and how important it is for us to see it!

As we consider this picture, we see that we are on the heart of Christ, held by His divinity and humanity. We are also upheld on His shoulders by His bearing strength. Now we know where the church is—on Christ's heart and on His shoulders. From John 10 we see that we are held by the hand of the Lord Jesus and also by the hand of the Father. Although this gives a sense of love and strength, the

impression is not the same as that afforded by the picture in Exodus 28.

A MEMORIAL BEFORE GOD

Verse 30 says, "Aaron shall bear the judgment of the sons of Israel upon his heart before Jehovah continually." Here we see that the breastplate was borne upon Aaron's heart before the Lord. This signifies that the entire church as one entity built together is borne upon Christ's loving heart before God. What a great comfort this is to us! Many among us have hardships and difficulties. We may have problems at work or at home. Human life is not easy. However, if we consider the picture of the breastplate on Aaron's heart, we shall realize that we are not in our hardships, difficulties, or problems—we are on Christ's heart before God. When the enemy comes to trouble us, we should declare, "Satan, right now I am borne on Christ's heart before God."

Exodus 28:29 says, "And Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goes into the holy place, for a memorial before Jehovah continually." This signifies that Christ is bearing the church before God for a memorial, for a remembrance before God. A memorial is usually pleasant and also good. The church borne on the heart of Christ before God certainly is pleasant to God. Every day and even every moment, God has a memorial. This memorial is the church on the heart of Christ.

We all need to realize that the church is borne upon Christ as a memorial, a remembrance, before God. This will encourage us at a time when the Lord's testimony is under attack and facing opposition. On the one hand, we may be troubled by the slander and rumors spread concerning us. But on the other hand, we should realize that all the churches are on the heart of Christ before God. This is very pleasing to Him. When God looks at His recovery with all the churches, He is happy. He is pleased to have such a remembrance. In the sight of man the churches may be

despised, but they are truly pleasant to God. We may have the assurance that we are a pleasing memorial to God.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(11)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:22-30; 39:15-21; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8a, 10a

GOD'S SPEAKING THROUGH THE URIM AND THE THUMMIM

Exodus 28:30 says, "And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah." In David Baron's book *The Ancient Scriptures and the Modern Jew* there is an appendix containing an article on the Urim and the Thummim. According to this article, the twelve names on the breastplate included eighteen of the twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The remaining four letters were put on a piece called the Thummim. The Hebrew word Thummim means perfecters or completers. Thus, on the breastplate with the additional piece called the Thummim all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet could be found. Just as the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet on the keys of a typewriter can be used to compose a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph, so the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet on the breastplate and the Thummim could be used to spell out words and sentences.

Furthermore, according to this article, the Urim was an illuminator inserted into the breastplate underneath the twelve stones. In Hebrew the word Urim means lights. This article in David Baron's book says that the Urim had the capacity to contain oil for burning and that the fire used to burn this oil came from the altar. The Hebrew scholar

responsible for this article also said that this Urim had twelve illuminators, one to illuminate each piece of stone on the breastplate. Then the transparent stones could shine with light.

When the Urim and the Thummim were added to the breastplate, they caused it to become the breastplate of judgment. Before they were added, the breastplate was simply for a memorial.

When God brought His people into the wilderness, He spoke to them through Moses. God spoke to Moses face to face. But after the death of Moses, Joshua received guidance from God not by His direct speaking in the way He spoke to Moses, but by the Urim and the Thummim on the breastplate worn by the high priest. Hence, whenever Joshua needed guidance concerning the move of the people, he had to go to the high priest who then received guidance from God by means of the Urim and the Thummim. Thus, God spoke through the Urim and the Thummim.

The writer of this article illustrates the function of the Urim and Thummim by referring to the case of Joshua and Achan. The children of Israel were defeated at Ai due to the sin of Achan (Josh. 7). How was Achan's sin discovered? According to this article, a representative of each of the twelve tribes came to the tabernacle and stood before the high priest, who was wearing the breastplate. Suddenly one of the twelve pieces on the breastplate became dark. That was the stone for the tribe of Judah. In this way Judah was singled out. Joshua 7:16-18 says, "And the tribe of Judah was taken: And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken." It was also by the darkening of certain stones on the breastplate that the family and eventually the person were found out. In this situation the breastplate functioned like a spiritual and heavenly typewriter to spell out the name of Achan.

This article cites other instances of the use of the Urim

and the Thummim. It says that Joshua allotted the land to the tribes through the Urim and the Thummim (Josh. 18:6-10), and also fought against the enemies according to the guidance of God made known by the Urim and the Thummim (Judg. 1:1-12; 20:18, 27; see Num. 27:21). Furthermore, when Saul the king became unfaithful to God, God would no longer answer him through the Urim and the Thummim (1 Sam. 28:6). When the priests were slain by Saul, one of the sons escaped to David, and David then followed the Lord by the Urim and the Thummim.

We have pointed out that the breastplate was called the breastplate of judgment. Deuteronomy 33:8 and 10 say, "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one.…They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law." Because the Urim and the Thummim were with the Levites, the priests, they could teach the people not only the law of God, but also His judgments.

What we have covered thus far regarding the Urim and the Thummim are some of the historical facts according to scholarship. We have not yet seen anything concerning the spiritual application of the Urim and the Thummim. It is not my burden in this message to speak about historical facts; rather, it is to show the spiritual application.

READING THE SAINTS

The breastplate signifies the church with all the believers built up together as one entity. All the transformed believers who are built up to become the one entity known as the Body of Christ, the church, are letters for God's speaking to us. This means that today, in the New Testament age, God speaks to the church through all the saints. We can see this in the way many of Paul's Epistles were written. In writing to a particular church, Paul considered the saints in that local church. In other words, he considered the condition and situation of the saints in that locality. Then he used the condition and situation of the saints as letters in the spiritual alphabet to compose an epistle. Paul did not write any of his Epistles in an abstract way with vain

thoughts. No, his Epistles were always based upon the condition and situation of the saints in a particular locality. Thus, those saints became the letters used by Paul in the spiritual typesetting of an epistle.

What does this mean for us today? It simply means that in a local church the leading ones need to seek the Lord's guidance by reading the actual situation and condition of the saints. For example, suppose the leading ones are considering whether or not the church should have a meeting for the preaching of the gospel. Before making a decision, they should consider the saints in their locality, asking what the condition of the saints is. Then based upon their reading of the condition and situation of the saints, the leading ones will have the guidance of the Lord. This will enable them to know whether or not at that time they should have a meeting for the preaching of the gospel.

The children of Israel went on by the guidance they received from the high priest's reading of the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim in the presence of God. Today it is important for all the leading ones to read the condition and situation of the saints in their locality. In this way they will receive the leading of the Lord for the going on of the church.

For us today, the breastplate is the church, and the stones on the breastplate are the saints. Every saint bears some letters. Therefore, with the saints we have the letters of a heavenly and spiritual alphabet. Furthermore, by reading the condition and situation of the saints, we can have certain "words." When these words are put together we have a complete sentence, a complete thought. This is the speaking of God through His redeemed saints as the letters. It is in this way that the congregation of the Lord knows how to go on.

THE CONDITIONS FOR HAVING THE URIM AND THE THUMMIM

The Urim and the Thummim were added to the breastplate based upon what the breastplate was. Certain items

were necessary in order for the Urim and the Thummim to be added into the breastplate. There had to be the twelve precious stones, the inscribing of the names of the tribes on these stones, the building up of the stones into one entity, the connecting and joining by the chains, the ribbons, and the rings, and the ephod with the shoulder-pieces. Therefore, the adding in of the Urim and the Thummim required all these basic matters. This signifies that what Christ is, what the church is, and how the church is attached to Christ are the basis for the addition of the Urim and the Thummim. If we as God's redeemed people are not transformed, if we do not have Christ inscribed into our being, if we are not built up as one entity, and if we are not connected by Christ's divinity and humanity to His expression, then we do not have the basis for the Urim and the Thummim. If our condition is poor, like that of many Christians, there is no ground, no basis, for the Urim and the Thummim. Thus, it is crucial to see that the basic matters concerning the breastplate covered in these messages are the condition for having the Urim and the Thummim.

In Romans 8:14 Paul says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." The leading of the Spirit is based upon many things covered in the first thirteen verses of Romans 8. When these basic matters are put together, they virtually equal the leading of the Spirit. This can be compared to mathematics, where certain numbers are added together to give a total. The leading in Romans 8:14 is the total of many spiritual items covered in Romans 8:1-13. The principle is the same with the breastplate and the Urim and the Thummim. The adding in of the Urim and the Thummim depends upon the breastplate, the twelve stones, the inscribing, the chains, the ribbons, and the rings. Without all these items, it would be useless to try to add in the Urim and the Thummim.

TRANSFORMED, TRANSPARENT, INSCRIBED, AND ENLIGHTENED

According to the appendix in David Baron's book, the

Urim had twelve illuminators to enlighten all twelve of the transparent precious stones. But suppose no letters had been inscribed on these stones. What, then, would be shown by the shining of the illuminators through the stones? Nothing would be shown, for there would have been no letters on the stones to be illuminated. Even if the stones had been enlightened by the illuminators and thereby shone with light, there would not have been any content. The content depends on the letters inscribed on the stones.

The principle is the same with the living letters of Christ in 2 Corinthians 3. Only when Christ has been inscribed into our being do we become His living letters. Just as God could not speak through the breastplate unless the stones had been inscribed with letters, so God cannot speak through His redeemed people unless they have been inscribed with Christ. Yes, the Lord does speak through His redeemed people. However, He actually speaks through the Christ who has been inscribed into them. This means that we need the content of Christ inscribed as letters into our being. Otherwise, God will have no way to speak through us, for there will not be any letters inscribed into us.

How many of today's Christians have Christ inscribed into them? The answer is that few have truly been inscribed with Christ. Even with these few, the amount of Christ inscribed may not be very great. Moreover, many Christians are not transparent. How can the Lord speak through those who have not been inscribed with Christ and who are not transparent? This is impossible. If the stones placed in the breastplate had been opaque, the illuminators of the Urim may have enlightened them, but they would not have been able to shine through such opaque stones. Likewise, because so many Christians are opaque, Christ does not have a way to shine through them. We need to be transformed, and we need to be transparent, and we need to have Christ inscribed into us. Then when the light shines through us, others will be able to read the letters, the content of Christ, inscribed into us. But if we are not

transformed and transparent and if we have not been inscribed with Christ, but are merely opaque stones without any letters inscribed into us, it will not be possible for God to speak through us.

BUILT UP AS ONE ENTITY

Another basic matter related to the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim is that the twelve stones on the breastplate were not divided, but were built up together as one entity. This signifies the building together of God's redeemed people into one entity, the church. However, today's Christians are scattered, separated, and divided. Furthermore, there is no building up. The oneness portrayed by the breastplate is lacking.

We must remember that the twelve stones on the breastplate were arranged in three rows of four, signifying humanity mingled with divinity to form a complete unit for the full expression of God and His eternal government. This is the significance of the number twelve, and it also is a basic condition for having the Urim and the Thummim.

Christians often talk about God's guidance and about the leading of the Lord. Actually, for the most part, they have no ground to have the Lord's leading. What they have is actually not His guidance or leading. Instead, it is often something according to their own imagination and doings. How is it possible to have the Lord's leading if we have not fulfilled the basic conditions signified by the breastplate? It is not possible to have His leading in such a situation. The points we have covered concerning the breastplate are basic and necessary to have the Lord's leading. If we do not have these basic items, there is no way to have the Lord's leading.

I would call your attention once again to the way the Urim and Thummim are recorded in 28:30. This verse says, "And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim." This clearly indicates that the Urim and the Thummim were added to something which had previously been made ready. First the breastplate with all its

items was prepared. Then the Urim and the Thummim, two additional pieces, were put into it. Without the readiness of the breastplate, there would have been no way to add in the Urim and the Thummim. The Urim and the Thummim actually signify the Lord's speaking. The fact that they could not be added to the breastplate until it had been made ready indicates that if we do not have the breastplate today, the Lord does not have a way to speak to us. The speaking of the Lord results from the readiness or the preparation of the breastplate.

GOD'S JUDGMENTS AND HIS LEADING

According to 28:29 and 30, the breastplate was not only a memorial before the Lord, but was also a plate of judgment. After the Urim and the Thummim were added into the breastplate, it became the breastplate of judgment. Verses 29 and 30 speak of judgment, not of leading or guidance. The judgments mentioned in Deuteronomy 33:10 are related to the Urim and the Thummim in 33:8, where we are told that the priests, the Levites, would have the Thummim and the Urim. The judgments in Deuteronomy 33:10 refer to the judgments in Exodus 28:29 and 30. In both portions of the Word judgment is related to the Urim and the Thummim.

In English judgment may mean the action of judging or a decision of judging. But this is not an accurate understanding of the word judgment as used in these verses. In Deuteronomy 33:10 the judgments are part of God's law, which is a totality of God's regulations. Usually when we think of the law of God, we think of the Ten Commandments. However, the law includes more than the Ten Commandments. As we have seen, the Ten Commandments recorded in Exodus 20 are supplemented by the ordinances and regulations recorded in chapters twenty-one through twenty-three. All these regulations are judgments. Therefore, the law not only includes the Ten Commandments, but also includes regulations and ordinances. Some of these ordinances concerned punishment for smiting others, and some were related to making

recompense for damage to others' property. All such regulations are judgments.

The English word judgment used to translate Deuteronomy 33:10 and Exodus 28:29 and 30 can be misleading. It may be regarded as an action of judging or even as an opinion, for our judgment may refer to our opinion. Furthermore, judgment may also involve evaluation. But this is not the meaning of judgment with respect to the breastplate of judgment. The word judgment in these verses indicates that God has a regulation concerning everything among His people. All the regulations will issue in judgments, and these judgments become God's leading. Thus, the leading of God comes from His judgments, which are based on His regulations.

When we were on Exodus 21 through 23, we pointed out that these chapters are supplements to the Ten Commandments. First God gave the Ten Commandments. Then He issued many regulations and ordinances as supplements to these commandments. The Ten Commandments are the principles of God's regulations, but the supplements in Exodus 21 through 23 provide the details of these regulations. In these detailed regulations we have God's judgment. This judgment leads us to certain decisions. As a result, we have God's leading.

God's regulations always include His judgment. For this reason, if we would receive the Lord's leading, many things about us need to be judged by God. Our flesh, our wrongdoings, and our natural life must all be judged by Him. God's regulations require that all these things be set aside. What remains afterward is truly of God. In this way we come to know God's leading.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVEN

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(12)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8-10; Ezra 2:63; 1 Sam. 23:6, 9-12; 28:6

In this message we shall continue our study of the Urim and the Thummim. Exodus 28:30 says, "And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the sons of Israel upon his heart before Jehovah continually." I believe that the Urim and the Thummim are the most mysterious parts of the garments worn by the high priest. If we would understand the Urim and the Thummim, we should study the Old Testament and also consider our spiritual experience.

TYPES OF CHRIST

In studying the Urim and the Thummim, we need to follow the principle that the types in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are types of Christ. In these books there are types of the individual Christ and also of the corporate Christ, the church. This means that in the Pentateuch there are types of Christ Himself and types of Christ with the church. For example, we have the ark typifying Christ, and the tabernacle, made of forty-eight boards, typifying the church. Furthermore, with the priestly garments we have types of Christ and the church. The ephod typifies the expression of Christ, and the breastplate worn by the high priest typifies the church. Therefore, the breastplate on the ephod is a type of the church borne by Christ.

I would encourage the saints to take the time necessary to study the types of Christ with the church in the Pentateuch. I am very grateful to the Lord that during the years I was with the Brethren I learned biblical typology. Many of the types are not new to me. However, understanding the application of these types to our experience requires further study. In this message let us study the Urim and the Thummim according to the Old Testament and also try to apply this type to our experience according to today's need.

THE APPLICATION OF THE URIM AND THE THUMMIM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In addition to 28:30, there are a number of references to the Urim and the Thummim in the Old Testament. Leviticus 8:8 says, "And he put the breastplate upon him: also he put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim." According to Numbers 27:21, the Lord said to Moses concerning Joshua, "And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: at his word shall they go out, and at his word shall they come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation." Ezra 2:63 and Nehemiah 7:65 speak of the Urim and the Thummim with respect to the same historical situation. Ezra 2:63 says, "And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim." The Urim and the Thummim are also referred to in Deuteronomy 33:8-10 and in 1 Samuel 23:6, 9-12 and 28:6.

Concerning the Urim and the Thummim, we have been helped by an appendix in David Baron's book *The Ancient Scriptures and the Modern Jew*. The Urim and the Thummim were two items placed into the breastplate in addition to the twelve precious stones. In Hebrew the word Urim means lights, illuminators, and Thummim means completers, perfecters. The placing of the Urim and the Thummim into the breastplate caused the breastplate to become the breastplate of judgment.

Aaron

According to the history in the Old Testament, the Urim and the Thummim were placed upon a number of different persons. The first application was to Aaron (Lev. 8:8). Although Aaron bore the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim, it is doubtful that he ever made use of the Urim and Thummim. During the time Aaron was high priest, Moses was still alive. Moses was an extraordinary person, and the Bible tells us that God spoke to him directly, without any means, instrument, or intermediary. Exodus 33:11 says, "And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." Numbers 12:8 indicates that the Lord spoke with Moses "mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches." Because the Lord spoke to Moses in such a direct and intimate way, there was no need during his lifetime for the Lord to make His will known to Aaron by means of the Urim and the Thummim. Aaron died before Moses did. Hence, even though Aaron wore the ephod with the breastplate and the Urim and the Thummim, he did not use them. In other words, during the time of Aaron's priesthood, God did not speak to His people through the Urim and the Thummim, for He had a person, Moses, with whom He spoke face to face.

Eleazar for Joshua

The Urim and Thummim were later applied to Eleazar, the son of Aaron. After Aaron and Moses died, Joshua came into the position to lead the children of Israel. God, however, did not speak to him as He spoke to Moses. Instead, God asked Moses to tell Joshua that if he wanted to know God's will or leading, he had to go to the priest (Num. 27:21). At that time, the high priest was Eleazar. Therefore, Joshua had to go to Eleazar to receive the revelation of God's will by means of the Urim and the Thummim.

According to the appendix in David Baron's book, it was through the Urim and Thummim that it was made known

that Achan was the one whose sin had caused the defeat of the children of Israel at Ai. This is recorded in Joshua 7:16-21. Through the Urim and the Thummim the tribe, the family, and the individual were singled out.

The Priests of Levi for Israel

After Eleazar, the Urim and the Thummim were applied to each of the high priests of Levi for Israel (Deut. 33:8-10; Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65). In Deuteronomy 33:8-10 we see what kind of person is qualified to obtain revelation through the Urim and the Thummim. This person must be not only holy but also godly. To be godly is to exhibit godliness, that is, to be one with God. A godly person is not only for God; he is also one with God. Someone who is merely holy may be for God, but someone who is godly is also one with God. Deuteronomy 33:8 and 9 say, "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy godly one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant" (lit.). Verse 9 indicates that between these godly ones and God there was no separation. Not even the members of their families separated them from God. This is very similar to what the Lord Jesus says in the Gospels: "He who loves father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter above Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37). The Lord Jesus also said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). Even in the Old Testament times Moses taught something the same in principle as what was taught by the Lord Jesus: not even our relationship with our family can be allowed to separate us from the Lord.

Deuteronomy 33:10 goes on to say, "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine

altar." According to this verse, those who are qualified to use the Urim and the Thummim are also those who offer the burnt offerings and burn incense. Both the burnt offering and the incense were a sweet-smelling savor to the Lord. In typology only two things gave such a pleasant fragrance to God. God smelled the fragrance from the burnt offering, and He especially delighted in the fragrance from the incense within the tabernacle. Both the burnt offering and the incense are types of Christ. Thus, the godly ones offer Christ to God as the burnt offering and as the sweet incense. To burn incense is to offer Christ to God as the fragrant incense. If we are truly one with God, we must offer the burnt offering and burn the incense so that He may enjoy their sweet fragrance.

Now we can see the qualifications of the priests, those who have the function to use the Urim and the Thummim for God to speak to His people. The priests were godly ones, they maintained a direct relationship with God, and they offered the burnt offering and the incense to God. This enabled them to use the Urim and the Thummim.

Abiathar for David

In the book of 1 Samuel we see that the situation among God's people had become abnormal. Most of the priests were destroyed by King Saul, and Abiathar the priest fled to David. First Samuel 23:6 says, "And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Abimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand." No doubt the Urim and the Thummim were attached to the ephod. Verses 9 through 12 of 1 Samuel 23 indicate that Abiathar used the Urim and Thummim to reveal the Lord's answers to David's questions concerning Saul. After telling Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod, David said, "O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant" (vv. 10-11). The Lord, by means of the Urim and the

Thummim, told David that Saul would come down and that the men of Keilah would deliver David into Saul's hand. Therefore, David received answers to two practical questions through the Urim and the Thummim used by Abiathar the priest. David was given a clear answer through the heavenly typewriter of the Urim and the Thummim.

Not for Saul

Because David was a godly person, the Lord answered him through the Urim and the Thummim. King Saul, however, was not godly, and he could not receive any answers through the Urim and the Thummim. Thus, the Urim and the Thummim worked for David, but not for Saul. David was a godly one, but Saul was not godly. In fact, the time came when God would no longer have anything to do with him. First Samuel 28:6 says, "And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." This verse clearly indicates that the Urim and the Thummim were not available to Saul.

First Samuel 28:6 gives three ways for God to reveal matters: dreams, the Urim, and prophets. Which of these ways do you prefer? I do not prefer the way of dreams. I would rather have God speak something to me directly instead of through a dream. (I know from experience, however, that some dreams are of God and that He does reveal certain matters through dreams.) Do you prefer to have God speak to you through a prophet? The reason the prophets were raised up is that the priests and the kings failed God. Because God had no way to go on with the priests and the kings, the prophets were raised up by Him. This is the reason in the Old Testament we have first the priests, then the kings, and then the prophets. Nevertheless, some Christians like to hear someone speak in the way of the Old Testament prophets and declare, "Thus saith the Lord." If you enjoy this kind of speaking and prefer God's speaking through the prophets, this may be an indication that you are not close to the Lord. If you are a person who is intimate with the Lord, you will be a priest with the Urim and the

Thummim. We should prefer God's speaking not through dreams or through prophets, but through the Urim and the Thummim. We are not dreamers or prophets; we are priests with the Urim and the Thummim.

CHRIST AS WITNESS AND ILLUMINATOR

The Urim and the Thummim are types of Christ. It is significant that two items, not one or three, were added into the breastplate. Two is the number of testimony, and these two items, the Urim and the Thummim, indicate that Christ is the witness, the testimony. He is both the Urim and the Thummim. As the means for God to speak to us, Christ is a testimony. He is a living witness. In Revelation 3:14 He refers to Himself as a faithful and true witness. From our experience we know and understand that Christ surely is God's witness, God's testimony.

The Urim typifies Christ as lights, illuminators. No doubt, Christ is the light, and He is also the true illuminator. This is easy to understand, for in the New Testament Christ says of Himself, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). Furthermore, Paul declares that Christ shines upon us and enlightens us: "Wherefore He says, Awake, sleeper, and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall shine on you" (Eph. 5:14).

CHRIST SHINING THROUGH THE SPIRIT AND THROUGH THE CROSS

The appendix in *The Ancient Scriptures and the Modern Jew* says that the Urim contained oil that was burned with fire from the altar. That fire came from God. Hence, it was a divine fire, a heavenly fire, that burned the oil in the Urim to give light. This is very significant. The oil typifies the Spirit, and the fire comes from the altar, which typifies the cross. As the illuminator, Christ surely has the oil, the Spirit. This Spirit burns through the cross. Today Christ the illuminator is shining through the burning Spirit.

I would ask you to consider the significance of the Urim according to your spiritual experience. Even though your experience may be limited, you certainly have had some

experience of Christ shining in you. Do you not realize that this shining Christ works through the Spirit and also through the cross? We may not have the words to explain it, but in our experience we realize that as Christ shines within us, the life-giving Spirit is burning and the cross is working. In our experience of Christ as the illuminator, the shining One, we have the cross, the Spirit, and Christ Himself.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHT

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(13)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8-10; Ezra 2:63; 1 Sam. 23:6, 9-12; 28:6

In the foregoing message we pointed out that the Urim and Thummim were added into the breastplate to make it the breastplate of judgment. We also considered the qualifications of those who used the breastplate and how it was applied to various people in the Old Testament. Furthermore, we saw that the Urim typifies Christ as the illuminator. Now we shall go on to consider the significance of the Thummim and how the Urim and the Thummim may be applied to our experience today.

CHRIST AS THE COMPLETER AND PERFECTER

According to an appendix concerning the Urim and the Thummim in David Baron's book *The Ancient Scriptures and the Modern Jew,* the Thummim contained four letters of the Hebrew alphabet that were not used in the names of the twelve tribes and therefore not inscribed on the twelve precious stones in the breastplate. The Hebrew word for Thummim means completers, perfecters, and it typifies Christ as the completer and perfecter. We do not know how the Urim and the Thummim were added to the breastplate. However, we do know that both the Urim and the Thummim typify Christ and that the breastplate typifies the church. Therefore, the Urim and the Thummim added to the breastplate typify Christ added to the church.

The twelve precious stones in the breastplate typify the believers, the components of the church, inscribed with Christ

as the letters of the spiritual alphabet. According to the book of Revelation, Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. Since He is the first letter and the last, He is no doubt all the letters in between. This means that Christ is the alphabet used to compose words, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and books. The letters inscribed on the twelve stones in the breastplate typify Christ as the letters in the heavenly alphabet.

According to the appendix in David Baron's book, four letters of the Hebrew alphabet were not inscribed on the stones set in the breastplate. Therefore, in order to have a complete Hebrew alphabet, it was necessary for the remaining letters to be supplied. That appendix also says that these four Hebrew letters were found on the Thummim. The Thummim, then, was a completer, a perfecter, of the letters on the breastplate. This indicates that no matter how much of Christ has been inscribed into us, we still are not complete. Some letters, something of Christ, are still missing. We need the completing Christ, the One who bears these missing letters.

THE NEED FOR CHRIST TO BE ADDED TO US

The Urim added to the breastplate caused the twelve precious stones to shine. If some stones had been missing, there would have been a dark spot on the breastplate, indicating that something of Christ is missing. But the important point here is that even with all the stones inscribed with letters signifying the believers inscribed with Christ, there was still something missing. This signifies that even if the church is complete, perfect, and without defects or shortcomings, something of Christ is still missing. Hence, there is the need for the Christ typified by the Thummim to be added to the church, the breastplate.

Often the leading ones in the church realize that no matter how much the saints in their locality have been experiencing Christ or how much of Christ has been inscribed into them, something of Christ is still missing. All the believers need something additional of Christ. Although the

saints may experience Christ and have Christ inscribed into their being, they are still short of Christ. Only Christ Himself can supply what is missing. Therefore, we need Christ as the completion. Furthermore, no matter how much we have experienced Christ and have had Him inscribed upon us, we shall still be in darkness if we depend on ourselves. We need Christ as the light, as the Urim, to be added to the church. Even though the precious stones on the breastplate had been inscribed with the names of all twelve of the tribes, there were still some Hebrew letters missing. Likewise, even though we may be rich in the experience of Christ, something of Christ is still lacking and can be made up by Him alone. We should never think that we have exhausted Christ. No, He is inexhaustible. Even after experiencing Him over a long period of time, we must admit that something of Christ is still missing. Therefore, we need Christ to be added to us. When this missing portion of Christ is added, we have the completion and the shining.

CHRIST AS THE ALPHABET FOR INSCRIPTION AND COMPLETION

Christ is the spiritual alphabet for inscription and also for completion. The Christ whom we experience is the One who is inscribed into us. But even though we may have a great deal of Christ inscribed into us, we are still missing something of Christ. When we realize this, we may say, "I cannot have this completion in myself, but I can have it through the church." However, if you try to find this completion in the church, you will not be successful. The church itself also needs this completion. Therefore, even if you have the church, you still need Christ as your completion.

The fact that Christ is the alphabet for inscription and completion indicates that He is inexhaustible. We may have Him as the letters for inscription, but we still need Him as the letters for completion. We can never exhaust Christ, for although we may enjoy His inscription, there is still something more of Him that we need for completion.

By the Lord's mercy and grace, I have been experiencing Christ for many years. When I went to Shanghai the first time, I was helped to experience Christ in a way I had not experienced Him in the past. After that visit to Shanghai, I returned to the north, where I held a conference and gave messages on Christ. I learned that no matter what my experience of Christ had been, while I was giving those messages, I realized that I had actually experienced very little of Christ. Regarding the experience of Christ, I then tried to receive help from the saints and from the church. However, I discovered that others were even more poor than I in experiencing Christ. In Shanghai I thought that I had experienced Christ to a great degree. But when I returned to the north and gave messages on Christ, I learned that I had not experienced Him very much at all. That was when I discovered what a great shortage there was among us with respect to the experience of Christ. Some saints had very little experience, and other saints had virtually no experience at all.

THE SHORTAGE OF THE INSCRIPTION OF CHRIST

If you carefully examine the situation of Christians today, you will find out what poverty there is concerning the inscription of Christ. A certain believer may be very good, but he may still be opaque, lacking both in transformation and in the inscribing of Christ. Although such a believer has truly been saved, he has not yet been inscribed with Christ.

One day Brother Nee, referring to certain persons, asked me if I thought they had been regenerated. I knew those persons rather well and answered that it seemed to me that they had been saved. Brother Nee, somewhat in a joking way, replied, "Perhaps they have been saved, but not regenerated." When I asked him how it was possible for someone to be saved without being regenerated, he answered, "Doctrinally, there is no such thing as a person who is saved but not regenerated. But according to actual experience, it seems that certain ones have been saved without being regenerated. No doubt, they have been redeemed by the

blood, but although we have known them for years, we have never met their regenerated spirit. There is no question that they have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, but there is no indication of the Spirit that they have a regenerated spirit. They just don't know to exercise their spirit." It was surely the case that with these ones there was no inscription of Christ.

A particular saint may be a good brother or a nice sister, but how much of Christ has been inscribed into that one? How much of Christ has been inscribed into you? You may have to admit that little of Christ has been inscribed into your being. Because this is the situation with so many saints, in recent years my burden has become more and more heavy. It is possible to have thousands of local churches with tens of thousands of saints, but with little experience of Christ. How much have the saints in your locality been experiencing Christ? How much inscription of Christ do they have? If we consider our situation in this way, we may be somewhat disappointed.

At this point I would say a word to those who live in a brothers' house or in a sisters' house. How much of Christ has been inscribed into those with whom you live? We have seen that each of the twelve precious stones on the breastplate was inscribed with one of the names of the tribes of Israel. However, if you consider those with whom you live in a brothers' or sisters' house, you may find that no one has even one complete word inscribed on him or her. In some cases, only a part of a letter may be inscribed. The brothers and sisters may be very good, but it is difficult to see in them the clear and definite inscription of Christ. It is one thing to be a good brother or a nice sister; it is a very different matter to have the definite experience of Christ.

THE PROPER EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

Consider once again the precious stones in the breastplate. Each stone was transparent, and each had been inscribed properly and definitely. For example, the name of the tribe of Judah had been inscribed into one of the stones.

But, with many saints today there is a shortage of the clear and definite inscription of Christ. However, with some saints there are the definite experiences of Christ and the clear inscription of Christ. These saints have experienced Christ as the spiritual alphabet.

The situation of most of today's Christians is far short of what God desires. The experience of Christ has been almost completely neglected by Christians throughout the centuries. Many have received edification, but few have had Christ inscribed into them. Before you came into the church life, you may have been edified in certain ways, but how much of the inscription of Christ did you have? You may have to admit that, although you were saved and regenerated, you did not have anything of Christ inscribed into you. Some among us were missionaries before they came into the Lord's recovery. But although they labored on the mission field for years, they still did not have the clear and definite experiences of Christ. Rather, their experience was vague and indefinite.

Before I went to Shanghai in 1933, I spent more than seven years with the Brethren, from whom I learned a great deal about typology and prophecy. But after spending a number of weeks in Shanghai, I realized that during those years I had very little experience of Christ. Many of us have been in a similar situation. We gained knowledge about the Bible, but not very much of Christ was inscribed into us. For this reason, I am deeply concerned that the saints in all the churches have the proper experiences of Christ.

Even if we are like the twelve precious stones on the breastplate—transformed, transparent, and inscribed—we still are not complete or perfect. Therefore, we need to humble ourselves and say, "Lord Jesus, we are not yet complete. Because we are still imperfect, Lord, we need You to be our addition and completion. Lord, as an individual member of the church, I need You. Not only so, Lord, the whole church needs You. Even if as the church we are rich in experiencing You, we are yet missing something of You. Lord, we still need You to be added to us."

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-NINE

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(14)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8-10; Ezra 2:63; 1 Sam. 23:6, 9-12; 28:6

In the foregoing messages we pointed out that the Urim is a type of Christ as the illuminator burning with oil, the Spirit, by fire from the altar, the cross. We have also seen that the Thummim typifies Christ as the perfecter. As the Thummim, Christ is the alphabet for inscription and completion. Many Christians today do not have Christ inscribed into them in a clear, definite way. But even if we have the definite experience of Christ and the clear inscription of Christ, we still are not complete. Therefore, we need Christ to be added to us to be our completion. In this message we shall go further to see today's application of the Urim and the Thummim.

TODAY'S APPLICATION

The twelve transparent stones in the breastplate indicate that the saints should be transparent in order for Christ to shine through them so that God's will may be shown. Suppose the twelve stones on the breastplate had been opaque instead of transparent. Furthermore, suppose nothing had been inscribed on any of the stones and no light was shining. Then the stones would have been opaque, without inscription, and without the shining of light. In such a case it would be impossible to use the breastplate to find out God's will, God's leading. This is the situation in most Christian groups today. There is no transparency, inscription, or light. It is very possible that this may be the situation of some local churches.

Many years ago in mainland China I visited some so-called churches. It seemed to me that everyone in these groups was opaque, altogether lacking in transformation and transparency. Furthermore, little of Christ had been inscribed into the saints. It seemed they had Christ in name, but they were very short of the experience of Christ. Moreover, there was no light among them. What they needed was a very basic, elementary kind of help. God's will could not be made known through them.

If you consider the condition of the majority of Christians today according to what we have covered in these messages, you will realize that in most cases with the believers there is opaqueness instead of transparency. There is virtually nothing of the inscription of Christ. Instead of the shining of light, there is darkness.

If as a local church we would be used by God as a breastplate, we all must be transparent, and we must have Christ inscribed into us. This means that we must have some definite experiences of Christ as the letters in God's spiritual alphabet. Our experience of Christ must not be vague. Rather, it should be clear and definite. However, the situation among most Christians, including us, is very different from this.

If we have been enlightened by the Lord and if we are bearing the burden of the Lord's interests, we shall be troubled by the situation among God's people. The more we consider the situation and condition of both the saints and the churches, the more burdened we shall be. We shall be deeply concerned about the lack of transparency, the lack of inscribing, and the shortage of light.

RECEIVING THE LORD'S LEADING CONCERNING THE CHURCH

Today's application of the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim also requires that the leading ones bear the saints and Christ on their hearts so that they may know the condition of the saints and the completion of Christ for God's leading. In every local church there should be a group

of leading ones who bear the saints and Christ on their heart. These leading ones need to see the Lord's shining and read the saints. Then they will be able to receive God's leading concerning the church in their locality.

GOD'S WAY OF SPEAKING

God's way of speaking through the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim is the opposite of what we would expect. God speaks not through the stones that are shining, but through stones that become dark. This means that God speaks through negative situations. Normally the twelve stones in the breastplate were under the shining of the Urim. Suddenly a piece inscribed with a certain name would become dark. This darkening of a particular stone was God's instant speaking. Our natural concept would be that God's speaking through the breastplate came from the stones that were shining. Actually, He spoke through the stones that suddenly became dark.

Paul's Epistles and also the seven epistles of the Lord Jesus to the seven churches in Asia were all written according to this principle. They were written according to the negative situation of the churches, not according to the positive things found in the churches. Take, for example, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. If there were no negative things found in the church in Corinth, I doubt that 1 Corinthians would have been written. Paul wrote this Epistle according to his reading of the negative situation at Corinth. By considering that situation, he knew what to write. But although his writing was based on the negative things, in this Epistle he ministered positive things—the riches of Christ—to the church.

The problem among Christians today is that because there is so much darkness, there is no way for God to expose darkness. When everything is in darkness, it is difficult to point out a particular matter that is in darkness. Suppose in a room there are many rows of lights on the ceiling. If all the lights are shining, it will be easy to find one that becomes dark. This illustrates how God spoke through the

breastplate. The darkening of a particular stone was God's instant speaking.

The situation of Christians today is abnormal. Instead of light, there is darkness. As a result, God has hardly any way to speak. In order for the darkness to be made known, there must first be the shining of light. If there is no light in a room, there is no way for darkness to be shown. But when all the lights are shining, it immediately becomes apparent when a certain light becomes dark. That darkness is an indicator that something is wrong. If in a certain church things that are wrong are easily found out, that church is normal. But if in a particular church it is not possible to find out what is wrong, this is an indication that the church there is in darkness. When darkness prevails, it is not possible for negative matters to be exposed. For this, light is necessary. What is exposed under the shining of the light is God's speaking. God speaks through things becoming negative. This kind of negative situation is an indicator of the shortage of Christ. By reading the negative situations in this way, we come to know God's leading. Then in our locality we shall know what God wants us to do, and we should then follow His leading.

JUDGMENT AND SUPPLY

The leading obtained through the breastplate always involves a judgment. This means that the Lord's speaking through the breastplate is through negative situations. If this speaking were only through positive situations, there would be no need of judgment, for everything would be positive and justified. But because the Lord's speaking is through negative situations, that speaking is a judgment.

The Apostle Paul was one who was truly shining. Under the shining of Paul, the darkness was exposed. Paul wrote certain of his Epistles according to the darkness, according to the negative condition, of the saints in the churches. Because Paul saw certain dark areas in the church in Corinth, areas that were letters of God's judgment, Paul could write Corinthians as a book of judgment. But along with all the

judgment contained in this Epistle, there are many positive things: the riches of Christ ministered to the believers at Corinth. This is God's way of speaking. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, God's speaking is according to the negative situation, yet with the riches of Christ as the supply for His people.

THE NEED FOR THE ADEQUATE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

If we as the church would be the breastplate of judgment, we must fulfill certain requirements. First, we need to be transformed and transparent. Then Christ as the letters of the spiritual alphabet must be inscribed into us clearly and definitely. This is to have the adequate experience of Christ.

Recently a brother testified that often, when the leading ones speak to new ones or young ones about the experience of Christ, these leading ones realize that they themselves do not have the clear and definite experience of Christ. If we do not try to minister Christ to others, we may not realize how short we are concerning the experience of Christ. When we try to speak to others about the experience of Christ, we may find that we ourselves are still very short of experience. We may have little of the real experience of Christ to minister to others. As those who would shepherd the saints, we need the experience of Christ. Otherwise we shall lack the proper spiritual vocabulary required for ministering Christ. We may want to minister Christ to others, but what experience of Christ do we have? To some extent, we may be able to teach the Bible, for we may have been reading and studying it for years. But when it comes to ministering Christ, we have a shortage. We do not have that much of Christ inscribed into our being. Perhaps we have only part of a letter inscribed into us. This is the situation of many Christians today. Therefore, it is very difficult to know the Lord's leading through the breastplate.

Because there is such a shortage of transformation,

transparency, inscribing, and enlightening, we need to pray that we may become transparent, have more of Christ inscribed into us, and experience more enlightening. Then we shall realize that, even if we are full of Christ, we still have a shortage, for something of Christ's riches is still lacking. This is what is indicated by the marvelous picture of the breastplate with the Urim and the Thummim.

RECOGNIZING OUR NEED FOR MORE EXPERIENCE

With the breastplate and the Urim and the Thummim we see two kinds of alphabets. One kind of alphabet is for inscribing, and the other kind is for completing. If we are not yet full of Christ, what we need is the inscribing. Christ must be inscribed into us until we are full of Him. It is when we are full of Christ that we recognize the need for completion. Thus, if we are not full of Christ, we need Him as the alphabet for inscription. But when we are full of Him, we need Him as the alphabet for our completion. Believers like the Apostle Paul, those who are full of Christ, realize that they still need Christ. However, those who are short of Christ may not sense the need for Christ. Many of today's lukewarm Christians do not have any realization of how much they need Christ. It is when we have Christ inscribed into us that we realize we are still short of Christ. Then we shall seek Him to be our completion.

It surely is a mercy of the Lord we can speak about Christ inscribed into us and Christ completing us. It is not easy to find Christians who speak concerning this. What we need now is more experience. Only through experience can we understand what it is to have Christ inscribed into us and to have Him complete us. Therefore, we all need to pray more regarding these things. I hope that every local church will become a breastplate according to the picture in Exodus 28.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(15)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:31-38; 39:22-26, 30-31; Isa. 6:1; Psa. 133:2; Rev. 1:13; Eph. 1:23

In typology garments signify expression. This is especially true of the priestly garments, garments that were for glory and beauty. Beauty and glory are both for expression. In a foregoing message we pointed out that, humanly speaking, garments are for covering, for warmth, and for beauty. But in the record concerning the priestly garments, the emphasis is on beauty and glory. Beauty is human, and glory is divine. Hence, the priestly garments are the expression of Christ's human beauty and divine glory.

The garments worn by the high priest were unusual. First, there was a tunic, which may have reached the ankles. Over the tunic there was a robe, which reached to the feet, and upon the robe there was the ephod. Upon the ephod there were the breastplate and the two shoulder-pieces. All these garments contain significant aspects of typology regarding Christ with the church.

THE EXPRESSION OF GOD

Christ is the expression of God. The incarnated Christ is the embodiment of God, and this embodiment is an expression. No one has ever seen God, but the Son of God, the only begotten, has manifested Him (John 1:18). This manifestation of God in Christ is God's expression. This means that Christ is the expression of the invisible and mysterious God. As the expression of God, Christ makes God visible and practical. When we contact Christ, we contact the visible, practical God. Now God is no longer only mysterious and invisible; in Christ,

He is practical and visible. Christ as God's expression has made God visible and practical to us.

The expression of God is both individual and corporate. As God's expression, Christ is not only individual, but also corporate. When Christ was on earth, He was the individual expression of God. But after His death and resurrection, this expression became corporate. In the four Gospels we see the individual Christ. But in Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation, Christ is no longer merely individual, for He has become corporate. In the Epistles and Revelation we see the corporate Christ.

THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

In this message we shall consider the robe worn by the high priest. What does this long robe signify in typology? To find the answer, let us turn to Isaiah 6:1: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." According to this verse, Isaiah had a vision of the Lord sitting in the temple. The word "train" here refers to the skirt of the Lord's long robe. Isaiah does not tell us how long this skirt was, but he does say that it filled the temple. No one has ever seen a bride whose wedding garment was so long that it filled the place where the wedding was held. No bride has such a fullness. But because the Lord is so full, His skirt fills the temple, His dwelling place.

What does this long train signify? It signifies the expression of Christ's virtues (see John 12:41). The Lord's fullness is shown in all His virtues. Suppose the Lord was very much lacking in virtue. In that case He would not be expressed by a long garment with the train filling the temple, for He would not have any fullness. If someone were to wear a garment that did not properly cover his body, this would indicate that this person was short of virtue. But if he is properly covered, this shows that he is full of virtue. The Lord is full of virtue. Therefore, when He sits in His dwelling place, His long train fills the temple. This means that the Lord's dwelling place is full of His virtue.

Psalm 133 also refers to the long robe of the high priest. When the divine anointing oil was poured upon Aaron, the high priest, that ointment ran down from the head to the beard and then to the skirts of his garment. Furthermore, in Revelation 1:13, the Lord Jesus has a garment reaching to the feet. This is a sign that the Lord's virtues are so extensive that they become His fullness.

We should never think that the Lord's long robe is devoid of significance. Based upon biblical usage, such a long robe surely signifies the virtues of Christ, and these virtues are His expression. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He expressed God in the divine virtues. If His human living had been short of these virtues, it would not have been possible for Him to express God. God was expressed in Jesus through the divine virtues. As He walked on earth, He walked in a way that was full of virtue. His expression certainly had a long train. For example, when He was in that little cottage in Bethany, His train filled the room. Likewise, when He walked on the streets of Jerusalem, His virtues filled the city. That was the expression of God. Therefore, in the Bible a long garment with a long skirt signifies the fullness of the virtues of the one clothed with that garment.

In this universe what is the fullness of Christ? Ephesians 1:23 says that the church is the fullness of the One who fills all in all. How great Christ is! He is all-inclusive and all-extensive, filling all in all. Because He is so great, inclusive, and extensive, He surely needs a fullness to express what He is. This fullness is the church.

THE EARTH COVERED WITH THE EXPRESSION OF CHRIST'S VIRTUES

Christ's train envelopes the whole earth. First this train was in the heavens. Then it descended to Jerusalem and spread to Antioch, Philippi, Corinth, and Rome. Eventually, it spread to Asia and then to the western hemisphere. Now the long train of Christ is wrapping the globe. Compared to this train, the earth is very small. It is covered by the church. Even though the church has become degraded, it cannot be

denied that nothing is more prosperous and far-reaching in human history than the church.

When I left the mainland of China thirty-three years ago, there were not more than four million Christians in China. Recently I read a newspaper article which says that now in China there are forty million believers. Furthermore, we have learned that in just one county in a certain province there are one hundred forty thousand believers pray-reading and calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. This proves that God is living and that Christ is mighty. Communist countries are known for being atheistic and for restricting the activities of Christians. But after thirty-three years, there are ten times more believers in China today than there were in 1949. This is the stretching, the lengthening, of the long robe of Christ. His train cannot be broken. The more there is persecution of the Christians, the farther His long robe extends.

I have also read that today in Russia the number of those who attend church services is five times the number of those who attend in England. This reminds me of an article I read in 1944. Stalin had asked the United States for aid. President Roosevelt told him that because so many American taxpayers were Christians, Russia would have to open the churches once again before aid could be given. Roosevelt pointed out that his people could not help one who persecutes Christians. Stalin thought that since the churches had been closed for years, there probably were not many Christians left. Therefore, he promised Roosevelt to open the churches. To his great surprise, at Easter, 1944, crowds of Christians gathered into the church buildings for Easter worship.

Christ the Lord is full of divine attributes and human virtues. In history there has never been a person with so many attributes and virtues. Now the expression of His virtues and attributes makes up a long train, a train that covers the whole earth. This train is the church, the fullness of Christ. Praise Him that we all are parts of Christ's long robe!

CHRIST WITH THE CHURCH

The tunic, the long robe, the ephod, the breastplate, and the shoulder-pieces typify Christ with the church. Regarded as a whole, these garments signify Christ expressing God. This is the basic significance of the priestly garments. But on the breastplate were engraved the names of God's redeemed ones. This no doubt signifies the church. Thus, upon the priestly garments we have the breastplate. This means that upon Christ, signified by the garments, we have the church, signified by the breastplate and the two shoulder-pieces. Moreover, the breastplate and the shoulder-pieces were set into the ephod. This indicates that the church is in Christ. Christ has His fullness, and this fullness is the church. The breastplate, the shoulder-pieces, and the long skirt all typify the church.

As we consider the garments worn by the high priest, we see that the most beautiful and precious part is the breastplate and the shoulder-pieces and that the longest part is the skirt. The most precious and beautiful part and the longest part signify the church. If the breastplate and the shoulder-pieces were removed and the skirt were cut off from the high priest's garments, the garments would be without fullness and beauty. This indicates that without the church, Christ's expression would be lacking in fullness and beauty. Today the beauty of Christ and the fullness of Christ are in the church. In other words, the church is Christ's fullness.

The picture of the high priest's garments shows clearly that the beauty and fullness of the garments consist of the breastplate, the shoulder-pieces, and the long skirt. The significance of this is that today Christ's beauty and fullness are in the church. According to our view, the church may be degraded and pitiful. But the Lord has His view of the church. According to His view, the church is lovable. He is not disappointed. What the enemy, Satan, has been doing may be compared to the activities of a naughty boy. One day the Lord Jesus will say, "Satan, is there anything more you can do? If not, go to the lake of fire. Now I shall come in to

clear up the situation." In the eyes of the Lord, the church is wonderful. This is true even today. Hallelujah for the clear picture of Christ with the church portrayed in the garments of the high priest!

The main elements of the high priest's garments are linen, gold, and precious stones. Linen signifies humanity, gold signifies divinity, and precious stones signify transformation. Also, there are various colors: blue signifying heavenliness, purple signifying kingliness, and scarlet signifying redemption. As we consider the garments of the high priest, we truly see a portrait of Christ with the church.

HELD, SUSTAINED, AND JOINED

According to this picture of the priestly garments, Christ holds the church and sustains the church. The breastplate is held by the ephod, and the shoulder-pieces are supported by the ephod. Now we must see that the long skirt signifies the church joined to Christ. From this we receive an impression of where the church is. The church is in Christ, on His breast; the Church is upon Christ, upon His shoulders; and the church is joined to Christ.

The robe is called the robe of the ephod because it was mainly for the ephod. With the ephod we see Christ with the church. Hence, the long robe is for Christ with the church. The basic interpretation of this long robe is that it signifies both the individual and corporate Christ as God's full expression. In this expression we have Christ and also the church joined to Christ.

FEATURES OF THE ROBE

All of Blue

According to 28:31, the long robe of the ephod was all of blue. This indicates that the church is all heavenly. The New Testament gives us this revelation concerning the church. The church is not in heaven, but the church is heavenly. In nature and position the church is not earthly but heavenly. John 3:7 indicates that we have been born from above. This reveals that heaven, not earth, is our source. Therefore,

even though we are on earth, we have been born from above, from heaven, and have a heavenly life with a heavenly nature. Even our position is heavenly.

Its Opening

Exodus 28:32 says, "And there shall be an opening for the head in the middle of it; there shall be a border of woven work around its opening; like the opening of a coat of mail it shall be, that it may not be torn." This verse indicates that the long robe was woven in such a way that it was one whole piece. At the top was an opening woven very strongly, like the opening in a coat of mail used for fighting. The reference to a coat of mail in verse 32 indicates that the priestly service is a warfare (Num. 4:23, margin "to war the warfare"). While we are serving as priests, we are also fighting as warriors. Our robe is a priestly garment, but the opening is like that of a coat of mail. Verse 32 says that the opening was like a coat of mail so that "it may not be torn." This means that something could happen to damage the garment.

Today we are here as a testimony of the Lord. However, we cannot avoid warfare. We do not want to fight, but many times we have been attacked by others. Therefore, our priestly garment must have the kind of opening to indicate that our ministering is a fighting.

Pomegranates and Bells

Verses 33 and 34 say, "And you shall make upon its skirts pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, on its skirts all around; and bells of gold in the middle of them all around: a bell of gold and a pomegranate, a bell of gold and a pomegranate, upon the skirts of the robe all around." Verse 33 speaks of pomegranates and bells, and verse 34, of "a bell of gold and a pomegranate." When the garment was being made, the pomegranates came before the bells. But in function, the bells come before the pomegranates.

As we have pointed out, the skirts are a sign of fullness,

and the fullness of Christ is the church. Therefore, the pomegranates and bells on the skirts must be matters related to the church. The pomegranates and bells were not part of the tunic, which does not signify the church. They were the bottom part of the robe, which does signify the church. This means that we need to consider the pomegranates and the bells as related to the church.

The pomegranates were made of linen signifying humanity, and the bells were made of gold signifying divinity. With the pomegranates we have humanity, and with the bells we have divinity. In the church life we always have humanity and divinity. Humanity is related to the pomegranates, and divinity, to the bells.

If you see a ripe pomegranate with its seeds, you will receive an impression that a pomegranate is full of life. In the Bible pomegranates signify the fullness of life. The church should be full of life in her humanity. This is the significance of pomegranates made of linen.

The church differs from Christ in that Christ never makes mistakes, but the church does make mistakes. You and I often make mistakes, especially when we act too hastily. For this reason, we need the golden bells to warn us not to walk too fast or carelessly. Fullness of life is expressed in the church's humanity, but the voice of warning is expressed in the church's divinity, as signified by the golden bells. The proper speaking of the church always comes from her divinity. If in the church we speak from ourselves, that is pitiful. We all need to learn to be little bells uttering a sound that has its source in divinity, not humanity. Such a sound is pleasant and gentle, for it comes not from a steel bell but from a golden one. What the church needs is not a few large bells, but a great many small ones.

I can testify that throughout the years in the church life, I have been warned a number of times by the speaking of young brothers and sisters. Sometimes they stand up and speak something in the meeting that is a warning to me. It seems that I hear the sounding of a little golden bell warning me not to walk carelessly. This is a description of a

particular aspect of the church life: the church speaking out of divinity, based upon the fullness of life in humanity.

When we all express the fullness of Christ as life in our humanity, there will be among us many golden bells. Then there will be God's speaking, God's voice expressed through the divinity of the church. In each of us there is a certain amount of divinity. From this element of divinity a sound comes out in a small scale, like the ringing of a little bell. First we have the expression of the fullness of life and then the sounding of the golden bells, that is, the speaking from the divinity of the church. The church has humanity for the expression of the fullness of life and also divinity for the sounding of the golden bells. First we have the fullness of life, the pomegranates. Out from this we have the sounding of the bells. However, it is difficult to tell which comes first, the sounding of the bells or the expression of the fullness of life. Both are in the church as the long train of Christ.

In the local churches we have pomegranates and bells. However, if you visit the degraded part of Christianity, you may not find any pomegranates or bells. No matter what you may say or how you may walk, you may not hear any warning sounds. But in the churches there are many voices of warning, voices that come from the fullness of life.

In the church we are not under human control. Certainly no one is controlling the way we think. I can testify that I do not control the elders in Anaheim and that they do not control me. However, we all are controlled by the pomegranates and the bells. The proper church life is full of the expression of life in the pomegranates and of the warning from the sounding of the golden bells. Do you know what are the signs of the proper church life? The signs are the pomegranates and bells.

According to 28:34, the pomegranates and the bells were placed alternately, a bell and a pomegranate. This indicates that the divine voice is interrelated with the divine life. God did not command Moses to have only bells on the skirts of the robe. If in the church life we have bells without pomegranates, there will be gossip and criticism, not the ringing of

golden bells. But if pomegranates are placed alternately with bells, gossip and criticism will disappear, and instead there will be a proper, divine sound.

In order for pomegranates to be placed alternately with bells in the church life, we need to grow in life and eventually blossom in life. Then we shall become pomegranates. Instead of gossiping, we shall give forth a divine sound. Furthermore, this growth in life will influence others and cause gossip and criticism to be replaced by the proper sounding of little golden bells. If this is the experience of a certain brother, he may come to the meeting to testify of how he has been dealt with by the Lord in a particular matter. Through his speaking others may be warned, for they shall hear the sound of golden bells placed alternately with pomegranates.

If the church is proper and is truly Christ's fullness, His train, then on the skirt there will be pomegranates and bells. In the church there will be the expression of life and the divine sounding. I have learned these things through experience and observation in the church life.

Only by experience can we understand the significance of the typology of the long robe with pomegranates and bells. First we see that the pomegranates and bells are attached to the skirts of the long robe. This indicates that they are related to the church life. Furthermore, the pomegranates signify the fullness of life, and the bells are for sounding. But the sounding is not from a human source; it is from a divine source, even divinity, as indicated by the fact that the bells are golden. Whatever we speak in the church must be of divine origin, of the divine source. At the same time, we need the fullness of life expressed in linen, in humanity. Therefore, in the church we have the beauty of life expressed in our humanity and the divine sounding from the golden bells. These are signs of the proper church life.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-ONE

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(16)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:36-43; 39:27-31

Thus far we have covered certain garments worn only by the high priest: the ephod, the shoulder-pieces, the breastplate, and the long robe with the pomegranates and golden bells. The breastplate and shoulder-pieces were attached to the ephod, and the ephod was upon the robe. Underneath the long robe was the tunic, which was the same as that worn by the other priests.

FIVE OTHER ITEMS

Exodus 28:36 says, "And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engravings of a signet, Holy to Jehovah." Exodus 39:30 refers to this plate as being "the plate of the holy crown of pure gold." Leviticus 8:9 also speaks of "the golden plate, the holy crown." The Hebrew word rendered plate in 28:36 can also be translated blossom. This plate is a blossom, and the blossom is a holy crown. This plate, this crown, was placed upon the turban (28:37).

The turban worn by the high priest was a kind of headgear or headtire. On his head the high priest wore this particular head covering made of linen. The plate of pure gold was upon the turban, the linen head covering. Therefore, the plate and the turban go together.

According to 28:40, tunics were made for Aaron and his sons. This indicates that the tunics were worn by the high priest and also by the other priests. The tunic was a long coat or robe, probably a little shorter than the robe worn by the high priest. For the high priest, this tunic was an inner

robe. But for the other priests, it was an outer robe, since they did not wear the long robe over the tunic.

Verses 39 and 40 also indicate that the high priest and the other priests wore girdles. Verse 39 speaks of "a girdle, the work of an embroiderer." Verse 40 says that girdles were to be made for Aaron's sons. Verses 42 and 43 speak of the linen breeches worn by Aaron and his sons: "And you shall make for them linen breeches to cover the naked flesh; from the loins even to the thighs they shall be. And they shall be upon Aaron and upon his sons when they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near to the altar to minister in the holy place, that they may not bear iniquity and die. It shall be a statute forever for him and for his seed after him." These linen breeches were trousers, short pants, reaching down to the knee, so that they covered the naked flesh from the loins to the thighs. Therefore, they signify Christ covering the nakedness of the fallen flesh. The fact that these linen breeches were to be upon the priests whenever they functioned indicates that we need Christ to cover us whenever we function as priests.

In 28:36-43 we have five items: the plate, the turban, the tunic, the girdle, and the breeches. Only the high priest wore the plate of gold, but all the priests wore turbans, tunics, girdles, and breeches. The high priest wore a tunic, the long robe with pomegranates and bells, the ephod, the shoulder-pieces, the breastplate, and the crown. All the other priests wore a tunic, a turban, a girdle, and breeches. In foregoing messages, we have considered the significance of the ephod, the shoulder-pieces, the breastplate, and the long robe with the pomegranates and golden bells. We have yet to see the significance of the golden plate on the linen turban. Furthermore, we need to know the significance of the clothing worn by all the priests—the linen turban, the tunic, the girdle, and the breeches.

HOLINESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

If we would understand the significance of the various aspects of the priestly garments, we need to see the

principle that all these garments are for expression. They are signs, symbols, expressions. As we carefully read the account of the priestly garments and study this account, we see that these garments are signs. Not only are they for beauty and glory, but they signify, express, symbolize, something. Furthermore, it is important to realize that 28:36-43 is the final word concerning the priestly garments. Usually a concluding word gives us the exact meaning of a certain thing. When we first begin to talk about something, our word may be somewhat unclear. But our concluding word makes the matter very clear. This principle also applies to the description of the priestly garments in Exodus.

The conclusion of the record of the priestly garments involves holiness and righteousness. Holiness is clearly signified in the golden plate with the inscription "Holy unto Jehovah." Suppose a high priest clothed in all his garments were standing in front of you. You would see the long robe, the ephod, the shoulder-pieces, the breastplate, and the turban. Upon the turban would be a golden plate engraved with "Holy unto Jehovah." Surely you would be impressed with the matter of holiness. Holiness was the mark of the high priest's garments, and was even branded on the golden plate. Thus, the full view of the high priestly garments signifies the holiness of God.

Second, the turban, the tunic, the girdle, and the breeches were all made of linen. According to the typology in the Bible, linen signifies righteousness. For example, Revelation 19:8 says that the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints. Therefore, the golden plate is a sign of holiness, and the turban, the tunic, the girdle, and the breeches, all made of linen, are a sign of righteousness.

As we consider the garments worn by the high priest, we see gold in the shoulder-pieces, in the breastplate, and on the head plate. Gold is the main element of both the shoulder-pieces and the breastplate. But even more significant, the head plate was made entirely of gold. Another primary element of the priestly garments was linen. As we

have pointed out, gold signifies divinity, and linen signifies humanity. With divinity we receive an impression of holiness, and with humanity, an impression of righteousness. Holiness is not a matter of sinless perfection. Rather, holiness is the divine nature. Divinity in nature is holy. Therefore, holiness is always related to divinity. Righteousness, however, is a virtue of humanity. The most important human virtue, the virtue that includes all others, is righteousness. If you are not a righteous person, you do not have any other virtues. But if you are righteous, your righteousness will include other virtues. Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, holiness and righteousness are emphasized.

The Lord Jesus Christ has two natures, divinity and humanity. We who believe in Him also have two natures, the human nature and the divine nature. Both we and the Lord Jesus possess the divine nature for holiness and the human nature for righteousness. Therefore, we are both holy and righteous, both divine and human. Holiness is the main divine attribute, and righteousness is the main human virtue. In Ephesians 4:24 Paul says that the new man, the church, is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. On the one hand, we are holy in the divine nature; on the other hand, we must be righteous in our humanity.

NORMAL AND PROPER PERSONS

Having covered the matters of holiness and righteousness, we must go on to speak concerning the priests themselves. Priests are the most normal and proper persons. If as a human being you are not a priest serving God, you are not normal. A proper human being is one who is a priest, one who serves God. If a lawyer or a professor does not serve God, he is not a proper person. If we are not priests serving God, we are abnormal. You may think that you are very good, even excellent. But no matter how good we may be, we are improper and abnormal if we are not priests. Praise the Lord that we can declare that we are

priests serving God! This means that we are normal, proper persons.

In order to be priests, we must be holy and righteous. This means that we should have the virtues of holiness toward God and righteousness toward men. This holiness and righteousness are signified by the priestly garments. We need to ask ourselves what kind of garments we are wearing. If we are priests, those who are normal and proper, we are wearing holiness and righteousness as our garments. Our priestly garments are holiness and righteousness.

The concluding word on the section concerning the priestly garments is that the garments of the priests are the expression of holiness and righteousness. This is the significance of the priestly garments, and this is the expression of a proper and normal person, one who is a priest serving God. A priest always wears holiness and righteousness as his garments, holiness in the divine nature and righteousness in humanity.

THE GOLDEN PLATE

Let us now consider in more detail the plate upon the turban, the tunic, the turban, the girdle, and the breeches. The golden plate was a holy crown, diadem, or blossom. This plate was of pure gold; that is, it was of the pure divine nature. The engraving "Holy to Jehovah" indicates that the entire priesthood is sanctified unto the Lord. Hence, the priestly garments signify holiness in the divine nature. The priests were separated unto the Lord from everything other than God. This is the meaning of the inscription "Holy to Jehovah." As we have pointed out, this holiness is the expression of the divine nature. However, because they are lacking in revelation, many Christians have a different understanding of holiness, an understanding that is far from scriptural.

Verse 37 says, "And you shall put it on a ribbon of blue, and it shall be upon the turban; at the front of the turban it shall be." The fact that the plate of gold was put on a ribbon of blue indicates that it was held by heavenly strength. A

heavenly strength holds the plate to the turban. This indicates that genuine holiness is related to heavenliness. Anything that is earthly is not holy. But if something is holy, it must be heavenly, for holiness is associated with heavenliness.

Verse 37 tells us that the plate of pure gold was put at the front of the turban. This signifies a declaration. The golden plate on the turban worn by the high priest declared that he was holy unto the Lord. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, there was upon His forehead a declaration to all the angels, demons, and the entire universe that He is holy unto God. This is also true of Him in the heavens today. The words "Holy to Jehovah" are His brand, His declaration. His entire being declares that He is holy unto God.

FOUR DEGREES OF HOLINESS

Verse 38 says, "And it shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel shall sanctify for all their holy gifts; and it shall be on his forehead continually that they may be accepted before Jehovah." This verse indicates that Aaron bore the responsibility of sanctifying the holy gifts of the sons of Israel that they might be accepted before the Lord. This is difficult to understand.

All the children of Israel labored on the good land and eventually harvested some produce. The top tenth of that produce was brought to the feasts and offered to God as holy gifts. Verse 38 speaks of holy gifts, not of holy offerings or sacrifices. A sacrifice involved redemption or the remission of sin. Sacrifices were offered to God for the remission of sin. But with gifts the remission of sin is not involved. For example, if someone gives you a gift, this does not mean that he has offended you and wants to give you something in order to be forgiven. No, a gift is for fellowship; it is a sign of an intimate relationship.

During the feasts, the children of Israel did offer sin offerings and trespass offerings. But of the five main offerings, only these two were related to redemption or the

remission of sin. The other three main offerings—the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering—were for fellowship with God. The peace offering was related to making peace with God, the meal offering was to be enjoyed with God and eaten with Him, and the burnt offering was for full communion, full fellowship, with God. The term "holy gifts" signifies peace with God, fellowship with God, and enjoyment with God. At the time of the feasts, the children of Israel brought the top produce of the land to offer to God so that they could be at peace with Him, have enjoyment with Him, and have communion with Him. These were the holy gifts.

A portion of the holy gifts offered to God was separated for God Himself to enjoy, and the remainder was for the people's enjoyment. First, the people labored on the good land and reaped the harvest. Then they brought the top tenth of the produce to the feast and offered this to God to make peace, to have enjoyment with God, and to have fellowship with Him. Part of what was offered to God was separated to Him; the rest was for the people. That part which was separated for God had to be kept entirely for Him. It was not to be used by anyone with the exception of certain parts designated for the priests. Only the priests had the right to enjoy this portion. This ordinance, this regulation, was to be strictly observed. It was Aaron's responsibility as the high priest to take care of this matter. If that portion which was separated unto God was touched by anyone who was not a priest, that would have been a serious transgression. It would have been a great offense in the sight of God, and the high priest was to bear the iniquity of it.

Now we can understand more clearly the meaning of the words "Holy unto Jehovah." Here we have a fourfold holiness. First, the people labored on the holy land. Second, as a result of their labor, they harvested the holy produce. Third, a tithe of this holy produce was offered to God. This means that the tithe was also holy. Fourth, a portion of the top tenth was separated absolutely unto God—it was holy unto

Him. Those who did not serve God as priests were not allowed to touch it. Some of this was burnt on the altar and offered to God for His satisfaction; the rest was for the enjoyment of the priests. Those who were not priests could not enjoy this portion, for it was altogether for the Lord. This is absolute holiness, and this is the meaning of "Holy unto Jehovah."

Do you see these four stages of holiness? These stages include the holy land, the holy produce, the holy tithe, and the holy portion separated to God and to His priests. That part was most holy. Hence, we go from the first degree of holiness, the land, to the second, the holy produce; from the second to the third, the holy tenth; and from the third to the fourth, the portion separated to the Lord. The high priest was to bear the responsibility for that most holy portion. That part was absolutely for God and His priests. Anyone else who touched it transgressed the ordinance of God's holiness. Aaron was charged by God to be responsible for such transgression. This means that the high priest was to keep that holy part absolutely for the Lord. For this reason, he wore a golden plate that declared "Holy unto Jehovah."

As those who believe in Christ, we all are saints, holy ones. However, we need to ask ourselves in which stage, or degree, of holiness we are. Are you holy in the first stage, or are you holy in the second, third, or fourth stage? Do you have fourfold holiness, or do you have onefold, twofold, or threefold holiness? Can your holiness be compared to the holy land, the holy produce, or the holy gifts? We have seen that the holy gifts were set apart to be offered to God during the feasts. At the time of the feasts, God's people enjoyed these holy gifts. From these gifts the top portion was set aside for God and His priests. Not even all the Levites could share in these holy offerings. As we consider these degrees of holiness, we need to realize where we are today. Yes, we are saints. But are we saints in the holy land? with the holy produce? with the holy gifts? or with the top portion of the holy gifts separated absolutely for God? These holy gifts are fully under the responsibility of

Christ, our High Priest. There must be such a top portion of holiness for God's enjoyment.

As our High Priest, Christ bears a heavy responsibility. He is responsible to take care of the highest degree of holiness. We have seen that the priestly garments first signify holiness in the divine nature. Now this holiness needs to come to the highest degree; that is, it must progress from the holy land, the holy produce, and the holy gifts to the topmost holy offering. This is the highest holiness taken care of by Christ. Thus, He wears a plate that declares "Holy unto Jehovah." He bears the responsibility to make us all holy not only in the first, second, and third steps, but also in the fourth step. He bears the responsibility to bring us into a fourfold holiness.

THE TUNIC, THE GIRDLE, AND THE TURBAN

Exodus 28:39 says, "And you shall weave the tunic of fine linen; and you shall make a turban of fine linen; and you shall make a girdle, the work of an embroiderer." Here we have the tunic, the turban, and the girdle. The tunic of fine linen of woven work signifies the covering of perfect righteousness in a humanity that has been dealt with. The turban of fine linen signifies the glory of perfect righteousness. The girdle of the work of an embroiderer signifies the strengthening of the Spirit's constituting work.

Verses 40 through 43 speak of the garments of the priests. Verses 40 and 41 say, "And for Aaron's sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make girdles for them; and turbans you shall make for them, for glory and for beauty. And you shall clothe Aaron your brother with them, and his sons with him; and you shall anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, and they shall serve as priests to Me." The tunics signify Christ experienced as beauty; the girdles, Christ experienced as strengthening; and the turbans, Christ expressed as glory.

COVERED BY CHRIST AS RIGHTEOUSNESS

Verse 42 says concerning Aaron's sons, "And you shall make for them linen breeches to cover the naked flesh;

from the loins even to the thighs they shall be." This verse speaks of the naked flesh, in particular that part of the body from the loins to the thighs. This may be regarded as the most unclean part of the human body. The words "naked flesh" here denote fallen, sinful, unclean human beings. As sinners, we were naked flesh. The word naked should remind us of the experience of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. After they sinned, they saw their naked flesh. Realizing they were naked, "they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Gen. 3:7). But God came in to make other coverings for them: "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). According to the Bible, naked flesh denotes human beings who have become sinful in the sight of God.

The turban, the tunic, the girdle, and the breeches are all related to covering the fallen being of a priest. The turban covers his head, and the tunic covers his entire body. The girdle serves to strengthen this covering. Even though the tunic covered the loins and the thighs, the breeches served as a double covering for this part of the body. The shoulders and the chest do not need this double covering. But because the area from the loins to the thighs is so unclean, it needs to be covered in a double way. These linen coverings signify Christ as our righteousness to cover our entire fallen being so that we may be priests. A priest is a person entirely covered by Christ as his righteousness.

Paul's aspiration was to be found always in Christ, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God, based on faith (Phil. 3:9). Paul did not want to be found in anything other than Christ as his righteousness. Christ was Paul's turban, tunic, girdle, and breeches. Christ covered the most unclean part of his fallen being.

Verse 43 says, "And they shall be upon Aaron and upon his sons when they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near to the altar to minister in the holy place, that

they may not bear iniquity and die. It shall be a statute forever for him and for his seed after him." If a priest was not properly clothed, he would bear iniquity and die. Not having the proper clothing brings in death. The priesthood, therefore, must always be maintained in the sphere of life. We must stay away from the realm of death and be preserved in an atmosphere of life. Whenever we are not fully covered with Christ, we bring in death.

As fallen human beings, we need to be covered. Naked flesh signifies that we need Christ as righteousness to cover us. I do not agree with the religious practice of ministers and pastors wearing long robes. But in a spiritual sense I agree with having our entire being covered with Christ. A priest is fully covered by Christ and with Christ. Christ is his turban, tunic, girdle, and breeches. Christ is everything we need to cover our whole being.

Furthermore, the Christ who covers us should also be our High Priest, our mark, our brand, and our declaration that we are holy unto the Lord. In our experience, He should also be the One bearing the responsibility to make us holy in a fourfold way and to preserve us in holiness, untouched by anything other than God. With such a holiness in divinity and righteousness in humanity, we have the proper expression of a person living before God and serving Him. We all should be such persons. We all should be priests clothed with holiness and righteousness.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO

THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

(17)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 28:36-43; 39:27-31

Speaking of the plate of pure gold engraved with the words "Holy to Jehovah," Exodus 28:38 says, "And it shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel shall sanctify for all their holy gifts; and it shall be on his forehead continually that they may be accepted before Jehovah." If we understand this verse properly, we shall see that, in type, it indicates that Christ takes the responsibility to make us holy and to guard for God the holiness that is in us.

Christ is guarding, protecting, caring for, the holiness that God has gained among us. As we have pointed out, this involves a fourfold holiness, a series of four steps in which we become more and more holy. We may be in the holy land producing a holy harvest. However, our experience of holiness may not be very definite. Thus, we may not understand much about setting aside the tithe, the top portion, of the holy produce. It is not easy to understand fully what is this top tenth that is set aside for God. It is even more difficult to explain what is that portion of the tithe that is separated to be absolutely for God and His priests. We can speak concerning these matters, but it is not easy to describe them from the standpoint of our experience, because our experience is limited. We know that, according to typology, Christ, our High Priest today, is safeguarding the holiness God has among us. But it is difficult to go further to explain how we may have in our experience a higher and higher degree of holiness.

CONCEPTS OF HOLINESS

Throughout the centuries, various Christian teachings have been formed into systems of theology. The understanding of many believers is fully occupied with the concepts of systematic theology. As a result, there is no room in them for the proper understanding of divine things. This is true in particular with respect to the subject of holiness.

From my youth I have been studying the matter of holiness. Even in the classical Chinese writings a word is used for holiness, and Confucius is called a saint. According to the traditional Chinese understanding, to be holy is simply to be upright; it is to be right with others in every way. Certain learned Chinese used to say that it is possible even for a saint like Confucius to be wrong. This indicates that their understanding of holiness is related to uprightness. When those with this understanding of holiness read the words holy or holiness in the Bible, they spontaneously have the thought of being upright. Eventually, I began to question whether this is what the Bible means by holiness.

Certain denominations emphasize a particular concept of holiness. These groups include the Church of the Nazarene, the Church of God, and some Pentecostal groups. They are the so-called holiness churches and follow regulations concerning such things as clothing, hair style, and behavior. According to their understanding, believers are holy if they follow these regulations.

Another concept of holiness is related to what is called sinless perfection. John Wesley and those with him developed certain methods to control their behavior, and they taught that holiness was a matter of sinless perfection. But the Brethren, who were raised up about one hundred sixty years ago, pointed out that in the Bible holiness does not mean sinless perfection. They pointed out that the Greek word for holiness denotes something separated to God. They referred to the Lord's word in Matthew 23:17 and 19 concerning the temple sanctifying the gold and the altar sanctifying the gift. They showed that this was to make the gold holy in position by changing its position from a

common place to a holy one. Likewise, the gift was made holy in position because its location was changed from a common place to a holy one. They went on to argue that sanctification has nothing to do with sin. How can gold commit sin? Likewise, a sheep, an ox, or a bird presented on the altar and sanctified cannot sin. Therefore, these Brethren teachers concluded, holiness is not a matter of sinlessness, but is a matter of separation. The gold in the market is common, secular. But the gold in the temple is separated, holy. Likewise, cattle in the flock are common, but those offered on the altar are holy. Realizing that this teaching concerning holiness is scriptural, I accepted it. However, in my reading of the New Testament I came to see that holiness involves more than separation. For example, 2 Thessalonians 2:13 speaks of sanctification of the Spirit. Hebrews 12:10 says that God disciplines us so that we may partake of His holiness. Verses such as these certainly indicate something deeper than mere positional separation. Furthermore, Romans 6:22 speaks of "fruit unto sanctification." This is another indication that holiness, or sanctification, involves something deeper than positional separation.

TWO ASPECTS OF SANCTIFICATION

Concerning the proper understanding of holiness, I have been helped by the writings of Brother Nee. More than fifty years ago, I read a booklet of his in which he says that righteousness is God's way of doing things, holiness is God's nature, and love is God's heart. That word concerning holiness being God's nature led me into a new field of exploration in the Word. During the past fifty years, I have been exploring the biblical field of holiness.

Now I see that holiness, sanctification, has both a positional and a dispositional aspect. The Brethren emphasized positional sanctification as illustrated by the gold in the temple and the gift on the altar. In this kind of sanctification, neither the gold nor the gift is changed in nature; it is changed only in position. The Brethren, however, did not

see the dispositional aspect of sanctification, the sanctification that takes place in our disposition, in our being. According to the Bible, sanctification is a matter both of position and of disposition. Hence, we need positional sanctification and dispositional sanctification as well.

The books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians are concerned with a holy life for the church life. In 1 Thessalonians 3:13 Paul says, "That He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." What does it mean for our hearts to be established blameless in holiness? When we read these words in 1 Thessalonians, we may take them for granted and assume that we understand them. We should not take for granted that we understand this matter. Surely for our hearts to be established blameless in holiness involves dispositional sanctification. It is not merely positional separation or sinless perfection.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:3 Paul says that the will of God is our sanctification, and in verse 7, that God has called us in sanctification. This is the continuation of his word regarding sanctification in 1 Thessalonians 3. At the end of 1 Thessalonians, in chapter five, verse 23, Paul says, "And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Certainly this is a further development of holiness or sanctification.

THE OPERATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD AND ITS RESULTS

First Peter 1:2 says, "According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Here we have the foreknowledge of the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. This verse raises a significant doctrinal question: How can the sanctification by the Spirit come before the sprinkling of the blood of Christ? Theologically speaking, the

sprinkling of the blood must precede the sanctification of the Spirit. But in this verse the order is reversed. According to the first chapter of 1 Peter, the blood of Christ redeems us not from sin, but from our vain manner of life received by tradition (v. 18).

Recently, as I have been considering 1 Peter 1, I have seen that this chapter is concerned with the operation of the Triune God on His elect for their participation in His full salvation. In 1 Peter 1:2 we see the Triune God, for this verse speaks of the election of the Father, according to His foreknowledge, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the sprinkling by the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the operation of the Triune God.

Beginning with verse 3 and continuing through verse 12, Peter gives a long blessing, a well-speaking regarding the Father who has regenerated us to a living hope. Here we have the operation of the Father. This chapter goes on to speak of the blood of Jesus Christ redeeming us. This is the operation of the Son. Furthermore, this chapter speaks of being purified through the Spirit (v. 22). This is the operation of the Spirit. Redemption and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ are applied to us by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, according to 1 Peter 1:12, the gospel is preached through the Spirit. Therefore, in this chapter we surely see the Triune God operating on His elect, His chosen people, so that they may participate in His full salvation.

This operation of the Triune God revealed in 1 Peter 1 has a twofold result. First, it results in a holy life. Verse 15 says, "But according to the Holy One who called you, you yourselves also become holy . . . ." This is sanctification. This is related to the purification of our souls. "Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth unto unfeigned brotherly love, love one another from the heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22). The purification of our souls involves the sanctification of our being. This is the first result of the operation of the Triune God on His elect. The second result, a further issue, is unfeigned love of the brothers. Therefore, the result of the operation of the Triune God for our

participation in His salvation is that we live a holy life and love the brothers.

GOD WROUGHT INTO US

Now we can give a definition of holiness. Holiness is God wrought into us. We have seen that holiness refers to the nature of God. Thus, holiness is a matter of having the divine nature wrought into our being to make us divine. When we become divine in this way, we are holy. God alone is holy. Everything else is common. Since only God is holy, for us to become holy requires that God be wrought into us. Therefore, holiness is the Triune God wrought into our being.

HOLINESS IN DIVINITY, RIGHTEOUSNESS IN HUMANITY

We have pointed out that the concluding word regarding the priestly garments in Exodus is related to holiness and righteousness. The plate of pure gold on the turban worn by the high priest was inscribed with the words "Holy unto Jehovah." This declaration, this brand, was on the forehead of the high priest. It was on the golden plate worn as a crown, a blossom, and therefore we may say that holiness was exalted. That holiness is exalted as a crown indicates that holiness in divinity is exalted for glory. Furthermore, the high priest was covered with linen—with a linen turban, a linen tunic, a linen girdle, and linen breeches. This linen covering of the high priest signifies righteousness. Righteousness, which is related to humanity, is expressed as beauty. Holiness in divinity is exalted as glory, and righteousness in humanity is expressed for beauty. Therefore, today holiness is our glory, and righteousness is our beauty.

ABSOLUTE HOLINESS

As our high priest, Christ is working to bring us all the way from the first stage of holiness to the fourth stage. God treasures this holiness, and Christ is guarding it.

In the Old Testament God gave the good land, the holy

land, to His people. He charged them to labor on the land in order to have the harvest, the holy produce. God also required that the top portion of this produce be brought to His dwelling and offered to Him on the altar. Furthermore, from this top portion offered as a gift, God required that a certain part be separated absolutely for Himself. Particular parts of the offerings were for God. These were regarded not as sacrifices but as holy gifts. The sin offering and the trespass offering were sacrifices, but the meal offering, the peace offering, and the burnt offering were gifts, holy gifts offered to God. Of these gifts offered to Him, God kept part for Himself, and the remainder was for the priests. According to Exodus 28:38, the high priest was required to bear the iniquity of this part. This means that if anyone who was not qualified partook of it, Aaron was held responsible. This indicates that the high priest guarded the holiness that was in the fourth stage. God treasures the holiness that is absolutely for Himself, and Christ is working to safeguard it.

The holy land is indeed holy, but it is not absolutely holy. Likewise, the produce of the holy land and the top portion of the produce were for God, but they were not for God in an absolute way. Only that part of the top portion that was set apart fully for God was absolutely for Him. Because God treasures this, He charges Christ to guard and protect it. This means that Christ as the High Priest is safeguarding a portion of holiness for God's satisfaction.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-THREE

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:1-14; 40:12-15; Lev. 8:1-9, 12-17

In this message we come to another section of the book of Exodus. We have covered the tabernacle with its furnishings and also the priestly garments. When God's people were gathered at Mount Sinai, Moses received the revelation of the pattern of the tabernacle and the design of the furniture of the tabernacle. The children of Israel were to build a house, a sanctuary, for the Lord to dwell among them and for His people to serve Him. Following this, the book of Exodus records a description of the priestly garments.

In the Bible garments signify our living, behavior, conduct, and character. This indicates that, concerning the priests, God's serving ones, Exodus first takes care of their outward conduct signified by the priestly garments. Now in chapter twenty-nine we have a section dealing with the sanctification of Aaron and his sons to be priests.

FILLING OUR EMPTY HANDS

Those who read Exodus 29 can easily be impressed with what is often called the consecration of the priests. Apparently this chapter is concerned with consecration, for here we see that the priests and their garments have been made ready and need to be consecrated. Some versions use the word ordination instead of consecration. This translation of the Bible is based on the traditional, religious practice of ordination. Actually, there is no ground for this translation. Verse 9 says, "And you

shall gird them with a girdle, Aaron and his sons, and bind caps on them; and the priesthood shall be theirs for an eternal statute; and you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons." The Hebrew word rendered consecrate literally means "fill their hand." Neither the word consecrate nor the word ordain is accurate. Therefore, I prefer not to use the word consecrate in verse 9. What this verse talks about is the filling of the priests' hands. Because their hands were empty, they needed their hands to be filled. This indicates that we cannot serve God empty-handed. If we would serve Him, our hands must be filled with Christ. Thus, to consecrate the priests, to ordain them (if we want to use that word), means the filling of their hands. The hands of those who serve the Lord need to be filled with Christ.

In 29:1 the word sanctify is used: "And this is the thing which you shall do to them to sanctify them to serve as priests to Me: Take one young bull and two rams without blemish." To sanctify something is absolutely different from ordaining it or consecrating it. To sanctify means to set something apart. For example, there may be many cattle in a herd, but one of these cattle is set apart from the herd. As a result, that animal is sanctified. Furthermore, when an animal is set apart from the herd or flock, a mark may be put on it to indicate that it has been set apart. Hence, to sanctify means to set something apart with a certain mark.

Formerly we were among all the sinners in the world. But one day the Lord set us apart. Salvation is an all-inclusive matter, and it includes being set apart. One day the Lord Jesus came to set us apart, that is, to save us. He separated us from sinners. To be saved and set apart in this way is to be sanctified.

The Lord's sanctifying always labels us, puts a mark upon us. We bear a mark to indicate that we have been saved, sanctified, and set apart unto God. Do you know what is the mark that separates us and sets us apart? This mark is Christ Himself.

When we were among sinners, we were empty. Not only were we empty-handed, but our whole being was empty.

When we were saved, Christ came into us and became the mark that sets us apart from empty sinners. From that time on, we have had something within us, something in our hand, with which to serve God. Many Christians, however, do not realize this. No one has told them they have Christ to fill their hand. Nevertheless, from the time we were saved, we have had Christ.

Since we have Christ, we should not come to God empty-handed. Rather, we should always come to Him with Christ. This is the reason we pray and meet in the name of the Lord Jesus. To meet in the Lord's name is to meet with Him. Those, such as the Jews, who pray to God without praying in the name of the Lord Jesus, pray to Him in a way that is empty-handed. But our praying in the name of the Lord Jesus is different because we are praying to God with our hands filled.

Now we can understand that consecration in Exodus 29 means to fill our hands. Genuine consecration is the filling up of our emptiness with Christ. This also is sanctification. Whenever we come to the meetings, we should have something of Christ to offer to God. We should not come to the meetings empty-handed. To be empty-handed in the meetings is to be condemned. We all should be priests whose hands are filled with Christ.

THE SIN OFFERING

Aaron, the high priest, experienced the Passover in Egypt. In relation to the filling up of Aaron's empty hands, the sin offering was the first offering presented to God. Was this not a repetition of the Passover? Did not the Passover include the sin offering? These questions are not easy to answer. We all experienced the Passover when we were saved. Why, then, do we still need the sin offering? Why in the filling up of the priests' empty hands was there still the need for the sin offering? When we were saved and experienced the Passover, our sins were forgiven. Nevertheless, when we come to the Lord, we still need the sin offering. No matter how long we have been saved, whenever we come to

serve God, we need the sin offering because we are still living in the flesh, in the old creation. To serve God as priests requires the sin offering. Even to contact the Lord during morning watch requires the sin offering. Serving the Lord as a priest is a great matter, and contacting Him in the morning watch is a comparatively small matter, but in both cases we need the sin offering and the trespass offering.

THE MARK OF SEPARATION

To consecrate someone to be God's priest is to sanctify him, and to sanctify him is to set him apart. In order for someone to be set apart to serve God as a priest, his hands need to be filled. This filling up of the hands becomes a mark that sets him apart from everything that is common. If I have something of Christ filling my hands, this indicates that I have been set apart. Whoever has Christ in his hands to fill his emptiness is set apart, sanctified.

Not only is it inaccurate to use the word consecrate in verse 9, but it is also inappropriate, because it somewhat hinders the proper understanding of what is recorded in this chapter. When we read the word consecrate, we may automatically think about dedicating ourselves to the Lord. But as we have pointed out, the meaning of consecrate here is to have Christ filling up our emptiness. In ourselves we are empty-handed. Now we need our empty hands to be filled with Christ. Having our hands filled is not a matter of consecration; it is to sanctify us, to set us apart, to make us different from others.

If our hands are filled with Christ, those in our family, neighborhood, or place of employment will realize that we are different. But if we are common, if there is no difference between us and unbelievers, then we are not priests. What makes us different from others is that we have Christ filling our hands. Wherever we may be, at school, at work, or at home, we need to have hands full of Christ. Being filled up with Christ will then be a mark that sets us apart from those who are common. Others will recognize that we are different. They are still empty-handed, but our hands are

full of Christ. To have hands filled with Christ is to be sanctified to be a priest.

SET APART TO SERVE GOD AS PRIESTS

When I was young, I learned about the universal priesthood from the Brethren teachers. The Brethren are opposed to the clergy-laity system. Before they were raised up one hundred sixty years ago, the clergy and laity were prevailing among Christians. Then the Brethren began to stand up against this system and testify that it is wrong. They said that, according to the New Testament, all believers are priests. Because this teaching is true, I accepted it and passed it on to others. However, I did not realize how God's people could be sanctified to serve as priests.

Although Aaron and his sons were of God's people, they still needed to be sanctified. What was done to them in Exodus 29 was not done to unbelievers, to Egyptians. Because they were among the people of God, Aaron and his sons had experienced the Passover, even while they were yet in Egypt. But they still needed to be set apart, sanctified, in order to serve God as priests. According to verse 9, the priesthood was to be theirs for an eternal statute. What was it that sanctified Aaron and his sons and made them different from others? What made them different and sanctified them from the rest of the children of Israel was the filling up of their hands with all the rich offerings. This filling sanctified them, set them apart, and became a mark of separation and sanctification. Yes, we all have been saved, but we need to ask ourselves if our hands are filled with Christ.

For a long time I did not know how to be a priest. Through years of groping, I gradually came to understand that to serve God as a priest requires that our hands be filled with Christ. Praise the Lord that I am no longer groping! Now I see that it is by having our hands filled with Christ that we are set apart to serve God as His priests.

We all need to be encouraged to function in the meetings.

But the question is how to function. Some may function by simply saying, "Praise the Lord!" However, if someone functions only in this way for a period of time, he will no longer have a pleasant taste when he declares this in the meetings. The same will be true of saying, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah." To function properly in the meetings, we all need to have our hands filled with Christ.

We need to see what it means to be sanctified to serve God as a priest. This matter of being set apart, separated, does not take place by some action or activity on our part; it comes about by having our hands filled with Christ as the offerings. This filling up of our empty hands with Christ is our sanctification, and this sanctification sets us apart to be God's priests.

Who sets us apart for this? The One who sets us apart to be priests serving God is Christ. However, the Christ who sets us apart is not a mere doctrinal Christ; He is the Christ we experience as the offerings filling up our hands. If we understand this, we have the proper foundation to consider the details of the sanctification of Aaron and his sons to be priests.

THE NEED TO BE CLEANSED

In order to have our hands filled with Christ, we need to be washed. Exodus 29:4 says, "And you shall bring Aaron and his sons near unto the door of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water." What we need for the filling of our hands cannot be given to us if we are unclean. Therefore, we need to be cleansed, washed. One who is dirty cannot serve as a priest. For this reason, it was necessary for Aaron and his sons to be brought near to the door of the tent of meetings and washed with water.

The washing of Aaron and his sons with water signifies the washing away of the defilements of the earthly touch, with the water in the Word (Heb. 10:22; John 15:3; see Eph. 5:26). In John 15:3, the Lord Jesus says, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." In Ephesians 5:26 Paul says, "That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word."

For us, the water that washes us is the word of God. In chapters fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen of John we see the sanctification of the priests. In these chapters the Lord Jesus was sanctifying His disciples to be priests. That sanctification began with the washing of the word, for the Lord told them that they were clean because of His word. The same is true in principle with Ephesians 5:26. It is by the water in the word that we are sanctified and cleansed.

CLOTHED WITH PRIESTLY GARMENTS

Verses 5 through 9 indicate that after Aaron and his sons were washed, they were clothed with the priestly garments. First Aaron was clothed with the tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate. Then he was girded with the band of the ephod. Following that, the turban was put upon his head, and upon the turban there was the holy crown, the golden plate. This holy crown was like a diadem; it was the blossom of his priestly garments. Once Aaron had been clothed in this way, his garments became upon him a complete and perfect expression full of beauty and glory.

THE CRUCIAL NEED OF FOOD

If Aaron had stood near the tent of meeting clothed in his priestly garments for a long period of time, he may have said, "I'm hungry. Outwardly I am properly clothed. My nakedness is covered, and I am clothed with garments for beauty and glory. But I still need something to nourish me and fill my hunger." This means that the priests needed the offerings in addition to the garments. The offerings were to be the priests' food. In addition to being washed and clothed, the priests needed inward nourishment, inward strengthening.

As we consider the picture of the washing and clothing of the priests, we realize the crucial need of food. We know from previous messages that the priestly garments typify Christ. To study these garments is an excellent way to study the Person of Christ. Not even in the New Testament do we have such a clear, rich, and profound record of the details of

Christ's Person as that in Exodus concerning the priestly garments. But these garments were only for outward expression and beauty. They could not meet the inward need for nourishment.

The story of the prodigal son and his return home illustrates the need for both clothing and food. The prodigal son decided to return home because he was hungry and had nothing to eat. He did not come back in order to have a garment for outward expression and beauty. However, before feeding him, the father first clothed him. According to Luke 15:22, the father said to his servants, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him." As the robe was being placed upon him, the prodigal son may have said to himself, "I'm still hungry. The robe may be very important to my father, but it is not that important to me. I came back because I needed something to eat." After telling the servants to put the best robe on his son, the father said, "And bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry" (Luke 15:23). What made the hungry one happy was not the clothing—it was the fatted calf.

If Aaron had been clothed and not fed, he surely would have been hungry. He may have said, "Outwardly, everything is fine, beautiful, and glorious. But what about my hunger? I'm still empty inside." This picture of Aaron clothed with the priestly garments but still in need of food indicates that we need Christ to be our outward expression and glory and even the more to be our inward nourishment and strengthening. We need Him to be our food! For this reason, in Exodus 28 we have the clothing of the priests, and in chapter twenty-nine we have the food for the priests. If as children of God we are to be sanctified to be priests serving Him, we need both outward clothing and inward nourishment. This clothing and nourishment are the filling up of our emptiness.

OUR EMPTINESS FILLED WITH CHRIST

Now we can understand what it means to have our emptiness filled with Christ. There is an inward emptiness and an outward emptiness. Outward emptiness is a matter of

nakedness, and inward emptiness is a matter of hunger. To exist we must solve the problems of both outward nakedness and inward hunger. Thus, for the maintenance of human life, food and clothing are absolutely vital. These needs, along with lodging and transportation, are the basic aspects of our living. To earn a living means to earn what we need to guarantee that we have clothing, food, lodging, and transportation. In the Bible the emphasis is not on lodging and transportation; it is on clothing and food. When we have Christ as our clothing, we also have Him as our lodging, for our clothing is our lodging. Furthermore, we may say that the Spirit is our transportation. In this message, however, we are concerned with clothing and food. Outwardly we must have clothing, and inwardly we must have food.

Both the clothing and food we need are Christ. This also is illustrated by the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. The best robe placed upon the returned prodigal is Christ, and the fatted calf also is Christ. The best robe is Christ as our clothing, and the fatted calf is Christ as our food. Praise the Lord that when we wear the best robe and enjoy the fatted calf, we are filled and sanctified! We are sanctified by God the Father to be His priests with Christ as the mark of our sanctification. The Christ who fills our emptiness is the One who separates us, who sets us apart from being common. Hallelujah, our emptiness is completely filled with Christ! No longer do we have nakedness outwardly or hunger inwardly. Our outward emptiness is filled with Christ as our clothing, and our inward emptiness is filled with Christ as our food.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FOUR

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:1-14; 40:12-15; Lev. 8:1-9, 12-17

We have seen that the priests needed to be clothed with the priestly garments outwardly and to be filled inwardly with nourishing food. Both the priestly garments and the priestly food signify different aspects of Christ.

Exodus 29:1 and 10 through 14 speak of the bull offered as the priests' sin offering. The sin offering here is Christ making the way for our emptiness to be filled. This emptiness is a matter of inward hunger. If we are hungry, we are empty inwardly. The priestly garments typify Christ covering our nakedness. When we have Christ as our priestly garments, we are no longer naked. Instead, outwardly we have an expression of glory and beauty. This means that outwardly our nakedness has been covered, and now we have Christ to cover our nakedness. But we still need Christ to fill us inwardly. In order for our inward emptiness to be filled, Christ must be our sin offering.

TWO KINDS OF BURNING

The sin offering was not food for the priests. This offering was burned completely. Exodus 29:13 and 14 say, "And you shall take all the fat that covers the inwards, and the appendage on the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat which is upon them, and burn them on the altar. And the flesh of the bull, and its skin, and its dung, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering." These verses speak of two different kinds of burning. The first burning,

described in verse 13, is the burning on the altar of the fat, the appendage on the liver, and the kidneys. This burning produced a sweet savor that ascended to God for His satisfaction. It was like the burning of incense, a burning that was not for judgment or purification, but for God's enjoyment. The Hebrew word rendered "burn" in verse 13 is a term used for burning incense (see verses 18 and 25). When the priests burned the incense as a sweet savor, that was for God's satisfaction. God enjoyed the aroma of the incense. Regarding the sin offering, the inward fat and certain inward parts were burned for God's enjoyment.

This burning satisfied God's requirements, which are mainly of three categories: the requirements of His righteousness, holiness, and glory. God is righteous, God is holy, and God is full of glory. Thus, His righteousness, holiness, and glory all make demands of us. If we are short of God's glory and do not match His righteousness and holiness, we fail to fulfill His requirements and therefore come under His condemnation.

It is the fat of the sin offering that satisfies God's requirements. The fat of cattle comes out of the richness of the cattle. This typifies the sweetness and the richness of Christ's perfection and satisfies the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. The burning of the fat and the inward parts produces a sweet savor for God's satisfaction; He is fully satisfied with it. Therefore, the first kind of burning related to the sin offering was for God's satisfaction.

The second kind of burning, described in verse 14, was the burning of the flesh, the skin, and the dung outside the camp. These parts of the sin offering were burned with the fire of judgment. Hence, the second burning was a burning of judgment. It did not take place on the altar, but took place outside the camp, signifying abandonment and judgment. On the one hand, Christ was accepted as a sweet savor to God to satisfy all of God's requirements; on the other hand, Christ was abandoned, condemned, judged, and burned outside the camp, outside God's dwelling place and away from God's people.

CHRIST AS THE SIN OFFERING

The trespass offering deals with our sins but the sin offering deals with our sin, that is, with our sinful nature. If we would be priests serving God, we need to realize that even though we have been saved, we still have a sinful nature.

We shall continue to have this sinful nature until our body is transfigured. I can testify that no matter how long we have been saved, our sinful nature does not change. I have been saved for more than fifty-five years. Nevertheless, I must testify that my sinful nature is still with me. We should never believe the doctrine of eradication, the teaching that the sinful nature is eradicated when a person becomes a believer in Christ. No, our sinful nature still exists. Therefore, whenever we come to serve God as priests, we must remember that we have a sinful nature and that we need Christ as our sin offering to deal with this nature.

Christ has fulfilled God's requirements to satisfy Him, and He has borne God's judgment on our behalf. In Him our sinful nature has been judged. Whenever we take Christ as our sin offering, we judge ourselves as sinners, even as sin. Again and again, we need Christ as our sin offering and we need to be judged. Paul refers to Christ as the sin offering in Romans 8:3, when he says that God sent His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, and condemned sin in the flesh.

Exodus 29:10 says concerning the sin offering, "And you shall bring the bull near before the tent of meeting and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands upon the head of the bull. And you shall slaughter the bull before Jehovah at the door of the tent of meeting." We today must lay our hands upon Christ and be fully identified with Him.

If we would serve God as priests, we must first have the realization that we still have a sinful nature and that we need Christ experientially to be our sin offering. In ourselves we are sinful. We are sinners, even sin itself. How we need Christ as our sin offering! This is the reason Paul says

in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf, that we might become God's righteousness in Him."

The sweetness and richness of Christ's perfection satisfies God, ascending through burning for His satisfaction. As the sin offering, Christ was also abandoned by God and judged by Him for us. The washing of the word mainly deals with outward defilement. The sin offering deals with the sinful nature within. To be a priest, it is not adequate simply to confess that we have been defiled by the earthly touch and need to be washed. We must also realize and admit that even we who would be priests serving God still have a sinful nature. We are still sinners. Therefore, we need Christ to be our sin offering. We need Him with all His perfections to be burned for God's satisfaction. We also need Christ to be burned to bear God's judgment on our behalf.

REALIZING THAT WE HAVE A SINFUL NATURE

If we realize that we have a sinful nature and if we lay our hands on Christ to be fully identified with Him, we shall be protected and, according to typology, prepared to enjoy the priestly food. If we would be priests serving God, we need the outward washing of the word, and we also need to put on Christ as our garment. However, we also need the inward nourishing and filling. This nourishing requires a deeper cleansing, a cleansing by Christ as our sin offering. This cleansing deals with our sinful nature. Whenever you come to serve God as a priest, you must realize and confess that your nature is still sinful. If you do not have this realization, you will not be able to enjoy the Christ typified by the rams, the unleavened bread, the unleavened, perforated cakes, and the unleavened wafers. We cannot enjoy Christ adequately without realizing that we have a sinful nature and need Christ to be our sin offering.

Fifty-five years ago I began to realize that my nature is sinful. Today, however, I have a much deeper realization regarding this. After many years of experience, I know fully

that I was born sinful, that I was born a sinner with a sinful nature. In fact, I was born sin. This sinful nature has not changed during the years I have been with the Lord. The more I realize this, the more I take Christ as my sin offering. On the one hand, realizing that I have a sinful nature and taking Christ as my sin offering causes me to be judged and subdued. On the other hand, it preserves me, for it causes me not to have any confidence in myself. I am reminded again and again that in my flesh I am nothing but sin.

Sometimes believers wonder how any brother who is spiritual and experienced could fall into serious sin. We should realize that we are capable of such sin. Consider David as an example. David, of course, was an Old Testament saint. He truly was saintly and wrote many spiritual songs. But was David's sinful nature eradicated? Certainly not. For the sake of his lust he had a certain man murdered, and then he took that man's wife. Even someone as saintly as David was capable of such sin. David did not become saintly after committing that sin; he was saintly beforehand. Nevertheless, he still fell into sin.

Suppose when David was tempted to commit that sin, he remembered that he was sinful and offered a sin offering to God. If that had been the case, I do believe that he would not have committed that sin. It might have been that David committed sin because he temporarily ceased to remember how sinful he was. He lost the realization that his nature was sinful. We should learn from his experience not to have the slightest confidence in ourselves.

Elsewhere I have pointed out that a brother and sister should not have a long talk alone in a private room. To do that indicates that we do not realize our need of Christ as our sin offering. If we remind ourselves of our need for Christ as our sin offering, we shall not engage in long conversations with members of the opposite sex in private. Furthermore, with respect to many other things, we shall not have any trust in ourselves, for we shall know that we are still sinful.

Every day we need Christ as our sin offering. After

rising up in the morning, we need to recall and realize once again that we are sinful in nature, that we were born sinners, and that we need Christ as our sin offering. Yes, we have been regenerated, but our sinful nature remains with us. We have the Holy Spirit in our spirit, but our nature is still sinful. Therefore, if we would enjoy Christ as the ram, wafers, cakes, and bread, we must first apply Christ as the sin offering. Applying Christ as the sin offering will prepare us for further enjoyment of Christ.

This word concerning the sin offering should not be a mere doctrine to us. We all need to have more experience of Christ as our sin offering. Let us all be encouraged to experience Christ in this way more and more.

DETAILS OF THE SIN OFFERING

According to 29:1, the sin offering used in sanctifying Aaron and his sons to be priests was a young bull. This young bull typifies Christ being strong and rich in life. We have seen that Aaron and his sons laying their hands upon the head of the bull signifies the believers being identified with Christ. According to verse 11, Moses was required to slaughter the bull before the Lord at the door of the tent of meeting. This signifies that Christ was slain by God, represented by Moses, before God Himself in front of His people (Isa. 53:10).

Verse 12 goes on to say, "And you shall take of the blood of the bull, and put it upon the horns of the altar with your finger; and pour out all the blood at the base of the altar." This signifies making the redemption of Christ powerful with a strong foundation.

As we have pointed out, the burning of the fat covering the inwards, the net on the liver and the two kidneys and their fat signifies the riches and sweetness of the inward being of Christ offered to God for His satisfaction. The burning of the flesh of the bull with its skin and dung outside the camp signifies the outward being of Christ sacrificed for the believers on this earth for their redemption.

OUR NEED TO BE FILLED WITH CHRIST

One crucial point we have covered thus far is that to be a priest we need to be filled up with Christ. We all must realize that, apart from Christ, we are utterly empty, void of anything to satisfy God and ourselves. Before we were saved, we were absolutely empty. We had nothing to fill us and qualify us so that we might serve God. But God intends to sanctify us, to set us apart, to be His priests. In order to do this, He needs to fill our emptiness so that we may be able to satisfy Him. Outwardly and inwardly, this is to fill our hands with Christ. Outwardly, we are clothed with Christ as the tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate. All these garments typify different aspects of Christ covering our nakedness. Now that we are covered by Him, we are no longer naked. Rather, Christ as our clothing qualifies us to serve as priests.

The clothing worn by the priests qualified them to serve God. Their priestly garments can be compared to a uniform. In many types of employment, a person must wear the proper uniform to be qualified for work. For example, both a policeman and a nurse must wear the appropriate uniform. In the same principle, a judge and a medical doctor also wear appropriate clothing. When we wear Christ, He becomes the clothing that qualifies us to serve God as priests. He is the covering for our nakedness.

Inwardly Christ is our nourishment and strength. He fills the emptiness within our being.

In order to fill our inward emptiness, Christ had to solve our basic problem with God, the problem of our sinful nature. In our flesh we are sinful. Actually we are sin. According to Romans 7, nothing good dwells in us, that is, in our flesh, for we are nothing but sin. Therefore, Christ has become the sin offering to solve our basic problem with God so that our inward emptiness may be filled.

PREPARING TO ENJOY CHRIST

A second crucial point related to serving God as priests is that whenever we would serve Him in this way, we need

to realize and confess that we have a sinful nature. Every morning we need to offer the sin offering. This is to be reminded that in our flesh we are nothing but sin.

If we realize and admit that we have a sinful nature, will it be possible for us to argue with others or fight with them? Certainly not. Since we ourselves are sinful in nature, what right have we to argue with others? What reason have we to be proud or to consider ourselves superior? The reason we argue and fight is that we consider ourselves better than others. This attitude is an indication that we have forgotten what we are, that we have forgotten that we are sinful. If we remember that we are sinful in nature, even sin itself, we shall not be proud.

Offering Christ as the sin offering prepares the way for us to enjoy Christ. If in the morning you offer Christ as the sin offering, surely during the day you will enjoy Him, perhaps as a ram, bread, cakes, or wafers. If you do not remember the sin offering, you will not have the basis to enjoy Christ. Very probably, you will be short of the enjoyment of Christ during the day. As a result of not having the enjoyment of Christ, you will be empty. How, then, will you be satisfied inwardly to serve God as a priest? You will be a priest in name and in position, but not in reality. All believers in Christ are priests, but in actuality most of them do not have the basis to serve as priests.

THE WAY TO FEED ON CHRIST

My burden concerning Exodus 29 is not to cover doctrinal points such as the putting of the blood upon the horns of the altar, or pouring out the blood at the base of the altar. My burden is to show how we need to be filled up with Christ and to feed on Christ. Chapter twenty-nine of Exodus shows us the way to feed on Christ. However, the way revealed in this chapter is quite unusual. It is marvelous even to realize that this chapter gives us the way to feed on Christ. Many have read this chapter a number of times without realizing that it gives us the way to feed on Christ. We may see the

offerings, the cleansing, and the application of the blood but not the feeding on Christ.

CARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE

I doubt if there are any books which say that Exodus 29 reveals the way to feed on Christ. Most Christians do not see this matter because they are not on the line of life. But by the Lord's mercy we are on this line. This is the reason we call our study of the Bible a life-study. When we read a portion of the Word, what we care for is life. This is also true of our study of Exodus 29. From this chapter we see that we need to be filled with Christ. What we need is the experience of life. Thus, whenever I touch the matter of life in a chapter of the Bible, I am fully occupied and give less emphasis to doctrinal points.

Certain Bible teachers have much to say concerning the sin offering. Their approach may be very interesting in a doctrinal way. You may find this approach attractive, but eventually it will distract you from life to the mere mental understanding of doctrinal teachings of typology. The result is that you do not receive any life supply. We approach Exodus 29 from another perspective. This is why I point out that we need to offer the sin offering in order to be prepared to enjoy Christ.

May we all see that we need to be filled with Christ. May we also realize that we still have a sinful nature and that daily, early in the morning, we need to offer Christ as our sin offering. This sinful nature deserves to be condemned, burned, as was the sin offering outside the camp. If we offer Christ as the sin offering with this realization, we shall be preserved, and we shall have the way to enjoy more of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:15-28; 40:14-15

I believe that the Lord wants to speak to us a very sweet word from chapter twenty-nine of Exodus. This portion of the Bible, however, is not easy to understand. As we read this chapter, we need the proper exercise of our mind. Otherwise, we may be led into the woods and not find the right direction. As we approach this chapter, we need to be calm and very sober.

More than fifty years ago, I was taught by certain Bible teachers that, according to the New Testament, all believers, whether old or young, whether experienced or beginners, are priests. I was glad to hear a word concerning this universal priesthood. Although I tried my best to practice the priesthood, I did not have the way to do it. When I was studying the Pentateuch with the saints in Taiwan in 1953, I began to see how we can serve God as priests.

It is possible to read through the New Testament dozens of times without finding the way to serve as a priest. But we can find the way by studying the types in the Old Testament. We should never disregard the value of the Old Testament types. Certain types are just as valuable as the plain words uttered in the New Testament.

First Peter 2:5 says that we are a holy priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. In verse 9 of that chapter we are described as a royal priesthood. Furthermore, Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 both say that we are priests. We are a royal priesthood and

a holy priesthood. We are priests, and we can serve God as priests. Thus, we are neither the clergy nor the laity, but a priesthood.

The clergy-laity system has its source in the Devil; it certainly is not according to the Bible. The Bible reveals that all believers are priests. But the clergy-laity system kills and nullifies the priesthood. It is our birthright to be priests serving God. But the traditional system of clergy and laity has taken away our birthright. For this reason, I say strongly that this system has its source in the Devil, not in the Bible.

Although the New Testament tells us that we are priests, it does not tell us how to be priests. From the New Testament we learn that we have been saved, washed with the blood of Christ, regenerated by the Spirit, and endowed with certain gifts. Thus, we know that we are saved, washed, regenerated, and gifted. But we still need further help to know how to serve God as priests. It was when I studied Old Testament typology again with the saints in 1953 that the light came from Exodus 29 to reveal the way to serve as a priest.

NOT ORDAINED OR CONSECRATED BUT SANCTIFIED

Exodus 29 speaks of sanctifying Aaron and his sons to be priests. Hence, it does not speak of sanctifying sinners, unbelievers, or the unsaved. Verse 1 says, "And this is the thing which you shall do to them to sanctify them to serve as priests to Me." Please notice that this verse does not speak of consecrating Aaron and his sons or of ordaining them. As far as this chapter is concerned, we need to avoid the use of the word consecration and instead speak of sanctification.

The word "consecrate" is somewhat traditional. Under the influence of this word, we may have a mistaken concept concerning the sanctification of God's saved ones to be His priests. Therefore, I would emphasize the fact that here we have the charge not to consecrate Aaron and his sons, but to

sanctify them. The proper word to use to describe what is recorded in this chapter is "sanctify." Aaron and his sons were sanctified to be priests serving God.

There is a great difference between consecration and sanctification, and an even greater difference between sanctification and ordination. When a person is ordained, some of the clergy lay their hands upon him and pray for him. Consecration, according to common, ordinary usage, means the presenting of ourselves to God. But Exodus 29 describes neither ordination nor consecration; it is a record of sanctification.

Suppose instead of being sanctified according to what is described in chapter twenty-nine, Aaron were ordained in a traditional, religious way. In such a case, others would lay their hands on him and pray for him. Aaron, however, would still be empty-handed. Both before and after his ordination, he would be the same in that he would be empty-handed. In order for him to be God's priest and to serve Him as a priest, he must have something with which to serve God.

Suppose instead of being ordained Aaron were merely consecrated to the Lord, offered to Him and presented to Him. But even after being consecrated in this way, Aaron would still be empty and have nothing with which to serve God. The sanctification of Aaron and his sons to serve as priests is very different from both ordination and consecration.

SANCTIFIED BY HAVING OUR HANDS FILLED

According to what is revealed in chapter twenty-nine of Exodus, the priests need to have their hands filled in order to serve God. Their hands should be filled with the fat of the ram of the peace offering, bread, cakes, and wafers. When a priest has his hands filled with the sweetness and riches of Christ, he is different from others. They are empty-handed, but he has his hands filled. As a result, he is sanctified, set apart, from the common people. Furthermore, he has the riches of Christ with which to serve God as a priest.

The way to sanctify a saint to serve as a priest is to fill his hands with the riches of Christ. Before a believer is sanctified in this way, he is already a saint. Consider the situation with Aaron. He had experienced the Passover, he had been saved from the judgment of God, and he had been delivered from Pharaoh's tyranny and from the usurpation of the world. Furthermore, he had crossed the Red Sea, enjoyed the heavenly food and the living water and received a divine education at Mount Sinai. He had also experienced many things in the wilderness. Truly he was a saint, one who was saved and brought out of Egypt and one who had experienced the things of God in the wilderness. This was true, of course, not only of Aaron, but of all the children of Israel as well. They had been brought out of Egypt and had come to the mountain of God to be trained by Him. Then the Lord told Moses that certain of God's people were to be sanctified to be priests. This indicates that it is not sufficient merely to be a saint. After becoming a saint, we need to be sanctified so that we may serve as a priest to God.

Being sanctified to serve as priests is different from enjoying Christ as the Passover or as the manna. Also it is not the same as enjoying the Spirit of Christ as the living water. This sanctification involves something in addition to all these precious experiences. This means that it is something in addition to the Passover, the manna, and the living water. As we have pointed out, it is not ordination or consecration, but the filling up of our hands with the riches of Christ. It is very important for us to see that in order to serve as priests, we need something in addition to the enjoyment of Christ as the Passover, the manna, and the living water. Oh, may we all see this!

When I saw this matter in Exodus 29 years ago, I was very happy. Truly it was a great light. I have no way to express how happy I was to see the way to serve God as a priest. During the first twenty-five years of my Christian experience, I knew that we believers were priests, but I did not know how to serve God as a priest in a practical way. But from studying this chapter under the Lord's enlightenment,

I began to see the way. How happy I was! How I rejoiced in the Lord's mercy in showing us the way to serve as priests! The way is to have additional experiences of Christ, experiences in addition to the Passover, the daily manna, and the flowing of the living water.

When I was a young Christian, I heard that Christ is our Passover and our manna. I was taught that He is the rock that was smitten to flow the living water. But I was never told that, according to Exodus 29, we need additional experiences of Christ in order to serve as priests. This chapter reveals that we may experience Christ as the bull, as the rams, and as the cakes and wafers. In this chapter we see three different kinds of cakes. By experiencing Christ in the way presented in this chapter, we become the serving priests in a very practical way.

Actually, it is little wonder that among today's millions of Christians very few actually serve Him as priests. In the past, how much have you served God as a priest? Before I received light through Exodus 29, I thought that I was serving as a priest when I visited a saint in his home, or when I helped to clean the meeting hall. Eventually, I came to see that such visitation and cleaning are a Levitical service, not a priestly service. Priestly service is a matter of offering Christ in a detailed way directly to God. The preciousness of chapter twenty-nine of Exodus consists in the fact that it reveals the way for us to be priests.

WASHED AND CLOTHED

The first step in sanctifying Aaron and his sons to be priests was to wash them. Exodus 29:4 says, "And you shall bring Aaron and his sons near unto the door of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water."

After Aaron and his sons were washed, they were clothed with the priestly garments. Concerning Aaron verses 5 and 6 say, "And you shall take the garments, and clothe Aaron with the tunic, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate; and you shall gird him with the band of the ephod. And you shall put the turban upon his head,

and put the holy crown upon the turban." Verses 8 and 9 also speak of clothing the priests: "And you shall bring his sons near, and clothe them with tunics. And you shall gird them with a girdle, Aaron and his sons, and bind caps on them." These priestly garments were for the covering of their nakedness.

Nakedness signifies the appearance, the exposure, of our natural being. Do you know what spiritual nakedness is? Spiritual nakedness is the sinful and ugly appearance of our natural being. Although we may be very good according to our natural birth, because we are the descendants of Adam, in the sight of God the appearance of our natural being is nakedness. It is altogether uncomely and abominable to Him. After Adam and Eve became fallen, they realized they were naked and tried to cover themselves with fig leaves. They realized that their nakedness needed to be covered. The clothing of Aaron and his sons in Exodus 29 indicates the covering of the appearance of our natural being.

REDEMPTION AND GENERATION

Verses 1 through 3 say, "Take one young bull and two rams without blemish, and unleavened bread, and unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil—of fine wheat flour you shall make them. And you shall put them in one basket, and bring them near in the basket, with the bull and the two rams." Here we have three animals, a young bull and two perfect, flawless rams. We also have bread, cakes, and wafers. Although the bread may have been rather thick, the Hebrew language here indicates that the cakes were not only thin, but were also perforated and hence easy to eat. The wafers probably were not very thick.

The bread, the cakes, and the wafers, of course, were of the vegetable life, in contrast to the animal life represented by the bull and the rams. In typology animal life signifies redeeming life, a life that has blood to be shed for redemption. In typology vegetable life denotes a generating, producing

life. The bread, the cakes, and the wafers all were made of wheat flour. According to John 12:24, a grain of wheat falls into the ground and produces many grains. This is the vegetable life as the generating life.

Christ has both the redeeming life and the generating, producing life. The Gospel of John reveals both aspects of the life of Christ. John 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" This is the animal life for redeeming. In John 12:24 the Lord Jesus says, referring to Himself, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." This is the vegetable life for generating, for producing. The sanctification of those who would serve God as priests involves both the animal life for redemption and the vegetable life for generation.

BEING REMINDED OF OUR SINFUL NATURE

According to 29:10-14, the bull was a sin offering. The bull was brought near before the tent of meeting, Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bull, and then it was slaughtered before the Lord. Some of the blood was put on the horns of the altar, and the remainder was poured out at the base of the altar. The tender, sweet parts of the bull were burned on the altar, and the rest, the flesh, the skin, and the dung, was burned outside the camp. This is a picture of the sin offering.

This offering should remind us always of our sinful nature. Even though we may not commit sin, as long as we are descendants of Adam, we have a sinful nature. Not only is our nature sinful—it is sin itself. This means that in our flesh we are nothing but sin. Therefore, in order to serve as priests in a practical way, we must first experience Christ as our sin offering. Every day, early in the morning, we must offer Christ to God as the sin offering. Spontaneously this will remind us that we are sinners, even sin. Our nature is sinful, and we are a totality of sin.

Day by day we spend a certain amount of time thinking about ourselves. When we do so, we may not consider

ourselves sinful. On the contrary much of the time we may think that we are rather good. However, thinking of ourselves in this way causes a problem related to the priesthood. How can we serve God as priests in a practical way while we continue to think we are so good? No wonder we have difficulty serving with others! We have problems with others in serving together mainly because we consider ourselves better than others. Therefore, we need to remember that we are sinful by nature and offer Christ to God as our sin offering.

If experiencing Christ as the sin offering reminds us of our sinful nature, how could we argue with others? Will a brother still fight with his wife? Certainly not. Should a brother continually realize that he has a sinful nature, he will be restricted from arguing with his wife.

It is very important for us to see that if we would be priests in a practical way, we must experience Christ as the sin offering. We who would be priests of God must be reminded constantly that in ourselves we are sin. If we have this understanding and realization, we shall not argue with others. Knowing that we have a sinful nature and offering Christ to God as our sin offering will protect us and preserve us so that we may serve God as His priests.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SIX

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(4)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:15-28; 40:14-15

We have pointed out that remembering that we have a sinful nature and daily offering Christ as our sin offering will protect us and preserve us. The offering of the sin offering was a basic aspect of the sanctification of Aaron and his sons to be priests. Let us now go on to consider some other aspects.

ONE WITH THE BURNT OFFERING

The sanctification of Aaron and his sons to serve God as priests required two rams, in addition to the young bull for the sin offering. Concerning the first ram, 29:15-18 says, "And you shall take one ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands upon the head of the ram. And you shall slaughter the ram, and take its blood and sprinkle it upon the altar round about. And you shall cut the ram into its pieces, and wash its inwards and its legs, and put them upon its pieces and upon its head. And you shall burn the whole ram on the altar; it is a burnt offering to Jehovah, a sweet savor; it is an offering by fire to Jehovah." According to these verses, the first ram was slaughtered and then cut into pieces. This, no doubt, refers to Christ, who was slaughtered and cut into pieces. However, we also are involved, for we are identified with Christ. This identification with Christ is indicated by Aaron and his sons laying their hands upon the head of the ram (v. 15).

We all treasure the matter of identification with Christ.

But have you ever realized that in Christ, with Christ, and through Christ you need to be slaughtered and also cut into pieces? Who among those who believe in Christ is willing to be slaughtered and cut into pieces? It is doubtful that anyone truly wants this. But in order to be a priest, we need to be slaughtered and cut into pieces in Christ and through Christ. We, of course, are not to slaughter ourselves or others, but God will slaughter us in Christ. The Bible indicates that whoever wants to serve God as a priest will be slaughtered and cut into pieces by Him.

When some hear about the priests being slaughtered and cut into pieces in Christ, they may protest and say, "No, we don't agree with this. Are not the bulls and the rams types of Christ? Christ is the One who was slaughtered. God has slaughtered Christ and cut Him into pieces. This is not something that happens to us. Regarding this, Christ is our substitute; He has replaced us in being slaughtered and cut into pieces." If this is your concept you are qualified only to be saved; you are not qualified to be a priest. Yes, Christ was crucified as our substitute. He was our replacement in bearing our sins when He died on the cross. Nevertheless, in order to serve God as priests, we must be identified with the slaughtered and cut Christ, the Christ who was cut into pieces by God.

After the ram of the burnt offering was slaughtered and cut into pieces, its inwards and legs were washed, and then the whole ram was burned on the altar as a sweet savor to the Lord. This indicates that after the slaughtering and the cutting, we need the washing and the burning. According to 29:4-5, Aaron and his sons were washed with water and then clothed with the priestly garments. That was the initial washing. After that, the priests had to be one with the ram that was slaughtered, cut into pieces, washed, and burned.

GOD'S FOOD

Verse 18 says that the whole ram was burned on the altar as an offering by fire to the Lord, a sweet savor to Him. The Hebrew term for burnt offering actually means ascending

sacrifice. When this offering was burned on the altar, it became a sweet savor ascending to God for His enjoyment. This is the reason Numbers 28:2 and 3 speak of the burnt offering as God's food. God's food, the burnt offering, satisfies Him.

Certainly, Christ is the One who is burned to feed God and satisfy Him. However, we still need to lay our hands on Christ; that is, we need to be one with Him, identified with Him. This means that whatever we are and whatever we do must be slaughtered, cut in pieces, washed, and burned on the altar, the cross, entirely for God's enjoyment and satisfaction. This will then become food for God.

In my early years as a Christian, I did not know that God needed food, that He needed something to eat. From the Bible I had learned only that it was necessary for us sinners to eat something. I did not know that God also wanted to eat. But when I restudied typology with the saints in Taiwan in 1953, I began to see that God needs food. The first aspect of God's food is the burnt offering. This is the reason that, of all the offerings described in the book of Leviticus, the burnt offering is mentioned first.

Although in Leviticus the burnt offering comes first, regarding the sanctification of the priests described in Exodus 29, the bull for the sin offering is first, and the ram for the burnt offering is second. We must first offer Christ as our sin offering; we must realize constantly that we are sinful in nature and even sin itself. By our natural birth and life, we are sin. Those who would serve God as priests must have this consciousness and understanding. Since we are sinful in nature, how can we serve God? In ourselves and in our natural life, it is impossible. We need to be redeemed, and our sinful nature must be dealt with.

After the first ram was slaughtered, its blood was sprinkled upon the altar round about. This blood speaks of redemption. How is it possible for us to be God's priests? It is possible only through redemption.

THE BLOOD AND THE FRAGRANCE

Concerning the burnt offering in Exodus 29, we see two

important matters. The first is the blood sprinkled about the altar. This is for our peace and satisfaction. The second matter is the sweet savor ascending to heaven for God's satisfaction. The redeeming blood is sprinkled on the altar on earth, and the savor ascends to the heavens to satisfy God. As our burnt offering for our sanctification as priests, Christ shed His blood for our peace, and He Himself was burned for God's satisfaction.

The first ram was for a burnt offering, but the second ram was for a peace offering. The peace offering is rather complicated. The burnt offering is actually simple: it was slaughtered, cut into pieces, washed, and burned. From this offering there was a twofold issue—the blood sprinkled upon the altar and the sweet fragrance ascending to God. The blood is for us to look at, and the sweet fragrance is for God to enjoy. To be sure, the blood satisfies God, but mainly the blood is for our conscience and for our peace.

Why do we offer Christ as the first ram, the ram of the burnt offering? We offer Him in this way because we realize that we have not been for God and that we are not for God. Instead we are always for ourselves. Furthermore, instead of being God's food, we have always been our own food. Therefore, because we are sinful, we need Christ to redeem us. He has been slaughtered for us, He has been cut into pieces for us, and His blood was shed for our redemption. Now whenever we look at the blood, we are at peace, knowing we have been redeemed. Also the sweet fragrance ascends to God for His enjoyment and satisfaction. As a result, our problem is solved, and God's hunger is satisfied. Hence, there is a peaceful situation, and we can go on further to enjoy Christ and experience more of Him. In particular, we may now experience Him as the second ram, as the peace offering.

THE BLOOD OF THE PEACE OFFERING

Let us now consider, in the way of a brief sketch, the significance of the second ram. From 29:20 we know that this ram was slaughtered. However, it was not cut into pieces. The blood of the first ram was sprinkled upon the altar, but

something different was done with the blood of the second ram. Verse 20 says, "And you shall slaughter the ram, and take of its blood, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the big toe of their right foot; and you shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about." Notice that the blood was put on the tip of the right ear, upon the right thumb, and upon the first toe of the right foot. The blood on the ear indicates that if we would be priests, we need an ear to listen to God. We should not speak too much. It may strike us as unusual that Moses was not commanded to put the blood on Aaron's lips or tongue. Being a priest requires that we listen, not that we speak so much. The thumb signifies working, and the big toe signifies walking. Therefore, as priests we need the proper listening, working, and walking. This also is part of the sanctification of the priests. Our ears, our thumbs, and our big toes all need the redeeming blood. The blood on our ear, thumb, and toe sanctifies us makes us different from others. Those who do not have the blood on their ear, thumb, and toe have not been sanctified to God. After Aaron and his sons had been cleansed by the blood in this way, they were sanctified to serve Him as priests.

According to verse 20, the blood of the second ram was not only put upon the tip of the right ear, on the thumb, and on the big toe, but was also sprinkled upon the altar. This is the second kind of application of the blood of the peace offering.

Verse 21 says, "And you shall take of the blood which is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him; and he shall be holy, he and his garments, and his sons and his sons garments with him." Here we see the third aspect of the blood of the peace offering. Moses took some of the blood that was sprinkled upon the altar and some of the anointing oil and sprinkled the blood and the oil upon the garments of Aaron and his sons. Now Aaron and his sons were fully sanctified, for the

garments covering their entire body had been cleansed and anointed.

TWO KINDS OF ANOINTING

In Exodus 29 the anointing oil is mentioned first in verse 7 and again in verse 21. Verse 7 says, "And you shall take the anointing oil and pour it upon his head and anoint him." This refers to the anointing of Aaron before any of the offerings were slaughtered. First Aaron himself was anointed apart from the blood. This is a type of the anointing of Christ mentioned in Psalm 133. In this psalm the ointment was poured upon Aaron's head and eventually ran down to the skirts of his garments. This signifies the anointing of Christ by God apart from redemption. Christ's anointing, of course, did not require the shedding of blood.

Aaron was anointed not only as a type of Christ, but also as a sinful person who was being sanctified to serve God as a priest. Because Aaron and his sons were sinful, there was the need for a second kind of anointing, an anointing with the anointing oil and the sprinkling of the redeeming blood. Actually, regarding this anointing, the blood is mentioned first. This indicates that we must first have the redeeming blood, and then we can participate in the anointing Spirit.

The blood of the peace offering is somewhat complicated. As we have seen, there are three steps, three applications: first, the blood applied to the ear, the thumb, and the big toe of the priests; second, the blood sprinkled upon the altar; and third, the blood with the anointing oil sprinkled upon the priests' garments.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PEACE OFFERING

Verses 22 and 23 say, "And you shall take from the ram the fat, and the fat; tail, and the fat that covers the inwards, and the appendage of the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat which is upon them. and the right shoulder; for it is a ram of the filling of hand; and one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer from the basket of

unleavened bread which is before Jehovah." The parts of the ram mentioned here are the richest and sweetest parts. According to verses 24 and 25 these parts, along with a loaf of bread, a cake of oiled bread, and a wafer from a basket of unleavened bread, were burned "on the altar upon the burnt offering for a sweet savor before Jehovah." The inward parts and the fat were all burned to be God's food. This is confirmed in Leviticus 3:11 and 16.

The main outward parts of the second ram were the breast and the shoulders. The right shoulder, the inward parts, and the fat were burned, along with the three cakes. The right breast was waved before God. This is a wave offering, a type of Christ in resurrection. This right breast which was waved before God was not burned; instead, it was given to Moses to be his portion. The left breast and the left shoulder were the portions for Aaron and his sons to enjoy. The shoulder was heaved, exalted. This heave offering typifies Christ in ascension. Christ in resurrection is the wave offering, and Christ in ascension is the heave offering.

The breast of the peace offering signifies love, and the shoulder signifies strength. The Christ in resurrection is of love, and the Christ in ascension is of strength. In the New Testament the ascension signifies strength and power. The ascended Christ is a Christ of power and strength.

To repeat, the right shoulder was burned for God, and the right breast was first waved before God and then given to Moses to be his portion. Both the left shoulder and the left breast were heaved up before God and then given to Aaron and his sons to be their portion. In forthcoming messages we shall cover these matters in more detail.

From what we have covered thus far, we see that we need Christ to be our sin offering, to be the ram as our burnt offering for God's satisfaction, and to be our peace offering, with all its aspects. Part of the peace offering is for God's satisfaction, and part is for the ministering priests. As priests, we may enjoy our part of the peace offering along with the bread.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SEVEN

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(5)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:15-28; 40:14-15

According to the New Testament, the goal of God's salvation is to make all those who believe in Christ priests of God. Therefore, if a person is saved but fails to become a priest to serve God, he cannot fulfill God's purpose or satisfy His desire. In the last book of the New Testament, Revelation, we see that the redeemed ones are all priests of God. In Revelation 1:5 and 6 we are told that Jesus Christ has loosed us from our sins by His blood and "made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father." Likewise, Revelation 5:10 says that we have been made "to our God a kingdom and priests."

From the typology in the Old Testament, we see that God first redeemed His people, then saved them, and then educated them. These three matters are revealed in the book of Exodus. First God redeemed the children of Israel, then He rescued and delivered them, and after that He educated them. While they were in Egypt, they were redeemed, and then they were rescued from Egypt. In the wilderness they enjoyed God's provision. Eventually, they arrived at Mount Sinai, where they received a divine education. At Mount Sinai God came in to sanctify certain ones among the children of Israel to be His priests.

A UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD

If we consider the entire revelation of the Scripture, we shall see that it was not God's intention to sanctify merely some of His redeemed ones to be priests. No, God's intention

was to sanctify all of His redeemed people for this purpose. This means that God intended for the whole people of Israel to be a kingdom of priests. Exodus 19:6 says, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." However, due to the degradation of the people, eleven tribes fell away. Therefore, God chose one of the twelve tribes, the tribe of Levi, to be His priests.

We should not think that God wants only some of His people to be sanctified as priests. On the contrary, God is sanctifying all believers in Christ to be His priests. For this reason, some Christian teachers speak of the New Testament priesthood as the universal priesthood. Because the priesthood is universal, there should not be some believers who are priests and others who are laymen. There should not be any clergy-laity system among New Testament believers. All those who believe in Christ, all the redeemed and saved ones, should be educated and sanctified to be priests of God. As revealed in the New Testament, God's desire is that all who have been redeemed in Christ should be His priests. This is spoken of not only in Revelation, but also in 1 Peter. First Peter 2:5 says, "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (lit.). Moreover, 1 Peter 2:9 says that the believers are a royal priesthood. This reveals that God's New Testament economy is to have all His redeemed people to be His priests.

A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SANCTIFICATION

Although the New Testament reveals clearly that all the redeemed ones should be God's priests, the New Testament does not provide a detailed description of how we may be priests serving God in a practical way. There is no detailed account in the New Testament of how we may actually be sanctified to serve God as priests. The New Testament tells us that God wants us to be priests, but it does not show us how to become priests. But in the Old Testament, specifically, in the book of Exodus, there is a chapter that gives

such a detailed description of the sanctification of God's priests. This chapter is Exodus 29. Concerning this, chapter twenty-nine of Exodus is precious. I can testify that I love this chapter very much.

In order to love anything it is necessary to have a proper appreciation of that thing. For example, in my home province in China there is a mountain known for yielding crystal used in making eye glasses. Outwardly, the stones containing this crystal are rough and uncomely. But if these stones are cut open, the high quality crystal within them can be seen. Only by having the proper appreciation of these stones can we value them. In the same principle, if we would have a love for chapter twenty-nine of Exodus, we must first come to appreciate this chapter. I believe that if you spend adequate time in this portion of the Word, you also will come to love it. It may be that after all these messages on Exodus 29, you will love this chapter as much as I do.

Why is Exodus 29 so precious? The preciousness of this chapter consists in its detailed description of how God's redeemed people can be sanctified to serve Him as priests. As we have pointed out, what this chapter describes is not ordination or even just consecration, but sanctification. The first verse of this chapter says, "And this is the thing which you shall do to them to sanctify them to serve as priests to Me." God commanded Moses to sanctify Aaron and his sons to serve as His priests.

Christians today are familiar with the words sanctify and sanctification. If we have a heart to seek a full sanctification in our experience, we must come to chapter twenty-nine of Exodus. This chapter is not only on the priesthood; in particular, it is a chapter on sanctification.

Sanctification is an important subject in theology. It may be as great in importance as justification. Among believers there are different schools of teaching concerning sanctification. What we need is an understanding of sanctification as described in Exodus 29. In these messages I shall try to give a brief sketch of the sanctification of the priests as portrayed in Exodus 29.

A THOROUGH CLEANSING

When Aaron and his sons were being sanctified to serve God as priests, they first had to realize that they were unclean, they were dirty, and they needed to be cleansed. It is not pleasant to realize that we are dirty and need a thorough cleansing. Physically speaking, uncleanness may come from two sources, one source from within us and the other from outside of us. On the one hand, we may come in contact with many things that cause us to become dirty. On the other hand, perspiration from within us also makes it necessary for us to bathe daily. Therefore, we become dirty, unclean, both from perspiration and from the outward touch with earthly things. In fact, it is not necessary to touch anything to get dirty, for we can be made dirty simply by what is in the atmosphere.

I use the matter of physical cleansing to illustrate the washing, the cleansing, that is part of the process of sanctification to serve as God's priests. Do you intend to be a priest serving God? If this is your intention, you must realize that you are dirty and that you need to wash. This is the reason in chapter twenty-nine the sanctification of Aaron and his sons to be priests of God begins with washing, with cleansing. Exodus 29:4 says, "And you shall bring Aaron and his sons near unto the door of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water." We need to wash away the uncleanness caused by perspiration and also the uncleanness which comes from the contact with the things on earth.

CLOTHED WITH PRIESTLY GARMENTS

After Aaron and his sons had been washed with water, they needed to be clothed with priestly garments. In order to serve God as priests, they had to be properly clothed. Their priestly garments can be compared to a uniform, official clothing worn for a specific purpose. The priestly garments not only covered the nakedness of Aaron and his sons; these garments also qualified them to fill the office of priest. Exodus 29:5 and 6 say, "And you shall take the garments, and clothe Aaron with the tunic, and the robe of the ephod,

and the ephod, and the breastplate; and you shall gird him with the band of the ephod. And you shall put the turban upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the turban." Verses 8 and 9 go on to say, "And you shall bring his sons near, and clothe them with tunics. And you shall gird them with a girdle, Aaron and his sons, and bind caps on them." These verses clearly indicate that in order to serve as priests, Aaron and his sons had to be clothed with the priestly garments.

As the high priest, Aaron wore several layers of clothing. The innermost layer was the breeches, a garment that covered the area from the loins to the knees, the most unclean part of the body. Then Aaron wore a tunic, which may be called the inner robe. Over the tunic he was clothed with an outer robe, the robe of the ephod. Then he put on the ephod and the breastplate. Here we have five layers: the breeches, the tunic, the robe, the ephod, and the breastplate. In addition, Aaron wore a covering on his head. As the priests, Aaron's sons wore the breeches, a tunic, and a head covering. By this we see that to serve as priests, we first need to have our uncleanness washed away, and then our nakedness needs to be covered with the priestly garments. It is important for us to realize that, as fallen human beings, we are unclean and also naked in the sight of God. Therefore to be God's priests we need to be washed and clothed.

THE NEED FOR REDEMPTION

Those who would serve God as priests must realize that they are unclean and need to be washed, and that they are naked and need to be clothed. Furthermore, we all must see that by our natural birth we are sin. Because we were born in sin, we have a nature of sin. By birth we are sinners, a composition, a constitution, of sin. Therefore, even though we have been washed and clothed and have solved the problems of uncleanness and nakedness, what about our fallen nature? Because we are sin by nature, we need to be redeemed.

The words redemption and redeemed are commonly used

by Christians. However, not many believers realize adequately that in the sight of God redemption includes three matters. First, it includes termination. Because we are sinners, we need to be terminated. After we have been terminated, we need to be redeemed, and what is redeemed needs to be restored. Therefore, we have termination, redemption itself, and restoration. How can all of this be accomplished? For this, we need Christ as our sin offering.

In Exodus 29 the sin offering is mentioned. According to this chapter, the sin offering was slaughtered, terminated, and then it was cut into pieces and burned. Hence, the entire sin offering was burned to ashes. The inward parts of this offering were burned on the altar; the remaining parts were burned outside the camp.

The sin offering in Exodus 29 typifies Christ. Christ has joined Himself to us, and now we join ourselves to Him. This joining is signified by Aaron and his sons laying their hands upon the head of the bull used in the sin offering. In this way they fully identified themselves with that offering. This means that by being identified with the sin offering, they too were slaughtered, cut in pieces, and burned. In Christ we have been terminated and reduced to ashes. In the sight of God, our old nature has become ashes. We have been utterly terminated.

Aaron and his sons were dirty and needed to be washed. They were naked in the sight of God and needed to be clothed. Now we see that they were sinful by nature and needed to be redeemed. Do you intend to be a priest serving God? If this is your intention, you need to be washed, you need to be clothed, and you need to be redeemed.

Redemption is by Christ as the sin offering. This redemption implies termination. God will not redeem anything sinful unless it is terminated. Therefore, in Christ we have been terminated. Nothing remains of our old nature except a heap of ashes.

THE BURNT OFFERING

In Exodus 29 we have not only the bull of the sin offering,

but we also have two rams, one for a burnt offering and the other for a peace offering. The burnt offering is different from the sin offering. The sin offering may be considered a sacrifice, but the burnt offering may be considered a gift. The sin offering is for redemption; the burnt offering is for fellowship. The peace offering is for enjoyment and satisfaction. On the one hand, we have been identified with the crucified Christ as our sin offering. On the other hand, we are also identified with the resurrected Christ. The bull in Exodus 29 typifies the crucified Christ; the two rams signify the resurrected Christ. The resurrected Christ is offered to God first as a burnt offering and then as a peace offering. As those who are being sanctified to serve God as priests, not only do we have Christ as the sin offering, but we also have Him as the burnt offering and the peace offering. He is the bull in crucifixion, and He is also the rams in resurrection.

The offerings for the sanctification of the priests are of two main categories. The first category is that of the animal life; the second category is that of the vegetable life. Regarding the animal life, there are the bull and the two rams. Regarding the vegetable life, there are the bread, the cake, and the wafer. In each category there are three items. Figuratively speaking, this number three signifies resurrection. Even when Christ was on the cross, He offered Himself in resurrection.

Christ is both the crucified One and the resurrected One. As such a crucified and resurrected One, He not only represents us, but also includes us. We are included in Him. Hence, when He was crucified, we were crucified in Him. When He was resurrected and presented to God, we were in Him.

The resurrected Christ is a burnt offering. The burnt offering is offered to God for His full satisfaction. The entire burnt offering was burned on the altar as a sweet savor to God. This is difficult to explain. From experience we know that when we are identified with Christ in His death, we have the realization that we have become a heap of ashes. Then, spontaneously, we are in resurrection. Here in resurrection Christ, our portion, is a ram offered to God as our

burnt offering to satisfy God in full. Therefore, in order to be priests, we need to be washed, clothed, and redeemed. Furthermore, we need Christ as the resurrected One to offer to God for His satisfaction.

THE PEACE OFFERING

The last step in the sanctifying of the priests is the offering of the second ram, the ram for a peace offering. The first step is to be washed; the second is to be clothed; the third is to present the bull as the sin offering; the fourth is to present the first ram as the burnt offering; and the fifth, the last, is to present the second ram as a peace offering.

The last part of 29:9 says, "You shall consecrate Aaron and his sons." Literally, the Hebrew rendered consecrate means "fill their hands." This is also the meaning in verses 29, 33, and 35. Therefore, to sanctify God's redeemed ones to be His priests requires the filling of their hands.

Many versions do not translate literally the Hebrew word which means to fill their hands. Some translations say consecrate; others even use the word ordain. Actually, what we have here is neither consecration nor ordination; it is the filling of the hands of the sanctified ones. Thus far, Aaron and his sons have been washed, clothed, and redeemed. These are the first three aspects of sanctification. They have also presented Christ as the burnt offering for God's full satisfaction. Therefore, their uncleanness has been taken away, their nakedness has been covered, their sinful nature has been dealt with, and they have offered Christ to God for His satisfaction. However, their hands are still empty. Even after all these four steps, they are still empty-handed. How can they serve God as priests if they are still empty-handed? In order to be priests serving God in a practical way, they need to have their hands filled.

We have seen that the washing, the clothing, and the presenting of the bull as the sin offering have solved three problems. The washing solves the problem of uncleanness, the clothing solves the problem of nakedness, and the presenting of the sin offering solves the problem of our sinful

nature. Furthermore, we have seen that the presenting of the burnt offering satisfies God and causes Him to be happy. When God smells the aroma of the burnt offering, He can say, "I am satisfied and happy." However, the priests, who are still empty-handed, might say, "O God, You are happy, but we are still hungry. Lord, we have nothing to fill our hands or our stomach. Yes, we have been cleansed and covered. Our sin has been taken away, and You are satisfied. But, Lord, we are still hungry." Because of this hunger, there is the need for the last step in the sanctification of the priests—the offering of the second ram.

Hallelujah for Christ as the second ram! This ram is not the sin offering to solve the problem of sin; neither is it the burnt offering to satisfy God. This ram is for the peace offering. The peace offering enables the priests to enjoy Christ with God. In other words, to have the peace offering is to be prepared to feast with God. The peace offering is for our feasting with God. In the following message we shall consider this offering in more detail.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(6)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:15-28; 40:14-15

REDEMPTION AND GERMINATION

We shall begin this message by considering some of the details of the peace offering described in Exodus 29. Verses 19 and 20 say, "And you shall take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands upon the head of the ram. And you shall slaughter the ram, and take of its blood, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the big toe of their right foot; and you shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about." Here we see that the blood of the ram was put upon the priests' ear, thumb, and big toe. This indicates that the organs used for hearing, working, and walking all need to be cleansed. Those who would be priests of God must learn to listen to Him. Then they will be able to work and walk according to what they hear from Him. As priests, we must have ears, hands, and feet that have been cleansed by the redeeming blood. We must learn how to listen to our Master, to our God, how to do what is required to serve Him, and how to walk according to His way in serving Him.

The greater part of the blood, according to verse 20, was sprinkled upon the altar. This sprinkling of the blood no doubt implies redemption. The shedding of blood requires the death of a certain living being. Here the sprinkling of the blood indicates that a living creature, a ram, has been slain. Regarding the sprinkling of the blood and the

anointing oil, verse 21 says, "And you shall take of the blood which is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him; and he shall be holy, he and his garments, and his sons and his sons' garments with him." Both the blood and the anointing oil were sprinkled upon the priests' garments. The blood implies termination and redemption, and the anointing oil implies germination, a new beginning. Whatever is terminated by the blood and redeemed by it is then germinated by the anointing oil. The priests as terminated, redeemed, and germinated ones could have a new beginning. As a result of this new beginning, they could be priests serving God.

GOD'S PORTION OF THE PEACE OFFERING

Even after Aaron and his sons had been terminated, redeemed, and germinated, their hands were still empty. They had been given a new beginning, and they could now serve God. However, they had nothing with which to serve Him. We all need to be impressed with this very important matter. It was at this point that the Lord gave Moses detailed instructions concerning the second ram. Verses 22 and 23 say, "And you shall take from the ram the fat, and the fat tail, and the fat that covers the inwards, and the appendage of the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat which is upon them, and the right shoulder; for it is a ram of the filling of hand; and one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer from the basket of unleavened bread which is before Jehovah." Here we read of the inward parts, the right shoulder, and the bread, the cake, and the wafer. If we read carefully verses 22 through 28, we shall see that there were two shoulders, or thighs, the right and the left, and two breasts, the right and the left. The thighs and the breasts were four major parts of the second ram, in addition to the inward parts, used for the peace offering.

Verses 24 and 25 say, "And you shall put the whole upon the palms of Aaron, and upon the palms of his sons; and wave

them as a wave offering before Jehovah. And you shall take them from their hand, and burn them on the altar upon the burnt offering for a sweet savor before Jehovah; it is an offering by fire to Jehovah." Now the priests had something to fill their hands, something to offer to God. These parts of the peace offering were burned on the altar as a sweet savor to the Lord. This was a further satisfaction to God. We have seen that the entire ram of the burnt offering was burned for God's satisfaction. Now part of the peace offering is also burned for this purpose. As we shall see, this indicates that God is eating Christ, feasting on Christ, with His priests.

THE WAVE OFFERING AND THE HEAVE OFFERING

Even though the priests had something to offer to God, they did not yet have anything to eat themselves. They were still hungry, still empty within. In verse 26 the Lord said to Moses, "And you shall take the breast from the ram of the filling of hand which is for Aaron, and wave it as a wave offering before Jehovah; and it shall be your portion." The word "wave" here indicates movement. This typifies Christ moving in His resurrection. In other words, the wave offering is a type of Christ in resurrection. Since the breast signifies love, the waving of the breast as a wave offering signifies the resurrected Christ in love.

According to the Gospels and the first part of Acts, the Christ who is now in resurrection came back to His disciples in love. His appearing to them after His resurrection was in an atmosphere of love. When the Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples in John 20, He said to them, "Peace be to you." This word was spoken in an atmosphere of love. The resurrected Christ comes to us in love. This wave offering, the offering that typifies the resurrected Christ in love, was given to Moses as his portion.

Two parts of the ram of the peace offering still remain: the left breast and the left shoulder, or thigh. Verses 27 and 28 say, "And you shall sanctify the breast of the wave offering, and the shoulder of the heave offering, which was waved and which was heaved up from the ram of the filling

of hand, from that which is for Aaron and from that which is for his sons. And it shall be for Aaron and for his sons for an eternal statute from the sons of Israel, because it is a heave offering; and it shall be a heave offering from the sons of Israel of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, as their heave offering to Jehovah." The heave offering signifies the exalted Christ, Christ in ascension. Thus, the wave offering signifies Christ in resurrection, and the heave offering signifies Christ in exaltation, in ascension. Furthermore, whereas the breast is a symbol of love, the shoulder is a symbol of strength, power. Christ in resurrection is with love, and Christ in ascension is with power. After He ascended to the heavens, Christ poured power upon His disciples. As their portion, the priests have the wave breast and the heave shoulder. This means that they enjoy Christ in resurrection with love and Christ in ascension with power. This is their portion for them to eat.

God had something to eat, Moses had something to eat, and all the priests had something to eat. God's portion was the right shoulder, the inward parts, the fat, the bread, the cake, and the wafer. The portion for Moses, the ministering one, was the right breast. The priests' portion was the left breast as a wave offering and the left shoulder as a heave offering. This indicates that all these parties—God, Moses, and the priests—were involved in feasting. When there is such a feasting, there is peace, and everyone is satisfied. God is satisfied, Moses is satisfied, and all the priests are satisfied, for they all enjoy Christ, the all-inclusive One. Praise the Lord for this picture!

If our hands are filled with Christ according to the picture in Exodus 29, we shall be able to say, "Our hands are full of Christ, and our inward being is also full of Him." This is the filling of hands, and this is true sanctification.

FULLY SANCTIFIED

Now we can see that the priests were fully sanctified. They were separated to God from uncleanness, from nakedness, and from their sinful nature. Furthermore, no longer

were they empty-handed or empty within. They had all the aspects of the rich Christ to be the mark of their sanctification. They now bore a mark which separated them unto God and which indicated that they had been sanctified from uncleanness, nakedness, sin, empty-handedness, and hunger. No longer did they have any problem of uncleanness, nakedness, sin, emptiness, or hunger. Instead, they had Christ as their clothing and food. Now they were sanctified and qualified priests.

In the Scripture sanctification implies many things. It includes washing away our uncleanness, covering our nakedness with proper clothing, redeeming us from our sinful nature, and filling us with Christ. Those who have been sanctified in this way truly are marked out, set aside, separate, from what is common.

When Aaron and his sons were sanctified to serve as priests, they were separated from uncleanness, from nakedness, from the sinful nature, from being empty-handed, and from being hungry. They bore as a sanctifying mark the all-inclusive Christ. They could satisfy God, and God could satisfy them. Thus, they enjoyed a mutual feasting on Christ with God. In this feasting there were enjoyment and satisfaction. This is the filling of the hands of the priests, and this is the sanctification of the redeemed ones to be God's priests.

God's portion of the second ram included the right shoulder. The left shoulder and the left breast were given to the ministering priests, and the right breast was Moses' portion. The bread, the cake, and the wafer were only for God to enjoy. Furthermore, the inward parts and the fat were absolutely for God's enjoyment. The inward parts and the fat signify what Christ is in His being. In His inner being Christ is altogether sweet. With Him there is the rich fat. The riches and sweetness of Christ are not outward; rather, they are within Him. In the sight of God, the inward being of Christ is rich and sweet. The inward parts and the fat of the peace offering were surely the topmost holy gifts.

In a previous message we spoke of a fourfold holiness: the

holy land, the holy produce, the holy tithe, and the topmost holy part offered entirely to God for His enjoyment and satisfaction. The inward parts and the fat of the second ram were the most holy things among the holy things. Furthermore, the bread, the cake, and the wafer were among these most holy things. This topmost portion of the most holy things is what Christ is in His inward being. The bread, the cake, and the wafer signify Christ in His outward behavior. All these items typify Christ's behavior. What Christ is inwardly is entirely for God's satisfaction, and Christ's conduct and behavior outwardly are also a holy portion for God's satisfaction.

What I have presented thus far is simply a very brief sketch as a hint related to the experience and enjoyment of Christ. I have the assurance that if you are faithful to pursue the experience of Christ, you will come to realize that Christ's inner being is rich and sweet and that His outward conduct and behavior are precious. But these holy portions are only for God to enjoy; they are absolutely for His satisfaction. According to Exodus 29, these portions are offered by those who have been sanctified to serve God as priests. After this process of sanctification, we may present such a portion to God.

We have seen that sanctification includes being washed and clothed, being redeemed, offering the first ram as the burnt offering, and the second ram as a peace offering. Hallelujah for such a sanctification! After we have been sanctified in this way, we are filled up with Christ and qualified to serve God as priests. We are covered with Christ outwardly, and we are filled with Him inwardly. Therefore, we have the qualifications to serve God as His priests. Moreover, we have something in our hands with which to serve Him: the all-inclusive Christ as the topmost holy portion for God's satisfaction. There is also a portion of Christ for us. All this is included in the peace offering. In the priestly service we enjoy a peaceful feasting on Christ with God.

FEASTING ON CHRIST

In Exodus 29 we have a negative picture of what we are

without Christ and outside of Christ. Apart from Christ we are unclean, naked, sinful, empty, and without anything to satisfy God or ourselves. Although they have been saved, many Christians, under the influence of superficial preaching and teaching, do not know the goal of their salvation. From Exodus 29 we see that we have been saved so that we may be sanctified to serve God as priests. As revealed in this chapter, sanctification includes being washed and clothed. It also includes redemption, which solves the problem of our sinful nature, and having our hands filled with something to satisfy God and ourselves. This last aspect of sanctification—feasting on Christ—involves saturation and transformation. Eventually, we are saturated by what we eat and transformed by it. The priests do not eat ordinary food. Instead, they have a priestly diet and eat priestly food. Their food, as typified by the offerings, is Christ. Eventually, the priests were constituted of the food they ate, for we always become what we eat.

When I was a child, my maternal grandparents lived by the sea, and they ate a great deal of fish. I remember visiting them and being surprised that they smelled of fish. When I asked my mother about this, she rebuked me and said, "Don't you know that they eat fish every day? They smell like fish because they eat fish three times a day." This is an illustration of the fact that eating is related to saturation and transformation. We are saturated and transformed by what we eat.

Because the priests ate the offerings, they were not merely sanctified positionally, but were also sanctified dispositionally. They were separated in position, and they were also transformed in disposition.

Before they were sanctified, the priests were not clean. Therefore, they needed to be washed by Christ with His word as signified by the living water. Because they were naked in the sight of God, they needed to be covered by Christ as their clothing. With this clothing we see glory in divinity and beauty in humanity. The priests, therefore, were richly clothed with Christ in all His riches. Because they were clothed in such a way, their nakedness was

covered. Furthermore, although they were sinful in nature, their fallen nature was terminated in Christ as their sin offering. Hence, three negative problems were dealt with: the problems of uncleanness, nakedness, and sinfulness. However, the priests were still empty, having nothing to satisfy God or themselves.

On the positive side, the priests had the resurrected Christ typified by the two rams. The first ram was a burnt offering absolutely for God's satisfaction. With the burnt offering the priest had something to offer to God. Toward God, therefore, they now were rich, for they had Christ in resurrection as the burnt offering to ascend to God for His satisfaction. They also had Christ in resurrection as the wave offering and in ascension as the heave offering to satisfy themselves as well as God. Thus, there was a mutual satisfaction through the peace offering. The priests could enjoy peace and find satisfaction. Now they had their hands filled with Christ. They had something that could satisfy God and themselves. They could be satisfied with Christ in resurrection as the wave offering of love and Christ in ascension as the heave offering of power. As a result, the priests were empowered and qualified to serve God. This is sanctification. All believers in Christ should be sanctified in this way.

A COMPLETE VIEW OF SANCTIFICATION

If we understand Exodus 29, we shall have a proper understanding of the significance of sanctification in the New Testament. In Exodus 29 we have a picture of the sanctification spoken of in the New Testament. Now when we read about sanctification in the New Testament, we should have the view of Exodus 29 in front of us and understand New Testament sanctification according to this view.

Sanctification means that we are washed, clothed, redeemed, and filled. We are filled inwardly with Christ in such a way that we are saturated and transformed. As a result, our uncleanness is removed, our nakedness is covered, our sinfulness is dealt with, and our emptiness is

filled. Outwardly we now have something of Christ to satisfy God, and inwardly we have something of Christ to satisfy ourselves. What we eat of Christ eventually saturates us and transforms us. In this way we are fully sanctified, equipped, qualified, and empowered to serve God as His priests. This is the full meaning of sanctification in the Scriptures.

We all need a richer, broader view of sanctification. Never underestimate the value of seeing a proper view of a certain matter. The view changes us; it affects our entire being. This is true both in the physical realm and in the spiritual realm. I love Exodus 29 because of the wonderful view it gives us of the sanctification of the priests.

When Aaron first stood before Moses, he had nothing. Moses, however, had been charged to sanctify him, that is, to equip, qualify, and empower him to serve God as a priest. First Aaron was washed with water. This water signifies Christ with His word. Then he was clothed with the priestly garments. This signifies the various aspects of Christ for glory and beauty. Following this, Aaron was redeemed by Christ as the sin offering. By means of this offering Aaron was terminated, brought back to God, and restored. In order for this to take place, he had to be identified with Christ, one with Him, as indicated by the laying of hands on the sin offering. Then Aaron had Christ in resurrection as the burnt offering ascending to God for His satisfaction. He also had Christ as the peace offering, the second ram plus the bread, the cake, and the wafer. Moreover, he had Christ in resurrection as a wave offering of love and as a heave offering in ascension in His power. This offering satisfied both God and man. Christ in His conduct is signified by the bread, the cake, and the wafer, an offering to satisfy God. God is satisfied with such a Christ, and we also are satisfied with Him. Not only are we satisfied with Christ—we are saturated with Him and transformed by Him.

The burnt offering typifies the objective Christ who ascends to God for His satisfaction. The peace offering signifies

the subjective Christ who comes into us to satisfy us, saturate us, and transform us, thereby making us another kind of person, one who is no longer unclean, naked, sinful, empty, and natural, but one who has something in his hands to satisfy God, who is filled inwardly with Christ, and who is transformed by Him. This is to be sanctified to be priests serving God. This sanctification is not only for Aaron and his sons; it is for all of God's saved and redeemed people. We all should be sanctified in this way to serve God as priests.

One matter we especially need to see is that of saturation and transformation. By eating Christ as the peace offering we are saturated with Him and transformed by Him and therefore are no longer natural. When the breast of the wave offering and the shoulder of the heave offering are taken into us, we are saturated and transformed. When Christ as the ram of the peace offering gets into us in this way, we are constituted of Him to become a ram.

Exodus 29 is unique in the picture it presents. Here we see that the right shoulder of the peace offering was given to God, that the right breast was given to Moses, and that the left breast and the left shoulder were given to the priests. The inward parts and the fat of the sin offering and also the bread, the cake, and the wafer of the peace offering were God's portion. This indicates that God enjoys Christ's inward being and outward behavior. These were the topmost holy things offered to God. We thus have the holy land, the holy produce, the holy tithe, and the holiest part of the tithe as the top portion for God's enjoyment.

If we serve as priests, we enjoy Christ with God. This enjoyment is portrayed by the peace offering. In peace there are mutual enjoyment and satisfaction for God and His priests. This is a picture of the church life, in particular of the church meetings. In the meetings of the church all the priests meet with God and feast on Christ with God.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-NINE

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(7)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:29-46

A CONCLUSION

Exodus 29:29-46 is actually the conclusion of chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine. Chapter twenty-eight is on the priestly garments, and chapter twenty-nine is mainly on the priests' food. The priests are qualified by having the proper clothing and food. Not only does 29:29-46 give us a conclusion of these chapters; it also presents a brief sketch concerning the priests' garments and their food and also God's food. Verses 29 through 42a contain statutes concerning the holy garments of the high priest (vv. 29-30), the holy food for the priests (vv. 31-34), and the daily offerings of the filling of hands of the priests (vv. 35-42a). Thus, after the revelation regarding the garments of the priests, the food of the priests, and God's food, Moses gives us a brief sketch of the statutes concerning the priestly garments and the food for the priests and God. We need to be impressed that these statutes are related to three matters—to the priests' garments, to the priests' food, and to God's food.

In verses 42b through 46 we have the result, the issue, of all these things. The result is that God comes to meet with the priests, to speak with them, and even to dwell among them and among all the sons of Israel. Verse 42 speaks of the door of the tent of meeting where the Lord will meet with us to speak with us. The following verses say, "And I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by My

glory. And I will sanctify the tent of meeting and the altar, and Aaron and his sons I will sanctify to serve as priests to Me. And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will be their God. And they shall know that I am Jehovah their God, Who brought them out from the land of Egypt that I might dwell in their midst; I am Jehovah their God." According to these verses, the result of having the priestly garments, the priestly food, and the food offered to God by the priests is that God comes to meet with us, speak with us, and dwell among us.

If we do not pay adequate attention to this brief sketch, we shall not be able to understand these verses. In fact, the more we read this portion of the Word, the less we shall understand it. This was my experience in reading these verses years ago. If we try to read and study this portion without a brief sketch and a knowledge of its conclusion, we shall have difficulty with these verses. It is not easy to see the real significance of these verses.

Suppose you receive a lengthy letter from your parents, a letter several pages long. You may find it difficult to grasp the emphasis or the central point of this letter. You may read it through carefully a number of times and still not see the main point. This is an illustration of our difficulty in understanding Exodus 28 and 29. We may read these chapters even twenty times and still may not be able to point out in a brief way what is revealed in these chapters. Of course, many can talk about these chapters according to letters in black and white. They may say, correctly, that chapter twenty-eight speaks of the clothing of the priests and that chapter twenty-nine tells us that Aaron and his sons need to be sanctified in order to serve as priests. However, how were Aaron and his sons sanctified to serve God as priests? Can you explain clearly and definitely the way they were sanctified?

The sanctification of Aaron and his sons to be priests involves a number of steps: the washing away of uncleanness, the covering of nakedness by the priestly garments, the dealing with the sinful nature through the sin offering,

and the filling of their emptiness. First Aaron and his sons had to be washed and clothed. Then they needed to realize that they were born in sin, that they had a sinful nature, and that they needed a sin offering to solve this problem. But even after they had been cleansed and clothed and had offered the sin offering, they were still empty. They had nothing to satisfy God or themselves. Therefore, they needed not only the outward filling of their hands, but also the inward filling of their stomachs. To be sanctified they needed the four steps of washing, clothing, dealing with the sinful nature, and filling without and within.

Before these messages on Exodus 28 and 29 were given, did you see these four steps of the sanctification of the priests? I doubt that any of us were clear about these matters. Furthermore, even after reading these messages, some still may not be able to recall these four points. Therefore, I urge you to remember the four steps necessary to sanctify Aaron and his sons to be priests of God: the washing away of uncleanness, the covering of their nakedness, the dealing with their sinful nature, and the filling of their emptiness.

GOD'S DESIRE TO DWELL AMONG US

In this message we come to 29:29-46, the conclusion of chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine. Even though we may now understand the steps in sanctifying Aaron and his sons to be priests, we may not understand how to apply these steps to the conclusion. In other words, we may not realize that these chapters have a goal. What is the goal of Exodus 28 and 29? Some may think that the goal is to sanctify God's redeemed ones to be His priests. However, this sanctification is a procedure; it is not the goal.

I realize that it is not easy to understand the goal of Exodus 28 and 29. Not only do we find it difficult to grasp the significance of certain parts of the Bible; we have the same difficulty in reading spiritual books or even in reading a letter. Recently, I received a letter from a believer who told me how much he had been helped by *The Economy of God*.

He further told me that he had devoured a number of other books put out by the Living Stream Ministry and had been nourished and helped by them. However, his letter indicated that actually he did not have the proper understanding of much of what he had read. This is an illustration of our difficulty in understanding spiritual matters.

For this reason, my speaking is often repetitious. We need to have certain things repeated again and again. The Bible itself is often repetitious. For instance, in the New Testament we are told repeatedly to believe in Jesus Christ. How many times does the New Testament charge us to believe in Christ? There can be no doubt that this is repeated again and again. The reason for such repetition is that we have dull, stubborn ears. We hear, yet we often do not understand.

Let me ask once again, what is the goal of chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine of Exodus? As we have pointed out, the goal is found in 29:42b-46. This goal is God's coming to speak with us, to meet with us, and to dwell among us. God does not want merely to pay us a visit; He desires to dwell among us. Verse 42 says that the Lord will meet with us and speak with us. In verses 45 and 46 the Lord says that He will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel. God first says that He will meet with us, then that He will speak with us, and eventually that He will dwell in our midst. This indicates that God's dwelling among us depends on His speaking to us and on our speaking to Him. In other words, it depends on the conversation between us and God. Our speaking may keep Him away, or it may encourage Him to dwell with us.

In these verses God seems to be saying, "I want to dwell with you and not just visit with you for a short time. My intention is to dwell among you. Thus, I want to come to you and talk with you to see how you are and where you are. My desire is to have among you a tent of meeting. The tents in which you dwell are not the tent of meeting, but My tent, the tabernacle, is the tent of meeting. The goal of having the priestly garments, the priestly food, and even

the food offered to Me is that I may meet with you and dwell among you."

INVITING GOD TO DINNER

I would like to use an everyday illustration to impress you with the significance of the goal of Exodus 28 and 29 as revealed in 29:42b-46. These chapters actually tell us how to invite God to dinner. From our experience of being invited to dinner or of inviting others to our home for dinner, we can understand something of what it means to invite God to dinner. Often saints have asked me to give them a time for fellowship. On a number of occasions, I had to tell them that I could not spare the time. Their strategy then was to invite me to their home for dinner. Actually, it was not their intention to feed me a good meal out of love; it was to create an opportunity to have a time to speak with me. They knew that if I accepted the invitation to dinner, they would have the time they were seeking. Thus, their invitation was their strategy to have time alone with me. The point here is that by inviting someone to your home for a meal, you give that person the opportunity to open himself to you and to have fellowship with you.

In the matter of inviting God to come to dinner, there is no need for strategy. God is very willing to accept our invitation. In fact, He Himself has proposed that we invite Him to dinner. Chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine of Exodus reveal that God wants us to invite Him to dinner, that He wants to come and eat with us. However, in order for Him to come, we need to make the necessary preparations.

Preparing to have dinner with God can be illustrated by the Chinese custom of preparing to receive an honored guest for dinner. First, the hosts need to bathe, get a haircut if necessary, and dress in their best clothes. Also, the house must be thoroughly cleaned, and the yard must be swept. If such preparations are not made, the hosts would despise their honorable guest. The more honorable the

guest, the more complete and thorough the preparation must be. It may even be necessary to freshly paint certain parts of the house. Then, of course, the best food must be prepared. This preparation should involve a variety of food: fruit, vegetables, fish, fowl, and meat. There would be the need for both salt-water fish and fresh-water fish. Furthermore, there should be some imported foods, famous foods from places far away, even from other countries. All these food items would then be put together in preparing a feast for the honored guest.

The host has a goal in issuing an invitation to an honored guest and in making thorough preparations. This goal is that, while enjoying the feast, the honored guest will be induced to open himself and speak freely with the host and his family. If the honored guest engages in a conversation in such a way, the host will be happy, considering that it was worthwhile to spend so much time and money to prepare for that occasion. He had attained his purpose in inviting that honored guest to his home for dinner.

This illustration helps us to understand Exodus 28 and 29. In these chapters the priests are the hosts, the ones inviting the honored guest. They are sanctified in order to receive this guest for dinner. Aaron, the high priest, is like the father in the host family, and his sons, the priests, may be compared to the children in this family. All together they are serving the Lord as their honorable guest. All the steps of their sanctification are for the purpose of having the Lord come to dinner.

In this country some who invite a guest for dinner may not be thoroughly prepared when the time comes to receive their guest. For example, they may not be wearing proper shoes. But according to Exodus 28 and 29 and the illustration given above, we should be washed and properly covered.

I use this illustration to show that these two chapters reveal the proper way to invite God to come to dwell with us. His coming, speaking, and dwelling are related to our eating together with Him. When people share a meal together, they

often converse in a loving, intimate way. This is also true of God's meeting with us.

GOD DRINKS

Recently it has occurred to me that, according to the Bible, God drinks. I have even been considering the need for a tract entitled "God Drinks." Exodus 29:40 and 41 mention the drink offering. This drink offering was not for the priests. Rather, it was altogether for God. Thus, because the drink offering was poured out for God, we can rightly say that God drinks. Not only does God eat, but He also drinks! According to Exodus 29, we should not only serve God with food, but we should also give Him something to drink. We need to pour out the drink offering for Him to drink. Eventually, we should serve Him with both food and the wine of the drink offering.

THE GOAL OF SANCTIFICATION

Have you ever imagined that Exodus 28 and 29 reveal the proper way to invite God for dinner? These chapters reveal what we must do to have God meet with us, speak with us, eat with us, and, eventually, dwell among us. This is the goal of the sanctification of Aaron and his sons to be priests.

Suppose a Chinese family is preparing to have an honored guest for dinner. While they are busy cleaning the house, sweeping the yard, and cooking the food, others may ask them what they are doing. Certainly the members of this family would not say that all this preparation is an end in itself. No, the goal of cleaning is not cleaning, and the goal of cooking is not cooking. The reason for all this preparation is that an honored guest is coming. Those in this family may say, "Do you know why we are so busy cleaning, sweeping, and cooking? The reason is that the mayor is coming for dinner tonight." The goal of all their preparation is to receive such an honored guest.

In like manner, we have a goal in being washed and clothed. Our goal is to receive God for dinner. Why do we need to be sanctified to serve God as priests? We need all

the steps of sanctification because God is coming for dinner, and we must be ready to serve Him. Furthermore, we shall eat with Him.

When we have a guest in our home, on the one hand, we serve him, and, on the other hand, we eat with him. First we give the guest the best portion of the food, and then we all enjoy the meal together. We also give the honored guest something to drink. Our goal is that our guest, the Lord Himself, will then open Himself to us, speak freely with us, and then decide to stay with us and dwell with us. Is this not a wonderful exposition of Exodus 28 and 29? If we see this goal, the reason for all the steps in the sanctification of the priests, we shall understand what is revealed in these chapters.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FORTY

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(8)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:29-46

We have pointed out that 29:29-46 is a brief sketch of chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine of Exodus. The first aspect of this sketch consists of statutes concerning the holy garments of the high priests. Verses 29 and 30 say, "And the holy garments which are for Aaron shall be for his sons after him, to be anointed in them and to fill their hands in them. Seven days shall the son that is priest in his stead put them on, when he comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place." These verses speak only of the garments worn by the high priest, first by Aaron and then by his sons, his descendants, after him. This word was to apply to all the coming generations. It applied to Aaron, then to his son, and after that to his grandson. There could, of course, be only one high priest at a time. When Aaron died, Eleazar his son succeeded him as high priest.

ANOINTED IN THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS

Concerning the holy garments, verse 29 says that Aaron and his sons were to be anointed in them and to have their hands filled in them. The phrase "in them" means in the priestly garments. In order to have the anointing and the filling of hands, the high priest had to be clothed with the holy garments. In other words, if he were not properly clothed, he would not be qualified to be anointed.

God cannot anoint anyone who is naked. Neither can He fill the hands of such a one. This is the reason, as we have already seen, that in the sanctification of the priests we first have the washing and then the covering of their nakedness. If we are spiritually naked in the sight of God, He will stay away from us. Anyone who was not properly clothed could never enter into the Holy of Holies to appear before God. Anyone who came into God's dwelling place had to be fully covered. Now we see that in order for the high priest to be anointed and to have his hands filled, he had to first be clothed with the holy garments.

This principle also applies to us as priests in the church life today. Do you intend to serve in the church as a priest? If this is your intention, you need to be anointed and filled. However, you must be anointed and filled in the priestly garments. At this point, we need to recall that these garments typify different aspects of Christ. Hence, to be clothed with the priestly garments is to be fully covered by Christ and with Christ. Once we are covered by Christ, we are qualified to be anointed.

Today many Christians either neglect the Holy Spirit, or they speak of the Spirit in a strange way. This is the reason I cannot agree with today's Pentecostalism. Many in Pentecostalism do not experience a genuine anointing, because they are not properly covered with Christ. Actually there is no need for us to pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If we are covered with Christ in a proper way, the anointing is ours. It comes automatically. I can testify of this from my experience. For a period of time many years ago, I adopted the practice of speaking in tongues. But after more than a year, I fully abandoned that practice. I can testify that I have more spiritual power today than I did when I spoke in tongues. But many who claim to have the power of the Spirit actually have nothing more than a phantom. Their experience and their work are not lasting.

Not only were the high priests anointed in the holy garments, but they had to be clothed with these garments in order to have their hands filled. This indicates that we need

to be covered with Christ, and then we can have our hands filled with Him.

WEARING THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS SEVEN DAYS

Verse 30 says that the high priest who serves in Aaron's stead must wear the holy garments seven days when he comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place. I have spent much time to understand the meaning of this verse. This verse means that whenever we touch the service of God, even if only for a day, we need to wear the priestly garments for seven days. Seven days signifies a full course of time. Therefore, when we touch the service of God, we need to wear Christ in various aspects for a full course of time.

Let us apply this matter of wearing Christ a full course of time in a very practical way. In particular, let us apply it to the church meetings. When we come to a meeting, perhaps on the Lord's Day, we may have the desire to serve God as priests. However, if we would be proper priests serving God, we cannot do this simply by putting on Christ in an instant way. On the contrary, we must wear Christ as the priestly garments a full course of time. This is to live Christ day by day for seven days, that is, for a full course of time.

God's service is not merely for a day; it is for our entire Christian life. Our whole Christian life, from the time we are saved until the Lord's coming back, is the full course of time signified by the seven days in verse 30. Therefore, we need to wear Christ for the full course of our life on earth.

Some of those reading this word may remember that on another occasion I said that, by applying the Lord's blood to our situation, we can function in the church meetings, even if during the day we have failed the Lord, for example, by losing our temper. Yes, I did say that through the cleansing of the blood of Christ we can have a peaceful conscience to praise the Lord in the meetings. But such a service is of another category from the priestly service. If we live Christ day by day, wearing Him in His different aspects throughout the course of our

Christian life, and then come to the meeting to function as a priest, that is one kind of service. But if we merely apply the Lord's blood just prior to coming to the meetings to cleanse us of our failures and weaknesses, we can serve Him, but in a category different from priestly service.

The Lord knows what is the basis of our service in the church life. He can discern our situation. Furthermore, the experienced saints also know the basis of our service. Is the basis a life of constantly wearing Christ, a life of wearing Him a full course of time, or is it the instant wearing of Christ? Of course, it is better to wear Christ instantly than not to wear Him at all. But it is far better to wear Christ constantly.

Wearing Christ instantly to the Lord's table meeting may be compared to a person quickly putting on his suit coat and necktie for a special occasion. But wearing Christ constantly can be compared to a person who wears a coat and tie all day long. In the latter case, the wearing of these clothes is part of his living. Those who wear Christ constantly and then come to the meetings of the church to serve have depth, weight, and riches.

Exodus 29:31-42a is concerned with the holy food for the priests (vv. 31-34) and for the daily offerings of the filling of hands of the priests (vv. 35-42a). In chapter twenty-nine God's food is described first. We are first told of the burnt offering, of the right shoulder of the ram of the peace offering, and of the bread, the cake, and the wafer, all of which were burned to be God's food. Then this chapter goes on to speak about the food of the priests. In the conclusion, however, the priest's food is mentioned first. The reason is that the conclusion is practical. In actual practice, we need to be clothed, and then we need to be satisfied. We cannot serve God with an empty stomach. First we need to be fed. Then we shall serve God, not out of our emptiness, but out of that with which we are filled. Therefore, this part of Exodus 29 first takes care of the priests' food and then takes care of God's food.

Verse 31 says, "And you shall take the ram of the filling of hands and boil its flesh in a holy place." The ram here is

not the first ram, the ram of the burnt offering, but the second ram, the ram of the peace offering. The first ram was burned wholly for God's satisfaction. No part of it was for the priests. Of the second ram, the ram of the filling of hands, the right shoulder was burned for God, and the right breast was given to Moses as his portion. The priests, Aaron and his sons, were given the left breast and the left shoulder. The left breast was a wave offering, and the left shoulder was a heave offering. The portions of the second ram given to Moses and the priests are denoted by the word flesh in verse 31.

ENJOYING CHRIST IN THE HOLY PLACE

According to verse 31, the flesh of this ram was boiled in a holy place. God's portion is not boiled; it is burned. Remember that the Passover lamb had to be burned, not boiled. What is the difference in spiritual significance between boiling and burning? Burning implies God's judgment. Anything offered to God for His enjoyment must be judged by Him; that is, it must be burned by His holy fire. Although God's food was burned, the priests' food was boiled. It was not necessary for their food to be judged. Burning implies judgment, but boiling does not imply judgment. Therefore, the breast and the shoulder of the second ram, given to the priests as food, were boiled.

The priests' portion of the second ram was boiled in a holy place, which must have been in the court of the tabernacle; and the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, is a type of the church. The children of Israel enjoyed the produce of the good land in the way of first laboring in the holy land. Then they reaped an abundant harvest. They were allowed to enjoy much of this harvest anywhere. The holy land is a type of Christ, and the harvest signifies the riches of Christ. Therefore, the children of Israel enjoying the harvest anywhere indicates that the children of God can enjoy the riches of Christ in any place. However, the children of Israel did not have the right to enjoy the top tenth of the harvest in the place of their choice. That portion, the tithe, had to be set aside and kept for the feasts.

At the time of the feasts, they were to bring this top tenth, this tithe, to Zion. A part of this tithe was offered to God. Among the things offered to God were the two rams. One ram was for God, and a portion of the other was for the priests. Not only was this second ram eaten only in Zion; it had to be eaten in the holy court. This signifies that this portion of Christ is to be enjoyed in the church life.

This ram was the topmost portion. It was the top part of the tithe of the harvest produced in the holy land. The tithe was the topmost part of the harvest, and of this tithe a part was taken for the priests. Numbers 18:26 says that of the tenth offered by the children of Israel from their harvest, a tenth was separated for the priests. From this we see that the food of the priests was the topmost portion among the top tenth.

Yes, you can enjoy Christ in every place. However, the Christ you enjoy in other places will not be nearly as rich as the Christ you enjoy in a church meeting. Some say, "Why must we attend the church meetings in order to enjoy Christ? This concept is too narrow. Can't we meet at home and enjoy the Lord?" You certainly can enjoy Christ in your living room with a few other believers. But that enjoyment is different from the enjoyment of Christ at the Lord's table meeting in the church. To enjoy Christ in the church meeting is to enjoy Him in the Holy Place.

The holy land is itself a holy place. However, with believers there is a difference of degree. The holy land, the holy mountain of Zion, and the holy court of the tabernacle are all holy places. Nevertheless, the degree of holiness differs. In what kind of holy place are you? Are you in the holy land, on the holy mountain, or in the holy court?

The Lord Jesus promised that if even two or three are gathered together in His name, He will be among them (Matt. 18:20). Therefore, some may argue, "In our living room we have many more than two or three meeting together. Isn't Christ among us?" Yes, Christ is with you in your living room. But that is Christ in the holy land, not on the holy mountain, much less in the holy court.

Let me give some further illustrations. You may be in a worldly place and still have some enjoyment of Christ. In addition, you may attend an evangelistic campaign conducted by a particular group of Christians and enjoy Christ there. You may also attend the Lord's table meeting in the church and enjoy Christ. Here we have three kinds of enjoyment of Christ: the enjoyment in a worldly place, the enjoyment in an evangelistic campaign, and the enjoyment at the Lord's table meeting. Are these kinds of enjoyment of Christ the same? No, they are not. The holy food for the priests must be boiled and eaten by the priests in a holy place. This holy place is not merely the holy land or the holy mountain; it is in the holy court of the tent of meeting. Therefore, the church meeting is the place to have the topmost enjoyment of Christ. In the meetings we enjoy the best portion of Christ. Thus, Exodus 29:32 says, "And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread which is in the basket, at the door of the tent of meeting. "

Verse 33 goes on to say, "And they shall eat those things by which propitiation was made to fill their hands to sanctify them; but a stranger shall not eat them, for they are holy." The holy food was only for the priests, not for strangers. This holy food was to be eaten by holy people in a holy place.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST BEFORE HIS COMING BACK

Concerning the holy food for the priests, verse 34 concludes, "And if any of the flesh of the filling of hands and of the bread remain until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire; it shall not be eaten, for it is holy." In typology what does it mean that the flesh and the bread were to be eaten before morning? This means that we need to experience Christ before His coming back. We should not say, "Let me forget about the enjoyment of Christ today. I certainly shall enjoy Him when He comes back." To do this is to keep the flesh of the second ram until the morning. The morning in typology is the Lord's coming back.

This also indicates that we should not save Christ for

enjoyment in the future. Do not open a spiritual savings account to keep the enjoyment of Christ for a later time. Instead, we should consume what we have of Christ. Do not save Christ for the future. Do not allow the flesh of the second ram to remain until morning. According to verse 34, the flesh that remained was to be burned, even though it had already been boiled. This means that it was then to be for God's enjoyment. If we try to save Christ, God will say, "Instead of saving that portion of Christ, offer it to Me and let Me eat it. If you don't enjoy Christ, let Me enjoy Him for you. Let what remains become My portion." This is the significance of the flesh and the bread not remaining until the morning and the remainder being burned with fire.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-ONE

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(9)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:29-46

We have seen a clear picture of the steps by which Aaron and his sons were sanctified to serve God as priests. First they were washed, then they were clothed, and after that they were satisfied by having their emptiness filled. They were washed with water, they were clothed with the priestly garments, and they were satisfied with holy food. These three categories of things—the water, the garments, and the food, the offerings—are all types of Christ. After Aaron and his sons had been washed, clothed, and satisfied, they were ready to serve God. In other words, they were ready to minister food to Him. We may say that the priests were waiters bringing food to God and serving it to Him. They did not serve God anything other than the proper food for Him.

MINISTERING FOOD TO GOD

Actually the sanctification described in Exodus 29 includes four steps. The first three steps, being washed, being clothed, and being satisfied, took care of the need of the priests. The fourth step, ministering Christ to God as food for God's satisfaction, was related to God's need. To be a priest is to serve God, to minister Christ to Him for His satisfaction. Therefore, being a priest involves three steps related to the priests themselves and another step related to God's satisfaction. This means that even after Aaron and his sons had been washed, clothed, and satisfied, they were not yet qualified to serve as priests. They still needed the

offerings with which to serve God, offerings to be ministered to God as food. Only when this step had been accomplished was their sanctification completed.

As God's people, we all have been redeemed. However, being redeemed is not sufficient to qualify us to serve God as priests. At most, redemption gives us the right and the position to be sanctified to serve God as priests. Therefore, after redemption, we need sanctification. This sanctification comprises four steps: being washed, being clothed, being satisfied, and serving God with food. In this message we shall consider the fourth and last step.

In chapter twenty-nine of Exodus the most difficult matter to grasp is that of the priests serving God with food for His satisfaction. In contrast, it is rather easy to understand the priests being washed, clothed, and satisfied. As we have pointed out, the left breast and the left shoulder of the second ram were given to the priests as their portion for their enjoyment. Along with these parts of the second ram, the priests were also given bread from the basket which also contained bread for God's food. Therefore, the priests could enjoy both meat and bread. This can be compared to the Lord Jesus using five loaves and two fishes to feed the multitude. In both cases the people were fed with meat and bread. The priests' diet, therefore, was quite simple.

When we come to ministering food to God, it is much more complicated. Because God is not simple, serving food to Him is likewise not simple. For example, it is rather easy for a mother to prepare a meal for her child. However, the preparation would be much more complicated if the governor of the state were coming to her home for dinner. She certainly could not feed him in the same way that she would feed a small child. In the same principle, feeding God is much more complicated than feeding the priests.

GOD'S FOOD

We need to be impressed with the courses, the "dishes" served to God as His food. The first course was a bull for a sin offering. This was followed by two lambs a year old,

fresh, young, vigorous, and full of strength. Then there was a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil. The quantity of oil was a fourth of a hin, that is, approximately a quart. The flour and oil were mingled to become the meal offering. Furthermore, there was "a fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering" (v. 40). The quantity of wine was the same as that of the oil, a fourth of a hin. Here we have three items of the animal life—a bull and two lambs—and three items of the plant life—fine flour, oil, and wine. These six items may be divided into two groups: the first group consisting of the bull and the two lambs, and the second group, of the flour, the oil, and the wine. All these items were the "groceries" used in "cooking" a meal for God. In order to feed Him, we need a bull, two lambs, and flour, oil, and wine.

Years ago, I had difficulty remembering all these items, all these groceries. I could not understand why Moses composed this section of the Word in such a puzzling way. You may need to read this chapter a number of times before all this becomes clear to you. According to this chapter, God's food included a bull, two lambs, flour, oil, and wine. The amount of fine flour was a tenth of an ephah. An ephah equals ten omers. Therefore, a tenth of an ephah was one omer. According to Exodus 16, the amount of daily manna for each person was an omer. Therefore, in quantity God's food was one bull, two lambs, a tenth of an ephah of fine flour, and the fourth of a hin each of oil and wine.

The bull was for a sin offering, and the two lambs offered with the flour, the oil, and the wine were for a burnt offering. In typology, the burnt offering is God's food. This offering is for God's satisfaction. However, in order for God to eat the burnt offering we present to Him, we must first offer the sin offering. The sin offering is not God's food, even though the inward parts and the fat were burned for His satisfaction. Therefore, we cannot say definitely that this offering was counted in the sight of God as food, but we do know that parts of the sin offering were for God's satisfaction.

THE NEED FOR THE SIN OFFERING

In a foregoing message we pointed out that, according to Exodus 28 and 29, God wants us to invite Him for dinner. However, we, the hosts, the ones who invite the Lord to dinner, are sinners. Therefore, before God can come to have dinner with us, our sinful nature must be dealt with. This is the reason Exodus 29 speaks not of the trespass offering, but of the sin offering. Are you clear concerning the difference between the sin offering and the trespass offering? It is important to know the difference between them.

SIN AND SINS

In the New Testament the word sin is used in two ways, in the singular (sin) and in the plural (sins). The New Testament tells us that Christ died on the cross both for our sin and for our sins. John 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" In 1 Corinthians 15:3 Paul says, "For I delivered to you, among the first things, that which also I received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Peter also tells us that Christ died for our sins: "Who Himself carried up our sins in His body onto the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24). In 1 Peter 3:18 he goes on to say, "Because Christ also has once died concerning sins, the righteous on behalf of the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God." Chapter nine of Hebrews speaks of both sin and sins. Referring to Christ, verse 26 says, "He has been manifested for the putting away of sin by His sacrifice." Verse 28 says, "So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear to those who wait for Him a second time, apart from sin, unto salvation." Therefore, in the New Testament, there is a distinction between sin and sins.

What is sin? Sin denotes our fallen nature. As fallen ones, our nature is sinful. In the sight of God, our nature is actually sin itself. A table made out of wood is not only wooden; it is also wood. In like manner, we are not only sinful—we are sin. We all need to realize that we are a constitution of sin.

According to Paul's word in Romans 5:19, we have been constituted sinners. Thus, sin is related to our sinful nature, to our natural being.

Sins are a matter of our works, deeds, conduct. An infant has a sinful nature from his birth, and as he grows he will therefore commit sins, deeds of sin. Sin refers to nature, and sins, to deeds. Outwardly we have the acts, the deeds, of sin; inwardly we have the nature of sin. Therefore, we need a Redeemer, a Substitute. The One who is our Redeemer and Substitute is the Lord Jesus. He died on the cross for our sins and also for our sin.

As those who would invite God to dinner, we need to confess that we have sinned and that we are sin. However, most of those who are persuaded in a gospel meeting to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ realize only that they are sinful in their deeds. In my ministry I have never met a person who, at the time of his initial repentance, realized that he was sin, that he was sinful in nature. But we must have this realization if we would invite God for dinner.

Many Chinese, thinking that Confucius was not wrong in any way, honor him, respect him highly, and regard him as a saint. But even if Confucius had done nothing wrong outwardly, his nature was still the same as that of a thief. For example, a peach tree that bears fruit and a peach tree that does not bear fruit are both the same in nature. The tree that does not produce peaches is still a peach tree in nature. Likewise, no matter how good Confucius may have been outwardly, he was still a sinner in nature, just like everyone else.

Thank the Lord that, through His mercy, we love Him and want to invite Him for dinner. But when we invite God to come for dinner, we need to realize who we are. Some may say, "I am a child of God." Yes, you are a child of God according to your new birth. But according to your fallen nature, you are still sin. Even though today you may not have sinned or done anything wrong, you are still sin. Therefore, you need to take Christ as your sin offering. According to 29:35 and 36, for seven days, every day of the priest's sanctification, a bull as a

sin offering was to be offered for propitiation. This indicates that daily we must offer Christ to God as our sin offering.

THE SIN OFFERING FOR PROPITIATION

Verse 36 says, "And every day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for propitiation." Instead of propitiation, some versions use the word atonement. Atonement means at-one-ment. Between us and God there is a problem. This problem is sin, and sin separates us from God. It keeps us away from Him. But a sacrifice—Christ as the sin offering—has been offered to God so that we and God may have at-one-ment. According to the meaning of the Hebrew word, we may have peace with God because He has been appeased. As the sin offering, the Lord Jesus has appeased God on our behalf. He has reconciled us to God. As a result, God and we have been brought together in oneness.

The bull of the sin offering is not for eating. Rather, it is for propitiation. Nevertheless, perhaps the inward parts and the fat, which were burned on the altar, may be regarded as a kind of food offered to God. I do not presume to say definitely whether these parts of the sin offering were God's food. However, there is no doubt that the inward parts and the fat of the sin offering were burned for God's satisfaction.

On the one hand, the fat and the inward parts were burned as a sweet savor to God. On the other hand, the blood of the sin offering was poured around the altar. The sweet savor is for God's satisfaction, and the blood is for our satisfaction. Formerly we had a serious problem with God because of our sin. But a sin offering has been offered to God, and this offering satisfies both God and us. By the sweet savor and by the blood both God and we are satisfied.

God is righteous and holy. He is also a God of glory. We, by contrast, are sinful. In the sight of God we are actually sin. Furthermore, His righteousness, holiness, and glory automatically place demands on us. But we cannot fulfill these demands, these requirements. The Lord Jesus has fulfilled God's requirements for us. What He did on the cross

satisfied the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. The Lord's death has thus become a sweet savor ascending to God for His satisfaction. Whenever God smells this savor, He can say, "I am satisfied. Now I am at peace with the one who presents this offering to Me." This is the satisfaction on God's side.

Christ as our sin offering also makes it possible for us to be satisfied. When we behold the blood of this offering, we are at peace. Before offering Christ as the sin offering, we did not have any peace. Instead, we were under condemnation. But through the shedding of the blood of the sin offering and the pouring out of this blood, we are at peace. Therefore, we can say, "O God, thank You that through the blood of the sin offering I am now at peace with You." As a result, God and we can have fellowship, can talk with one another. This is at-one-ment.

The sin offering is not food in a direct way. It is not food for us at all, and it does not directly provide food for God's eating. The sin offering is for cleansing, for solving the problem between us and God. We are the ones inviting God to dinner, and God is the One who is invited. The sin offering solves the problem between the host, the inviter, and God, the invited One.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-TWO

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(10)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:29-46

In the foregoing message we pointed out that if we would be brought into oneness with God, we need to offer the sin offering. This offering is not actually food for God in a direct way. Rather, it solves the problem between us and God so that we may have fellowship with Him.

PROPITIATION MADE UPON THE ALTAR

Exodus 29:35 and 36 say, "And thus you shall do to Aaron and his sons, according to all which I have commanded you; seven days you shall fill their hands. And every day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for propitiation; and you shall purify the altar when you make propitiation upon it; and you shall anoint it to sanctify it." The seven days mentioned in verse 35 signify a full course of time, that is, our entire life. Every day we need to offer Christ as our sin offering. According to verse 36, the bull as a sin offering was offered for propitiation. Here the emphasis is propitiation on the altar.

The altar is purified by having propitiation made upon it. The altar, we should remember, is a dining table. Whenever we are about to serve a meal, we first clean the table. We want to remove all dirt that is there and purify the table. The sin offering purifies our dining table, the altar, and makes it clean as a place for eating.

Verse 36 says that the altar was to be anointed in order to be sanctified. In this verse nothing is said concerning the blood. But in principle the matter of sanctification through

the sprinkling of the blood is revealed elsewhere in the writings of Moses. There is no question that the altar is purified by the blood. Here, however, the altar is sanctified by the anointing oil. Blood signifies the death of Christ, and oil, the anointing of the Spirit. We have the blood to purify us and the Spirit to anoint us. Again, we may use the illustration of a dining table. When we clean a dining table, we like it to be bright and shining. The blood purifies us, and the oil causes us to shine. Therefore we need both the blood to make us pure and the Spirit to cause us to shine. This is to be sanctified.

We need to remember that to be sanctified is to be separated and marked out. All other tables may be unclean and dull. They are dirty, and they do not shine. But there is one table—the altar—that is purified and anointed. Thus, it is clean, and it is shining. As a result, this table is different from all other tables and separate from them.

Verse 37 says, "Seven days you shall make propitiation on the altar and sanctify it, and the altar shall become most holy; all that touches the altar shall be holy." Here we see that propitiation was to be made on the altar every day. After the altar had been sanctified, it became most holy. Anyone who touched the altar became holy. This means that the altar on which propitiation has been accomplished and which has been anointed with oil has become most holy. As such, the altar itself is able to sanctify the one who touches it. Whoever touches the altar is sanctified, and whatever is put on the altar is likewise sanctified. Therefore, anything offered on the altar is spontaneously sanctified.

Every day we need to offer the sin offering. When we do this, we have a dining table that has been fully cleansed and anointed. Whatever is placed on this table will then be sanctified.

Every morning we need to offer Christ as the sin offering. This will cause us to have a good morning. People often greet one another with the words "good morning." When we speak of a good morning, we should refer not to a greeting, but to having a good morning through offering the sin

offering to God. If we present Christ as the sin offering to God in the morning, we shall have a good morning, a morning of propitiation. The result will be that we shall have a good day, for that good morning will sanctify the entire day.

In the foregoing message we used the illustration of man inviting God to dinner. When we offer Christ as the sin offering, there will be no problem between us, those who invite God to dinner, and God, the One who is invited. Instead of problems, we shall have the redeeming blood and the anointing oil signifying propitiation and sanctification. Now there is peace between the inviting one and the invited One, and we can proceed to serve God food for His satisfaction.

The matter of propitiation needs to be understood according to the background of the practice in ancient times. Especially among Jews, when two parties had a problem, there was the need of propitiation. After propitiation had been accomplished, the parties involved could eat together. Because propitiation had been made, they could be at peace. Then in peace they could enjoy a meal together. This is a picture, a type, of the relationship between us and God. Because of our sin, we have a problem with God. The source of this problem, this trouble, is Satan. He injected sin into us, and that sin has become a problem. But Christ came as the Lamb of God to take away sin. In this way He solved the problem and made propitiation. Therefore, whenever we offer Him to God as the sin offering, we may enjoy what He has done for us. In this way, because He has made propitiation with God on our behalf, we no longer have a problem with God. Instead, we have peace, and in peace we can feast with God.

THE FOOD OFFERED TO GOD

Verses 38 through 41 speak of offering two lambs every day as food directly for God. Verse 38 says, "And this is what you shall offer upon the altar: two lambs a year old, every day continually." According to verse 39, one lamb was to be offered in the morning, and the other lamb, in the

evening. With each lamb there was an offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering (v. 40). The lambs with the flour, the oil, and the wine were offered to God by priests who had been washed, clothed, and satisfied.

At this point, let us consider the "groceries" used in preparing the food offered to God. These groceries include two lambs, an amount of flour, and a quantity of oil and wine. The lambs, of course, are of the animal kingdom; the flour, the oil, and the wine are of the vegetable kingdom. All these groceries typify aspects of Christ. Christ is our lamb, our wheat, our grapevine producing wine, and the olive tree producing oil.

How can Christ in these four aspects become groceries to us? If we would answer this question, we need to realize that these matters were not merely objective to the Israelites. Rather, they were quite subjective to them, because they were things grown, raised, and reaped by the children of Israel. A tenth of the harvest was set aside and, during the feasts, was offered to God. Because these items were produced in such a way, they were subjective to the children of Israel. In other words, these items were the produce of their labor, a produce that belonged to the children of Israel.

God's people in the Old Testament offered what they had produced. This indicates that the Christ we offer to God as His food should be very subjective to us. He should be our produce, what we have produced by our labor and daily experience.

GROWING CHRIST AND RAISING HIM

Recently we have been speaking much about living Christ. To live Christ is actually to grow Christ. This means that as we live Christ, He grows in us. In Matthew 13 the Lord Jesus likens Himself to seed and us to soil. He came to sow Himself as the seed into us as the soil so that we may grow Him. This thought is richly developed in the New Testament. For example, in 1 Corinthians 3:9 Paul says, "You

are God's farm." Literally, the Greek word rendered farm in this verse means cultivated soil, cultivated land. We are God's cultivated land for growing Christ. Therefore, it is crucial that we produce Christ.

We may speak of living Christ, but we may not realize that to live Christ is to grow Him and raise Him. On the one hand, as believers we are a farm; on the other hand, we are a ranch. A farm produces cereal and vegetables, but a ranch is for the raising of cattle. Therefore, we are growing Christ as the vegetable life, and we are raising Him as the animal life. But now we need to ask how to grow Christ and how to raise Him.

If we would raise Christ as a bull for our sin offering, every morning we need to practice offering Christ as our sin offering. The more we offer Christ as the sin offering, the more He will grow in us in this aspect. Perhaps when we first begin to offer Him as the sin offering, He will be a very small bull. But gradually, as we continue to offer Him, He will grow. Eventually, after a period of time, He will be a large bull.

From experience I have come to realize that every time we contact God, we need to offer Christ as the sin offering. However, in praying with others, I have observed that hardly anyone in prayer offers Christ as the sin offering. I have wondered why the brothers and sisters do not offer Christ in this way. Are they not sinful? Of course, we all are sinful, but many do not have the realization of their sinfulness. Just as we need to wash our hands before eating, we need to wash ourselves by offering Christ as our sin offering. Every day we need to offer Christ to God as our sin offering. We should not do this merely as a habit or routine. On the contrary, we should do it with a strong impression and consciousness that, in our fallen nature, we are sin. When we realize that we are sinful, that we are actually sin itself, and then offer Christ as our sin offering, Christ will little by little grow in us until He is a large bull.

You may have the feeling that the meetings of the church in your locality are quite good or that they are improving. However, are there any groceries in the meetings? In

particular, is Christ offered to God as a bull for a sin offering? In the church meetings we should hear prayers such as this: "Lord, we confess that we are sinful. Lord, we are even sin. Even if we do not feel that we have done anything wrong, we are still sinful in nature. Lord, whenever we come into Your presence to contact You, we have the deep realization that we are sin. We need Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to be our sin offering." At the Lord's table some should pray, "Lord, here at Your table we behold You as our sin offering. We thank You, Lord, for becoming our sin offering." However, among today's Christians there is spiritual poverty. Dead religion has deprived so many of the Lord's people of the riches of Christ.

PROPER SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

I have learned that due to certain situations, many young people in China have been deprived of a proper education. Likewise, many of today's Christians have been deprived of the proper spiritual education. Many preachers are eloquent, knowledgeable, and capable, but they are shallow. My heart is broken over this situation. Dear saints, we all need more genuine spiritual education. Christians in this country may have a high secular education, but in spiritual things many are deprived. They may know a great deal about science, material things, and the affairs of this life, but they are limited in their knowledge of spiritual things. But I hope that all the saints in the Lord's recovery will acquire the best spiritual education. Therefore, I encourage you to spend time in the Life-study Messages. These messages will help you to be educated spiritually.

BRINGING THE GROCERIES TO THE MEETINGS

In the meetings of the church we must have the proper content. We should not have empty shouting, shouting void of content or reality. It is not sufficient merely to function in the meetings in an active way or in a so-called living way. We need spiritual content. This content requires that daily

we grow Christ and raise Christ. If you do not raise Christ as the animal life, how can you have a bull or a lamb to offer to God? If you do not till the ground, sow seed, and water the crop, how can you have a harvest of wheat? How can you have oil and wine? It is absolutely necessary that we grow Christ as the vegetable life and raise Him as the animal life.

Just as we need to raise Christ as a bull for propitiation, we need to raise Him as a lamb to be food offered directly to God. This means that we need to raise Christ as a bull and also as a lamb. When we come to the meetings, we shall then bring Christ as a bull and a lamb.

We also need to grow Christ as wheat to produce flour, as olives to produce oil, and as a grapevine to produce wine. To grow wheat is to experience Christ daily as our life supply. Wheat signifies Christ in incarnation, whereas barley signifies Christ in resurrection. (For a fuller treatment of these aspects of Christ, see *The All-Inclusive Christ.*) If we experience Christ as our life supply, we shall grow Him as wheat and barley. If we live Christ by the Spirit in our spirit, we shall grow Him as olives to produce oil. Furthermore, if in our experience we pour out the self that lives Christ, we shall grow the grapevine to produce wine for a drink offering. Hence, to produce the oil and the wine, we should live daily and die daily. We need a life of living and dying. Paul said that daily he was put to death. Day by day he was delivered into the death of Christ. This should also be our experience. Daily we may be put to death by others, perhaps by our family or by different things in our environment. As we live such a life of being put to death, we shall produce wine for the drink offering. I hope that this brief and simple word will give you some understanding of the spiritual groceries described in Exodus 29.

Let us all experience the riches of Christ and gain the proper spiritual education so that we may live a life on a higher plane, not on the low plane common among today's Christians. Let us grow Christ and raise Christ. Then we shall have groceries to bring into the church meetings.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THREE

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(11)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:29-46

In the foregoing messages we have seen that with the sanctification of Aaron and his sons to serve God as priests, there were four important points. Three of these points are related to the priests, and one is related to God. The three points concerning the priests are the matters of being washed, being clothed, and being satisfied. The one point related to God was that of preparing food for God and feeding Him so that He may be satisfied. The "groceries" used in preparing God's food involved three items of the animal life—a bull and two lambs—and three of the plant life—flour, oil, and wine. As we know, flour comes from wheat, oil comes from the olive tree, and wine comes from the grapevine.

THE FUNCTION OF THE SIN OFFERING

As we have seen, the bull offered as a sin offering was not God's food in a direct way. Rather, the bull of the sin offering was for atonement, for propitiation. This means that it was offered for appeasement. Daily we need to raise Christ as a bull for a sin offering. This means that we need to practice every day offering Christ to God as the sin offering because our nature, our being, is sinful.

When we invite others to our home for dinner, we like to have everything clean and in order. Then, with everything properly prepared, we and our guests shall be able to enjoy our food in peace. This illustrates the function of Christ as our sin offering. This sin offering, typified by the bull offered to God in

Exodus 29, clears up the situation between us and God. The basic problem between us and God is that of our sin. Through the fall, sin entered into mankind, and as a result we are constituted of sin. Hence, we actually are sin. When Christ was incarnated, He came to be made sin. Second Corinthians 5:21 says that He was made sin for us. According to Romans 8:3, Christ, the Son of God, came in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin. Moreover, this verse reveals that when Christ was on the cross, God condemned sin in the flesh. Therefore, Christ was made sin for us, and God condemned sin in the flesh.

In the sight of God, sin, which has its source in Satan and which has entered into man, is the element of our fallen nature and of our old self. Actually, we ourselves are sin. Christ became sin and brought the flesh of sin to the cross, where God condemned sin in the flesh. Therefore, before God, sin has been dealt with.

If you read the New Testament carefully, you will see that nowhere are we told that Christ bore our sin on the cross. Rather, the New Testament tells us that Christ bore our sins. For example, Hebrews 9:28 says that Christ has been "once offered to bear the sins of many." First Peter 2:24 says that Christ "Himself carried up our sins in His body onto the tree." Regarding sin, the New Testament says that it was taken away or put away. According to John 1:29, John the Baptist declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Speaking of Christ, Hebrews 9:26 says, "He has been manifested for the putting away of sin by His sacrifice." As we have already pointed out, Romans 8:3 says that God has condemned sin. According to these verses, sin has been dealt with. It has been condemned, taken away, and put away.

SIN NOT ERADICATED

In saving us, God does not eradicate our sinful nature at the time of our repentance, conversion, and regeneration. To save us in that way is not according to God's economy. When

we repented, God forgave our sins. He also came into our spirit to regenerate us with His Spirit. However, He did not eradicate the sin that is within us. Although we have been forgiven, cleansed by the precious blood of Christ, and regenerated by the Spirit, we are still in our old nature, in the old creation. On the one hand, we are a new creation and have a new nature; on the other hand, we are still in the old creation with the old nature. Therefore, we need to be reminded that in our old nature, our flesh, we are still sinful. We need to realize that we are sin.

Some Christians hold on to a concept of the eradication of sin or to a doctrine of absolute holiness. Some teach that once a believer receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he becomes absolutely holy and can no longer sin. Such teachings are not according to the Bible. Furthermore, accepting the concept of eradication or absolute holiness has led some to excuse sinful things by calling them weaknesses or shortcomings. In some cases, those who hold onto the concept of eradication or of absolute holiness have fallen into gross sin. According to the Bible, we are a new creation in Christ, but in our fallen nature we are still in the old creation. Yes, we have eternal life, the divine nature, and the Holy Spirit. This means that God Himself is in us. Yet, we still have the old man, the old creation, and the flesh. Thus, with us there is always the possibility of falling into sin. We need to realize that we are still sinful.

According to the typology in the book of Exodus, every day we need to offer Christ to God as the sin offering. The seven days mentioned in Exodus 29 signify a full course of time, that is, our entire Christian life. Until we have experienced transfiguration, the redemption of our body, we shall continue to need the sin offering. Daily we should remind ourselves that we are sin and that we need Christ as the sin offering to clear up the situation between us and God.

When we apply Christ as the sin offering, the problem between us and God is solved, and we are cleansed. Because God has been appeased through Christ as the sin offering,

we may be at peace. Now in an atmosphere of peace, we can serve food to God.

GOD'S FOOD

According to Exodus 29, God's food consists of two lambs, a meal offering containing flour and oil, and a drink offering of wine. In the morning one lamb was offered to God with the meal offering and the drink offering, and in the evening, the other lamb was offered to Him, also with the meal offering and the drink offering. Let us now go on to consider the lambs, the flour, the oil, and the wine offered to God as food.

OBEDIENT TO GOD

The lamb typifies Christ as the One who is obedient to God. When the Lord Jesus was on the earth, He was absolutely obedient to God. Philippians 2 says that He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Christ's death on the cross was the highest expression of His obedience. In the words of Romans 5:18 and 19, in the sight of God that obedience is regarded as a righteous act. The "one righteous act" is in particular ascribed to that single act of Christ in which He was obedient to God unto the death of the cross.

As a lamb, Christ was not only obedient to God, but was also meek before man. Isaiah 53:7 says, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." According to the Bible, to be meek means not to resist or fight against what happens to you. Rather, it is to suffer attack and oppression. Meekness is a characteristic of lambs. Unlike dogs and cats that fight back, lambs do not resist. The four Gospels reveal that Christ was obedient and also meek.

A TESTIMONY OF OUR DAILY LIFE

The picture in Exodus 29 indicates that throughout the course of our Christian life, we should daily offer Christ as

the sin offering. Then we need to have the lambs, the flour, the olive oil, and the wine. In order to be God's priests, every day we must offer Christ to God as our sin offering. If we do this, then in our Christian life we shall raise Christ as a bull. The more we practice offering Christ as the sin offering, the more in our experience He will grow to be a large bull. After a period of time, in our experience Christ will increase more and more as the bull for the sin offering. To have Christ increase as the sin offering in this way is to raise Christ on our "ranch" in our daily life.

In the church meetings we need to offer Christ to God as the sin offering. This should be a demonstration, a testimony, of what we experience in our daily life. If we try to offer Christ in the meetings without experiencing Him day by day, we shall be performing like actors in a theater. What we do in the meetings should be a testimony of our daily life. Every morning we should offer Christ as our sin offering. This is a kind of spiritual washing. After washing in this way, we then may go on to live Christ during the day. Therefore, if we would offer Christ as the sin offering, we need to raise Him as the animal life.

We also need to raise Christ as a lamb and grow Him as wheat, olive trees, and vines. How can we raise Christ as a lamb in our daily life? We do this by living Him as a lamb. After we offer Christ as the sin offering to be cleansed, our spirit will be living. Then we should live Christ by taking Him as a lamb.

LIVING BY CHRIST AS THE LAMB

At least some of us can testify that whenever we take Christ as the sin offering in the morning, we immediately sense that we have been cleansed, that our spirit is living, and that Christ as the Spirit is real to us. As a result, in a practical way we live by Him as the lamb. This means that in so many things we take Him as the One in us who is obedient to God. We have this obedient One as our obedient life, even as our obedience to God, and He lives in us a life of obedience. In times past, we were not obedient or submissive to God. But

through the practice of offering Christ as the sin offering, we spontaneously become obedient. Actually, it is not we who are obedient; it is Christ who is the obedient One living in us. On the one hand, Christ is the bull for our sin offering; on the other hand, He is also the lamb by whom we live.

I believe that many of us can testify that by taking Christ as our sin offering, we are becoming more obedient to God. In the past, when we were not obedient in certain matters, we trespassed. This made it necessary for us to offer Christ as our trespass offering. For example, a sister may be disobedient in shopping. In going to a department store, she may be rebellious and disobedient. As a result, there is a fight between her and God. Instead of taking the trespass offering in a proper way, she later may simply try to apply the Lord's blood to her situation and claim His cleansing. But if this sister will daily offer Christ to God as her sin offering, her experience will be quite different. Spontaneously, she will be much more obedient to God. Much more of the time she will willingly obey and submit. This is to raise Christ as a lamb.

If a brother and his wife are obedient to God, they will not want to exchange words. The arguing between husband and wife can be compared to the barking of dogs. To be sure, this kind of arguing, this exchange of words, is not pleasant. If a brother daily takes Christ as his sin offering, he will automatically become obedient to God and also meek. Instead of arguing with his wife, he will be much more willing to give in. He will be meek, neither fighting nor resisting. This is the living of Christ as a lamb.

RAISING A FLOCK OF LAMBS

I would emphasize the fact that if we would raise Christ as a lamb, we must first have Him as the sin offering. I know from experience that when we raise Christ as a bull for a sin offering, we also raise Him as a lamb for a burnt offering. Offering Christ as the sin offering is the way to raise Christ as a lamb.

Revelation 14:1 says, "And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and

forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads." As part of a description of the hundred and forty-four thousand with the Lamb, Revelation 14:4 says, "These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He may go." This is a strong verse related to growing Christ as a lamb. Those who are faithful follow the Lamb wherever He goes. To follow Christ as the Lamb is to raise Him as a lamb. Eventually, we shall raise Christ as a flock of lambs. This does not mean, of course, that there is more than one Christ. Christ is uniquely one, but in our experience we may have Him in many ways. Therefore, experientially we may raise Christ as a flock of lambs.

To understand a matter in a doctrinal way is one thing, but to view the same matter experientially is very different. Regarding Christ, I do not want to remain merely in doctrine, but I long to have the adequate spiritual experience.

Those who care primarily for doctrine often oppose those believers with experience. Toward the end of the last century and in the first part of this century, certain Bible teachers criticized Andrew Murray because he emphasized experience more than doctrine. His books on spiritual experience have been helpful to thousands of seeking Christians. His masterpiece is *The Spirit of Christ.* I have received great help from this book, and I encourage you all not only to read it, but also to study it. Apart from the writings in the Lord's recovery, no book other than *The Spirit of Christ* has been so helpful to Christians in knowing Christ as the life-giving Spirit. Nevertheless, Andrew Murray has been condemned by certain Bible teachers, in particular by some of the Brethren. Furthermore, Jessie Penn-Lewis has also been severely criticized by these same Bible teachers. Years ago, a certain bookstore in China sold all of Brother Nee's books with the exception of *The Spiritual Man*. Those who operated this bookstore knew that one chapter in *The Spiritual Man* was a translation of Mrs. Penn-Lewis' writings on spiritual warfare. They regarded that book as unclean because it contained a portion of her writings. Although thousands of

believers have been helped by the writings of Jessie Penn-Lewis, some who focus on doctrine condemned her not only as a heretic, but even as a witch.

When we speak about raising Christ as a flock of lambs, we are talking about our experience of Christ. My concern here is not merely with teaching the Bible. With the Bible as my basis, I wish to speak concerning the experience of Christ. Thus, speaking from the experiential point of view, I would say that we can have Christ as a flock of lambs.

In ancient times, the children of Israel brought the firstlings of their flocks and of their herds to Mount Zion to offer to God. All these firstlings typified Christ. We have pointed out that Christ is uniquely one. But in our experience we may have Christ in many different ways. There is only one Christ, but the experiences of Christ are countless.

THE OFFERINGS FOR GOD'S EATING

We have seen the way to raise Christ as a bull for the sin offering and as lambs for the burnt offering. In Exodus 29 the lamb is not for propitiation; rather, the lamb is a burnt offering as food for God. It was offered to God for Him to eat. Many Christians have never heard that Christ may be offered not only for propitiation, but also as food for God's eating. Those with some knowledge of theology may wonder about this. Nevertheless, according to the Bible, certain offerings were not for atonement, not for propitiation, but were for God's eating. This is clearly portrayed in Exodus 29. In this chapter the bull was offered as a sin offering; that is, it was offered for propitiation. The lambs, however, were offered to God for His eating. For this reason, Exodus 29 does not mention blood with respect to the lambs. The blood is for redeeming, for propitiation, and for atonement; it is not for eating. But the lambs offered as the burnt offering were wholly for God to eat.

Do you know by what way God eats His food? God eats with fire. When God comes to eat the food you have prepared for

Him, He will eat it by His holy, consuming fire. Perhaps you have never heard before that fire is the means by which God eats His food.

Now we know how to raise Christ as a bull for a sin offering and as a lamb for a burnt offering. The whole lamb was burned. This means that it was absolutely for God. No part of the lamb of the burnt offering was for the offerer or for the priests. The lamb was God's food and was entirely for His eating.

If we continue to practice offering Christ as our sin offering, we shall live by Christ as the lamb, as the One obedient to God and meek before man. Then in the meetings we shall have Christ as many lambs to offer to God as food for His satisfaction.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(12)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:29-46

Exodus 29:38-40 says, "And this is what you shall offer upon the altar: two lambs a year old, every day continually. The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer between the evenings; and with the one lamb a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering." According to these verses, two lambs a year old were to be offered every day, one in the morning and the other in the evening. Along with each lamb, there was to be an offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour, a fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine.

In typology, or in figure, a lamb signifies Christ as the One obedient to God and meek before men. When Christ was on earth, He lived a life of obedience and meekness. The four Gospels indicate that Christ in His humanity was obedient and meek.

When some read this word about the meekness of Christ, they may wonder if Christ was meek when He took a whip of cords and drove out the moneychangers from the temple (John 2:15). We need to remember that Christ is all-inclusive. As a man, He is obedient and meek. But He is also the Lord and the Master. As the Master, it was necessary for Him to chasten His people. A father may be very gentle and meek, but it is still sometimes necessary for him to discipline his children. A father should not say, "I should always be a lamb in relation to my children. Therefore, I

should not discipline them." In such a case, he would be a lamb-father. But in the Bible there is no such thing as a lamb-father. Rather, the Bible reveals that the Father must discipline, chasten, His children. Hence, the Lord's chastening of His people in no way detracts from His meekness as a human being.

THE LIFE PRODUCER AND LIFE SUPPLY

Let us now go on to consider the items of the vegetable life in Exodus 29: the wheat, the oil, and the wine. In *The All-Inclusive Christ* we have pointed out in detail that wheat and barley are both types of Christ as our life supply. As the vegetable life, Christ is the One who produces life. A grain of wheat is useful in producing life and also in producing food for eating. When a grain of wheat is sown into the ground, it eventually grows and produces wheat. When the wheat is ground into flour, it becomes suitable for eating. Therefore, wheat signifies Christ as the life producer and also as the life supply.

In the Gospel of John we have a revelation of Christ as the life producer and life supply. In John 6:41 the Lord Jesus said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." Elsewhere in the same chapter, the Lord used five barley loaves and two fishes to feed the multitude. Moreover, according to John 12:24, the Lord Jesus was a grain of wheat who fell into the ground to produce many grains: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." In chapter six of John we have the life supply, and in chapter twelve, the life producing.

When we offer Christ to God in the morning as our sin offering, we shall be brought into a clear situation with God. We shall also have a clear conscience, a liberated spirit, and an atmosphere of peace. Spontaneously, during the day Christ will be a lamb to us, and we shall live Him as this lamb. Furthermore, we shall also experience Christ as a grain of wheat. As we live Him, He will become our life supply, and He will also produce something within us that is good for eating. This is the way to grow Christ as wheat.

Are you still wondering how to grow Christ as wheat? The way to grow Christ is to live Him as your life supply and as the One who produces life within you. Words are not adequate to describe this experience. But if we daily offer Christ as our sin offering, other experiences of Christ will follow automatically. By offering Christ to God as our sin offering, we indicate strongly that we mean business with God. Perhaps in the past we were somewhat negligent and did not mean business with the Lord. However, offering Christ to God as a sin offering proves that we are serious with the Lord in living Him. Previously we may have talked about living Christ, but were not seriously intending to live Him. But from the time we sincerely begin to offer Christ as a sin offering, we indicate that we mean business with the Lord. As a result of offering Christ as the sin offering, the sky is clear over us, our spirit is freed, and spontaneously Christ as the life-giving Spirit has the ground in us to move and the opportunity to energize us inwardly. Then spontaneously we live Him as a lamb and also as a grain of wheat. In this way we raise Christ as a lamb, and we grow Him as wheat.

RICH IN SPIRITUAL GROCERIES

The more we raise Christ and grow Christ, the more we shall have Him as the animal life and the vegetable life in the church meetings. Then we shall be rich in spiritual groceries, for we shall have Christ as the bull for a sin offering, as the lamb for a burnt offering, and as the grain that produces life and supplies life.

In the church meetings we need to forget the past religious and traditional practices. No longer should we pray in a traditional manner. Rather, our prayers need to be transformed. This means that in our prayers we should make mention of Christ as the bull for a sin offering, as the lamb for a burnt offering, and as the grain for a meal offering.

Regarding Christ as the animal life, the cattle, God requires only one bull and two lambs. However, we need to have a reserve, a flock, of Christ. If we do not have a reserve

of Christ as the animal life, how shall we be able to continue offering Christ as the bull for a sin offering and as the lamb for a burnt offering? Therefore, although we cannot raise many Christs, because Christ is uniquely one, nevertheless in our experience we can raise Christ as a herd and as a flock so that we may have the reserve that will enable us to offer Him to God continually.

Regarding the food offered to Him, God is not greedy. He does not eat without limitation. Of the cattle, the animal life, He requires only two lambs. Concerning flour, He requires only the tenth of an ephah, that is, one omer. According to Exodus 16, an omer was the measure of each one's daily portion of manna. Therefore, God actually does not require very much in quantity. We should not think that God's eating has no limitation. On the contrary, God wants you to offer Him an omer of flour. However, you still need to have a reserve. It is not possible to grow Christ as wheat in a short period of time. For this reason, we need a reserve of both grain and flour. Even if we have a large quantity of grain, not enough of this grain may have been ground into flour. Then we shall not have the adequate amount of flour for a meal offering. We need a reserve not only of grain, but also of flour.

CHRIST AS THE ANOINTING SPIRIT

Verse 40 says that the tenth of an ephah of fine flour was mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil. We would find it difficult to eat bread without some kind of oil. Usually we put butter on our bread. In like manner, God's eating of flour also requires oil. We have seen that the flour, or wheat, typifies Christ as the life supply and as the life-producing One. But what does the oil typify? The oil here typifies Christ as the anointing Spirit. Christ is the olive tree that produces the oil which typifies the life-giving Spirit.

Recently in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* I read a portion about the historic Christ and the pneumatic Christ. The historic Christ is the One who lived on earth. But after His resurrection the historic Christ became

the pneumatic Christ. The term pneumatic Christ does not denote a spiritual Christ; rather, it refers to Christ as the Spirit, as the *pneuma.* A number of writers agree in saying that in the Epistles of Paul Christ is identical to the Spirit, especially insofar as Christian experience is concerned. Thus, we should not think that it is a false teaching to say that Christ is the life-giving Spirit.

Some Bible teachers have pointed out that olive oil is a type of the Holy Spirit of God. This understanding, however, is only partially right. The olive oil not only typifies the Holy Spirit of God, but also typifies Christ as the Spirit. Christ as the Spirit is not separate from the Holy Spirit. No, these two are one Spirit.

In Exodus 29 Christ is the bull, Christ is the lambs, Christ is the flour, and Christ is also the olive oil. It would not be logical to say that the bull, the lambs, the flour, and the wine are Christ but that the oil is something other than Christ. All these categories of things are types of Christ.

Many teachers of the Bible try to separate the Holy Spirit from Christ. They insist on holding the traditional teaching of three separate Persons in the Trinity. According to this teaching, Christ the Son is separate from the Holy Spirit. Those who hold to this concept ignore the revelation in the Bible, expressed both in types and in plain words, that Christ is the life-giving Spirit.

Our concern is not for tradition or systematic theology. We care only for the facts of the Scripture and for spiritual reality. In Exodus 29 there are six items of groceries, three of the animal life and three of the vegetable life. We should not say that the three items of the animal life and two of the vegetable life are types of Christ but that the third item of the vegetable life is a type of the Holy Spirit, not of Christ. No, the oil here typifies Christ as the Spirit. According to the Bible, it is not heretical to teach that Christ is the Spirit. On the contrary, it is heretical to deny it.

The bull, the lambs, the flour, the olive oil, and the wine are all different aspects of Christ. If you consider your

experience, you will realize that when you offer Christ as the sin offering, the whole situation between you and God becomes clear. Then in you Christ will be a lamb, obedient to God and meek in the presence of others. He will also be flour for the producing of life and the supplying of life. At the same time, He, the anointing One, will move within you. Christ Himself is the bull, the lamb, the flour, the olive tree producing oil, and the wine.

PRODUCING OLIVE OIL

How do we produce olive oil? In other words, how can we grow Christ as an olive tree? We grow Him as an olive tree and produce olive oil by always exercising our mingled spirit, our regenerated spirit mingled with the Holy Spirit, and by using this mingled spirit. We should not say or do anything apart from this spirit. Everything we do should be in spirit. This is to grow Christ as the olive tree, and this is the way to produce oil.

If we put all these matters into practice, we shall have more understanding of them. We shall realize that the lamb, the wheat, and the olive tree are all growing within us. On the one hand, we are a ranch; on the other hand, we are a farm. On the ranch bulls are being raised and lambs are eating tender grass. On the farm wheat and olive trees are growing. The result is that we have an abundance of oil. Anyone who lives in this way will be filled with oil in his words, attitudes, and activities.

From experience we know that if we do not live in this way, we shall be dry, very much lacking in oil. For example, when a brother is arguing with his wife, both of them are dry. They do not experience anything of the anointing. But if a brother and his wife both offer Christ as their sin offering, their words and activities together will be full of oil. Between them there will be a flow of olive oil.

In order for a machine to run, it must have oil. The motor in your car needs oil. Often, a machine that is lacking in oil will make an unpleasant sound. The same is true in principle with the arguing between husband and wife.

The exchanging of words between a brother and his wife gives forth a sound of dryness. But if a brother has sufficient oil, even the exchanging of words with his wife will be replaced with something that is sweet and pleasant. The oil makes everything smooth. You may say, "But if we are full of the Spirit, we would not argue." That would be very good. Then instead of arguing, there would be praise and fellowship.

We all need olive oil. The way to gain the oil is to deal with the mingled spirit, to use our spirit, and to live, walk, speak, and do everything by the spirit. Then we shall have the oil to be mingled with the flour for a meal offering.

THE DRINK OFFERING

Let us now say a word concerning the wine of the drink offering. When we experience Christ as the One who produces life and supplies life, we have Him as wheat. When we walk in spirit and do things in spirit, dealing with the Spirit, we are growing olives. Then if we are willing to sacrifice and pour out what we have experienced of Christ, we shall have Him as wine. This is the way to produce wine.

The quantity of wine is the same as that of the oil. Both are a quarter of a hin. This indicates that we cannot pour our life out for God more than we have enjoyed Christ. What we pour out cannot exceed the extent of our enjoyment of Christ. The oil is for enjoyment, and the wine is to be poured out as a drink offering to God. What we experience of the Spirit in our spirit should be poured out. We should not retain it for ourselves.

To produce oil is to live by Christ, and to produce wine is to die for Him. To live Christ is to grow wheat and olive trees; to die for Him is to produce wine. This is to turn the oil into wine. Therefore, we need to live Christ and also die for Him. We live by Him, and we live for Him. This is to experience Him as wheat and olive oil. But we also must die for Him. This is to experience Him as wine. In 1 Corinthians 15:31 Paul says, "Daily I die." In 2 Corinthians 4:10 he says that day by day he experiences the putting to death of

Jesus. We also need to be put to death day by day, even in our married life and family life. This is to pour out as wine what we have experienced and enjoyed of Christ. This wine is a heavenly spiritual wine poured out to God for His pleasure.

FOOD FOR GOD'S SATISFACTION

When we have the lambs, the wheat, the oil, and the wine, we have all the courses for a feast. We have these courses by daily offering Christ as our sin offering. If we practice offering Him in this way, we shall have a clear conscience and a free spirit. Then Christ will live in us as the lamb, the wheat, the olive tree, and the grape vine. Therefore, we shall raise Christ as a lamb and grow Him as wheat, olive trees, and vines. The result will be that we shall have the produce of the good land as our spiritual groceries. When we come to the meetings of the church, we should bring these groceries with us. This does not mean that we should bring all that we have produced. Rather, we should bring two lambs, a tenth of an ephah of flour, a quarter of a hin of oil, and the same amount of wine. We should then offer all this to God as food for His satisfaction.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FIVE

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(13)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:38-46

We need to be deeply impressed with the significance of all the types in the Old Testament. In particular, we need to have a proper understanding of the daily offerings for the sanctification of the priests. Every day for a period of seven days there was the need of a bull for a sin offering, two lambs for burnt offerings, one offered in the morning and the other in the evening, and along with the lambs a meal offering and a drink offering. The meal offering was composed of wheat flour mingled with oil. The drink offering was made of wine produced from grapes. If we consider all these types in the light of our experience, we shall realize that their significance is wonderful.

ATTITUDES TOWARD TYPOLOGY

A good number of Christian teachers, including some who are professors in seminaries and Bible schools and others who are denominational pastors, do not care much for the value of the types in the Old Testament. Many regard the Old Testament merely as history or as being related only to the children of Israel and having nothing to do with us, the New Testament believers in Christ. Thus, one kind of attitude toward the biblical types is to pay little or no attention to them.

A second attitude is somewhat different. This is the attitude that since the Old Testament types have been fulfilled in the New Testament, there is no longer any need for us to pay attention to them. Those who hold this attitude

claim that it is sufficient for us to have the New Testament and that there is no need for us to consider the Old Testament types any further.

A third attitude toward biblical typology concerns the interpretation of types. This attitude is held by those who acknowledge that there are types and that they are worthy of attention. However, they say that it is too difficult for anyone to interpret them. Some, they claim, interpret them in one way, and others interpret them in another way. Because of these different understandings of the types, those who hold the third attitude say that it is better for us to leave them alone and not try to understand them.

We should not hold any of these attitudes, for none of them is acceptable. The Bible says, "For whatever was written before was written for our instruction, that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we may have hope" (Rom. 15:4). This clearly indicates that what was written in the Old Testament is for us today. Furthermore in 1 Corinthians 10:6 Paul, referring to the children of Israel in the wilderness says, "Now these things occurred as types of us." In verse 11 of the same chapter Paul goes on to say, "Now these things happened to them as types, and were written for our admonition, unto whom the ends of the ages have come." These verses certainly indicate that the Old Testament types are for us.

Moreover, the writer of the book of Hebrews in dealing with certain Old Testament types indicated that he did not have sufficient time to go into them further. For example, after speaking of the Holy Place with the lampstand and the table, and the Holy of Holies with the ark of the covenant, the writer of Hebrews speaks of the cherubim of glory overshadowing the propitiation cover. Then he says that concerning these things he "cannot now speak in detail" (Heb. 9:5). This indicates that the author had more to say concerning the types, but did not have the time adequate to say it. But in writing the book of Hebrews he established an example to help us interpret the types in the Old Testament. By reading Hebrews we find a model that will help us in our study of the Old Testament

types. Since the New Testament points to the value of the types for us today, we must regard the three attitudes we have mentioned as not being scriptural.

Let us now go on to consider a fourth attitude, an attitude that is somewhat according to the Scriptures. However, as we shall see, this view of the types is rather limited in its correctness. This is the view that something in the Old Testament may be regarded as a type if it is explicitly identified as such in the New Testament. According to this understanding of types, if the New Testament does not indicate that a certain matter is a type, we should not consider it a type. As an example, those who hold this view of typology would refer to Paul's word concerning Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4. In this chapter Paul clearly says that these two women are types of two covenants. Referring to such an example, those who hold this view would say strongly that we should not interpret anything in the Old Testament as a type and apply it to us unless the New Testament tells us that it is a type. Moreover, according to this view, unless the New Testament says so, we should not apply any particular matter in the Old Testament to Christ.

However, some who hold this attitude allow for exceptional cases. The outstanding exception is that of Joseph in the book of Genesis. Many Bible teachers, including those who hold this fourth attitude toward types, admit that Joseph is a type of Christ. But in the New Testament there is not so much as a word to say that Joseph typifies Christ. Nevertheless, teachers of the Bible throughout the centuries have regarded Joseph as a type of Christ.

When I was young I accepted this fourth attitude toward the Old Testament types. I also agreed that we could allow for an exceptional case such as Joseph. But later I began to wonder why there could not be many other exceptions if there could be one exception. The principle in each case would be the same. On the one hand, those who hold this fourth view set up a wall to limit the interpretation of types; on the other hand, they open one door as an exception. But why could not many other doors, even hundreds of doors, be

opened? Considering this matter further over the years, I have concluded that this fourth attitude toward typology is not altogether correct.

There is also a fifth attitude toward Old Testament typology. This is the view that the types in the Old Testament may be applied only in part to the New Testament. Take as an example the history of the children of Israel. Nearly all fundamental teachers understand the Passover in Exodus 12 as a type of Christ as our Passover. Paul clearly says as much in 1 Corinthians 5:7, where he tells us that our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed for us. Thus, concerning this type, there is no room for argument. Also, although there is no clear word, no explicit word, in the New Testament concerning the manna as a type, there are hints in chapter six of John that manna typifies Christ as our daily food. In John 6 the Lord Jesus said that He is the bread of heaven, the bread of life, the living bread, the bread that came down to give life to the world. In the light of this, those who make a partial application of the Old Testament types to the New Testament would agree that manna is a type of Christ. Because Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10 that the rock that went with the children of Israel in the wilderness is Christ, a good number of Bible teachers would also say that the rock flowing with living water is also a type of Christ. A good number also regard the crossing of the Red Sea as a type of baptism (1 Cor. 10:1-2). However, not many understand the crossing of the river Jordan as having a typological significance. The crossing of the Jordan is often interpreted as a picture of a believer's physical death. Even those who do not agree with a typological interpretation of the Old Testament may regard the crossing of the Jordan River as signifying a believer's dying and going to heaven. A number of songs have been written about this. In particular, one hymn speaks of the fact that sooner or later all believers must pass through the cold waves of Jordan. There is a serious problem with this interpretation, however. If crossing the Jordan is a type of our physical death, how can the land of Canaan signify heaven? Canaan, we should remember,

was full of enemies against which the children of Israel had to fight. If Canaan typifies heaven, this means that there will be enemies in heaven. But surely this is not the situation. Thus, this interpretation of crossing the Jordan River is not accurate.

Many Bible teachers regard the early history of the children of Israel as a type. But they do not interpret typologically the Babylonian captivity and the return from captivity. Certain teachers among the Brethren and perhaps others as well, have taken the captivity and the return from Babylon as types.

We should take the Old Testament the same as we take the New Testament. The Old Testament is a picture book, and the New Testament is the explanation of this picture book. Therefore, we should not take only the part that gives the explanation and ignore that part which presents the pictures. Neither should we merely take only certain parts or aspects of the picture book. It is not adequate to take the Old Testament as a picture book only in part. Rather, our attitude should be absolute. This means that we should be absolute in taking the Old Testament as a picture book for us today.

However, this certainly does not mean that we take the Old Testament without having a proper understanding of God's dispensation. For example, we should not take the law, in particular the Ten Commandments, in exactly the same sense they were given to the children of Israel. Concerning this, the Seventh Day Adventists have a problem with the seventh day. They claim that the law concerning the Sabbath is still binding on New Testament believers. At present, I do not care to enter into this controversy. My aim is to point out that our attitude toward the entire Old Testament is that we approach it in the way of God's dispensation. Therefore, this should be our attitude and understanding when we consider the types in Exodus 29.

A PICTURE OF CHRIST

Consider the picture in this chapter. We have a bull for a

sin offering, lambs for a burnt offering, oil and flour for a meal offering, and wine for a drink offering. As you ponder these things, do you not have the feeling that they are meaningful and significant? To me, these pictures are very meaningful. However, I would point out strongly that my interpretation of these pictures, these types, is not something produced by the natural imagination of the human mind. In Exodus 29 we have a picture. The bull for the sin offering, the two lambs for the burnt offering, the flour, the oil, the wine—all these are parts of the picture. Unless you have some knowledge and experience, you will not know how to interpret this picture. Certainly, a person who has not been saved and regenerated and who does not have an adequate knowledge of the Bible has no way to understand this picture. He could see the bull, the lambs, the flour, and the wine, but he would not know their significance. He could do nothing more than point out this list of items in Exodus 29. However, because these items are described in the holy Scriptures, we need to consider them seriously and realize that this picture presents something very meaningful concerning us as believers in Christ.

If we have experienced the Lord's salvation and have had some amount of experience in the Christian life and then read Exodus 29, we shall realize that the bull, the lambs, the flour, the oil, and the wine all portray different aspects of the all-inclusive Christ. Again and again we have pointed out that the bull typifies Christ as our sin offering. In this universe no one other than Christ Himself can be a sin offering for us. According to Exodus 29, the lambs are for a burnt offering. These lambs typify Christ as our burnt offering. Only He is qualified to be the burnt offering.

It is more difficult to understand the significance of the flour mingled with oil and of the wine poured out as a drink offering. The fine flour mingled with oil is for a meal offering. The meal offering, of course, is good for eating, and the wine is meant for drinking. If we are faithful and dig into the Word, we shall eventually learn the significance of the meal offering and the drink offering. No doubt, the flour pictures

Christ as our food. First He was a grain of wheat. Then He was ground to become food. Furthermore, with the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and our experiences, we can trace the meaning of the flour, the oil, and the wine. The Bible and the Holy Spirit can be compared to two railroad tracks. We may travel along these tracks until we reach our destination—in this case a proper understanding of the types in Exodus 29. No doubt, the flour signifies Christ as the producing life becoming the supplying life to be our daily food. As we have pointed out, the oil signifies the Spirit. But what about the wine? The wine is for God's satisfaction. It is poured out unto God for Him to drink.

As we consider all these matters, we realize that they are put together in a meaningful way. They can be compared to pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. When all the pieces of a puzzle are put together, we have a picture. In like manner, when we put together all these items from the Old Testament, in our spirit we can see a picture of Christ. What is revealed in this picture goes beyond what can be described in words. For example, by looking at a photograph of a person's face, we can see what his face looks like. However, even if we try to describe his face in thousands of words, we still shall not have an accurate understanding of its appearance. A person's face can be shown only through a picture, not by a description in words. I use this illustration to point out the importance of considering the types in the Old Testament. These types portray things that cannot be presented in words.

As one who has been a Christian and studying the Bible for more than fifty years, I wish to testify that if we did not have the Old Testament, we would be deprived of much spiritual understanding. We cannot understand spiritual matters adequately if we read only the New Testament. We need the pictures in the Old Testament as well as the definitions, the plain words, in the New Testament. Therefore, we all need to have a proper regard for the Old Testament. We need to be impressed with the significance of the pictures in the Old Testament so that we shall regard it more highly

than we do at present. According to my realization, most Christians, including many of us, do not have an adequate regard for the Old Testament. This lack of regard is primarily due to the influence of our religious background.

Many Christians do not use even the New Testament truly in a spiritual sense or in a spiritual way. On the contrary, they use it in a religious way, in a natural way, or in an ethical or cultural way. For example, the New Testament tells us that we need faith. However, some take this in a natural way and claim that if we have faith, we shall be successful in what we are doing. Is this the kind of faith revealed in the New Testament? Certainly not. Also, the New Testament commands us to love others. But this commandment regarding love may be interpreted in a natural way or in a religious way instead of in a genuinely spiritual way. When I was young, I heard many sermons in which verses from the Bible were used as a basis for someone to express his opinion according to his cultural background. This practice is still common today. Time after time, verses are quoted from the Scriptures only to be usurped for a particular purpose. Many do not know how to use the Bible according to the mind of God.

Even if we know the New Testament according to the mind of God, we still need the Old Testament. By itself the New Testament is not adequate. The plain words of explanation are not adequate for us to apprehend God's revelation. Along with the descriptions and definitions in the New Testament, we need the types, the pictures, in the Old Testament.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SIX

THE SANCTIFICATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS TO BE THE PRIESTS

(14)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 29:29-46

In the foregoing message we emphasized the value of the types in the Old Testament, and we also considered different attitudes toward these types. In addition to the plain words in the New Testament, we need the types, the pictures, in the Old Testament. In particular, we need to pay attention to the types of Christ presented in Exodus 29. If we apply this picture of Christ to our experience, we shall enjoy more of Christ and learn how to grow Christ and produce Him so that we can offer Him to God in the church meetings.

A RADICAL CHANGE IN OUR DAILY LIFE

I hope that all the saints in the Lord's recovery will be willing to drop their old, religious background. At least to some extent, this background influences the saints unconsciously or subconsciously. When they come to the meetings, many are still under the influence of the background of religion. Because of this influence, they come to the meetings merely to sit and join the congregation in singing. Others may offer a prayer or give a testimony. This, of course, is an improvement. Nevertheless, the situation of the meetings is still too much under the influence of what we inherited from traditional Christianity. We may regard this inheritance, this influence, as an old culture that we need to drop.

In these messages on Exodus 29 we have been considering the sanctification of the believers to serve God as

priests. This is related to the question of how to meet. What is revealed through the types in Exodus 29 is absolutely different from the practice of traditional Christianity. For this reason, I urge you to lay aside your old background and take up something new according to the picture in Exodus 29.

Toward the end of Exodus 29 we see the bull for the sin offering, the lambs for the burnt offering, the flour and the oil for the meal offering, and the wine for the drink offering. Daily our practice needs to match what is revealed in these types. This means that in our living we should experience Christ in all these ways. No longer should we live the Christian life in an old way. The New Testament makes clear what the Christian life is. However, the New Testament does not give us the details. The details are pictured in the Old Testament types. Here in Exodus 29 we have a picture showing that daily we need a bull, two lambs, flour, oil, and wine. Where is the sin offering in your way of living the Christian life? Where are the lambs, the fine flour, the oil, and the wine? It is possible that you do not have any of these in your daily life. The aspects of Christ are pictured in the Bible, but they are not part of your experience; they are not found in your daily life. Our way of living the Christian life may have its source in ethics, culture, religion, and the natural concept. It is not constituted of the elements portrayed in Exodus 29. We may be like Bible students studying the Old Testament who study the types in Exodus 29, but do not live according to them. We do not make them one with our daily living. What is the purpose of the picture of the bull, the lambs, the flour, the oil, the wine? To be sure, it is not just for the composition of the Bible. It is a picture of what we should experience in our daily life.

It is possible to be under the Lord's ministry for years without applying in our daily life the revelation we have received. If this is our situation, we have the ministry in our listening, learning, or reading, but not in our living. Furthermore, what we have in our Christian life may be derived from tradition. Even what we gain from the Lord's ministry

may do nothing more than influence our traditional way of living the Christian life. It does not lead to a radical change, to a revolution, in our daily living. The picture in Exodus 29 should bring about a radical change in our Christian life. It should cause us to no longer have our daily life in a traditional way.

We may illustrate what we mean by tradition from certain practices of Catholicism. According to the Catholic way, regularly a believer should go to confession and then attend mass. In addition, when she is in a church building, a woman is supposed to have a covering on her head. Also according to Catholic tradition, some may buy candles and place them in front of an image. This is the Catholic way according to tradition. Although you do not follow this kind of tradition, in principle your way of living the Christian life may also be traditional. Therefore, I hope that as we are speaking concerning how to meet and how to be priests serving the Lord, we shall apply all the matters in Exodus 29 to our daily living. May all these things cause a revolution in our Christian life. In particular, we need to be revolutionized in our praying.

I can testify that I am still learning how to have a proper Christian life. I admit that in the past I was strongly under the influence of tradition. We do not know how deep in tradition we are. When we try to get out of tradition, we discover that it is extremely difficult to get out.

In Exodus 29 the bull typifies Christ as our sin offering and the lambs typify Christ as our burnt offering. I encourage you to practice offering Christ to God as your sin offering and also as your burnt offering. I would also encourage you throughout the day to enjoy Christ as the meal offering, as the fine flour mingled with oil, and even to experience Him as the wine to be poured out to God as a drink offering.

PRAYING SPONTANEOUSLY AND INTIMATELY

Because it is somewhat difficult to understand these matters and practice them, let me try to explain further what I

mean. I do not mean that you should do anything in a legal way. The Lord is living and present, and we love Him. He is present with us, and we are present with Him. Is the Lord not living and present? And are you not also living and present? Therefore, both you and the Lord are living and present to each other. There should be some spontaneous communication between you and the Lord. As you and the Lord enjoy such a relationship, you will realize that you are still sinful, and you will offer the sin offering.

Living in the Lord's presence will make us conscious of the fact that we are sinful, even that we are sin itself. If we do not have this feeling when in the Lord's presence, there must be something wrong. Of course, there cannot be anything wrong with the Lord. Whatever is wrong must be on our side. But if the situation is proper, probably the first thing we shall do is to say something like this: "O Lord, I am still in the old creation, still in myself, my old nature, and in the flesh. Lord, I confess that I am sinful. Thank You, Lord, that You died for me on the cross as my sin offering. Lord, now in Your presence, I lay my hand on You and apply You as my present sin offering." This is to take Christ as the sin offering in a spontaneous manner, not in the way of legality.

A spontaneous prayer in which we apply Christ as our sin offering is a true praise to the Lord. When we pray like this, we render Him the best appreciation. This kind of prayer is different from common prayer according to religious tradition or habit. The following is an example of a rather common prayer, a prayer that may be offered according to habit: "Lord, I am sinful. I thank You for Your precious blood that I can now apply to me." This kind of prayer certainly is good, but the expression indicates that, at least to some extent, the one who prays in this way is still under the influence of tradition. However, if we apply Christ as the sin offering in the way illustrated above, that will be a sign that we are not under tradition but that we are under the Lord's enlightenment.

When we and the Lord, as living persons, are together in fellowship, something will operate within us and cause us

to realize that the Lord is new and that we are old. Then we may say, "O Lord, You are so holy and new, but I am old. I live in the old creation, and I am still in my flesh and in my old nature. I am sinful—I am even sin. Even though I have been saved and regenerated, I am still sin." This is a realization that comes spontaneously when we have genuine, intimate contact with the Lord. It is not a common, traditional prayer offered in a legal way. On the contrary, it is an intimate way of speaking to the Lord. Then, we may go on to say, "Lord, I thank You that You were made sin for me. When You died on the cross, You condemned sin. Lord, I thank You for condemning my flesh." This kind of prayer is not according to tradition; it is a loving, intimate word spoken to the Lord under His enlightenment. This kind of expression is according to the sentiment deep within us.

Often in our actual practice, our way of speaking to the Lord is very different from the way we speak to the members of our family. Instead of speaking to Him in an intimate way, we may be formal and even speak as if we were performing. It is not at all pleasant to come to the Lord in such a way. Why not contact the Lord in the same kind of living, spontaneous, and intimate way you contact those who are close to you? When you see your husband or wife, you do not speak in a formal manner. On the contrary, you speak in a loving, spontaneous way. We should also talk to the Lord Jesus this way.

Have you noticed that in the Gospels the disciples did not pray to the Lord Jesus in a way that was religious, formal, or traditional? Rather, the disciples prayed by talking to the Lord intimately and lovingly. We should learn from this example to cease from our old way of praying and live a life according to what is pictured in Exodus 29.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

I have learned from experience how good it is to be intimate with the Lord and one with Him. Sometimes we should not first speak to Him. We should let the Lord speak

first. When He speaks, we should not immediately speak in return. This means that we and the Lord should be like friends who take time to listen to each other. Suppose a friend visits you and begins to speak to you about certain things. If you interrupt him and begin to speak about other matters, that would indicate that you do not care for what he is saying. That is not the way for intimate friends to converse together. The proper way is that your friend talks to you, and you listen. Then, after a period of time, he will give you an opportunity to speak, and he will listen. It certainly would not be proper for him to do all the talking and then, when he is finished, to say goodbye and leave. He should give you the opportunity to speak to him. This should also be true of our relationship with the Lord.

Early in the morning, when you are with the Lord, He may begin to speak to you. As He speaks, He enlightens, for His speaking is our enlightening. Sometimes He may encourage you. At other times, He may rebuke you or even scold you. But no matter what He says, you must listen to Him. Then He will give you time to speak. I am rather certain that whatever you say will be in the realm of the sin offering. You may answer Him by saying, "Lord, I am sin, but You are my sin offering. You were made sin for me, and You died on the cross to condemn sin. How I thank You that Your precious blood is the blood shed by You as my sin offering. O Lord, how I treasure this blood!" Talking to the Lord in this way will cause you to love Him very much. You will sense that you have never loved Him as much as you love Him now. Furthermore, you will give Him the highest appreciation. All this will cause you to live a daily life of enjoying the Lord. In particular, you will enjoy Him as the fine flour feeding you and supplying life to you. Also, spontaneously you will walk in spirit, act in spirit, and speak in spirit. In this way you will enjoy Christ as the olive oil. Then you will become willing to sacrifice yourself for the Lord and for others. This is to have a life in which we pour out Christ as wine. In this way you will have a bull, two lambs, and an amount of flour, oil, and wine.

OUR WAY OF MEETING

If you come to the church meeting with Christ in these aspects, you will not come in a traditional way, in a common way, in a way according to the religious background. No, the way you come to the meetings and function in the meetings will be absolutely different. I do not know what you will do, but I believe that spontaneously you will offer praise to the Lord and testify of Him. The Bible reveals that whatever fills us will eventually be poured out. This means that if we are filled with Christ, we shall pour Him forth in praise and testimony.

Our way of meeting is still too formal and traditional. For instance, we may think that testimonies should be given at the end of the meeting. According to this concept, if we testify at the beginning of the meeting, we break the rules or regulations of the meeting. Actually, there is no rule that says we should testify at the end of the meeting and not at the beginning. If this rule exists, it exists in the saints as a self-made rule. Suppose we come to a church meeting or even to a ministry meeting and testify one by one. There may be so many testimonies that there will not be an opportunity for anyone to give a message. My intention in saying this, however, is not to present a proposal concerning the way of meeting. My burden is to point out how formal, religious, natural, and traditional we are. My intention is to show that we are still under the influence of traditional Christianity. In our daily practice and in our meetings we need to get away from this influence.

TWO CULTURES

I would take as an illustration my experience of turning from the old, Oriental culture to the modern, Western culture. As a result of much contact with Westerners, my family began to be influenced by Western culture. But the influence of the old, Oriental culture was so strong that it took a while before we could follow the modern way. When we are in a situation where we must choose between two cultures, we need to exercise discernment to know which is

better. From my youth, I began to realize that the modern culture was better than the traditional culture. But the vast majority of the Chinese did not realize this and even opposed modern culture. I use this as an illustration of our situation today. Today there are two atmospheres, one more prevalent than the other. The more prevalent atmosphere is that of Christianity; the other is that of the Lord's recovery. We need the proper discernment to know which atmosphere we should be in, the atmosphere of Christianity or of the Lord's recovery.

EXPERIENCE CHRIST IN A PRACTICAL WAY

Christ is living, present, and real. In reality and in actuality He is our sin offering, our trespass offering, and our burnt offering. He is the fine flour for the meal offering composed of flour mingled with oil, which signifies the life-giving Spirit. He is also the wine with which we are filled and which we pour out as a drink offering for God's enjoyment. Christ is all these things. But we need to have a life not only to match this, but also to reflect it. Our living should be the reflection of such a Christ.

If we attend ministry meetings week after week and year after year and do not put into practice the things we hear in the messages, then this kind of meeting becomes merely a class for Bible teaching. We all need to practice the things revealed from the Word through the Lord's ministry. I hope that I myself shall receive mercy and grace to take the lead to practice these things. May we put all these matters into our daily life and make them a reflection of Christ according to the picture of the Old Testament types.

We need to experience Christ daily in a practical way as our present sin offering and burnt offering. We should also experience Him as the meal offering, that is, as our life supply. This means that we should have the fine flour mingled with an adequate amount of oil. We should not be dry; we should have the oil of the life-giving Spirit not only poured upon us, but also mingled with us. Then we should

be thoroughly saturated with the oil of the Spirit. Following this, we need to have Christ as our wine to fill us up and make us so happy that we shall be willing to sacrifice everything for the Lord and pour out everything for Him.

GRINDING AND PRESSING

The fine flour comes from grains that have been ground. This grinding of the grains is a picture of the working of the cross in our experience. The dealing of the cross is a grinding. We may be grains, but we may not be fine flour. This means that we may have the experience of Christ as grain, but may not have the experience of Him as the fine flour, because we do not have the experience of being ground. We need this experience, this dealing of the cross.

The olive oil comes from olives that have been pressed. If olives are not pressed, no oil can flow out. Olives flow out oil only through the process of being pressed. The same is true of grapes. Unless grapes are pressed, they cannot flow out wine. The pressing of the olives and the pressing of the grapes are both illustrations of the dealing of the cross. Thus, the grinding and the pressing both signify the operation of the cross in us. If we would enjoy Christ as fine flour, we must be conformed to His death. We must live a life under the grinding of the cross. Moreover, in order to flow out oil and wine, we must live a life under the pressing of the cross.

As we consider these matters, we may feel that they are difficult to comprehend. But if we put them into practice in our daily life and have a living that is a reflection of this picture, spontaneously we shall experience the grinding of the grains and the pressing of the olives and the grapes. If we are not under the pressing of the cross, we cannot have oil. We cannot have a life rich in the life-giving Spirit. In like manner, if we are not under the pressing of the cross, we cannot have any wine to drink, much less have wine to pour out for the Lord and for others. Wine and oil come from the pressing, and fine flour comes from the grinding.

THE LORD DWELLING IN OUR MIDST

Verses 42 and 43 say, "It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tent of meeting before Jehovah, where I will meet with you to speak with you there. And I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by My glory." These verses indicate that if we have the life described in this chapter, the Lord will meet with us and will speak with us. According to verse 43, He will meet not only with the priests, but with the entire congregation. Furthermore, everything will be holy, sanctified. Verses 44 and 45 say, "And I will sanctify the tent of meeting and the altar, and Aaron and his sons I will sanctify to serve as priests to Me. And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will be their God." This also is the outcome, the issue, of the kind of life depicted in this chapter. Finally, in verse 46 we have the conclusion: "And they shall know that I am Jehovah their God, who brought them out from the land of Egypt that I might dwell in their midst; I am Jehovah their God." The result of experiencing Christ according to Exodus 29 is that the Lord dwells in our midst.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SEVEN

THE GOLDEN INCENSE ALTAR

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:1-5; 37:25-28

After so many messages on chapter twenty-nine, we come now to a wonderful matter in chapter thirty—the golden incense altar (30:1-5).

In studying the types in the Old Testament, especially in the books of Exodus and Leviticus, the most difficult thing is to see how to apply these types to our daily Christian life. It is not so difficult to study the types in a doctrinal way or to understand them in a doctrinal way. But to apply these types in a practical way to our daily life as Christians requires a certain amount of experience.

THE PLACE WHERE THE PRIESTLY SERVICE BEGINS

Regarding the incense altar, I would like to ask this question: Why is the incense altar revealed so late in the sequence in the book of Exodus? From reading chapter twenty-five we know that the first item in the tabernacle to be mentioned is the ark. The record then goes on to speak of the table, the lampstand, and the building of the tabernacle itself. As we read chapters twenty-five and twenty-six, we may wonder why there is no mention of the incense altar in this section. Furthermore, chapter twenty-seven describes the bronze altar and the court of the tabernacle; chapter twenty-eight speaks of the priestly garments; and chapter twenty-nine is concerned with the sanctification of the priests. Actually, Exodus 29 is concerned with the priests' food. Thus, chapter twenty-eight talks about the clothing of the priests, and chapter twenty-nine, their food. It is after all this that we have the description

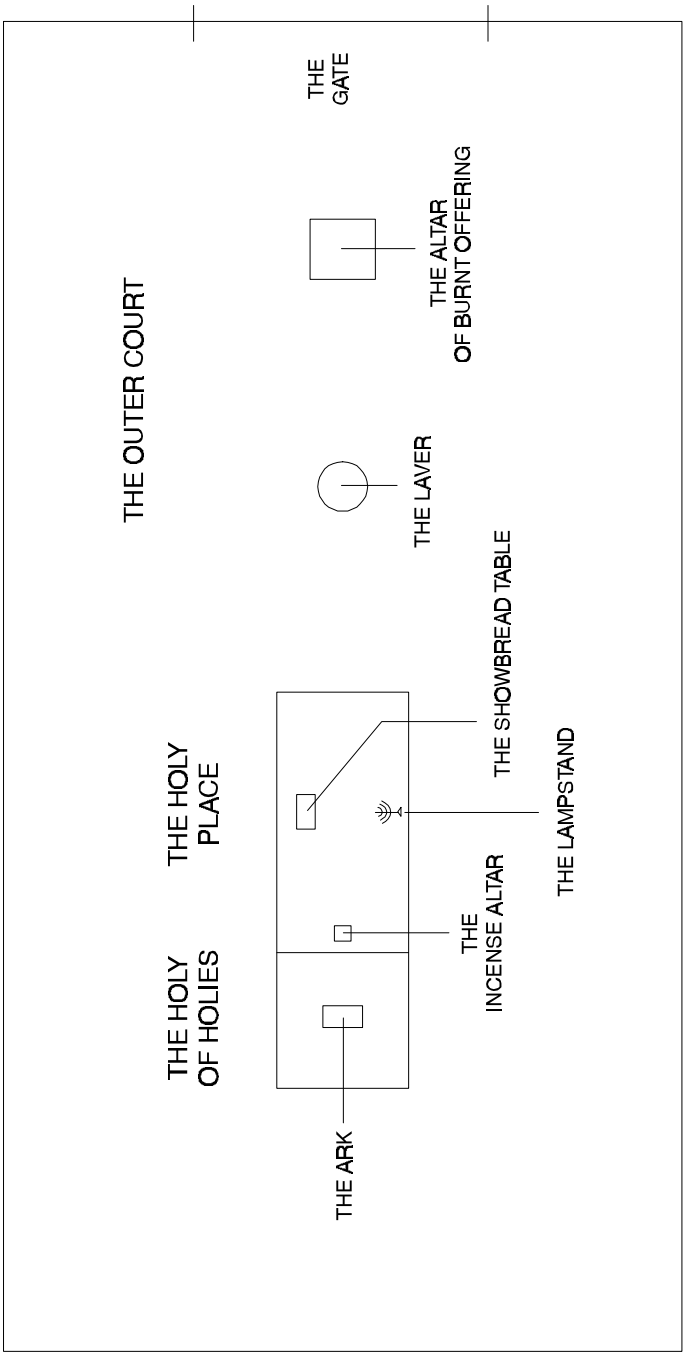
of the golden incense altar in 30:1-5. Therefore, the incense altar is the last item revealed of the furniture within the tabernacle. It is described after the revelation of the tabernacle with the rest of its furniture and the equipping of the priesthood. In other words, the incense altar comes in only after the tabernacle with all the rest of its furniture has been revealed.

We have seen that the incense altar is described after the chapter concerning the sanctification of the priests. When the priests have their clothing and their food, their hands are filled, and they are ready to serve God. By the end of chapter twenty-nine the tabernacle with its furniture is ready, and the priesthood is also ready. Now is the time for the holy service to begin. But with what should this holy service, this priestly service, begin? Some may think that the priestly service ought to begin at the altar of burnt offering, not at the incense altar. However, according to the divine record in Exodus, this service begins at the golden incense altar, which is the second altar.

With respect to the tabernacle, there are two altars: the altar of burnt offering in the outer court, the first altar, and the golden incense altar in the Holy Place, the second altar. In the sight of God, the priestly service begins at the incense altar, at the place where prayers are offered to God. I believe that it will be very helpful to our Christian life to dwell on the importance of the priestly service beginning at the incense altar.

THE LOCATION OF THE INCENSE ALTAR

In order to be impressed with the significance of the incense altar, I would ask you to pay attention to the diagram of the tabernacle printed with this message. The entrance to the outer court is on the east, toward the sunrise. The altar of burnt offering and the laver were in the outer court. The tabernacle, a structure thirty cubits long, ten cubits wide, and ten cubits high, was divided into two parts: the Holy Place, measuring twenty cubits by ten cubits, and the Holy of Holies, a cube ten cubits in length, width, and height. The table was on the north side of the


THE GATE
THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING
THE OUTER COURT
THE LAVER
THE SHOWBREAD TABLE
THE HOLY PLACE
THE LAMPSTAND
THE INCENSE ALTAR
THE HOLY OF HOLIES
THE ARK

Holy Place, and the lampstand was on the south side. The ark, the focal point of the entire tabernacle, was in the Holy of Holies. But where was the incense altar located? It was in the Holy Place, very close to the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

Actually there is some ambiguity in the Scriptures regarding the location of the incense altar. It is difficult to say whether it was outside the veil or within the veil. Regarding the standing place of the incense altar, there is apparently a discrepancy between the mentioning of it in the Old Testament and that in the New Testament. Exodus 30:6 says that the incense altar was put "before the veil," that is, outside the veil. This indicates clearly that the incense altar was put in the Holy Place, which was outside the veil, not in the Holy of Holies, which was within the veil. But Hebrews 9:4 says that the Holy of Holies has the incense altar. Therefore, many Christian teachers and Bible readers have thought that some error or misconstruction must somehow have occurred. But it is not so! The apparent discrepancy has a very spiritual significance according to a number of points.

First, the Old Testament record of the incense altar's standing place implies the closest relation of the incense altar to the ark of testimony, over which is the propitiation-cover, where God meets with His people (Exo. 30:6). The record even says that the incense altar is set "before the ark of the testimony," without mentioning the separating veil that stands between them (Exo. 40:5).

Second, according to the American Standard Version, 1 Kings 6:22 says that the incense altar "belonged to the oracle." "Oracle" here means the speaking place of God; it denotes the Holy of Holies, in which was the ark of testimony with the propitiation-cover, where God spoke to His people. Thus, the Old Testament indicated already that the incense altar belonged to the Holy of Holies. (Though it was in the Holy Place, its function was for the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies. On the day of atonement, both the incense altar and the propitiation-cover of the

ark of testimony were sprinkled with the same blood for atonement—Exodus 30:10; Lev. 16:15-16.) Hence, in Exodus 26:35 only the table and the lampstand are mentioned as being in the Holy Place. There is no mention of the incense altar.

Third, the incense altar is related to prayer (Luke 1:10-11), and in Hebrews we see that to pray is to enter the Holy of Holies (Heb. 10:19) and to come to the throne of grace, signified by the propitiation-cover over the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies. Our prayer often begins with our mind, which is part of our soul, signified by the Holy Place. But our prayer should usher us into our spirit, signified by the Holy of Holies. Due to all these points, the writer of Hebrews had to reckon that the incense altar belongs to the Holy of Holies Hebrews 9:4 does not say that a golden incense altar is *in* the Holy of Holies, as the lampstand and the table are in the Holy Place in verse 2. It says that the Holy of Holies has a golden altar, since it belongs to the Holy of Holies. This concept fits the whole emphasis of the book of Hebrews—that we should press on from the soul (signified by the Holy Place) to the spirit (signified by the Holy of Holies).

THE CENTER OF GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

According to the diagram of the tabernacle and the outer court, the ark is the focus. However, in actual practice the center is the incense altar. This indicates that Christ's interceding life is the center of the divine practice, the divine administration. In the universe there is something that may be called God's economy, God's administration, God's practice. We may use different terms to describe this one matter: economy, administration, practice, dispensation, move, government. All these terms may be regarded as synonymous, as referring to the same thing. This means that God's economy, dispensation, administration, government, move, and practice all refer to the same thing. God is not idle: He is a God of purpose. He has a purpose, and He is moving, working, acting, dispensing, administrating. This diagram of the

tabernacle is a very accurate and detailed picture of God's administration, God's economy, in this universe.

When we study the incense altar, we are studying the greatest matter in the universe. There is nothing more central than this. Although we are not politicians, we surely are heavenly statesmen. Furthermore, we are studying universal "politics," that is, God's politics. The ark in the Holy of Holies is the central government, our heavenly Washington, D.C. The incense altar may be regarded as our heavenly White House. This means that everything is executed, motivated, and carried out from this divine center. The intercession of Christ is God's White House. Christ's interceding life, His prayer life, is the center of God's administration.

The book of Revelation is a book of God's administration, a book of divine execution. This book reveals the throne of God and the administration of God throughout the universe. However, the executing center actually is not the throne; the executing center is the incense altar in Revelation 8. Revelation 8:3 says, "And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him that He should add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." On this altar the prayers of the saints are offered to God, and Christ's incense is added to these prayers. When the prayers of the saints ascend to God with the incense of Christ, God executes the policies of His administration.

THE PRAYER LIFE OF THE CORPORATE CHRIST

The prayer life of Christ is the center of God's execution of His government on earth. Revelation 8 indicates this. But some who read chapter eight of Revelation may say, "In Revelation 8 we cannot see Christ's prayer. We can see only the prayers of the saints." The saints, however, are one with Christ. The prayers in Revelation 8 no longer are merely the prayers of the individual Christ, but have become the prayers of the corporate Christ. In the matter of the execution that takes place at the incense altar, the saints truly are one

with Christ. Therefore, when we speak in this message of the prayer life of Christ, we mean the prayer life of the corporate Christ.

Furthermore, we need to realize that whenever we pray in the spirit, Christ is praying in our praying. The New Testament speaks of praying in the Lord's name. To pray in the name of the Lord Jesus is to pray in Christ. When we pray in this way, Christ is actually the one praying. For example, suppose you go to a bank to carry out a transaction in the name of another person. Will the bank honor your name or the name of the person you represent? To be sure, the bank will not recognize your name; instead, it will recognize the name of the person represented by you. In a very real sense, because you are representing that person, you are that person, for you are acting in his name. In like manner, when we pray in Christ's name, we pray in Him. Also, when we pray in Him, Christ is actually the one praying. He prays in us; He prays in our prayer. In the sight of God, all the proper prayers of the saints and of the churches are prayers of Christ and are included as part of Christ's intercession.

A REPRESENTATIVE BOOK

The Bible is a picture book. The picture portrayed in the Bible as a whole corresponds to the diagram of the tabernacle and the outer court. There is one book in the Bible that can be regarded as representing the entire Bible. This representative book is the Gospel of John.

The Bible begins with the words, "In the beginning…." The Gospel of John begins in a way that is very similar. Genesis 1:1 tells us that God created the heavens and the earth. Speaking of the Word, which was with God and which is God, John 1:3 says, "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being which has come into being." Everything that has come into existence has come into being through Him. Thus, in the Gospel of John we have the matter of creation.

The Old Testament has much to say about the tabernacle. We also find the tabernacle in the Gospel of John: "The

Word became flesh and tabernacled among us" (John 1:14). The record in John is a record of the tabernacle. In this Gospel Jesus Christ Himself is God's tabernacle.

Speaking of the Lord Jesus, John the Baptist said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Here we have the altar. In chapter three of John we have the laver, for this chapter speaks of the washing that comes through regeneration. Because regeneration is a kind of washing, Titus 3:5 uses the expression "the washing of regeneration." This regeneration that washes us is the laver.

As we go on from the altar in chapter one of John and the laver in chapter three, we come to the showbread table in chapter six. The bread on this table is in verse 33: "For the bread of God is He who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world."

The lampstand is in chapter eight. In verse 12 the Lord Jesus says, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Therefore, we have the tabernacle, the altar, the laver, the table, and the lampstand.

Where in the Gospel of John do we find the ark? The ark is in chapters fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen, three chapters that reveal the Holy of Holies. Here we see that we can enter into God, into the place where God is. These chapters also speak of Christ's death and resurrection. By His death and resurrection Christ has prepared the way for us to enter into the Holy of Holies, that is, to come into God Himself.

The incense altar can be found in John 17. In this chapter we have Christ's prayer of intercession. The four Gospels record other occasions when the Lord Jesus prayed, but no record of Christ's prayer is as adequate, excellent, and marvelous as that found in John 17. All the saints and all the churches need to learn how to pray from John l7. The prayer in this chapter is a model, a pattern, of the prayer of the corporate Christ. Thus we all must learn to pray this prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus. I do not mean, however, that

we should merely recite the prayer recorded in John 17. Rather, we must learn to pray in the Lord's name in the same way He prayed. The prayer in John 17 should become our prayer.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INCENSE ALTAR

If it were not for the incense altar, no one would come to the altar of burnt offering. No one would repent and come to the altar to confess his sins. It is the prayer at the incense altar that motivates sinners to come to the altar of burnt offering. Because of this prayer, one day we repented. Do you know the reason you repented? You repented because the incense altar, the heavenly White House, sent forth a message urging you to repent. Thus, without the incense altar, the altar of burnt offering cannot function, and no one can repent.

Some may have the experience of repentance, but they may not yet be regenerated. Thus, there is the need of more prayer at the incense altar. Either Christ Himself as the Head or the church as the Body needs to pray, "O Father, look at these people. They have repented, but they have not yet been regenerated. Father, forgive their sins and regenerate them." As a result of further prayers from the incense altar, others will be motivated to come to the laver. They will want to plunge into the laver and be immersed in the Spirit.

Today many saints are starving spiritually. In Anaheim we have the burden to pray that these hungry ones will come to the showbread table to feed on Christ. Although many are starving, they are not willing to come to Christ to enjoy Him as their life supply. Of the millions of Christians on earth today, how many are feeding on Christ at the table? The vast majority do not even have a small basket of food, much less a table. By this we see there is the need of much more prayer at the incense altar so that the believers will be motivated to come to the table in the Holy Place to enjoy Christ as their life supply.

I have learned that gradually more and more believers are taking the way of the Lord's recovery. The number is still

small and the progress is slow, but it is an undeniable fact that more of the Lord's people are coming to His dining table. I have received many letters of appreciation from saints telling me how they have been nourished through the Life-study Messages. Not long ago I learned that there is a church in Costa Rica, a country located in Central America. A letter from the capital of Costa Rica, San Jose, informed me that there is a church in that city and seeking ones in nearby localities as well. The saints in these places appreciate the nourishment they receive from the Word. They are dining at His table. Christ the Head and so many of the churches are praying for this.

Prayer is going on in the heavenly White House not only that the believers will be nourished through the Word, but also that they will be enlightened. Light always comes after the showbread table. In the Holy Place first we come to the table to be nourished and then to the lampstand to be enlightened. The sequence is the same in the Gospel of John. In John 6 we have the feeding, and in John 8 we have the light. When we are fed, we shall receive light. However, if the saints are to be fed and enlightened, there must be prayer for this offered at the incense altar.

After we experience the feeding and the enlightening in the Holy Place, we need to enter into the Holy of Holies to touch God's testimony. In the Lord's recovery we do not care merely to carry out a work; we are here for the carrying out of God's testimony. In a very real sense we are not in a field laboring; rather, we are in the Holy of Holies touching the testimony. However, some of the churches have not yet come into the Holy of Holies to contact God's testimony. Instead, they are still in the Holy Place at the showbread table. These churches need more prayer. I am concerned for those of us who are still at the table and who have not yet come into the Holy of Holies to touch the central point of the tabernacle, God's testimony. There is the need of more prayer concerning this. I believe that this prayer is being offered at the incense altar.

As the incense ascends through the burning at the golden altar of incense, the execution of God's administration is

taking place. This execution is God's answer to the prayers offered at the incense altar.

Can you explain why you are in the Lord's recovery? Not many were urged to come this way by friends or relatives. On the contrary, some of them may have held you back and told you not to attend the meetings of the church. But even though others may have tried to hold you back, you have come this way because of the incense altar. Therefore, if we are asked what caused us to come into the Lord's recovery or who sent us here, we should answer that we were motivated and sent by the incense altar.

Some of those who oppose the Lord's recovery made a decision some years ago to do whatever they can to destroy the recovery. But I am not afraid of what opposing ones determine to do. On the contrary, I regard the opposition as a confirmation that we are in the Lord's way. Do you know why opposition comes? It comes because we are motivated by the prayer at the incense altar. In fact, the more opposition there is, the more divine motivation we have. The opposers are busy, but the Intercessor and also the intercessors are more busy. Eventually, the prayer from our White House will prevail. It is a serious matter for anyone to deal lightly with the heavenly White House, the center of God's administration.

I believe that if we consider John 17 in the light of what we have covered in this message, our appreciation of this chapter will be greatly increased. The intercession in chapter seventeen of John implies the effectiveness of the altar of burnt offering, the riches of the showbread table, the brightness of the lampstand, and in particular the Holy of Holies with the ark of testimony. John 17 truly is the incense altar in the tabernacle, the place from which the activities at all the other places in the tabernacle are motivated. It is the incense altar that causes people to come to the altar of burnt offering, to the laver, to the showbread table, to the lampstand, and to the ark in the Holy of Holies. The prayer of the Lord Jesus recorded in John 17 is a marvelous picture of this incense altar.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-EIGHT

THE GOLDEN INCENSE ALTAR

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:1-5; 37:25-28; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25

In the foregoing message we pointed out that the Gospel of John may be regarded as representative of the entire Bible. In this Gospel we have creation, the tabernacle, and the various items found in the outer court and in the tabernacle: the altar of burnt offering, the laver, the table, the lampstand, the ark, and the incense altar. As we have seen, the last item to be revealed of the furniture within the tabernacle, the incense altar, is the center of God's operation in the universe. It is the heavenly White House.

It is also possible to regard the book of Romans as representing the Bible as a whole. In the first few chapters of Romans we have the burnt offering altar, and in chapter eight we have the ark, for this chapter is the Holy of Holies. Furthermore, in chapter eight, we have the incense altar, Christ as the Intercessor. Verse 34 says, "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died, but rather who was raised, who is even at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." According to this verse, the One who died for our sins, who has been raised from among the dead, and who has ascended to the right hand of God in the heavens is the One who is interceding for us. Only this One can condemn us, but instead of condemning us, He is interceding for us. Hallelujah, this One will never condemn us! Now, after His death, resurrection, and ascension, He is interceding for us.

THE NEED FOR INTERCESSION

If it were not for Christ's intercession, no one would

accept His death, experience His resurrection, or be one with Him in His ascension. In order for people to be motivated to experience Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, His intercession is necessary. Without the interceding of Christ and the church, sinners will not receive the death of Christ. Moreover, those who have received Christ's death will not go on to experience His resurrection, much less know what it means to be with Christ in ascension, sitting with Him in the heavenlies. All these experiences are dependent on the motivation that comes from the interceding Christ and the interceding church. This is the significance of the incense altar.

The Bible first shows us the altar, the cross of Christ, and then the laver, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Following this, we have Christ as the life supply, as the light, and in the Holy of Holies as the ark. Finally, in the book of Revelation, a book of God's executing, we see that the divine administration, the divine executing, is always carried out by the incense altar.

As those who are seeking the Lord, we in the recovery both individually and corporately must learn one thing—to pray. We need a praying life. The real praying life is always a life of interceding. Genuine prayer is not mainly to pray for ourselves; it is continually to pray for others. Praying for ourselves is not intercession. But to pray for others is to intercede for them. Thus, prayer for others is intercession.

The proper prayer life is a life of praying for others, of interceding for them. We need to pray for the churches throughout the earth and for all the saints. We need to pray for the older ones, the younger ones, and the opposers. Day by day we need to pray not mainly for ourselves, but for others. We need such an interceding life. The intercession offered at the incense altar should daily be increasing.

If we consider the diagram of the tabernacle and the outer court, we shall see that the incense altar is the center. If there were no incense altar in the tabernacle, the tabernacle would not have a center. The executing center of

God's administration is not the ark; the executing center is the incense altar. It is very important that we all see this.

The diagram of the tabernacle and the outer court is also a diagram of our tripartite being. The outer court signifies the body; the Holy Place, the soul; and the Holy of Holies, the spirit. Where have you been today—in the outer court, in the Holy Place, or in the Holy of Holies? Some saints may have been in the outer court. When we lose our temper or when we murmur, complain, and gossip, we are in the outer court, that is, in the flesh. Anger and complaining are signs of being in the outer court, in the body.

From reading the Life-study Messages we may be enlightened concerning the tabernacle and its furniture. However, none of the matters concerning which we have received light may be effective in our experience; it may seem that nothing works. The reason is the lack of a prayer life. If we do not have the center, the incense altar, none of the aspects of the tabernacle and the outer court will be effective in our experience. Oh, we must have a prayer life! We must have the incense altar. The prayer life motivates us to experience the altar, the laver, the table, the lampstand, and the ark. If you will pray even a little, you will find in your experience that the showbread table is precious, that the lampstand is prevailing, and that the ark is attractive.

We may have much knowledge about the furniture in the tabernacle. We may know what is in the Holy Place and in the Holy of Holies. Nevertheless, we may not have any of these aspects of the tabernacle in our experience. Rather, we may be like a machine without a motor. Do you know what is the "motor" in our being, the motor in our body, soul, and spirit? The motor is the prayer life. Christ is not only the bread, the light, and the ark—He is also the incense altar. This means that He is the motivator and even the motor. Therefore, we need to enjoy Him as our prayer. We need to let Him pray in us, let Him guide us into prayer and into the enjoyment of Him as our prayer. I hope that we all shall see this.

In our experience we need to come to the altar, the laver, the table, the lampstand, and the ark. According to my study of the Bible, after we come to the ark in the Holy of Holies, we need to come back to the incense altar. The incense altar is not one item on the passageway through the tabernacle. On the contrary, it can be compared to a motor which causes everything to operate. Hence, the incense altar stands by itself as a turning point. Again and again we must come back to this turning point. This means that in order to experience any aspect of the outer court or the tabernacle, we need to pray. When we pray, everything works. When we pray, in our experience the altar, the laver, the table, the lampstand, and the ark are all effective. However, when the motor stops, everything else stops also. When the motor operates, everything else operates. This is the reason that we need to have a motor—the interceding Christ—operating within us. We need to have a prayer life, a life of prayer.

CHRIST AS THE INTERCESSOR

The incense altar signifies Christ as the Intercessor to maintain the relationship between God and His people (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). Without such an interceding Christ, the proper relationship between God and us could not exist. This relationship could not be maintained. Therefore, for the maintaining of our relationship with God, we need prayer not only from Christ individually, but also from His Body corporately.

ITS MATERIALS AND DIMENSIONS

According to Exodus 30:1 and 3, the incense altar was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The acacia wood signifies Christ's humanity, and the gold signifies His divinity. Thus, the incense altar made with acacia wood overlaid with gold signifies that Christ's humanity is strong in character and high in standard to express His divinity. Nothing can express God as much as an interceding life. This interceding life is based on the renewed and uplifted humanity of Christ to express God Himself.

Exodus 30:2 gives us the size of the incense altar: "A cubit its length, and a cubit its width—it shall be squared, and two cubits its height." The incense altar was one cubit in both length and width. It was a square. The height of it was two cubits. This means that the incense altar was two cubes of one cubit each. A square signifies perfection, and a cube signifies perfection in perfection. Moreover, the two cubes indicate something that is twofold, something that gives confirmation and bears a testimony. This implies that the interceding Christ, or the interceding life, is a confirmation, perfection, and testimony. Moreover, the height of the incense altar was greater than that of the showbread table and the ark. This indicates that Christ is interceding in the highest.

HAVING FOUR HORNS

The incense altar has four horns, one on each of its four corners. In biblical typology, a horn signifies strength. Therefore, the four horns on the incense altar signify the strength of Christ's intercession. These horns indicate that Christ's intercession is powerful toward the four corners of the earth.

At this point I would say parenthetically that on the day of Atonement the blood of the sin offering was brought within the veil, into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled on the propitiation-cover of the ark. Then the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled on the incense altar. This is a further indication that the incense altar was not on the passageway, but rather was a center and a turning point. The blood of atonement sprinkled on the incense altar made that altar an efficacious, effective, turning point.

HAVING A CROWN OF GOLD

The latter part of 30:3 says, "And you shall make for it a crown of gold round about." This crown was a kind of ledge around the altar. The crown of gold around the incense altar signifies the glory of Christ's divinity being the preserving power of His intercession. Our praying life does have the

power to preserve God's people and His interests. It has the power to preserve whatever needs to be preserved.

THE RINGS AND THE POLES

Exodus 30:4 says, "And you shall make two rings of gold for it under its crown; upon its two ribs you shall make them, upon its two sides; and they shall be receptacles for poles to carry it by them." The two rings of gold as receptacles for the carrying poles signify the moving of Christ's intercession.

Concerning the poles, verse 5 says, "And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold." This signifies that Christ's human nature with His divine nature is the strength for the moving of His intercession.

The rings and the poles both refer to the Spirit of Christ, that is, to the life-giving Spirit. On the one hand, this life-giving Spirit is the rings; on the other hand, this Spirit is the poles. The life-giving Spirit brings the intercession of Christ everywhere on earth. This can be compared to radio waves that are sent out everywhere.

Today the life-giving Spirit includes the element of Christ's human life. This is signified by the poles of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The Spirit today is all-inclusive. Before Christ's death, the Spirit was "not yet" (John 7:39) because Christ had not yet been glorified in resurrection. Through His resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit. On the one hand, He is the Redeemer; on the other hand, He is the life-giving Spirit. He is also the Lord in the heavens.

The life-giving Spirit includes Christ's humanity and His divinity. Now this Spirit is moving on earth to bring the effectiveness of the praying Christ to people everywhere. Wherever God's interests are, this prayer will be followed by the life-giving Spirit. This means that when the churches and the saints pray with Christ, the life-giving Spirit will carry out whatever we pray, bringing Christ's intercession to every place on earth related to God's interests.

May we all be stirred up to seek such an interceding life so that we may enjoy Christ not only as the table, the lampstand, and the ark, but also as the incense altar. This incense altar is the turning point of our Christian life. It motivates every aspect of the Christian life to positive action. The prayer of intercession also motivates others to come to Christ at the altar of burnt offering, at the laver, at the table, at the lampstand, and at the ark in the Holy of Holies. It will motivate a great many saints to seek the riches of Christ until they come to maturity. Therefore, it is extremely important that we intercede with Christ at the incense altar.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-NINE

THE GOLDEN INCENSE ALTAR

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:6-10; 40:5, 26-27; Psa. 84:3; 141:2; Rev. 8:3-6; Exo. 30:26-28

I am quite burdened concerning the incense altar because some of the points related to it are rather new to us. Thus, it will take time for us to enter into the depths of the truth with respect to the incense altar.

We need to pay attention to the fact that the incense altar was in the center of the tabernacle. It was not outside the tabernacle, and it was not in the outer court. If you consult the diagram of the tabernacle with the outer court printed in message one hundred forty-seven, you will see that the incense altar was in the center of the tabernacle.

THE INCARNATED GOD

Regarding the tabernacle, John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." According to John 1:1, the Word that became flesh is God Himself. Hence, we have God, the Word, and the tabernacle. This tabernacle was Jesus, and Jesus is the very God. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was God." The Word became flesh, and this flesh is the tabernacle. By this we see that the tabernacle is actually the incarnated God. In other words, Jesus is the incarnated God.

The incarnated God is available to be contacted by us. Not only can we contact Him; we can also enter into Him. This means that we can have a tour of the tabernacle and enjoy its contents.

As we consider the tabernacle in Exodus, we need to be

impressed that it signifies the incarnated God. God is invisible, abstract, mysterious. However, as the tabernacle, the incarnated God, this invisible, abstract, and mysterious One, becomes real, practical, and concrete. He becomes touchable and, in a very real sense, visible. For this reason, 1 John 1:1 says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld, and our hands handled concerning the Word of life." Here we see that the Apostle John touched the incarnated God. We may even go on to say that the incarnated God is enterable. Therefore, now He is not only visible and touchable—He is also enterable.

CHRIST AS THE OFFERINGS

When the Lord came as the tabernacle, He also came as all the offerings. John 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Where did the Lamb of God take away the sin of the world? He did this on the cross, which is signified by the altar of burnt offering. As the Lamb of God, Christ is the offerings offered on the altar. Therefore, He is both the tabernacle and the offerings.

Christ is both the incarnated God into whom we may enter, and He is also the offerings that are good for us to eat. The eating of the offerings is quite unusual because the goal of this eating is that we enter the tabernacle. If we had only the tabernacle without the offerings, in particular without the sin offering and the trespass offering, we would not have the means by which to come into God. The means by which we are qualified to enter into the tabernacle, into the incarnated God, is Christ as the offerings. This is the reason He says, "I am the way, and the reality, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Apart from Christ, we have no way to the Father. If we did not have Christ as the offerings, the tabernacle might still be present, but we would not have a way to enter into it.

Do you think you are qualified to enter into the tabernacle, to come into the incarnated God? We all are sinful,

unclean, and full of trespasses. Because this is our condition, we are under God's condemnation. If we tried to come into the tabernacle, we would die. What, then, is the entrance to the tabernacle? What is the way by which we may enter? The entrance, the way, is Christ as the offerings.

Without the burnt offering altar and the offerings, we would not have a way to enter into the tabernacle. This is the reason the book of Hebrews speaks of a new way consecrated for us: "Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh" (10:19-20). The blood of the offerings shed on the altar opens the way for us to enter into the tabernacle. This was the blood shed by Christ on the cross when He was crucified as our sin offering and trespass offering. Because His blood opens the way, it becomes the means by which we are qualified to enter into God.

Furthermore, when we enter into the tabernacle, we should not be empty within. Rather, we have something to fill us inwardly. We not only offer the sacrifices to God, but after offering them, we may have a portion of them to eat. Thus, we have the blood outwardly and the food, the meat of the offerings, inwardly. The blood of the sacrifice without opens the way for us to enter into God, and the meat fills us inwardly. We are not hungry when we come into the tabernacle. No, we are those who have been fully satisfied.

PRAYING IN GOD AND WITH GOD IN US

The picture of the tabernacle portrays Christ as the incarnated God who is available for us to enter. This very Christ is also all the offerings to qualify us by opening the way into God and by filling us inwardly. As a result, we are in God, and God is in us. Therefore, by the time we come to the altar of incense, we are already in God, and God is in us. Because the incense altar is in the center of the tabernacle, which signifies the incarnated God, to be at this altar is to be in the incarnated God. Moreover, when we are

in God, He is also in us. At the altar in the outer court we experience the offerings, and we have the blood to cleanse us and the meat to fill us inwardly. This qualifies us to enter into the incarnated God, the One who indwells us as our food, as our life supply. Whoever comes to the incense altar is a person who is in God and who has God in him. He is one with God and mingled with Him. What a great matter this is!

Perhaps you have been a Christian for years without realizing that to pray at the incense altar is to pray in God and with God in us. However, those who pray merely in a natural way may be quite far from God, and their prayer may not have the element of God in it. Although they pray to God, they are far away from Him. When the Jews pray, they may be much closer to God than Gentiles, but they are still outside of Him. Moreover, Christians who lack enlightenment and experience or who are indifferent may have some prayer at the altar in the outer court, but they may fail to come to pray at the altar of incense in the tabernacle. Where are you when you pray? Are you at the altar in the outer court, or are you in the tabernacle, in the incarnated God? Whenever we pray we should experientially be in God, and simultaneously, He should be in us. While we are praying to Him, we should be in Him, and He should be praying in us.

Being energized through eating a healthy meal can be used to illustrate the experience of having God pray in us while we are praying in Him and to Him. Suppose there is a ministry meeting in the evening. Before the meeting I eat dinner and am energized by the food I have eaten. When I come to the meeting to speak, I am full of energy. As I am speaking, the food I have eaten for dinner is energizing me. In the same principle, when we pray in God and with God in us, He prays in us.

On the one hand, Christ is the tabernacle; on the other hand, He is the food. We enter into Him as the tabernacle and He comes into us as the food. As food, Christ is not ordinary; rather, He is holy food, food offered to God. As priests who come into the tabernacle to pray at the incense

altar, we do not eat common food. We eat holy food, food that has been offered to God. We do not eat any food that has not first become an offering. In other words, we do not eat anything that is not Christ. Christ as food to us has first been offered to God. Hallelujah, we can be in the incarnated God, and this very God is the food in us energizing us!

BURNING CHRIST AS INCENSE

According to typology, there is no indication that the incense altar is a place to pray. This is our interpretation. The incense altar is a place to burn incense, and burning the incense typifies praying. How should we pray at the incense altar? Now that we are in God and He is in us, and now that we are at the incense altar, we must burn the incense. But what is this incense? The incense is Christ. Christ is the tabernacle, Christ is the offerings, and Christ is also the incense. Thus, to burn the incense means to pray Christ.

Revelation 8:3 and 4 say, "And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him that He should add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of the hand of the Angel before God." This Angel is Christ, the One who adds His incense to the prayers of the saints. It is this incense, not the saints' prayers, that causes the smoke to rise. In our prayers we need to have Christ as the incense with the smoke that rises. The point here is that to burn the incense actually means to pray Christ.

If we see that to burn the incense is to pray Christ, we shall feel ashamed of the way we have often prayed in the past. We have prayed many things which are not Christ. Instead of burning Christ as the incense, we have burned strange incense. We have offered strange incense, something other than Christ Himself. However, we should not offer as incense anything except Christ. In the past there

was much strange incense in our prayers; there were many things that were not Christ.

At the incense altar we should not offer the burnt offering or the meal offering; neither should we pour out a drink offering. All these offerings should be offered at the first altar, the offering altar in the outer court. On the incense altar the only thing that should be offered is incense.

When we come to the last part of Exodus 30, we shall see that the incense typifies the resurrected and ascended Christ. However, all the offerings, with the exception of the wave offering and the heave offering, are types of Christ as the One who was judged by God and who died for us. The resurrected and ascended Christ is the unique One who is acceptable to God. He is received by God, accepted by Him. Thus, He becomes a sweet savor to God. This savor, as the incense, should be in our prayer. As we have pointed out, this means that when we pray, we should pray Christ.

When some hear this word concerning burning Christ as the incense, concerning praying Christ, they may ask, "Tomorrow I shall go on a long journey. Don't I need to pray for a safe trip?" This question indicates that in the prayer of this one there is a great deal of strange incense. I do not think that such a one prays at the incense altar in the tabernacle.

On the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies there was a lid, a cover, called the propitiatory cover. That cover, made of gold, was the place where God met with His people. The King James Version describes this lid, this cover, as the mercy seat. Eventually, the mercy seat in the tabernacle in Exodus becomes the throne of grace spoken of in Hebrews 4. This means that the throne of grace is the propitiatory cover, the lid covering the ark of the testimony. On the one hand, with respect to propitiation, this lid is the propitiatory cover. On the other hand, with respect to God's dispensation, it is the throne of grace, the place where God dispenses His grace to people. Furthermore, according to the book of Revelation, it is also the throne of authority,

the throne of divine administration. Therefore, one item is the mercy seat, the throne of grace, and the throne of administration.

In chapters two and three of Revelation we have the church, and chapters four and five portray the throne of God. The throne in Revelation 4 and 5 is the throne of authority, the throne of the divine administration over the entire universe. Therefore, to the universe as a whole, this is the throne of God's authority, but to us, it is the throne of grace. It is the place, the propitiatory cover, where we may contact God and receive grace.

In the book of Revelation the incense altar is directly in front of the throne of God's authority. According to Revelation 8, Christ as another Angel comes and adds His incense to the prayers of the saints. This incense then ascends to God at the throne of administration, and God answers the saints' prayers. As a result, fire comes down to earth to execute the divine judgments recorded in the remainder of the book of Revelation. This is a picture of the incense altar being the administrating throne of God for God to execute His judgments in His administration. It is important for us to see that the execution of God's administration is motivated by the prayers offered to Him from the incense altar.

PRAYING CHRIST

Suppose you come to the incense altar to pray. How will you pray at this altar? Will you pray about a trip you are about to take? Will you pray about your job? It is pitiful that so many of today's Christians pray only about such matters. If they did not pray concerning material things, they would have little else to pray for. It seems that they do not know how to pray for God's economy. To them, it sounds strange to hear about praying Christ. These words are a foreign language to them. Actually, it is not strange to pray Christ; rather, it is strange to pray for many other things instead of Christ. It is very normal for believers to pray Christ. Should we continue to pray about transportation, housing, and jobs, God may say, "Why do you pray about so

many strange things? Why do you pray for a better house or for a better job? My desire is that when you pray, you pray Christ."

Thousands and thousands of prayers are offered to God by Christians, but there is very little execution of God's purpose. Christians pray again and again, yet there is very little dispensation of the supplying grace of God. Who today knows how to pray in such a way as to motivate the throne of grace to dispense God's life supply as grace to all the needy ones? Hardly any believers know how to pray like this. Also, who knows how to pray to motivate the throne of authority to execute the divine administration? Once again, very few know how to pray in this way. In a practical sense, many of those who pray are not even in the outer court, much less in the tabernacle. When they pray to God, they are actually far away from Him.

In light of what we have covered in this message, we all need to see three matters. First, when we pray, we should be in the tabernacle. Second, when we are about to pray, we should first be satisfied by eating holy food. Third, when we pray, we should offer incense to God. This means that when we pray, we should pray in God, we should pray with God within us as our energizing supply, and we should pray with Christ as the incense. Then we shall burn incense to God. I believe that if we have this view concerning prayer, our prayer life will be revolutionized. May we all see this view and experience such a revolution.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY

THE GOLDEN INCENSE ALTAR

(4)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:6-10; 40:5, 26-27; Psa. 84:3; 141:2; Rev. 8:3-6; Exo. 30:26-28

In the previous message we emphasized three important matters related to the incense altar. First, when we pray, we need to be in the tabernacle, which signifies the incarnated God. Second, in order to pray at the incense altar, we must first be filled and satisfied by eating the holy food, our portion of the offerings. Third, when we pray, we should offer incense to God. If we have a clear view of these matters, our prayer life will be revolutionized. Instead of being occupied in prayer with material needs or personal concerns, we shall pray for the executing of God's purpose, for the carrying out of the divine administration, and for the dispensing of God's supplying grace.

PRAYER RELATED TO CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Matthew 6:33 is a verse often quoted by today's Christians: "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." This indicates that if we seek God's kingdom and His righteousness, whatever we need—food, clothing, housing—will be added to us. This shows that there is no need for us to be occupied in our prayer with things such as food and clothing. Instead, we should pray for God's kingdom.

What is the kingdom of God today? God's kingdom is the church. But what is the church? The church is Christ. Therefore, to seek God's kingdom is to seek Christ with the church.

According to Matthew 6:33 we should also seek God's

righteousness. What is God's righteousness? God's righteousness is Christ expressed through the church. Thus, to seek God's kingdom and His righteousness is to seek Christ and the church. Our prayer should be related to God's kingdom and His righteousness, that is, to Christ and the church.

What is sad is that many Christians know how to pray for a better job, a larger house, or their safety on a journey, but they do not know how to pray for Christ or the church. When some pray for the church, they do not pray directly for the church, but instead pray for business matters related to the church. We should forget about praying in such a way and pray instead for Christ and the church. When some Christians hear this word regarding their prayer life, they may say, "This word is troublesome. It seems that you are robbing me of all my prayers. After hearing this word, I don't know how to pray. It seems that any way I try to pray is wrong."

A SERIOUS PROHIBITION

I encourage you to read again this portion of the Word. We should burn incense upon the golden altar. However, there is a serious prohibition: we must not burn strange incense. Only the resurrected and ascended Christ is acceptable; everything else is prohibited. We should not burn strange incense, and we should not even burn at the incense altar what is acceptable to God at the offering altar. This means that we should not present the crucified and judged Christ at the incense altar. Rather, we must burn as incense the resurrected and ascended Christ. We must present such a living Christ to God as incense at the incense altar.

If some saints were to ask me to tell them how to pray, I would not do it. If I told you how to pray and you prayed accordingly, that kind of prayer would still not be Christ. You may use the right terminology, but you may still be praying outside of God. You would not be praying in God, in the center of God's dwelling place. Furthermore, while you are praying, you may not have the inner satisfaction or the

inner energizing. This means that you do not have God praying in you as you are praying. When we pray, we need to pray in God, and we need to pray with God energizing us inwardly. Then we need to offer Christ to God and pray Him to God.

A SAD SITUATION

If you were to stay with me for a period of several days, you would learn that I am a person who much of the time is not happy. The situation of today's Christians makes me very sad. Consider the people around you and what they are doing. What do they know concerning God's economy? How pitiful is the situation! The Lord Jesus has delayed His coming back for nearly two thousand years. Of course, to Him two thousand years are as two days. What is a long time to us is a short time to Him. From the Lord's point of view, two hundred fifty years is like six hours, one-fourth of a day. It is Peter who says that with the Lord a thousand years are as one day (2 Pet. 3:8). In the same chapter Peter passes over the millennium and speaks directly concerning the new heavens and the new earth in eternity (2 Pet. 3:13). This indicates that even a thousand years is not long to the Lord. But as far as I am concerned, the Lord has delayed His coming a long time.

Who today is praying that God would dispense His grace into people? Who is praying in such a way as to motivate God's throne of authority to judge this age? Christ has a great deal of incense, but where are the prayers that are qualified to receive the incense of Christ? Is Christ able to add His incense to your prayers? I am afraid that too few of our prayers are qualified to have Christ's incense added to them. Therefore, it is very important for us to see that concerning our prayer life, Christ is the tabernacle, Christ is the food offered, and Christ is also the incense.

HOW THE TWO ALTARS ARE CONNECTED

By the Anointing

According to the Bible, the two altars are linked.

Exodus 30:27 and 28 say that both the altar of incense and the altar of burnt offering were anointed with the holy anointing oil. After the tabernacle and its utensils were anointed, the two altars were anointed. Exodus 30:26-28 says, "And you shall anoint with it the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its base." Notice that the sequence in these verses is the tabernacle, the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering. Thus, the anointing connects the two altars.

The anointing signifies God's move. According to God's move, therefore, the incense altar and the altar of burnt offering are connected. The anointing is the connecting element.

By the Blood of the Sin Offering

The altars were also connected by the blood of the sin offering offered for propitiation, or atonement, on the day of Atonement. The day of Atonement, or as we would prefer to translate it, the day of propitiation, occurred once a year. On that day the most important sin offering was offered. After the blood of this offering was shed, it was brought from the altar into the Holy Place and applied to the four corners of the incense altar. A portion of the blood was also brought into the Holy of Holies, and the remainder was poured out around the altar in the outer court. This propitiating blood also connected the two altars.

By the Fire That Burned the Offerings

Furthermore, the two altars were connected by the fire that burned on the altar in the outer court. If we read the Old Testament carefully, we shall see that no strange fire was allowed to be on the incense altar for the burning of the incense. Rather, the only fire that could be used to burn the incense was the fire from the altar of burnt offering, the fire which had come down from the heavens. That fire was

not strange. Any other kind of fire, however, would have been strange. The heavenly fire, the fire that came from God, that was used to burn the offerings on the altar of burnt offering was also used to burn the incense on the incense altar. By this we see that the fire that burned the offerings was also an element that linked these two altars.

From the altar of burnt offering a sweet savor ascended to God. A sweet savor also ascended to Him from the incense altar. Hence, from both the burning on the offering altar and from the burning on the incense altar a sweet savor ascended to God for His satisfaction. There was a difference, however, between these two kinds of burnings. The burning on the offering altar was a burning of judgment, but the burning on the incense altar was a burning of acceptance.

These two kinds of burning and ascending reflect each other. In particular, the first kind of sweet savor, that from the altar of burnt offering, is reflected in the second, that from the incense altar. The sweet savor ascending to God from the altar of burnt offering is reflected in the savor that ascended to Him from the incense altar. Here in these two kinds of sweet savor we have the sweetness of Christ in His death at the offering altar and the sweetness of Christ in His resurrection and ascension at the incense altar. The fragrance of Christ in His resurrection and ascension is for our acceptance. By these three elements—the anointing, the blood, and the fire—the two altars are connected.

THE PSALMIST'S APPRECIATION OF THE TWO ALTARS

Because the two altars are connected, the psalmist speaks of them together: "Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God" (Psa. 84:3). Writing in a poetic way, the psalmist appreciates the two altars. This is especially interesting when we realize that in God's dwelling place there were other furnishings and utensils, such as the ark, the table,

and the lampstand. But the two altars are foremost in the psalmist's appreciation.

The sparrow and the swallow signify us, human beings who are small, weak, and unworthy. The Lord Jesus said that two sparrows were sold for a penny (Matt. 10:29). Nevertheless, we who are as frail as sparrows can find a house at the Lord's altars. Furthermore, as swallows, we can lay our young at these altars.

Those who do not have the proper appreciation of Psalm 84 may wonder how sparrows and swallows could possibly make their nest at the Lord's altars. Those who view the psalm in this way may regard the altars as desolate and not taken care of by anyone. However, Psalm 84 is very sweet. It is filled with appreciation of God's dwelling place, in particular, of the two altars.

These altars signify Christ's death and His intercession. The offering altar is the altar of Christ's death, and the incense altar is the altar of Christ's intercession. I can testify that these two altars, joined together, have become very sweet to me in my experience. I am like a sparrow or a swallow nesting at the altars and laying my young ones there.

THE TWO ALTARS IN OUR EXPERIENCE

In their experience many Christians have only one altar, the first altar, the offering altar in the outer court. This means that they have the cross, but they do not have the incense altar. In our experience we need both altars.

Now that we are studying the incense altar described in chapter 30 of Exodus, I am burdened to point out that we are not merely having a Bible study or simply teaching the Bible. All the points we are covering should be applied to our prayer life. Our prayer life must be in God, and it must be with God in us as our supply and satisfaction. If we are to have a proper prayer life, we must also offer Christ to God as incense. Furthermore, it is very important for us to see that this kind of prayer is linked to the crucified Christ.

I would encourage you to bring all these matters to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to show you something further.

The revelation concerning the incense altar has helped me a great deal. Often it has served to govern my prayers. But sometimes, due to the environment, I too have prayed in a rather natural way.

May the Lord have mercy on us that we may see that the proper and genuine prayer life is in God and requires that God be in us; that it is one with the resurrected and ascended Christ as our incense to God; and that it is linked to the crucified Christ by the blood, the fire, and the sweet savor. If we have this kind of prayer, we shall be able to live a life that motivates God's move. This kind of prayer governs God's dispensation of grace and His administration of His authority. This means that the prayer offered at the incense altar governs the universe. This is a matter of great significance. May our eyes be opened to see it.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-ONE

THE GOLDEN INCENSE ALTAR

(5)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:6-10, 26-28; 40:5, 26-27; Psa. 84:3; 141:2; Rev. 8:3-6

CHRIST INTERCEDING

The deepest type of the types in the Old Testament may be the incense altar in Exodus 30. If we consider this type even superficially, we shall see that it is related to prayer. Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament incense offered to God signifies our prayer to Him. Therefore, in our reading of the Bible, we can realize that the golden altar of incense must in some way be related to prayer.

If we consider this matter in a deeper way, we shall see that actually the incense altar does not refer to our prayer. Rather, it refers to the prayer of Christ, for the altar itself is a type of the Person of Christ. It is not a type of Christ's prayer. The incense altar typifies Christ the Person, not His prayer. It signifies Christ praying, Christ interceding.

The individual Christ after His resurrection, and especially after His ascension, has become corporate. Thus, today before God not only is the individual Christ interceding, but the corporate Christ, the Head with the Body, is interceding as well. Christ the Head is interceding in the heavens, and the church the Body is interceding on earth. The intercessor, therefore, is not merely Christ Himself, but is Christ with His Body. If we realize this, we shall see that what is signified by the incense altar is something very deep.

A DEEP CONCEPT

If you consult the diagram printed in message one hundred forty-seven, you will see that the incense altar was located inside the tabernacle. The first altar, the altar of burnt offering, however, was outside the tabernacle, in the outer court. The significance of the incense altar is deeper than that of the altar of burnt offering. As we have pointed out, the tabernacle signifies clearly and definitely God Himself into whom we may enter. Furthermore, since the incense altar is in the tabernacle, whoever would pray at the incense altar must be inside the tabernacle. The concept here is deep. This is the reason we say that the significance of the incense altar is profound. In this message we shall try to cover some of the details related to the depths of the significance of this altar.

With the tabernacle and the outer court there are two altars: the altar of burnt offering and the golden altar of incense. The incense altar in the tabernacle is for prayer, and the altar of burnt offering in the outer court is for offering sacrifices.

Suppose a sinner came to offer a sin offering or a trespass offering at the altar in the outer court. Would not such a person pray? Yes, he surely would pray. However, that kind of prayer, the prayer at the altar in the outer court, is shallow, for it is offered outside of God. It is not the prayer offered in God. Today many Christians know only to pray this kind of shallow prayer. They know only to pray on the basis of the blood of Christ shed on the cross. Not many believers know how to pray the kind of prayer that is offered at the incense altar.

The primary condition or requirement for praying at the first altar is that we offer Christ as our substitute, either as the sin offering for our sin or as the trespass offering for our trespasses. This means that we pray by Him as the crucified One who shed His blood for our redemption. If our prayer goes no farther than this, we can pray to God, but we do not pray in God. To pray to God is one thing, but to pray in God is something much deeper. This is a very important matter that we all need to see.

I hope that in this message we shall see something deeper, something experiential. I do not want to consider the incense altar merely in a doctrinal way. This message is not simply a Bible study on Exodus 30. Therefore, I hope that the Lord will show us something deeper related to the golden altar of incense.

When I was young, I attended the Southern Baptist Church, the Chinese Presbyterian Church, and the Brethren assembly. During the years I went to those places, I heard many prayers that concluded with the words, "through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus." But I do not remember ever hearing a prayer ending with the words, "in the name of the Lord Jesus." Those prayers were offered at the altar in the outer court, not at the incense altar, because those who prayed in that way were rather shallow in their prayer life. They had not entered into the deeper life or the inner life. To pray through the blood of Christ at the cross is shallow, but to pray at the incense altar is deep.

THE BLOOD AND THE FIRE

The incense altar was connected to the altar of burnt offering mainly by the blood of the sin offering. First the blood of the sin offering was shed at the altar in the outer court. Then it was brought to the incense altar and sprinkled on it. The remainder of the blood was poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering. Hence, the redeeming blood joined the two altars. This indicates that the prayer offered to God at the incense altar should be based on the experience at the first altar. Once we have experienced the first altar, we shall have the base, the standard, the ground, to come to the second altar to pray.

The two altars were also connected by fire. The fire that burned on the altar in the outer court was used to burn the incense at the incense altar in the tabernacle. The two altars, therefore, were connected by both the blood and the fire.

The blood signifies that our sin and trespasses have all been dealt with. Sin has been taken away, and the

trespasses have been borne away. The blood gives us the assurance of this. Concerning this, there is nothing left for us to do. The blood has solved the problem of sin and of trespasses.

REDUCED TO ASHES

But what does the fire indicate? The fire indicates that whatever we are needs to be reduced to ashes. We need to be burned so that we become ashes.

Certain Christians, especially those of us in the Lord's recovery, often speak about being natural. There is only one way for us not to be natural, and that way is for us to be burned to ashes. If you have not been burned, you are still natural. Suppose you have a wooden table in front of you. That table exists in its natural state. But if the table is burned and becomes a heap of ashes, it is no longer natural. This illustrates the fact that when something is burned to ashes, it is no longer natural.

I do not presume to say of myself that all believers in Christ need to become ashes. This is the Lord's desire, not mine. When some hear that the Lord Jesus wants us to be burned to ashes, they may say, "Christ is the One who is reduced to ashes by burning. The fire at the altar burns Him; it does not burn me." We need to remember, however, that according to typology the offerer laid his hands upon the sacrifice and thus identified himself with that sacrifice. This means that the sacrifice includes the one offering it. When Christ died on the cross, we died in Him, for we were included in Him. To say the least, when we believed in Him, we laid our hands on Him. To believe in Christ is to lay our hands on Him. Therefore, since we are one with the Christ who has been burned to ashes, we also are burned to ashes.

Some may ask, "If we are burned to ashes, how shall we be able to live?" Paul gives the answer in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Christ's death brings in resurrection. Now in Christ we are in resurrection, and it is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us. However, for

most Christians, Galatians 2:20 is merely doctrine. They do not have much experience of it in a practical way.

In a foregoing message we pointed out that with the sin offerings we can see three things: the blood, the ashes, and the sweet savor ascending to God. The blood and the ashes are related to us, whereas the sweet savor is for God's satisfaction. Thank the Lord that today we have the blood as the sign and assurance that our sin and our trespasses have all been dealt with. We also have the ashes as a sign that we have been crucified, terminated. When we become ashes, we are no longer a natural person. Instead, we are a person who has been crucified, terminated, burned. No longer are we a natural man—we have become a heap of ashes. Nevertheless, for most of us this is true only doctrinally; it is not yet true experientially. Therefore, we need to go on to have the experience of actually being reduced to ashes.

It is unfortunate that many Christians know only the blood that was shed at the cross. They do not realize that at the cross there is also fire. With these believers there is the blood, but no ashes. They remain natural, unburned. They surely have not become ashes. How, then, can such believers pray at the golden altar of incense in the tabernacle? The answer is that it is impossible for them to pray there.

When we believed in the Lord Jesus and confessed our sins to God, we prayed to Him. But we prayed at the first altar in a shallow way. Because we prayed only for ourselves, that prayer cannot be regarded as intercessory prayer. It was a personal prayer for our situation; it was not an intercession for others. Intercession cannot be made at the first altar; it must be made at the second altar. But who can pray at the second altar? Those who pray at the second altar must first be burned to ashes; that is, they must no longer be a natural person. Every one who would pray at the incense altar must become a heap of ashes.

If we come into the tabernacle, we cannot go directly to the incense altar. As we have already indicated, first we must go to the showbread table, then to the lampstand, and

after that to the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies. Only then shall we be ready to come to intercede at the incense altar.

OUR CONDUCT, SIGHT, AND VIRTUE

Our conduct is versus Christ as life (the bread of the presence table, the showbread table). Our sight is versus Christ as our light (the lampstand). Our virtue is versus Christ as our incense to God (the incense altar). Our conduct, our sight, and our virtue together equal our natural being, which is versus Christ as God's testimony (the ark). If we have become a heap of ashes, will we still have our natural conduct, our natural sight, and our natural virtue? Certainly not. A heap of ashes does not have any conduct, sight, or virtue. What does a heap of ashes have? It has nothing. To be reduced to ashes is to be reduced to nothing, to zero.

As long as we think that we are something and regard ourselves as something, we are not in the tabernacle. Rather, we are outside the tabernacle. Do you remember what the tabernacle signifies? The tabernacle signifies the incarnated God. Thus, to be in the tabernacle is to be in God. Now we must realize that the requirement for being in God is that we become nothing. We can be in God only if we first become zero. For this reason, I wish to emphasize the fact that if we continue to think that we are something, we are not in God. But when we have become nothing, we are then qualified to be in Him.

How do we know that we are still something and that we have not yet become nothing? We know it by the fact that we still have our natural conduct, our natural sight or view, and our natural virtues. For example, a brother may think of himself as being very pleasant and kind. A married brother, in particular, may regard himself as much more pleasant than his wife. But one who prays at the incense altar in the tabernacle does not think this way about himself. The one who prays in the tabernacle at the golden altar of incense is one who has become ashes. This means that he no longer

has his natural virtue. Along with his natural virtue, his natural conduct and sight have become ashes.

If we still have our own conduct, our natural behavior, we do not enjoy Christ as our bread. We cannot enjoy Him as our life supply. Let me assure you that what I am saying here is not merely doctrine. It is something I have learned through experience. From experience I know that whenever I still hold on to my natural conduct, I do not have the enjoyment of Christ as my life supply.

From experience I have also learned that if I still feel that I have my own sight, my own view, my own knowledge of things, I am through with Christ as my light. I cannot experience Him as my lampstand. Christ can be experienced by me as my lampstand only when I no longer have any natural sight.

Often the questions we are asked by others test us with respect to our natural sight, view, and knowledge. Suppose you come to me and ask about a particular brother or a particular church. Your question will be a test to me, and my answer will indicate whether I still have my natural sight. If I hold to my own view, sight, and knowledge, Christ will not be my lampstand. But if I do not have my natural sight or view, Christ will become my lampstand in a very practical way in my experience. He will be my light. Then instead of natural sight, I shall have divine light. I shall have the spiritual light, and this light is Christ Himself.

Too many times we consider the brothers or the church according to our natural sight. But sometimes we may look at matters not by our natural sight, but by Christ as our light. A person who prays, intercedes, at the second altar is one who has spiritual light in place of his natural sight.

Furthermore, anyone who intercedes at the incense altar has Christ as his incense. He no longer has his natural virtue. With such a person, Christ is everything. Christ is his life supply for proper conduct, Christ is his light for genuine sight, and Christ is his virtue for him to have a sweet fragrance ascending to God. This is the kind of person who can pray at the incense altar.

Nothing that we pray at the first altar, the altar of burnt offering in the outer court, can be an intercession. But whatever we pray at the second altar, the golden altar of incense in the tabernacle, will be an intercession. At the second altar we do not pray much for ourselves. Instead, we pray for God's economy, we pray for God's dispensation, we pray for God's move, we pray for God's recovery, and we pray for the churches and the saints. We intercede in this way spontaneously.

When we pray at the first altar, it is very difficult to pray in such a way that we are not occupied with ourselves or our situation. However, when we pray at the second altar, it is very difficult to be occupied with ourselves. The reason self is not involved with the prayers offered at the incense altar is that in order to pray at this altar we must first become ashes. To intercede at the second altar requires that we first be reduced to nothing. By contrast, those who pray at the first altar often cry out to God concerning themselves. They may call out to the Lord for His mercy and ask Him to help them with various matters. It is very difficult to be outside of ourselves when we pray at the first altar. The prayer at this altar is full of ourselves. But by the time we come to the second altar, we have passed through the cross, the table, the lampstand, and the ark. Because we have experienced the table, we no longer have our natural conduct. Instead, we have Christ as our life supply. Because we have come to the lampstand, we no longer have our natural sight. Instead, we have Christ as our light.

Now we must see what we experience when we come to the ark. The ark signifies Christ as God's testimony, which is versus our natural being, signified by the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. We need to be impressed that the veil is our natural being and that this veil is versus the ark. Our natural being is a composition of our conduct, our sight, and our virtue. This natural being is the veil that is versus Christ as God's testimony.

Have you ever before realized that the veil covering the ark is versus the ark and that it signifies your natural

being? Here we have four matters: our natural conduct, our natural sight, our natural virtue, and, the composition of these three, our natural being.

Let us suppose that a certain brother behaves himself as a gentleman. He is a very good husband and father. Furthermore, he has natural sight and seems to have vast knowledge. He is also full of virtue. Many would regard such a brother as an outstanding Christian, for he is full of good behavior, sight, and virtue. However, this kind of Christian is altogether natural; he lives according to his natural being. As a result, he cannot be inside the tabernacle praying at the incense altar. As long as he regards himself as a good person, he is far away from the tabernacle. To be sure, he is not in God.

This is something I have come to know through years of experience. I could not have given this message thirty years ago, for at that time what I had learned from experience was not adequate. The teachings I had learned concerning the incense altar were merely doctrinal. As I have indicated, I do not care to speak concerning the incense altar merely in a doctrinal way. My burden is to see what the incense altar typifies in the way of experience.

What the incense altar typifies is very deep. It indicates that if we would pray intercessory prayers at the incense altar, we must become ashes; that is, we must become nothing. If we have become ashes, we shall not have our natural conduct, our natural sight, or our natural virtue. We shall not have natural conduct replacing Christ as our life supply, we shall not have natural sight replacing Christ as our light, and we shall not have natural virtues replacing Christ as our incense. This means that we shall no longer be natural. Therefore, with us there will be no veil. In place of the veil, we shall have the ark, Christ as God's testimony. As a result, we shall be qualified to intercede at the incense altar. Having traveled through the various stations of the tabernacle, we may now come to pray, to intercede, at the golden altar of incense.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-TWO

THE GOLDEN INCENSE ALTAR

(6)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:6-10; 40:5, 26-27; Psa. 84:3; 141:2; Rev. 8:3-6

After we have gone to the altar of burnt offering, the table, the lampstand, and the ark, we arrive at the golden altar of incense. When we come to this altar, our unique taste, our only interest, is to pray.

ONE WITH CHRIST IN INTERCESSION

What kind of prayers shall we offer at the incense altar? Shall we pray private prayers or personal prayers? No, the prayer we offer at the incense altar will be intercessory prayers. Whenever we open our mouth to pray at the incense altar, the prayer that will issue forth will not be personal, individual prayer. It will be intercessory prayer. Here we no longer have any interest in ourselves or in our welfare. Instead of considering ourselves and praying for ourselves, we intercede for others. At that time we shall be in our experience a real member of Christ, a genuine part of the Body-Christ, the corporate Christ. Furthermore, that will be the time when we cooperate with Christ in His ministry of intercession. He intercedes in a particular way, and we cooperate with Him in His way of interceding. This means that we carry out His intercession in our prayers of intercession. This is marvelous! Here we are truly one with the Lord.

THE DESTINATION OF THE DIVINE TOUR

At the altar of burnt offering in the outer court there is a particular kind of depth. There are other depths at the table,

the lampstand, the ark, and the incense altar. Hence, concerning the tabernacle and the outer court, there are at least five kinds of depths. In the sight of God, the reason that not many believers today are praying at the incense altar is that they have not experienced all these depths. As we have pointed out, many may pray at the first altar, but few are interceding at the second.

In order to pray at the second altar, we must first experience the altar of burnt offering. In our experience of this altar, we need to have a full realization concerning the blood and the ashes. Then we must go on to experience the bread on the table, the bread that signifies Christ as our life supply. After this, we proceed to the lampstand, which signifies Christ as our light. Following that, we go to the ark, which signifies Christ as God's testimony. This testimony is versus our natural being. After we have experienced the first altar, the table, the lampstand, and the ark, we may come to the incense altar and remain there.

Once we arrive at the incense altar, we should stay here longer than at any other place in the outer court or the tabernacle. Here we need to pray again and again. This golden altar of incense is the destination of the divine tour. The tour begins at the altar in the outer court, passes through the table, the lampstand, and the ark, and stops at the incense altar. Because the divine tour stops here, we need to stay here to pray.

Where are you when you pray? You may say that you are in God. However, this answer is too general. You need to specify a particular place. Where do you stay when you are in God? Do you remain at the table? Or do you remain at the lampstand or at the ark? It is very good that we spend time at the table, the lampstand, and the ark. But we should not remain at these places, because they are not our destination. Our destination is the incense altar. Because the incense altar is our destination, once we arrive there we should remain and continue there in prayer.

After you have more experience, you will understand more fully what I am saying. Then according to your experience, you will say the same thing. You will declare, "After

passing through the first altar, the table, the lampstand, and the ark, I am now at the incense altar interceding for God's interests, for the churches, and for the saints." If we remain at the incense altar, then in Christ and with Christ we shall have something that ascends to God. This is our prayer.

OUR PERSON REVEALED BY OUR PRAYER

Our prayers represent ourselves. This is true both of the prayers at the first altar and at the second. Whatever we pray will represent us. The kind of prayer we have depends on the kind of person we are, for our prayers reveal our person. Suppose a thief offers a prayer. Certainly his prayer would indicate the kind of person he is. When the Apostle Paul prayed, he prayed in a way that represented his person. Likewise, the prayer offered to God the Father by the Lord Jesus indicates what the Lord is in His person. None of us is an exception to this principle. The way we pray reveals what we are.

At the first altar we cannot pray intercessory prayers. The reason we cannot pray such prayers at the first altar is that we are not yet the kind of person to offer intercessory prayers. Thus far, you have come only to the first altar. You need to experience it thoroughly and then go on to the table, the lampstand, and the ark. Not until you reach the second altar can you be the kind of person who is able to offer intercessory prayers. Reaching the incense altar indicates that we have experienced the first altar, the table, the lampstand, and the ark and have arrived at our destination.

STRANGE INCENSE

When we pray at the incense altar, there will be neither strange incense nor strange fire in our prayer. If we have been enlivened by the Lord, we shall realize that many Christians pray with strange incense or with strange fire. God wants us to pray with Christ as our incense. This means that we should pray with Christ. We should not pray with strange incense.

Do you know what strange incense is? Strange incense is anything we pray that is not Christ or that is not related to Christ. In the sight of God, that kind of prayer is strange; it is a prayer with strange incense.

When some hear that to offer strange incense is to pray something other than Christ Himself, they may ask, "Do you mean that we should not pray about our married life or family life? Are we not supposed to pray about our practical human affairs?" I do not presume to tell you what you should pray for. However, I can say that you need to ask yourself how much the things you pray for have to do with Christ. If you consider your prayer life in this way, you will find out where you are. You may realize that your prayers concerning your married life have nothing to do with Christ. Thus, those prayers are strange incense.

However, I wish to make it clear that I do not mean we should not pray concerning our personal affairs or for material things that we need. My point here is that we ask ourselves how much our prayers are related to Christ. This question is a test that will reveal whether what we pray is real incense or strange incense.

STRANGE FIRE

What is strange fire? According to typology, strange fire is any fire other than that which burns on the altar of burnt offering. The fire that burned on the altar in the outer court came down from the heavens. After coming down from the heavens, that fire burned continually on the altar. The incense must be burned by the fire from the first altar. If you burn incense by any other kind of fire, that will be strange fire.

To have strange fire is to have some kind of motive within us that is natural and that has not been dealt with by the cross. Anything that has not been dealt with by the cross and yet motivates us to pray is strange fire. If we see this, we shall realize that a great many Christians are motivated to pray by natural motives. Their motives have never been

touched by the cross. The result is that they pray with strange fire.

To pray something that has nothing to do with Christ is strange incense, and to pray with motives that have not been dealt with by the cross is to have strange fire. In our prayers we may offer strange incense by strange fire. If we see the significance and the seriousness of strange incense and strange fire, we shall confess that much of our prayer in the past has been motivated by our natural motives. We shall also see that much of our prayer has had nothing to do with Christ. Furthermore, we shall realize that we ourselves often have not been in God when we prayed. On the contrary, we were outside of Him. Our prayers indicated that we were not in God. Whether we are in God or outside of God will be indicated by the way we pray. Our prayers always indicate where we are.

NATURAL PRAYERS

Recently a brother said to me, "Brother Lee, you have taken away our heavenly mansion through ministering to us the truth concerning God's economy. Now it seems that you are robbing us of our prayers." In a sense, we all need to be robbed, deprived, of our natural prayers. It may be that in the future not so much of the prayer offered in the meetings will be natural. In this sense there may be less prayer among us.

When I was young, I appreciated the book by R. A. Torrey on how to pray. I treasured that book and read it a number of times, and I put what I read into practice. In the early days that book did help me to pray. If I remember accurately, it tells us that in order to pray we must first confess our sins. Then we shall be able to pray. However, this is to come only to the first altar. Eventually, after years of experience, I realized that Torrey's book on prayer is elementary. Then I read other books concerning prayer, in particular the book by Andrew Murray entitled, *With Christ in the School of Prayer.* That may be the deepest book on prayer. Nevertheless, it did not render much help to my spirit.

Instead of reading books on how to pray, we need to digest these messages on the incense altar. I cannot tell you how to pray. But I assure you if you pray concerning these messages on the incense altar and put them into practice for a period of time, you will become a different person in the matter of prayer.

In the past our way of praying was natural and religious. I must confess that I also have prayed in a natural, religious way. Anyone can pray and call upon God in times of trial or hardship. But where are most people when they pray to God? To be sure, they are not in the outer court of the tabernacle, much less in the tabernacle itself.

WHAT GOD DESIRES

What God desires is the prayer at the incense altar. As we have pointed out, this kind of prayer is intercessory prayer. Whenever we open our mouths to pray at the incense altar, our prayers will not be for ourselves. Instead, our prayers will be for God's eternal plan, for His recovery, for His move, and for all His churches. Our prayer will indicate where we are and who we are.

In these messages we have covered certain deeper points related to the prayer life. We all need to put these truths into practice. This may help us to pray more if we realize that we do not need to pray in a formal way; we do not need to offer natural, religious prayers. On the contrary, when we arrive at our destination, the incense altar, we shall become intercessors. All day long we shall intercede for others and for the Lord's interests. This kind of prayer is a fragrant incense to God. This prayer fulfills God's purpose, satisfies His hunger, and delights His heart. As we pray in this way, we know that we are truly one with the Lord. By our prayers of intercession we are one with Him at the incense altar.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-THREE

THE PROPITIATION SILVER

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:11-16; 38:25-28; Num. 1:45-46; 2:32

In this message we come to a new item—the propitiation silver. Apparently this is easy to understand. Actually, the matter of the propitiation silver is not simple. In order to see into the depths of the truth related to the propitiation silver, we need to find out the reason this item is mentioned in Exodus 30 immediately after the record concerning the incense altar.

In understanding any kind of writing we need to consider the context. If we would understand a particular paragraph, we need to know what precedes this paragraph and what follows it. We should not try to understand the paragraph merely as a unit in itself. We need to follow this principle in seeking to understand the significance of the propitiation silver.

It is not easy to understand how the incense altar and the propitiation silver are related. In a simple way we may say that the relationship between them indicates that Christ's ministry of intercession is based upon His redemption. But even this explanation is mysterious and difficult to understand, for many things are implied by it. Therefore, we need to find out the relationship between the incense altar and the propitiation silver.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE PROPITIATION SILVER

We also need to ask why, at this juncture, the children of

Israel needed a ransom, or why they needed the propitiation silver. Had they not already been redeemed? Yes, they certainly had been redeemed. Their redemption had taken place nearly a year before. Not too long after the children of Israel had been redeemed by the Passover lamb, they came to Mount Sinai. It is not easy to explain why the children of Israel needed the propitiation silver in Exodus 30 since they had already been redeemed.

Not long after I was saved, I read an article that said that the propitiation silver, the ransom silver, was a type of Christ's redemption. This is correct; however, this understanding is superficial. The propitiation silver is related to the redemption of Christ. But why did God's redeemed people need something further related to redemption? They had been redeemed in Egypt by the Passover lamb less than a year before. Why, after such a short time, did they need something further?

The redemption of God's people in Egypt was accomplished by the blood of the Passover lamb. The lamb was slain, and the blood was applied to the doorpost. In this way the children of Israel experienced the Passover and were redeemed. However, in Exodus 30 redemption is not related to the blood; neither is it related to anything of the animal life. Rather, in this chapter redemption is related to silver, which is a mineral.

Christ's life has three basic elements: the animal life, the vegetable life, and the minerals. Christ is a lamb. Here we have the element of the animal life. Christ is also wheat. Here we have the element of the vegetable life. Furthermore, Christ is the minerals, for with Him there are gold, silver, and precious stones.

Why is the redemption in chapter thirty not related to the blood of the animal life but rather related to silver? Some would say that the silver signifies the price paid for our redemption. According to their understanding, the silver in Exodus 30 signifies the preciousness in the sight of God of the blood of Christ shed for our redemption. Christ paid a high price to redeem us—the price of His own blood. In the

sight of God, this price is precious and thus it is signified by silver. However, we need to see something further.

Another important question related to the propitiation silver is why it is called a heave offering. Verse 13 speaks of "half a shekel as a heave offering to Jehovah." Verses 14 and 15 also refer to the propitiation silver as a heave offering.

I am glad to know that the Hebrew text here uses the word for heave offering. Most translations simply use the word "offering"; others use the word "contribution," something the redeemed ones pay to God. But these versions do not indicate that the offering of the propitiation silver was a heave offering. Darby, however, was faithful, and his New Translation of 30:13 uses the expression "the heave-offering for Jehovah." Furthermore, the margin of the New American Standard Version says "heave offering," although the word "contribution" is used in the text. It is important that we have the exact translation. Otherwise, an improper translation will become a thick covering that will keep us from seeing the truth in the original text.

The propitiation silver, the price paid for our redemption, is definitely called a heave offering. Why is it called a heave offering and not a sin offering? Since this matter is related to our redemption, it seems that it should be a sin offering. We need to understand why the propitiation silver is considered a heave offering.

The Passover lamb was for all the children of Israel, both male and female, both young and old. But in chapter thirty the propitiation silver is only for males twenty years old and upward. Exodus 30:14 says, "Everyone passing over unto those that are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the heave offering of Jehovah." The females and all those under the age of twenty are excluded. They have no share in this matter. Why is this propitiation silver only for males twenty years and above? This is another important question that we need to answer.

Exodus 38:26 says concerning the propitiation silver, "A bekah for every man, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from

twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men." According to this verse, the propitiation silver was the ransom price paid for 603,550 males, aged twenty and upward. From Numbers 1:45 and 46 we learn that this was the number of males who were able to go forth to war: "So were all those that were numbered of the children of Israel, by the house of their fathers, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel; even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty." These verses reveal that the number of the males for which the ransom price was paid was the number of those who could be soldiers to form an army.

We now have five questions before us with respect to the propitiation silver. First, what is the relationship between the incense altar and the propitiation silver? Second, why did the children of Israel need something further related to redemption when they had already been redeemed in Egypt? Third, why is the propitiation silver called a heave offering? Fourth, why, after the redemption of the children of Israel by the blood of the Passover lamb in Egypt, was something related to redemption portrayed by silver at Mount Sinai, as described in chapter thirty? Fifth, why was the Passover lamb for everyone, but the propitiation silver was only for males twenty years of age and upward? If we can answer these questions, we shall have a thorough understanding of the propitiation silver.

A MILITARY CENSUS

If we take a bird's-eye view of this item according to these five questions, we shall see that the propitiation silver was not the redemption for all the children of Israel; it was not a ransom for all the common people. Unlike the Passover lamb, it was not the ransom paid for everyone. We have emphasized the fact that in Egypt all the children of Israel, from the youngest to the oldest, both male and female, were redeemed. But concerning the propitiation silver in chapter thirty, many were excluded. First, all the females were

excluded. Furthermore, all the males under the age of twenty were excluded. The propitiation silver, therefore, was only for males twenty and above; that is, it was only for those who were able to go to war.

Exodus 30:12 says, "When you take the sum of the sons of Israel according to those that are numbered of them, then every man shall give a ransom for his soul to Jehovah when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them." The Hebrew word translated "sum" can also be rendered "census." But the census here is not general or ordinary. Rather, it is a census needed to count the number of those who can be formed into an army. Numbers 1:45 and 46 speak of those who were able to go to war, but Numbers 2:32 speaks of camps or hosts: "These are those which were numbered of the children of Israel by the house of their fathers: all those that were numbered of the camps throughout their hosts were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty." The word "hosts" signifies armies. Those who were numbered in chapter thirty not only were able to go to war; they were those who could be formed into hosts, camps, armies. First it was necessary to have those who were able to go to war. Second, the ones able to go to war had to be formed into armies. The ransom in Exodus 30 was not for the common people; it was a ransom for the army. Hence, the census here is not common or general; it is a military census, a census related to the drafting of men into the army.

FIGHTING FOR GOD'S EXPRESSION

As we think of the tabernacle with the table, the lampstand, the ark, the incense altar, and the outer court with the altar and the laver, we may wonder what all this is for. It is correct to say that the tabernacle, the outer court, and all the items related to them are for the purpose that God may come to us so that we may contact Him and enter into Him. It is also true that all this is for Christ to be our enjoyment so that we may experience Him and enter into God through Him in order to be a people who are in God and

who have God in them. However, this is actually an initial understanding. For what purpose are we in God and is God in us? Perhaps you would say that the purpose is the expression of God. Yes, we are in God and God is in us so that we may be His expression. Nevertheless, in this statement there is still something missing, and we need to understand what this is.

The book of Ephesians is a book on the church as the fullness of the Triune God. For the church to be the fullness of the Triune God means that the church is the expression of God. What is the last point in Ephesians concerning the church as God's expression? This point, revealed in chapter six, is spiritual warfare. According to Ephesians 6, the church must be a warrior fighting against God's enemy.

Recently we have given a number of messages on the church meetings. Why do we meet? Some would say that we meet to express God. However, there are many enemies—"Canaanites" and "Amalekites"—that seek to keep us from expressing the Lord. God commanded the children of Israel to enter into the good land and slaughter all the Canaanites. This indicates that in order to express the Lord, we need to fight against His enemy. Because of the frustrating tactics of the enemy, it is difficult for us to meet together to express God. The "Canaanites" are not willing for us to express Him. They will try to frustrate us from entering into the good land. Therefore, we need to declare, "Canaanites, this land is not yours. This is the Lord's land. God has given this land to His people." It is necessary for the church to fight against all the evil powers in the air.

As God's people, we have been chosen by God to be His possession. First Peter 2:9 says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." How can God's chosen people express Him? The children of Israel were chosen by God to be His particular possession on earth to express Him. But how could those Israelites, who

had been redeemed by the Passover lamb, express God? In order to become God's expression, it was necessary for them to be brought to Mount Sinai to receive a particular education from the Lord. At Mount Sinai the children of Israel were trained by God to become His expression.

COMING TO THE INCENSE ALTAR TO INTERCEDE FOR GOD'S INTERESTS

In order for the children of Israel to express God, they first had to come to the altar in the outer court to confess their sins and their sin. They needed to offer the sin offering for their inward sin and the trespass offering for their outward trespasses. The blood of the sin offering and the trespass offering would then open the way for them to come into the tabernacle.

In the tabernacle first we have the enjoyment of Christ as the life supply. The bread on the table of the bread of the presence indicates that God's people should no longer live by themselves. Rather, they should live by Christ as their life and their life supply. They should not care about their good behavior, good conduct, and natural character, because God cares only for Christ. God is concerned with how much of Christ we have eaten and enjoyed. God is interested in how much we live Christ, express Christ, and have Christ constituted into our being.

After the table of the bread of the presence, God's people need to go to the lampstand to be enlightened. How much have you enjoyed Christ as your light? We need to forget our own knowledge, insight, and foresight and recognize that we need Christ to be our light. First we need Christ as our life supply and then as light for our enlightenment. Christ as our enlightenment is versus our natural view, our natural sight.

After experiencing Christ as light, we proceed to the ark of the testimony in the Holy of Holies. However, there is a veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. This veil needs to be broken. Otherwise, we shall not be able to

enter into the Holy of Holies to contact the ark. Thus, the ark is versus the veil.

As we have pointed out in a previous message, the veil signifies our natural being constituted of our conduct, our view, and our virtue. If we put together our conduct, our sight, and our virtue, we have our natural being. This natural being is the self and also the flesh. This is the veil between us and God. This veil needs to be broken from top to bottom. Once the veil has been rent and we enter into the Holy of Holies to contact the ark, we experience Christ as our testimony.

When we experience Christ as our testimony, we are qualified to come to the incense altar. The golden altar of incense is our destiny and also our destination. What should we do at the incense altar? At the incense altar we need to pray. However, instead of praying for ourselves and our own interests, we should pray for God's move and for His interests. Prayer for God's move and God's interests is intercessory prayer. After God's chosen people pass through the different stations in the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies, they arrive at their destination, the incense altar, to intercede for God's interests. For what in particular should God's people intercede? They need to intercede for God to move.

GOD'S MOVE ON EARTH

The tabernacle signifies God embodied in His elect, His chosen people. What is the purpose of this embodiment of God in the tabernacle? It is for God's move on earth. Concerning this, the principle is the same today as it was in ancient times. Therefore, it is crucial for us to see that the tabernacle and everything related to it is for God's move on earth.

God has many enemies. The Egyptians were His enemies. The Amalekites also were enemies of God. As we read the Old Testament, we can see that from Egypt to Canaan God had enemies everywhere. Even His own people could be enemies to Him. The same is true today. Who is for God? In ourselves we also are God's enemies.

Because of all the enemies, God does not have the freedom to move. If He wants to move in a certain direction, there is no thoroughfare, no freeway, because the enemies seek to block the way. Then if God seeks to move in a different direction, other enemies will try to frustrate Him. God is not welcome anywhere. What, then, shall He do? God must fight in order to destroy all His enemies This was the reason the children of Israel were told not to have mercy on the Canaanites. On the contrary, they were to utterly destroy them.

In the book of Ephesians we see the church as the fullness of God. What is the fullness of God? The fullness of God is God's tabernacle, that is, the embodiment of the Triune God in His chosen people. Eventually, according to the book of Ephesians, the church, God's people, should be a warrior fighting not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers in the air. Therefore, the revelation of the church in Ephesians corresponds to the type of the tabernacle in Exodus.

First, there is the need of the tabernacle as God's embodiment. Then God's chosen people must experience all the aspects of the tabernacle until they arrive at the incense altar to intercede for God's interests and His move. In particular, God's people need to pray for the formation of the army of the Lord, an army to fight for God's move on earth. This is the reason the census and the propitiation silver are mentioned immediately after the description of the incense altar. Actually, in 30:11-16 there is more emphasis on the census than on the ransom silver, the propitiation silver. In verse 12 the Lord told Moses to take a sum, a census, of the sons of Israel according to those who were numbered of them. This numbering of the people is for the formation of an army.

We need to be impressed with the fact that when God's chosen people arrive at the incense altar, they intercede for God's move. The answer to this intercessory prayer requires the formation of an army. If we see this, we shall understand the relationship between the incense altar and the propitiation silver. At the incense altar we pray for God's move. In

order for this prayer to be answered, a census must be taken of those who are able to be formed into an army to fight for God's move on earth.

In this message we have just begun to consider the significance of the propitiation silver. The following message, a continuation of this one, will cover other important matters related to the propitiation silver.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FOUR

THE PROPITIATION SILVER

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:11-16; 38:25-28; Num. 1:45-46; 2:32

In the previous message we began to consider the matter of the propitiation silver in 30:11-16. Exodus 30:12 speaks of the sum, or the census, of the sons of Israel according to those who are numbered, and verse 16 speaks of taking the propitiation silver from the sons of Israel and giving it for the service of the tent of meeting. We have pointed out that, in order to understand the significance of the propitiation silver, we need to ask several important questions. First, what is the relationship between the incense altar and the propitiation silver? Second, why did the children of Israel need the propitiation silver in chapter thirty since they had already been redeemed? Third, why is the propitiation or ransom in Exodus 30 related to silver and not to the blood of an animal, inasmuch as redemption was accomplished through the Passover lamb? Fourth, why is the propitiation silver called a heave offering? Fifth, why is the propitiation silver paid only for males twenty years of age and older and not for all the children of Israel?

PRAYER AND THE FORMATION OF THE ARMY

In answer to the first question, we have seen that the prayer, the intercession, at the incense altar is for God's move, that God's move requires an army that can fight for His interests, and that for the formation of His army a census is necessary. By this we can understand the relationship between the incense altar and the propitiation silver.

We can understand why the propitiation silver is mentioned immediately after the description of the incense altar. The prayer at the incense altar issues in the numbering of the children of Israel for the formation of an army to fight for God's move on earth.

Suppose an army had not been formed among the children of Israel. Would it still have been possible for the tabernacle to move without an army? No, there would have been no way for the tabernacle to move without an army to fight for God's interests. According to the book of Numbers, the numbering of the males aged twenty and upward was for the formation of the army. Later, the book of Numbers refers to the twelve tribes as hosts, that is, armies. This indicates that each tribe was formed into an army. The only exception was the tribe of Levi, because that tribe was the host for the tabernacle. The tribes were formed into armies for the purpose of God's move.

In Exodus 30, immediately after the record concerning the incense altar, we have a word regarding the census and the propitiation silver. In order to have the formation of an army to fight, there was the need of a census. The intercession at the incense altar is for God's move. But how can God move in a situation where there are so many enemies? The answer is that God moves by fighting. But where is God's army? Where are His hosts? These hosts must be formed from God's chosen people. Furthermore, only males who have reached the age of twenty are qualified to be part of this army. This indicates that, in order for the army to be formed, a good number of God's chosen people need to mature.

In certain countries young men of a particular age are drafted into the army. However, this kind of military draft has nothing to do with redemption. A young man does not need to be redeemed in order to be drafted into military service. But the situation is altogether different with the formation of God's army. The formation of God's army requires redemption. Do you believe that a natural man is qualified to be in God's army? The natural man surely is not qualified to be drafted into this army. For this reason, there

is the need of the ransom silver, the propitiation silver, a further requirement in addition to the blood of the Passover lamb.

THE PASSOVER LAMB AND THE REDEMPTION SILVER

There is an important difference between the Passover lamb and the propitiation silver. The Passover lamb was purely and absolutely for redemption, and it was available for all the people. But the ransom silver was related to redemption as it applied to those who were qualified to be formed into God's army. Suppose some of God's chosen people who were under the age of twenty wanted to put in the half-shekel of the ransom silver. Because they were under age, not yet mature enough, they would be disqualified from paying the ransom silver. However, age was not a factor in the redemption accomplished through the Passover lamb. All the children of Israel, regardless of age, were qualified to be redeemed by the lamb. Even a newborn infant was qualified to be redeemed. The matter of the difference in qualification for the redemption of the lamb and the ransom silver has been overlooked by some teachers of the Bible.

THE URGENT NEED OF MATURITY

As God's chosen people, we all have been redeemed, no matter what our age may be, spiritually speaking. However, we need to ask ourselves what our spiritual age is according to our maturity. Perhaps your spiritual age is only a few weeks or a few years. The total number of the children of Israel at the time of Exodus 30 was at least two million. But less than a third, 603,550 to be exact, were qualified to be in God's army. More than two-thirds of God's people, all the females and the males under the age of twenty, could not be numbered in this military census.

The spiritual significance of this is that if we would be in the army to fight for God's move, we need to mature. We need to grow until we come to the spiritual age of twenty. The intercession offered at the incense altar is for this

growth and maturity so that the army can be formed. The more intercession there is at the incense altar, the greater will be the urgency for God's people to grow. More and more we shall realize that the need for maturity is desperate. There is the urgent need for more of us to grow, reach maturity, and thereby become qualified to be formed into an army. Only when such an army has been formed will God be able to move on earth for His purpose. Apart from an army formed of mature ones, there is no way for God to move. Oh, God's chosen people need to grow! The intercessory prayer offered to God at the incense altar is for this.

The sisters should not be disappointed to hear that only the males among the Israelites could be formed into God's army. In spiritual experience a male signifies someone who is strong. Today, spiritually speaking, some sisters may be males, whereas some brothers may be females spiritually. Whether we are spiritually a male or a female does not depend on whether we are brothers or sisters; it depends on whether we are strong in spirit or weak in spirit. If you are strong in spirit, you are a male. But if you are weak in spirit, you are a female. Too many among us are females. Therefore, there is the need of maturity.

FIGHTING BY THE PRECIOUS CHRIST IN ASCENSION

Let us suppose that you are mature enough to be in God's army. Because your spiritual age is at least twenty years, you are qualified to be numbered among those who are able to go to war. But does this mean that you should enter directly into the fight? It certainly does not mean this. If you try to fight directly, you will suffer a plague. Exodus 30:12 says, "When you take the sum of the sons of Israel according to those that are numbered of them, then every man shall give a ransom for his soul to Jehovah when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them." In order to avoid any plague, we should never go to war in ourselves. We should say, "In myself I shall never go to fight in God's army. Only in Christ and by Christ shall I go. I have Christ as my half-shekel, as my

ransom silver. He is precious and valuable." If we would fight in God's army, we must fight only by this precious Christ.

The Christ typified by the ransom silver is not the crucified Christ, the Christ who died on the cross as the sin offering and the trespass offering. On the contrary, the propitiation silver is a heave offering, and the heave offering signifies the resurrected and ascended Christ, the Christ in the heavens. According to the type of the propitiation silver, the Christ by whom we fight is not the crucified One—He is the ascended One. Perhaps you have never considered this matter before, but this is the picture presented by the type.

Furthermore, from experience we know that whenever we go to war by ourselves and not by Christ as the ransom silver, we suffer a plague. This means that in spiritual fighting we have a disaster. However, at least some among us have had the experience of fighting the spiritual warfare not by themselves but by Christ as the ransom silver. They fight by Christ as the heave offering, as the resurrected and ascended One.

All those who have engaged in spiritual warfare know that this warfare is not fought on earth. The battles of spiritual warfare are waged in the air. In order to fight this kind of battle, we need to be in the heavenlies with the ascended Christ. We need to be in the heavens with Christ as our heave offering. Elsewhere we have pointed out that the wave offering signifies the resurrected Christ and that the heave offering signifies the ascended Christ. Therefore, the heave offering is an advancement beyond the wave offering; that is, the ascended Christ is an advancement over the resurrected Christ. In ascension Christ defeats His enemy.

According to the record in Exodus and Numbers, only through a military census can God's army be formed. When God has such an army, He is able to move on earth for His interests. However, as we fight in this army for God's move, we must fight by the resurrected and ascended Christ. We should never fight by ourselves.

INTERCEDING AT THE INCENSE ALTAR

If the Lord's recovery is to move on, a number of saints need to experience all the aspects of the outer court and the tabernacle. They must go to the altar and then enjoy Christ as their life supply at the table in the Holy Place. Then they need to receive Christ as their light and experience the breaking of their natural being in order to have the ark, Christ as the testimony of God. Eventually, they will reach the incense altar and intercede for God's move.

Some of the saints in the recovery have had this experience. They can understand experientially what I am talking about. These saints long to stay at the incense altar to pray. Even if outwardly they do not have much time to pray, inwardly their spirit craves to remain at the incense altar and pray, "Lord, we call on You for Your recovery. O Lord, move on. But look at today's situation—there are enemies everywhere. Lord, where is Your testimony? We pray that Your testimony will go on." This is the intercessory prayer offered at the incense altar.

After we arrive at the incense altar and stay there for a period of time, we shall not have the appetite to pray for material things, such as a house or a car. Our only desire will be to pray for the Lord's move. We shall be burdened for His testimony throughout the earth. We shall pray, "Lord, may Your recovery move on. O Lord, what about Your testimony on earth? Lord, move on in Europe and in South America." We may be so burdened to pray for the Lord's move that we shall not have the heart to pray for personal matters. We shall leave all these matters, including concern for our health, in the hand of the Lord. But even if we outwardly have some prayer for personal matters or for our health, inwardly those things are not our real concern. Our concern deep within is for the Lord's recovery, move, and testimony.

The intercessory prayer at the incense altar makes it urgent for God to have a census among His people so that an army can be formed to fight for His move. This means that it is the prayer at the incense altar that leads to the formation

of the army. Do not think that this understanding is a product of my imagination. Far from being imaginary, this is a true description of events in the spiritual world. As a result of the prayer at the incense altar, the Lord conducts a military census of the saints in the churches. Here and there, He numbers His people. Those who are numbered are the ones qualified to go to war. However, they must realize that they cannot fight on their own; they need Christ as the ascended One. They need the Christ who is on the throne in the third heaven.

THE CHURCH RESTING ON CHRIST EXPERIENCED AS THE RANSOM SILVER

According to 38:25, the silver that was collected from the males numbered to form the army was "a hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore and fifteen shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary." Verse 27 tells us that the hundred talents of silver were used to make the sockets for the sanctuary and the veil: "And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; a hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket." Each socket weighed a talent, and a talent is equal to approximately one hundred pounds. The entire tabernacle rested upon these one hundred silver sockets. Furthermore, all the pillars in the tabernacle had caps of silver. These caps signify glory. Exodus 38:28 says, "And of the thousand seven hundred seventy and five shekels he made hooks for the pillars, and overlaid their chapters, and filleted them." The hooks and the fillets were for the formation of the tabernacle and the connecting of it.

This silver signifies the Christ in the heavens as the price paid by those who are able to go to war. Every local church rests upon this Christ, experienced by the saints who are able to go to war. These brothers and sisters have experienced the resurrected and ascended Christ to this extent, and the Christ whom they have experienced becomes the silver sockets, the silver crowns of the pillars, the silver hooks, and the silver fillets.

I can assure you that this is not merely a doctrine. If you study the history of every local church, you will see that this is actually the situation. Wherever there is a local church, there is sure to be a number of saints who, spiritually speaking, have reached the age of twenty and who take Christ as their ransom silver. This Christ is not the crucified One; He is the resurrected and ascended One. These saints are one with this Christ and experience Him to such an extent that He becomes the sockets of the church in their locality. He also becomes the caps on the pillars; that is, He becomes the glory of that church. Furthermore, this ascended Christ becomes the hooks and the fillets, the strength and the linking power of that church.

This experience of the ascended Christ as the ransom silver is for God's move. It is the issue, the result, of the intercessory prayers offered at the incense altar. Therefore, the ransom silver is directly related to the incense altar.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FIVE

THE PROPITIATION SILVER

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:11-16; 36:25-28; Num. 1:45-46; 2:32

Without the propitiation silver, God's dwelling place could not be built up. Furthermore, apart from the propitiation silver, there was no way for God's dwelling place to move. The propitiation silver provided the material for the sockets, the caps, the hooks, and the fillets of the pillars. The propitiation silver was also related to the numbering of the males twenty years of age and over to be drafted to form the army to fight for God's move on earth.

A HALF-SHEKEL FOR A MEMORIAL

Some teachers of the Bible misinterpret the significance of the propitiation silver and say that it is simply a type of Christ's redemption. Apparently the propitiation silver does typify the redemption of Christ. But for the initial experience of Christ's redemption, we do not need to pay anything. However, concerning the propitiation silver in Exodus 30, all those who were numbered were required to pay a half-shekel of silver.

Later, among the children of Israel, this half-shekel was known as the poll tax. Matthew 17:24-27 refers to this. Verse 24 says, "And when they came to Capernaum, those who received the half-shekel came to Peter and said, Does not your teacher pay the half-shekel?" This half-shekel was the poll tax for God's dwelling place in 30:12-16. In Matthew 17 we see that, fifteen hundred years after the book of Exodus was written, the regulation in 30:12-16 had become a statute related to

the paying of the poll tax, the head tax. According to chapter thirty of Exodus, the half-shekel had to be paid by every male twenty years of age and older. Surely this is more than simply a type of the redemption of Christ.

The payment of the half-shekel in Exodus 30 was a kind of tax. In principle, it was somewhat similar to today's income tax. This tax was used by God to accomplish two things. First, God used this tax to collect silver for the building up of the tabernacle. From Exodus 38:25-28 we learn that the silver from this tax, the propitiation silver, was used to make the hundred sockets for the pillars of the tabernacle and also to make the caps, the hooks, and the fillets. Second, God used this tax to accomplish the formation of an army. Therefore, through the single matter of the half-shekel payment God did something for the building of the tabernacle and the formation of the army.

The propitiation silver is related to Christ's redemption, but it is not a direct type of redemption, for in this type there is no blood. Because there is no blood, the silver is not actually related to the death of Christ. Rather, the Christ typified by the propitiation silver is the uplifted One, the ascended One, not the crucified One. All the silver paid in by those numbered to form God's army was regarded as a heave offering. Exodus 30:14 says, "Every one passing over unto those that are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the heave offering of Jehovah." The heave offering signifies Christ in ascension.

This heave offering was offered to God not for redemption but for a memorial. Verse 16 says, "It shall be a memorial for the sons of Israel before Jehovah to make propitiation for your souls." A memorial is a pleasant matter. In the sight of God, the half-shekel paid by the children of Israel drafted into His army was a memorial.

THE HIGHEST EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

We have emphasized the fact that the propitiation silver could be paid only by males twenty years of age and upward. This indicates that, spiritually speaking, we all need to grow

up. If we do not grow up and reach the age of twenty, we shall not be qualified to be drafted into the army to fight for God's move on earth. In some countries the young people may be afraid of being drafted and wish that they could stay under draft age. Because they are afraid of the military draft, they do not want to grow up. In the spiritual life many believers have their growth stunted. Although they may be rather old, it seems that they are dwarfs. They have not grown in life. We hope that among us in the Lord's recovery there will not be any dwarfs. I hope that more and more of us will be able to say when we are asked how old we are, spiritually speaking, that we have reached the age of twenty and are qualified to pay the half-shekel. Eventually, we all should be able to say, "Praise the Lord that in the spiritual life I am no longer a teenager! I am past the age of twenty, and I am qualified to pay the half-shekel and be drafted into God's army."

What is the significance of the half-shekel? What does it typify? The half-shekel typifies Christ in ascension. It does not typify the incarnated Christ, the crucified Christ, nor even the resurrected Christ. The propitiation silver as a heave offering is a type of the ascended Christ.

In order for us to pay the half-shekel, our experience of Christ must reach the highest point, the point where we are sitting with Him in the heavenlies. This is the highest experience of Christ. We need to experience such a Christ in order to have Him as the half-shekel. In other words, the half-shekel of silver signifies the ascended Christ experienced by us and paid by us as the poll tax.

The half-shekel of silver signifies our experience of Christ as the ascended One. When we are in the meetings, we need to be in the heavens. Otherwise, we shall not be able to function. Whenever we are not with Christ in the heavens, we cannot function in the meetings. When we function properly, we are truly in the ascended Christ.

EACH ONE REQUIRED TO PAY THE AMOUNT

Now we need to go on to find out why the rich and the poor alike were to pay a half-shekel. The rich were not

required to pay more, and the poor were not allowed to pay less. Verse 15 says, "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give the heave offering of Jehovah to make propitiation for your souls." Everyone who paid this tax was to pay the same amount, a half-shekel.

According to 30:13, a shekel was twenty gerahs. A half-shekel, therefore, was ten gerahs. Furthermore, ten gerahs were equal to one bekah. A half shekel, ten gerahs, and one bekah all signify the same quantity. God required that His people pay only a half-shekel.

When the gatherers of the poll tax came to Peter in Matthew 17, they asked Peter if his master paid the half-shekel. Instead of going to the Lord for the answer to the question concerning the half-shekel, Peter answered that his Teacher did pay the poll tax. This indicates that Peter forgot the vision he had seen on the mount of transfiguration. In Matthew 17:5 the voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I delight; hear Him!" The Father was telling the disciples not to listen to Moses or Elijah, who, respectively, represented the law and the prophets, but to listen to Christ, the living Son of God. It seems that the Father was saying, "Don't care for what Moses says or for what Elijah says. Only care for what My Son says. Hear Him!" Although Peter had heard the voice out of the cloud, when he came down from the mountain he failed the test with the gatherers of the poll tax. Actually, Peter at that time did not understand what had happened on the mountain.

Those who collected the poll tax wanted to know if the Lord Jesus paid the half-shekel according to what Moses said. If Peter had understood what he had heard on the mountain, he would have answered, "No, it is not necessary for my Teacher to pay this tax." Because Peter was still under the influence of tradition, he answered the question with a yes. Like Peter, we are also still too much under the influence of religious tradition.

Matthew 17:25 says, "And when he came into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, What do you think, Simon?

From whom do the kings of the earth receive custom or poll tax, from their sons or from strangers?" The Lord was actually giving Peter a word of rebuke. The Lord seemed to be saying, "Peter, you have forgotten what you heard on the mountain. I am the Son of the One who owns the temple. I am the Son of the King. Therefore, I don't need to pay any tax."

Peter may have been shocked by the Lord's answer. Perhaps he said to himself, "What shall I do now? I told those outside that my Teacher paid the half-shekel, and they are still outside the door waiting for the payment. But the Lord has made it clear to me that He does not need to pay the tax." However, according to Matthew 17:27, the Lord went on to say, "But that we may not stumble them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel; take that and give it to them for Me and you." While the Lord was correcting and teaching Peter, He took care of his need. This is always the Lord's way in dealing with us.

The fact that the amount of the propitiation silver was a half-shekel indicates that God's requirement of us in this matter is not too high. The requirement of functioning in the meetings is likewise not very high; it is only a half-shekel from each one attending the meeting. The tax that must be paid in order for us to be drafted into the heavenly army is also just a half-shekel. From God's point of view, the amount of this tax is not very high.

Although the amount of the tax was only a half-shekel, it was also ten gerahs. Since the number ten signifies fullness, the ten gerahs indicate that the tax involved a payment in full. There was no deficiency. Furthermore, the half-shekel was equal to one bekah, a complete unit. Therefore, the payment of the half-shekel involved a payment that was full and complete.

God's command that, concerning the propitiation silver, the rich not pay more than a half-shekel and the poor not pay less is altogether against the common practice among today's Christians. This practice is that the more someone

puts in, the better. Those who are rich, the spiritual giants, pay more than God requires, and the poor do not pay anything. The result is that in the so-called services there is the system of clergy-laity. A few do all the speaking, and the majority of the people do not say anything.

I would like to say a word of warning to the leading ones among us and to those who are good speakers: Do not think that because you are rich you should pay more than a half-shekel in the meetings. I would also say a word to those who are not good speakers, yet who, spiritually speaking, are above the age of twenty: You need to pay a half-shekel, nothing less.

The Lord hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans. He hates that the giants would become a clergy, and that the other saints would become laymen. The type of the propitiation silver in Exodus 30 certainly can be interpreted and applied in this way. Because of the system of clergy and laity among today's Christians, there is no census, no draft.

Leading ones, be careful that the amount of the poll tax you pay in the meetings is not more than a half-shekel. Even though you have been enriched by God—thank Him for this—you need to be limited and not pay so much tax in the meetings. Leave opportunity for others to speak. Those who regard themselves as poor and weak at least have a half-shekel.

Those who say that they do not have a half-shekel should be encouraged to gain a half-shekel to pay in each meeting. Otherwise, according to the Bible they will be cut off. Those who do not pay their income tax may be sentenced to jail. In the same principle, those believers who do not pay the half-shekel tax will be cut off. Many Christians today have been "jailed" because they have not paid their tax.

PAYING THE HALF-SHEKEL IN EVERY MEETING

A proper meeting, a meeting that is living, rich, and balanced, is one in which each one pays the half-shekel. But the situation today is that certain rich ones may put in

millions of shekels, whereas most of the Christians do not pay anything at all. This is the situation of today's Christians, and it may also be the situation among us.

I am concerned that in the meetings the leading ones are paying too much. If the leading ones pay too much, they will kill the meetings. On the other hand, many of the saints may pay less than a half-shekel, and some may not pay anything. Whenever you come to a church meeting, you should put in your half-shekel. This is not a great requirement. Actually you need to pay just a half-shekel, yet this half-shekel is a full payment and a complete unit, for it is ten gerahs and one bekah. I long to see meetings where all the saints pay the half-shekel.

Recently I have been deeply bothered by the matter of overpayment and underpayment in the church meetings. With the exception of the Lord's table meeting, in most meetings some pay too much—more than a half-shekel—and others pay too little—less than a half shekel. Of course, we cannot blame those who spiritually are under the age of twenty for not paying anything. A group of those who pay too much tax may function like a corporate pastor, and the rest of the attendants may be like laymen. This kind of situation bothers me. This is not the Lord's recovery, and this is not the census for the formation of the army.

We all need to grow and experience Christ to the standard required by God. Then the half-shekel must be weighed not by our own balance but by the balance in the sanctuary. For this reason, in verse 13 the shekel is called the shekel of the sanctuary, a shekel weighed according to God's holy standard. At the least, we need to experience Christ to the extent that we have enough silver to pay our spiritual poll tax for the census, for the draft.

If we all pay the half-shekel in each meeting, how strong, living, rich, uplifted, excellent, and wonderful our meetings will be. Again I say that those who are very young in the spiritual life are not required to pay the half-shekel. Spiritually speaking, they are children or teenagers. It is normal to have such young ones among us. But all those over the age

of twenty are required to pay the half-shekel. This is for the formation of the army.

FIGHTING FOR GOD'S MOVE

When the army goes forth to fight the enemy, we do not send the toddlers, school-age children, or teenagers. Rather, we would keep them safe and protected at home. Those who are twenty and upward, however, must go forth to fight. Actually, every meeting is a fight. We need to realize that every meeting is a fight for God's move.

By now we should be clear that the propitiation silver is for the building up of God's dwelling place and also for the move of God's testimony. Eventually, as we shall see later on, after God's dwelling place had been built, the propitiation silver served as the maintenance fee.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SIX

THE LAVER OF BRONZE

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:17-21; 38:8; 40:7, 30-32

In this message we shall consider the laver of bronze described in 30:17-21. We may not realize how important the laver is. But it is crucial that we discover the significance of this item.

BRONZE, SILVER, AND GOLD

According to the record in Exodus, the laver comes immediately after the propitiation silver, and the propitiation silver comes after the incense altar. It is interesting to see that the incense altar is overlaid with gold, that the half-shekel of the propitiation money was silver, and that the laver is of bronze. Here we have three metals: gold, silver, and bronze. The silver and the bronze are for the gold. We go from bronze to silver and from silver to gold.

Here in Exodus 30 there is no mention of iron. But in the description of the great image in Daniel 2, we have gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay. The image seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream had a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay (Dan. 2:32-33). With God's building, with His testimony, there are gold, silver and bronze; however, there is neither iron nor clay. The lowest of the metals in the building is bronze.

We need to be impressed with the gold, the silver, and the bronze in Exodus 30. Surely these metals go together. In Exodus 30 first we have the incense altar overlaid with gold, then a heap of silver pieces, and then a laver made of bronze.

It is easy to study the typology in chapter thirty of

Exodus, but a great deal of experience is required in order to understand it and apply it. First, we need to touch the spirit of the writer. In matters of typology this is not easy to do. Second, we need sufficient experience in order to interpret the types. Certainly the types of the bronze, silver, and gold in Exodus 30 are related to one another.

THE LAVER FOR THE TABERNACLE'S OPERATION

The incense altar is for intercession, and intercession is for God's move, God's operation. What makes it possible for God's testimony, the ark, and also for the entire tabernacle, God's dwelling place, to move on earth? How can Christ as God's testimony and the church as God's dwelling place move on earth? The ark and the tabernacle, Christ and the church, move by means of the army.

The tabernacle is God's dwelling place. Viewed from the standpoint of a dwelling place, the tabernacle is God's dwelling. But viewed from another perspective, the tabernacle is a camp related to an army. In the books of Exodus and Numbers we see the camps of God's army. These camps are for fighting. The tabernacle is the central camp, and around the tabernacle the twelve tribes of Israel were formed as camps. Therefore, the twelve tribes camped around the camp of Jehovah, the tabernacle. When the children of Israel traveled, six camps went ahead of the camp of Jehovah, and six camps followed it.

The incense altar is for God's move, and God moves by the army. But how can the army be formed? The army is formed by drafting the eligible ones. Today in different countries there is a military draft. When young men reach a certain age, they are drafted into an army. Hence, to be eligible for the draft into the army depends on growth. A little child cannot be drafted to serve in the army. Rather, a child needs to be fed, nourished, and cared for. If someone is to be drafted into the army, he must first reach the minimum age. As we have seen, the minimum age in Exodus 30 was twenty. All the males twenty years of age and upward were numbered and had to pay the half-shekel of the propitiation

silver. This census and payment of the propitiation silver were for God's move.

The propitiation silver was also for God's building. The one hundred sockets for the pillars of the tabernacle were made of the propitiation silver. The crowns of the pillars, the hooks, and the fillets were also made of this silver. This indicates that the propitiation silver was for the building of God's dwelling place. The males aged twenty and upward paid the propitiation silver and were drafted to form the army to fight for God's move. But the half-shekel paid was for God's building. Whoever was qualified and paid the half-shekel could be in the army to fight for the move of God's testimony on earth. Therefore, both the incense altar and the propitiation silver were for God's move.

The laver is for the tabernacle's operation. In the outer court there were the altar and the laver; in the Holy Place, the table, the lampstand, and the incense altar; and in the Holy of Holies, the ark. Without the army, the tabernacle could not move. But without the laver, nothing in the tabernacle or in the outer court could operate. For the operation of the tabernacle it was necessary for sacrifices to be offered at the altar. These sacrifices included the burnt offering, meal offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering. Unless these offerings were offered to God, there would be no way for the tabernacle to operate. It was also necessary for the priests to come into the Holy Place to arrange the bread on the table and trim the lamps. It was also necessary for them to intercede at the incense altar. All this is involved in the operation of the tabernacle. Whenever the priests were to come to the altar to offer something to God or were to come into the tabernacle to serve, they first had to go to the laver to wash their hands. Unless the priests washed in the laver, there was no way for the tabernacle to operate. Without the army, the tabernacle and everything related to it would be at a standstill; it would have no way to move. But without the laver, the tabernacle would not be in operation. If the laver were removed from the outer court, everything else in the tabernacle and outer

court would still be complete. However, there would not be any way for those things to operate.

OUR NEED TO BE WASHED FROM THE EARTHLY TOUCH

The service of the priests in the outer court and in the tabernacle depended on their washing in the laver. No one would go several days without washing his hands. But spiritually speaking, Christians may go a very long time without washing in the laver. For example, some sisters may pray quite often both privately and in the meetings. I am concerned about their service of prayer. Sisters, before you pray, do you wash your hands in the laver? Do you have a spiritual washing before you enter into the service of prayer? Some may reply, "We confess our sins, trespasses, failures, and shortcomings. Is this not a kind of washing?" Yes, to confess our sins to the Lord is to experience one kind of washing. However, this is the washing by the blood, not the washing by the water in the laver. In order to wash away our sin, sins, trespasses, and transgressions, we need the blood. We also need the blood to wash us of our mistakes, failures, defects, defeats, and shortcomings. We need the blood to cleanse us of all these things because they are sinful. However, when the Lord Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He used water. That kind of washing did not require blood. The feet of the disciples were dirty and needed to be washed with water. The problem was not one of sin, but of dirt, of defilement.

If we tell a lie or lose our temper, we commit a trespass. But if we become defiled through the earthly touch, we have not committed anything sinful. We should not try to use the blood to cleanse away that kind of dirt. For example, hands that are dirty from touching the floor need to be washed with water. Likewise, if we become defiled because of the earthly touch, we need to be washed by the water in the laver.

I am concerned by the fact that due to our religious background and to the atmosphere that surrounds us, most

Christians do not have much consciousness of being dirty spiritually. They may think that to be defiled or unclean is always a matter of sinfulness. The Bible, however, speaks of two kinds of defilement: the defilement that comes from sin and the defilement that comes by the earthly touch. If we lie or steal, we commit sin and become defiled by these transgressions. But we may be defiled in another way by means of the earthly touch, by having contact with the things of the world.

I always wash my hands before eating because I realize that on this earth there is dirt everywhere. Our hands may become dirty even by touching our clothing. In the same principle, we can easily be defiled spiritually by having contact with earthly things. Simply by living and walking on this earth, we become defiled. In order to be defiled, it is not necessary to contact evil people. We can be defiled even through contact with good people. Although we are so easily defiled, we may not have any realization, any consciousness, of the kind of defilement that comes from the earthly touch. Subconsciously we may have the thought that we are not wrong in any way, since we have not lied or stolen. We may have been good, humble, honest, and patient. Nevertheless, we may have been defiled simply by going to a restaurant or a department store.

Years ago I visited some saints in Las Vegas. Certain ones encouraged me to visit a gambling casino just to observe it. I said to them, "I would not go to such a place. I know that by visiting there one time, I would be defiled. Then I would not be able to pray for a period of time." Whenever we are defiled by the earthly touch, we need to be washed not by the blood, but by the water in the laver.

You may confess your sins, failures, shortcomings, and defeats to the Lord, but you may not have the awareness that you need to be washed by the water in the laver. Washing in the laver will remind us to be careful not to get our hands dirty. Just as washing our hands with soap and water reminds us of the need to keep our hands clean, so washing in the laver reminds us of the need to keep ourselves from the defilement by the earthly touch. Those who

do not have the consciousness that they need the washing of the water in the laver may feel that there is nothing wrong with going to a worldly place just to see what is happening there. They may not do anything sinful, but they will be defiled. We may also be defiled by listening to the conversation of worldly people. Although we may not join in their conversation, we are defiled just by listening to them. Even though we may not commit sin, we still may become defiled. Because the entire world is unclean, it is very easy for us to be defiled.

THE RESULT OF SERVING IN THE TABERNACLE WITHOUT FIRST WASHING IN THE LAVER

When we pray to offer something to the Lord, we first need to wash our hands and even our feet in the laver. To come to the meeting to function is actually to come into the tabernacle to serve the Lord. Before we serve the Lord in the tabernacle, we need to wash. However, in the Christian life of many believers and in their service to God there does not seem to be a laver. When they come to the altar to make an offering to God, they have unclean hands. They may come into the church meetings and serve without washing their hands in the laver. This kind of service brings in death. This is the reason 30:21 says, "Then they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they may not die."

We should be careful not to touch God's service unless we have first washed our hands in the laver. If we try to serve God in the tabernacle with unclean hands, we shall die, spiritually speaking. How much death there is among Christians today! The more they serve, the more death they have because they serve with unclean hands. Praying and serving with unclean hands brings in death.

If we do not pray in the meetings or function, in a sense we may be somewhat living. But if we pray or function without washing in the laver, we shall bring death to ourselves and also spread death to others. Death is the result of our trying to pray or serve without washing in the laver.

EXPERIENCING THE LAVER FOR THE OPERATION OF GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

The propitiation silver is for God's move, and the laver is for the operation of God's dwelling place. Without the propitiation silver, God's dwelling place cannot be built up and it cannot move. There will be a shortage of silver to make the sockets, caps, hooks, and fillets. There will not be the adequate number of persons drafted to form the army to fight for God's move. In the same principle, without the laver there is no way to have the operation of the tabernacle. Even if we have God's dwelling place and all its furniture, we shall not have a way to put these things into operation. Without the washing in the laver, no one is qualified to serve in the tabernacle. It is unfortunate for emphasis to be given to the altar, the table, the lampstand, the ark, and the incense altar, but not so much to the laver. We must experience the laver for the operation of God's dwelling place.

THE LAVER IN RELATION TO THE ALTAR

In location the laver is after the altar, but in function the laver is before the altar. When the priests came to minister at the altar, they first had to wash at the laver. They also had to wash at the laver before going into the tabernacle to minister. By this we see that the function of the laver comes before that of the altar.

The location of the laver indicates that it comes out of the altar. The altar was overlaid with bronze, and the laver was made of bronze. In typology bronze signifies God's judgment. The altar typifies the cross of Christ. At the altar, at the cross, God's judgment was exercised to the fullest extent. Out of the judgment of God exercised at the altar, the laver was produced. The bronze on the altar signifies judgment, but the bronze on the laver signifies the result, the issue, of God's judgment. This result is the washing power. This means that the washing power of the laver comes out of God's judgment.

According to the New Testament, the washing power of the laver is the life-giving Spirit. Titus 3:5 speaks of the

washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. This verse reveals that the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of life, is the washing power. Hence, the laver signifies the washing through the life-giving Spirit.

The laver typifies the washing power of the life-giving Spirit brought forth by the death of Christ. The altar signifies Christ's redemption, and the laver signifies the life-giving Spirit's washing. At the altar we see Christ's redeeming, and at the laver we see the life-giving Spirit's washing. However, this life-giving Spirit is not someone other than Christ. The life-giving Spirit is actually Christ Himself. After passing through God's full judgment and entering into resurrection, the crucified Christ became the life-giving Spirit who washes us.

THE BRONZE OF THE ALTAR AND THE LAVER

The bronze used to overlay the altar came from the censers of the two hundred fifty rebellious ones who were judged by God. After these rebellious ones were judged, the Lord said to Moses, "Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed. The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the Lord, therefore they are hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel" (Num. 16:37-38). This indicates that the bronze on the altar should remind God's people of His judgment upon the rebels. Therefore, the bronze used to overlay the altar became a reminder of God's judgment on rebellion.

The bronze on the laver came from the looking glasses of the women who assembled at the door of the tent of meeting (Exo. 38:8). The Hebrew word for "assembling" in 38:8 means to assemble by troops. This is another indication that all the camps of the children of Israel were troops. The women who assembled at the door of the tent of meeting assembled to serve as troops. In other words, their service also was part of the military service. The looking glasses of these women were used to make the laver of bronze. This

implies that the laver of bronze was a looking glass, a mirror, that could reflect and expose. Whereas the bronze on the altar was a reminder of God's judgment, the bronze on the laver was a mirror to expose God's people. It indicates that the judgment suffered by Christ on the cross has the power to expose us.

Those who came to the laver had their uncleanness exposed. In this way they would realize their need to wash. I remember a time years ago when my children refused to admit that they were dirty and needed to wash. I picked up a mirror and held it in front of them. When they saw themselves in the mirror, they were convinced that they were dirty and they were willing to wash themselves. Likewise, the bronze of the laver is a mirror reflecting our condition and exposing our dirt. Therefore, the bronze at the altar reminds us of God's judgment, and the bronze at the laver reminds us that we are dirty and need to wash.

At the laver we have the bronze, the mirror, and the water. When we are at the laver, the bronze should remind us that whatever is sinful, earthly, and fleshly has been judged by God on the cross. But although we may confess our sins, we may not realize how much we are still worldly and fleshly. In the sight of God we have been redeemed, but we still need to be washed. Having been redeemed by the blood at the altar, we need to be washed by the water in the laver.

Among Christians today not many messages have been given telling the believers that, even though it is wonderful to be redeemed through the blood of Christ, we still need to be washed by the life-giving Spirit. Although we have confessed our sins, we still need to deal with defilement, with the dirt that comes from the earthly touch. We also need to deal with the defilement that comes from the flesh and the natural life. Therefore, we need to be washed by the life-giving Spirit.

THE WASHING OF THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

Every day we first need to offer Christ as the sin offering and the trespass offering. On the one hand, this will

lead us to experience Christ as our life supply and as the food that is offered to God. On the other hand, it will lead us to the realization that we need the washing of the life-giving Spirit.

The more we walk in the Spirit and live in the mingled spirit, the more we shall be washed. Each washing will be a reminder not to go to certain places, contact certain persons, or be involved in situations that will defile us. Even though we may not do anything sinful, we may touch something worldly and natural and thereby be defiled. If we remain in a condition of defilement, we shall not be able to pray, serve the Lord, or function in the meetings. If we try to function without washing away the defilement in the laver, we shall experience death.

I can testify that this understanding and interpretation of the significance of the laver corresponds to our experience. What we have said regarding the laver in this message can be confirmed by our experience.

Exodus 30:18 says, "And you shall make a laver of bronze, and its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar; and you shall put water in it." The base of the laver signifies steadfastness. The laver was put between the tent of meeting and the altar to continue the work of the altar for the entrance into the tabernacle. The water put into the laver signifies the washing of the life-giving Spirit (see Eph. 5:26).

Verse 19 continues, "And Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it." As we have pointed out,this washing signifies the washing away of the defilement that comes from the earthly touch (John 13:10).

AN ETERNAL STATUTE

Verses 20 and 21 say, "When they go into the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, that they may not die; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn an offering by fire to Jehovah, then they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they may not die. And it shall be an eternal statute to them, to him and to his seed

throughout their generations." The priests were to wash in the laver in order to be kept away from death. Today we need the washing of the life-giving Spirit to avoid spiritual death.

The priests needed to wash in the laver when going into the tent of meeting or coming to the altar to minister. As the last part of verse 21 points out, this was to be an eternal statute, an eternal principle for all generations.

THE INCENSE ALTAR, THE PROPITIATION SILVER, AND THE LAVER

According to Exodus 30, immediately after the incense altar, we have the silver for God's building and God's move, and then the laver of bronze for the operation of God's dwelling place. Without the propitiation silver, there would not be a way to have God's dwelling place built up or a way for God's dwelling place to move. Furthermore, if there were no laver of bronze, there would not be a way to have the operation of God's building. Without the laver, God's building would come to a standstill, and everything related to it would be quiet.

Now we can understand why the propitiation silver and the laver of bronze immediately follow the golden incense altar. We need the silver for the building up of God's dwelling place and for its move. We need the bronze for the operation of God's dwelling place. This means that the actual operation in the church life depends on the laver of bronze.

As we shall see, in Exodus 30 we also have the ingredients of the ointment and of the incense. The ointment and the incense belong with the propitiation silver and the laver of bronze. Therefore, after the incense altar we have four items: silver, bronze, ointment, and incense. After we have the silver and the bronze of the laver, we need the ointment to anoint us, and we also need the incense to burn on the incense altar for intercession.

I would encourage you to pray about the propitiation silver and the laver of bronze and to have fellowship

concerning them. The proper understanding of these matters requires much prayer and fellowship.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVEN

THE HOLY ANOINTING OIL

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:22-33; Psa. 133:2; 1 John 2:20, 27

In this message we shall begin to consider the holy anointing oil. This oil is a compound of four spices blended with oil. The first thing we need to see is the position of this ointment in the divine record in Exodus. We need to find out why it is revealed at the end of chapter thirty. If we understand the position of the ointment, then we shall know the relationship between it and the tabernacle.

THE POSITION OF THE OINTMENT

The book of Exodus begins with God's chosen people suffering as slaves in Egypt. Eventually, the children of Israel made a great exodus from that condition of slavery, crossed the Red Sea, came into the wilderness, and enjoyed God's provision. Even while they were in Egypt, they enjoyed the Passover. They also experienced God's mighty salvation, for God delivered them out of Egypt and rescued them from the strong hand of Pharaoh and his army. In the wilderness God's people tasted the heavenly food, the manna, and also drank living water out of the cleft rock. By God's mercy they experienced many miracles.

The children of Israel were brought to Mount Sinai, where they stayed for probably ten months or more. At Mount Sinai they received the revelation from God that He wanted them to build a tabernacle for Him to have a dwelling place on earth. Furthermore, through this tabernacle God could have the best communion, the best fellowship,

with His people. Therefore, at Mount Sinai God gave Moses the heavenly design of the tabernacle.

Beginning with chapter twenty-five of Exodus, we have a detailed description of the tabernacle and all its furniture and utensils. This record is completed at the end of chapter twenty-seven. Then in chapter twenty-eight the divine revelation comes to the matter of the priests. First we have a record of the clothing of the priests. Then in chapter twenty-nine God reveals what kind of food the priests should eat. This chapter shows how the priests are sanctified and filled with the riches of the things required by God. Therefore, by the end of Exodus 29 the priests are ready.

In chapter thirty we first have the incense altar and then the census for the divine draft to form God's army. In foregoing messages we have pointed out why the draft for the formation of God's army follows the description of the incense altar. The reason is that the incense altar is the motivating factor for God's move, and God's move requires an army. The army must fight for God's move so that the way is clear for God to go on.

In Exodus 30 we also have the laver, which was not far from the entrance of the tabernacle. Before entering the tabernacle to serve God, the priests had to wash their hands and feet in the laver.

Following the description of the laver, we have the record concerning the holy anointing oil, the compound ointment. This ointment sanctified the priests, the tabernacle, and all the furniture and utensils. In other words, there was the need for the tabernacle, the furniture, the utensils, and also the priests to be anointed with this oil. Before the end of chapter thirty, the time was not right for God to speak of the anointing oil. Now we can understand why the record of the anointing oil is found toward the end of chapter thirty.

God's revelation is progressive. It proceeds step by step and even section by section. In Egypt the children of Israel enjoyed the Passover lamb. In the wilderness they enjoyed the manna and the water from the rock.

A DEEPER TRUTH

Many Christians know the Passover lamb, the heavenly manna, and the living water. A number of hymns have been written on the Passover, the manna, and the living water. However, many Christians have never read a book or listened to a message on the compound ointment.

Recently I looked into what others had to say regarding the compound ointment in Exodus 30. In his *Synopsis* J. N. Darby has only a short word on the ointment and the incense. In his notes on the Pentateuch, C. H. Mackintosh says that in the holy anointing oil "we discern a type of the varied graces of the Holy Ghost, which were found, in all their divine fullness, in Christ." But he does not tell us what these graces are. The writing of C. A. Coates on Exodus 30 shows a great improvement. With respect to the ointment, he uses the term the Spirit of Christ many times. Few writers use this expression; most speak of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, or even the Holy Ghost. Furthermore, Coates speaks of "the Spirit of the Man of God's pleasure" and also of "the Spirit of another Man—even of the Man who is at God's right hand." This indicates that Coates saw that the Spirit of Christ is not only the Spirit of God, but also the Spirit of another Man. Concerning the four spices, Coates says that they "represent all those features of grace which were so perfectly blended and harmonized in the Spirit of Christ." Coates realized something concerning the blending of the spices with the olive oil. Four kinds of spices were compounded with the olive oil to make the ointment.

The anointing oil in Exodus 30 certainly signifies one of the deeper truths in the Bible. I am concerned that some among us have not yet realized much concerning this deeper truth. Therefore, we need to know the significance of the compound ointment.

ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The compound ointment was used to anoint the tabernacle with all its furniture, the altar with all its utensils, the laver with its base, and the priests (30:26-30). This ointment

signifies God, who is triune, after a long process becoming the all-inclusive compound Spirit to reach His chosen and redeemed people to be one with them.

It certainly was good for the children of Israel to enjoy the Passover, the manna from heaven, and the water from the rock. But none of these enjoyments can compare with the enjoyment of the anointing oil. The anointing oil signifies that now the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—can reach His chosen and regenerated people to be one with them. This is much more than the Savior or the Redeemer typified by the lamb. It is also much more than the manna and the living water. This ointment typifies the Triune God—the very God in His divine Trinity—after a long process becoming the all-inclusive compound Spirit to reach us, to make us one with Him, and to make Himself one with us. How marvelous!

For centuries this wonderful matter of the compound ointment has been neglected by Christians. This is the reason there are not any hymns on this subject. However, it is easy to find hymns on the Passover. For example, one well-known hymn says, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." A number of hymns have been written about manna, and some deeper Christians have written hymns on the living water. But where can you find a hymn on the compound ointment?

When certain Christians hear us speak about the compound ointment, they may say, "What are you talking about? What is this—the Triune God after a long process becoming the all-inclusive compound Spirit? Can God the Spirit be compounded? And what do you mean by this Spirit reaching us? We know that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost came upon the believers. But the Father remained on the throne with the Son beside Him. What is this you are saying about the Triune God reaching us to be one with us?" Who knows these things today? And who talks about them?

Over the years, I have been burdened to speak again and again concerning the compound Spirit. Repetition of important matters is a principle in the Bible. In the Scriptures

certain things are repeated again and again. For example, consider how many times in the New Testament we hear about believing in the Lord Jesus. Why does God repeat this so much? He repeats it because it is extremely important. Likewise, because the compound Spirit is so crucial, I cannot avoid speaking about it repeatedly. Furthermore, I am concerned about the influence of today's religious atmosphere. Due to this influence, many believers care only for superficial things. They may know about the Lamb, the heavenly manna, or even a little about the living water. But when it comes to a message on the compound ointment in Exodus 30, few Christians have any ear. They like messages that tickle their ear, but they do not want to hear things that are deep and weighty.

I hope that all of us will be deeply impressed with the fact that it is not God's eternal intention merely to give us a Redeemer, or to supply us with heavenly manna and living water. It is God's eternal intention that He would reach us as the all-inclusive compound Spirit, as the Spirit who includes divinity, humanity, incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. All this is blended to form the compound ointment, and this ointment is for the anointing of God's chosen and redeemed people.

Painting can be used to illustrate anointing. When we paint a particular object, the paint reaches it and becomes one with it. Likewise, when God anoints us with Himself, He reaches us and makes Himself one with us.

What is involved with God's anointing us is much more complicated than His creation of the heavens and the earth. In creation, when God wanted something, He only had to speak. For example, God said, "Let the dry land appear," and the dry land appeared. But God had to go through a process to produce the ointment, the divine "paint." The elements of this ointment include divinity and humanity. Other ingredients are Christ's incarnation and human living.

The very God lived on this earth for thirty-three and one half years. This is a great thing! The almighty Creator lived as

a human being in a poor family in a despised country. After thirty-three and a half years, He died on the cross, He was buried in the tomb, and He took a tour of Hades. Then, in resurrection, He came out from among the dead, and later He ascended to the heavens. All these steps were necessary for the compounding of the spices with the oil to produce the ointment.

According to Exodus 30, the basic element of the compound ointment is olive oil. This olive oil signifies the Spirit of God, the Third of the Godhead. We have seen that the ingredients of the compound Spirit include divinity, humanity, incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. These elements have been compounded with the divine Spirit. Now the divine Spirit is no longer oil alone, but has become an ointment.

Nothing can compare with this marvelous ointment. What comparison is there between the ointment and the Lamb? It is a wonderful fact that God has become our Savior and Redeemer. Jesus is Jehovah our Savior, and I appreciate His salvation very much. Nevertheless, the Lamb cannot compare with the Triune God processed to become the all-inclusive compound Spirit to reach us, to make Himself one with us, and to make us one with Him. According to 1 Corinthians 6:17, he who is joined to the Lord is even one spirit with Him. How great this is!

It is not sufficient to be impressed with this matter in a doctrinal way. We need to pray, "Lord, show me the vision of the all-inclusive Spirit. Show me that today You are the all-inclusive Spirit compounded of divinity, humanity, incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Lord, I need to see that Your uplifted humanity, Your all-inclusive, wonderful and mysterious death, and Your indescribable resurrection have been compounded into the Spirit." If we see this vision, we shall pray, "Lord, I thank You that the Spirit is now the compound Spirit. This all-inclusive life-giving Spirit is the Triune God Himself reaching me, anointing me, making Himself one with me, and making me one with Him."

This all-inclusive Spirit is greater than the Passover lamb, the manna, and the living water. In fact, this Spirit is greater than everything else. Nothing can surpass the Triune God undergoing a long process to become the life-giving Spirit. Now not only do we enjoy this Spirit—we become one with Him!

In this universe many of the angels rebelled against God, and mankind became fallen. Now the earth is in a state of rebellion against God. It seems that it is not possible for God to find a dwelling place anywhere on earth. But He does have a number of His chosen people to become His dwelling place. Therefore, He would come to them, He would make Himself one with them, and make them one with Him. He would even make them His dwelling place by entering into them and dwelling among them. Furthermore, they can serve Him, commune with Him, be one with Him, and abide with Him. This is real sanctification. This is to sanctify a people to be God's dwelling place on earth. These people are priests serving God, contacting God, communing with God, and even being one with God.

God could not have such a dwelling place in Egypt or in the wilderness on the way to Mount Sinai. Rather, He had to bring the people into His presence at Mount Sinai and show them the heavenly revelation concerning the tabernacle with its furniture and utensils, the sanctification of the priests, and the anointing oil. The ointment used to anoint the tabernacle and the priests was a symbol of the Triune God Himself who, after being processed, has become the compound ointment to reach His chosen and redeemed people.

After the record concerning the ointment in Exodus 30, we have a description of the incense. The ointment reveals how God comes to reach us in Christ and with Christ. The incense signifies how we go back to God in Christ and with Christ. Therefore, here we have God coming to us in Christ and with Christ and our going back to Him in Christ and with Christ. This corresponds to the revelation in the Gospel of John. In chapters one through thirteen of John we have the coming of God in Christ and with Christ to reach us.

Then, especially in chapters fourteen through seventeen, we have the Lord Jesus showing us the way for us to go back to God in Christ and with Christ. First God came to us in Christ and with Christ, and now we go back to Him in Christ and with Christ. What a marvelous divine traffic! We all need to learn to partake of the anointing and to offer Christ to God at the incense altar as sweet incense for God's satisfaction.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-EIGHT

THE HOLY ANOINTING OIL

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:22-33; Psalm 133:2; 1 John 2:20, 27

In this message we shall consider the details related to the holy anointing oil in 30:22-33.

ITS MATERIALS

Four Kinds of Spices

The materials of the holy anointing oil are of two categories and are five in number. The first category includes the four spices: myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. The second category consists of one item—olive oil.

Flowing Myrrh

Flowing myrrh, smelling sweet but tasting bitter, signifies the precious death of Christ. In the Bible myrrh is used mostly for burial. Hence, myrrh is related to death. According to John 19, when Nicodemus and others were preparing to bury the body of the Lord Jesus, they used myrrh.

Myrrh comes from an aromatic tree. This tree drops its juice either as a result of being cut or through some kind of natural opening or incision. In ancient times, this juice was used to reduce the suffering of death. When the Lord Jesus was being crucified, He was offered wine mixed with myrrh to reduce His pain. However, He refused to take it. No doubt, the myrrh in Exodus 30 is a symbol of the Lord's death.

The aromatic liquid of myrrh not only reduces pain, but also can be used for healing the body when it gives off the wrong kind of secretion. Myrrh can correct this condition in the human body. In our human life there are many wrong secretions, but the Lord's death on the cross corrects this problem.

Fragrant Cinnamon

Fragrant cinnamon signifies the sweetness and effectiveness of Christ's death. Cinnamon not only has a distinctive flavor, but it can also be used to stimulate the heart. Cinnamon may be prescribed to stimulate a weak heart.

Myrrh signifies the precious death of Christ, and cinnamon signifies the effectiveness of His death. If we apply the Lord's death to our situation, it will reduce our pain, correct the wrong secretions, and eventually stimulate us and make us happy and joyful. I can testify of this from my experience. There are times that negative things in my environment would cause me to be low. But when I apply the Lord's death, I am corrected, adjusted, stimulated, and stirred up.

Fragrant Calamus

The calamus in Exodus 30 is a reed. The Hebrew root of the word myrrh means flowing, and the root for calamus means standing up. Calamus grows in a marsh or muddy place. But even though it grows in a marsh, it is able to shoot up into the air. According to the sequence of the spices, this calamus signifies the rising up of the Lord Jesus from the place of death. The Lord was put into a marsh, into a death situation, but in resurrection He rose up and stood up. Calamus, therefore, signifies the precious resurrection of Christ.

Cassia

The fourth spice, cassia, signifies the power of Christ's resurrection. Cassia and cinnamon belong to the same

family. Cinnamon is from the inner part of the bark, and cassia, from the outer part of the bark. Both cinnamon and cassia are sweet and fragrant. Furthermore, the plants from which they are derived often live and grow in places where other plants cannot grow.

In ancient times cassia was used as a repellent to drive away insects and snakes. Cassia thus signifies the power, the effectiveness, of Christ's resurrection. Christ's resurrection can withstand any kind of environment, and His resurrection certainly is a repellent. It repels all evil "insects" and especially the old serpent, the Devil.

Myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia are all of one category of materials, the category of the spices. Now we come to the olive oil, the only item in the second category.

Olive Oil

In the Bible olive oil signifies the Spirit of God. Olive oil is produced by the pressing of olives. The olive oil signifies the Spirit of God, through the pressure of Christ's death, flowing out.

The olive oil is the base of the ointment; it is the basic element compounded with the spices. The four spices are compounded into the olive oil to make the ointment. This indicates that the Spirit of God, signified by the olive oil, is no longer merely oil, but now it is oil compounded with certain ingredients. Regarding this, John 7:39 says, "But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." This means that before the Lord's glorification, the compound Spirit was not yet. It was after Christ's resurrection that the compounding, or the blending, of such a Spirit was completed.

The Four Spices Signifying Humanity in God's Creation, and the Oil Signifying Divinity in the Godhead

The four spices signify humanity in God's creation. In the Bible the number four signifies God's creation. We have

the four living creatures and the four corners of the earth. Furthermore, the four spices themselves are elements of God's creation. These spices signify the humanity of the Lord Jesus. In His incarnation the Lord Jesus was both God and man. The four spices signify the humanity of the Lord Jesus in God's creation. Of course, some Christians do not like to hear the word creation used in the case of the Lord Jesus. This is due to the heretical teaching of Arius who taught that Christ was merely a created being, and that He was not the eternal God.

The oil signifies divinity in the Godhead. We have seen that the number four signifies the creatures. The number one signifies God, the unique Creator.

In this compound ointment we have the numbers four and one, with the number four blended with the number one. This signifies humanity blended, mingled, with divinity. Concerning the compound ointment, we cannot avoid using the word "mingled." The words "compounded" and "blended" actually mean mingled. The four spices were mingled with the oil.

The mingling of the spices with the oil can be compared to the mingling of fine flour and oil in the meal offering (Lev. 2). For the meal offering, the dough is produced by blending, mingling, fine flour with oil. This also signifies that in the one Person of Christ we have both divinity and humanity.

I have read some books which say that the Gospel of John was written in an attempt to reconcile the different parties who were debating concerning the Person of Christ. Some said that Christ was God, and others that He was merely a man. Others said that Christ was not God, but was the Word, the Logos, created by God. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This makes it clear that the Word, which is Christ, is God. Furthermore, John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh." The very Word who is God became flesh. Actually, I do not like to use the words "conciliate" or "reconcile" with respect to John's writings. The writings of

the Apostle John actually are not conciliatory; rather, they are all-inclusive. Christ is the all-inclusive One. If He were only God and not man, or were merely man and not God, He would not be all-inclusive. Praise the Lord that Christ is God as well as man, man as well as God! Because Christ is all-inclusive, the writings of John are also all-inclusive.

The compound ointment likewise is all-inclusive. Can you see the all-inclusiveness of this compound? In this all-inclusive compound we have olive oil, myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. This indicates that in the compound Spirit typified by the ointment we can see divinity, humanity, the all-inclusive death of Christ, and the effectiveness of Christ's death. Furthermore, we can see the precious resurrection of Christ and the power of His resurrection. All these elements are included in the Spirit of Christ.

As used in the New Testament, the Spirit of Christ is an all-inclusive expression. Philippians 1:19 speaks of the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. However, there is no reference to the bountiful supply of the Spirit of God. In Genesis 1 we read about the Spirit of God. But in the Epistles of Paul we have the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of Jesus Christ as well.

May we all be deeply impressed that today the all-inclusive Spirit, as the compound ointment, is nothing less than the Triune God processed to become the all-inclusive Spirit to reach us. Some Christians consider this understanding of the Spirit heretical. However, the judgment made today is not final. According to the Bible, this is the day of man, and man's day is not final. Let us wait until the day of the Lord, and let Him judge. I have the assurance that the Lord will say that this understanding of the all-inclusive Spirit is right.

In the Old Testament we have the olive oil signifying the Spirit of God. Eventually, after the tabernacle was built up and the priests were made ready, there was not only the olive oil, but the compound ointment. This indicates that we have not only the Spirit of God, but also the Spirit of Christ. No doubt, Mr. C. A. Coates has seen something here. In his

writing on the ointment in Exodus 30 he speaks of the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of another Man.

As believers, we have been anointed with the compound ointment, with the all-inclusive Spirit. Psalm 133:2 describes how the anointing oil flowed down from Aaron's head to his beard and then to the skirts of his garments. This signifies that the whole Body is anointed with the Spirit.

Then in 1 John 2:20 and 27 we are told that we have received an anointing and that this anointing teaches us all things. First John 2:20 says, "And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know." Verse 27 says, "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him."

To receive the anointing is to receive the divine painting. Painters know that it is good to apply more than one coat of paint. In painting certain things it is good to have layer upon layer of paint. In our experience of the Spirit, we need to be "painted" again and again. Eventually, we may receive hundreds of layers. Praise the Lord that He is daily painting us by His anointing!

As the anointing is being applied to us, it teaches us. Today God mainly teaches us silently by the anointing. For example, you may ask the Lord about something, and He will teach you concerning it by anointing you. If we would say, "Lord, please tell me what color You want," the Lord may not say anything. Instead, He may pick up His "brush" and paint you a particular color, perhaps green. Instead of speaking to you about the color green, He tells you that He wants green by painting you green. This is the Lord's way to teach us.

According to 1 John 2, the anointing within us teaches us in everything. Many times we know that we are wrong. No one needs to tell us this. But the moving of the anointing within us teaches us that we are wrong. I believe that we all

have had some amount of experience of this teaching of the anointing.

ITS MEASURE

Five Hundred Shekels of Myrrh

The five hundred shekels of myrrh signify one unit of full responsibility. The number five in the Bible symbolizes responsibility. We may use the human hand as an illustration. On our hand we have four fingers and a thumb. Because of this, the hand can do many things and bear responsibility.

Five is composed of four plus one. Once again, the number four signifies the creature, and the number one signifies God. Therefore, the number five signifies God added to man to give us the ability to bear responsibility.

In the Bible there are clear illustrations of the fact that five is the number of responsibility. The Ten Commandments were written on two tablets, five on each tablet. Also, the ten virgins in Matthew 25 are divided into two groups, five in each. In the cases both of the commandments and of the virgins, the number five signifies responsibility. The five hundred shekels of myrrh is composed of one hundred times five, signifying one unit of full responsibility.

Two Hundred Fifty Shekels of Cinnamon and Two Hundred Fifty Shekels of Calamus

According to 30:23, the measurement of the cinnamon was "half as much, two hundred and fifty, and of fragrant calamus two hundred and fifty." Two hundred fifty shekels signify a half unit of full responsibility. The two hundred fifty shekels of cinnamon and the two hundred fifty shekels of calamus together form one unit and signify that the Second of the divine Trinity was split through death. It is no accident that with the spices there are three complete units and that the middle unit is divided in half. This was written by God with the view of signifying how the Son of God would be cut on the cross.

Five Hundred Shekels of Cassia

Verse 24 says, "And of cassia five hundred, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin." The five hundred shekels of cassia also signify one unit of full responsibility.

Three Units of Five Hundred Shekels Each in Four Spices

The three units of five hundred shekels each, in four spices, signify the Triune God in resurrection mingled with humanity to bear the full responsibility. I can testify that in the ministry of the Word the Triune God in resurrection mingles Himself with the speaker to bear the responsibility to minister the Word to His people.

ITS FUNCTION

The function of the holy anointing oil as a compound ointment is to sanctify the things of God and men of God, separating them from anything common and making them most holy for God's service. According to 30:26-28, the anointing oil was used to anoint the tent of meeting, the ark of the testimony, the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its base. Verse 30 says, "And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and you shall sanctify them to serve as priests to Me." Whoever or whatever was anointed was sanctified, set apart. The ointment became a mark separating them from anything common.

Verse 29 says, "And you shall sanctify them, and they shall be most holy; whatever touches them shall be holy." As soon as the anointing oil was applied to something, that thing became most holy. Furthermore, whoever touched it became holy.

Let us suppose that we paint a chair green with a paint that never dries. Anyone who touches this chair will get paint on him. We may say that we have been painted with a paint, a divine paint, that never dries. Anyone who touches

us, therefore, should be affected by us. All Christians should be influential in this way; there should be something contagious about them. If you touch us, you should get painted. Sometimes others have said of me, "Don't go to contact that man! If you have contact with him, you will be influenced by him." It is my job as a minister of Christ to influence others. If I am not influential in this way, I am useless as a minister of the Word. A useful minister of the Word always has something contagious about him.

FOR ALL GENERATIONS

Exodus 30:31 says, "And you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations." This indicates that God's principle or policy in His divine economy does not change. The ordinance concerning the anointing will remain forever. Even in eternity God will continually be anointing us.

NOT TO BE POURED UPON THE FLESH OF MAN

Verse 32 says that the holy anointing oil was "not to be poured upon the flesh of man." In the Bible the flesh of man denotes fallen man in the old creation. As believers in Christ, we have all been regenerated, and in regeneration we have become a new creation. On the one hand, we have a regenerated spirit; on the other hand, we still have the old, fallen flesh. The command not to pour the anointing oil upon the flesh of man indicates that the anointing is not to be applied to men of the old creation. Whenever we live and walk according to the flesh, we are through with the Spirit of Christ. If we would partake of this Spirit and enjoy the all-inclusive Spirit, we must remain in our spirit.

The Spirit of Christ cannot be poured upon our old nature, our old man. Our flesh does not have the position to participate in this compound ointment. Whenever you lose your temper, you are in the flesh and cannot enjoy the Spirit of Christ. But whenever you turn to your spirit, immediately in your spirit you sense the anointing. You realize that you

are being painted with the Spirit of Christ, for you are in the new creation, not in your old nature.

Exodus 30:33 indicates that the ointment was not to be put upon a stranger. The word "stranger" implies a comparison between those who are priests and those who are not. The priests serving in the presence of God do not act according to the old nature. Instead, they live according to their new nature and thereby enjoy the anointing. However, in the sight of God all other people are strangers. We may say that the flesh, the old man, is a stranger. We Christians today are not strangers; we are priests. But unbelievers are strangers. When we act and behave according to our flesh, we are in the old creation and are regarded as strangers in the sight of God. When we are such strangers, we cannot enjoy the Spirit of Christ. We must remain in our spirit, and we must live, act, speak, and contact others in the spirit. Then we shall be in the new creation as priests serving God and participating in the Spirit of Christ.

If we would enjoy the Spirit of Christ, we must be priests in the new creation. Do not be in the flesh, lest you be a stranger in the sight of God. If we are a stranger, then we shall not have any share in the all-inclusive Spirit.

NOT TO MAKE ANY LIKE IT IN ITS PROPORTIONS

The middle part of verse 32 says, "Neither shall you make any like it in its proportions." Furthermore, verse 33 goes on to say, "Whoever compounds any like it, or who puts any of it upon a stranger, he shall be cut off from his people." The command not to make anything like the anointing oil in its proportions means that we should not imitate it. However, among Christians today there is a great deal of imitation. Therefore, we need to discern what is truly of the Spirit and what is an imitation. For example, a person's humility may not be of the Spirit. In China I saw some disciples of Confucius who were much more humble than many Christian teachers. But that humility had nothing to do with the Spirit of Christ. Because of the influence of certain teachings, many Christians try to act humble.

This humility, however, is not of the Spirit of Christ. Rather, it is an imitation.

Do not imitate any spiritual virtue by your own effort. To do this is to make something like the ointment. In the sight of God this is an abomination.

Because Christianity has been in existence for centuries, a great many people, including unbelievers, have been influenced by Bible teachings. Under the influence of these teachings, many try to be honest, loving, and faithful. All this is an imitation of the Spirit. To try to behave in this way is to make an imitation of the genuine ointment. Our honesty must come out of the Spirit of Christ. Likewise, our love, humility, patience, and kindness—indeed, every virtue—must be a product of the indwelling Spirit. Otherwise, we are imitating the ointment; we are making something false in the same way. Therefore, we should not act in our old nature and we should not imitate anything that is of the Spirit of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE

THE HOLY ANOINTING OIL

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:22-33

THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

When I was young, I heard many messages from the book of Exodus. I often heard about the Passover lamb and the manna, and I heard a few messages about the living water. However, I did not hear anything concerning the compound spirit.

The children of Israel stayed at Mount Sinai to receive the law and the ordinances and then to receive the revelation of the tabernacle. Some teachers pointed out that the law was given as God's test of His people. God did not intend that the children of Israel would keep the law. But because of their ignorance, it was necessary for Him to give it to them. Therefore, God tested the children of Israel by giving them the law. Immediately after the decree of the law, God gave Moses the revelation of the tabernacle. These teachers pointed out that this revelation is a matter of grace. John 1:17 says, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and reality came through Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ is the reality of the tabernacle. When this tabernacle came, grace came. Some teachers had light concerning this; however, their experience was limited. Because they were short of experience, they could not properly understand the compound ointment in Exodus 30.

Experience is not necessary simply to teach the tabernacle doctrinally as a type of Christ. As long as we have objective light, we can teach this type in a doctrinal way. But to touch the real significance of the compound ointment in our

teaching requires spiritual experience. Because the teachers were lacking in experience, they did not know the compound ointment.

Bible teachers have pointed out that the oil in Exodus 30, as elsewhere in the Old Testament, typifies the Spirit of God. Some have even taught that the oil poured by Jacob on the stone in Genesis 28 signifies the Spirit poured upon God's chosen people. But although these teachers of the Bible have seen the significance of the oil, they have not seen the significance of the ointment.

A COMPOUND OINTMENT

The ointment in Exodus 30 is a compound. However, in itself, oil is not a compound, but rather a single element without any other ingredients. The ointment was a compound formed by blending four spices with olive oil. This compound ointment can be compared to paint. Paint is a compound containing more than one element. The same is true of the holy anointing oil in Exodus 30.

C. A. Coates has much to say concerning the Spirit in his writing on Exodus 30. He devotes nearly three pages to the ointment and the incense. In this section of his writing he uses the terms the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit twenty-one times. He does not speak of the Spirit as the Holy Spirit or as the Spirit of God. Once he speaks of the Spirit of the Man of God's pleasure. He indicates that the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of the Man of God's pleasure. Coates also speaks of the Spirit of another Man, even the Man sitting on the right hand of God.

C. A. Coates says that the four spices "represent all those features of grace which were so perfectly blended and harmonized in the Spirit of Christ." This indicates that Coates realized something concerning the blending of the spices with the olive oil. However, he does not say what are the features of grace that are blended in the Spirit of Christ. Regarding this, he did not have light. He did not see that myrrh signifies the all-inclusive death of Christ and that cinnamon signifies the effectiveness of Christ's death. Furthermore, he did not

see that calamus, rising up out of a muddy situation and shooting into the air, is a symbol of Christ's resurrection, and that cassia, a substance that repels insects and snakes, typifies the power of Christ's resurrection.

The sequence of the four spices is significant: myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. Furthermore, here we can see three complete units of five hundred shekels. There were five hundred shekels of myrrh and five hundred shekels of cassia. Here we have two complete units. But there were two hundred fifty shekels each of cinnamon and calamus. Together these half units make another complete unit. It is significant that it is the second unit that is split into two parts. This is at least an indication that the Second of the Trinity was split into two parts on the cross. Therefore, with the ingredients of the holy anointing oil and the measurements, we have symbols of the death and resurrection of Christ. Moreover, in the spices we also see the effectiveness of Christ's death and the power of His resurrection.

THE SPIRIT AND THE ANOINTING

John 7:39 says, "But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." This means that before the Lord's glorification the compound Spirit was not yet. The Spirit of God was present in Genesis 1, and the Holy Spirit was involved with the birth of Christ. Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit. But, as Andrew Murray makes clear in the fifth chapter of *The Spirit of Christ,* the term "the Holy Spirit" is not used in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit is first mentioned at the beginning of the New Testament when Christ was conceived. For Christ to be conceived of the Holy Spirit means that His humanity, as part of God's creation, is holy. The conceiving Spirit in Greek is called the Spirit, the Holy. But although the Holy Spirit was present at the conception of the Lord Jesus, the Spirit was not yet until Christ was resurrected, glorified. It was then that the compounding of the Spirit was completed.

In the writings of John, the term the Holy Spirit is seldom used. However, especially in the book of Revelation, John often speaks of the Spirit. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7). This statement is repeated throughout chapters two and three. Then Revelation 14:13 says, "Yes, says the Spirit…" and Revelation 22:17 says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come!"

In his first Epistle, John emphasizes the anointing. First John 2:20 says, "And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know." In 1 John 2:27 he says, "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him." No doubt, when John was writing these verses, he had in mind the picture of the holy anointing oil in Exodus 30.

Do you know what the anointing is? The anointing is the moving, the "painting," of the compound Spirit. We all have this anointing, this painting, within us. Furthermore, the anointing we have received teaches us.

We worship the Lord that, over the years, He has made us clear concerning the compound Spirit. In the past, many Christians experienced only the Passover, the manna, and, at most, the living water. Their Christian experience did not come to the point of partaking of the compound Spirit.

THE TABERNACLE AND THE PRIESTHOOD

Why have so many Christians failed to experience the compound ointment? The reason is that this Spirit is for the building up of a spiritual house and for the holy priesthood. In 1 Peter 2 we have the spiritual house and also the holy priesthood. Likewise, in the book of Exodus, we have the tabernacle and the priesthood. In chapters twenty-five through twenty-seven the tabernacle is revealed. This corresponds to the spiritual house in 1 Peter 2. Then in chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine we have the priesthood. Therefore, at

Mount Sinai two things were made ready—the tabernacle and the priesthood. After the revelation of the tabernacle and the priesthood, we have the description of the compound ointment. This indicates that the ointment is for God's dwelling place and for the priesthood.

If we do not care for God's building and His priesthood, we cannot experience the compound Spirit. Because of the lack of the building up of the spiritual house, Christians throughout the centuries have not been able to see the matter of the compound Spirit. Furthermore, there has been a lack of the priesthood. The ointment was not merely for the anointing of individual priests. According to Exodus, Aaron and his sons were to be anointed. This indicates that the anointing was for the priesthood, for a body of priests. In the New Testament two different Greek words are translated priesthood. One of these words means the priestly office; the other means a body or group of priests. In Exodus we have not only the office of a priest; we also have the corporate body of priests, the priesthood. If we would have the anointing of the compound Spirit, we must have God's dwelling place and a corporate priesthood.

THE SPIRIT COMPOUNDED THROUGH CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

The five elements of the anointing oil—the four spices and the olive oil—all had to pass through a process that involved either pressure or cutting. For instance, if olives are not put into the press, they cannot give forth olive oil. Likewise, in order to have myrrh and cinnamon, some kind of incision must be made on the bark of a tree. Someone has said that when a tree flows out the resin of myrrh, this resin has the appearance of tears. This points to an experience of suffering. The blood and tears that issue from our body also are signs of suffering. When the myrrh tree flows out its resin, we may say that it is shedding tears.

As we pointed out in a previous message, cinnamon comes from the inner part of the bark of a tree, and cassia

comes from the outer part of the bark. Cinnamon can be used to stimulate the heart, and cassia, to repel insects and snakes.

All the spices were prepared for use through suffering. This indicates that the Spirit of God could become the Spirit of Christ as the compound ointment only through Christ's sufferings. Actually, the compounding is the suffering. It was through the sufferings of Christ that the spices were blended with the oil to form the compound Spirit.

The Lord Jesus suffered death throughout His life, not only during the six hours He was on the cross. As soon as He was born, He began to suffer. This suffering is signified by myrrh. In the past we have pointed out that the Lord Jesus lived a crucified life. A crucified life is a life of suffering. The Lord Jesus was crucified continually. He was crucified by His mother, by His brothers in the flesh, and by His disciples. Daily He lived a life of crucifixion. This is the experience of myrrh dropping as tears from cuts made in the tree.

After the Lord Jesus was born, the magi expressed their appreciation of Him by offering Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. At the time of His death, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea also showed their appreciation of the Lord by putting myrrh upon His body when they buried Him. Therefore, at the beginning of the Lord's life on earth and at the end, at His birth and at His death, there was myrrh. This indicates that the Lord's life from birth to death was a life of suffering, a life of tears. He lived a crucified life, a life of myrrh.

THE EXTRACT OF CHRIST'S DEATH

We need to learn how to apply the myrrh in our experience. Where is the death of Christ today, and how can we apply it? The death of Christ is in the Spirit. In our language the word "spirit" in a particular usage can mean the essence of a substance as extracted in liquid form, especially by distillation. Therefore, the extract of a particular substance is the spirit of that substance. For example,

alcoholic beverages made from extracts of grains are known as spirits. Likewise, the aloes used with myrrh to anoint the body of the Lord Jesus for burial may also be regarded as a kind of spirit. When a plant, a grain, or some other substance is subjected to pressure, we can extract from it the spirit of that substance. We can apply this principle to the Lord's death and ask this question: What is the extract of the death of Christ? The answer is that the extract of the Lord's death is an element in the Spirit of Christ. The real essence or element of any substance is its spirit. For example, when we drink tea, we actually drink the spirit, the extract, of the tea. The effectiveness of the tea is in this extract or spirit. In like manner, the effectiveness of Christ's death is one of the elements of the compound Spirit.

In speaking concerning the subjective experience of the cross of Christ, Jessie Penn-Lewis emphasized the Spirit. In her writings she has much to say about the Spirit. A. B. Simpson also saw something regarding the subjective aspect of the death of Christ. However, with respect to the subjective experience of the cross, he did not emphasize the Spirit as much as Jessie Penn-Lewis did. A. B. Simpson's presentation is good doctrinally, but it is not so helpful experientially. Concerning our identification with Christ in His death, A. B. Simpson emphasized the matter of reckoning. He even wrote a hymn on the subject of reckoning.

Brother Watchman Nee pointed out that if we would experience the death of Christ, we need the Spirit. He also said that the fact revealed in Romans 6 that our old man has been crucified with Christ can only be experienced through the Spirit in Romans 8. In other words, apart from the Spirit we cannot experience the death of Christ. The fact of our identification with Christ in His death is in Romans 6, but the experience of this is in Romans 8.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

In Romans 8 there are at least four terms used to describe the Spirit: the Spirit of life, the Spirit of God, the

Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from among the dead. The aspect of the Spirit in Romans 8 that is most crucial is not the Spirit of God, the Spirit of life, or the Spirit of the One who raised Christ from among the dead. The crucial aspect in this chapter is the Spirit of Christ.

The title Christ includes incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension. Christ is the anointed One. As God's anointed One, Christ passed through birth, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Today the Spirit of Christ contains the extract of His death, resurrection, and ascension. It even contains the extract of His birth and human living. Therefore, the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit, the extract, of Christ's birth, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension. We have seen that the spirit of a substance is the extract of that substance. Applying this principle to the Spirit of Christ, we may say that the extracts of Christ's birth, living, death, resurrection, and ascension are now all elements of the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, in this one Spirit we have the effectiveness of Christ's birth, living, death, resurrection, and ascension.

It is only through experience that we can have this understanding of the Spirit of Christ. When we walk according to spirit, we have Christ's incarnation and His human living. We do not have merely an imitation of the way Christ lived. Furthermore, we also have His death, resurrection, and ascension.

CONTACTING THE SPIRIT

Apart from the Spirit of Christ, we cannot have the experience of being seated with Christ in the heavens (Eph. 2:5-6). Some Bible teachers present Ephesians 2:5-6 merely as a doctrine. They claim that being seated with Christ in the heavenlies is a positional matter and that we should simply take the fact by faith. However, when we believe as a matter of position that we are seated with Christ in the heavens, nothing happens. This is not the way Paul teaches. According to Paul's teaching, the extract of Christ's

ascension is included in the Spirit of Christ. In the Spirit we have the experience of sitting with Christ in the heavens.

Most of today's Christians are lacking in spiritual experience. In His recovery, however, the Lord is going on. We cannot deny that, by His mercy and grace, we have learned much concerning the Spirit throughout the years. We received light doctrinally from other Bible teachers. From experience we have learned that reckoning and taking our position by faith do not work. Some teachers of the Word claim that what we need to do is take the accomplished facts by faith. According to this understanding, we should not do anything except believe the facts. I practiced this, but it did not work. The more I tried to believe the facts, the more dead I became. I did not experience any of the divine stimulation. However, I can testify that when I prayed and contacted the Spirit, I did experience the Lord's stimulation.

In the past centuries a number of saints experienced the Spirit, even though they had not been enlightened concerning the compound Spirit. When they prayed, they were stimulated by the Spirit and spontaneously experienced the element of the death of Christ included in the Spirit. They experienced this because they prayed themselves into the Spirit. Because they were in the Spirit, they experienced the extract of the death of Christ contained in the Spirit of Christ. There was no need for them to reckon themselves dead, and it was not necessary for them to take the position by faith. Simply by being in the Spirit, they experienced the effectiveness of the death of Christ.

NO IMITATION OF THE SPIRIT

Today we also need to experience the effectiveness of Christ's death in a practical way. When we are in the Spirit experiencing the extract of Christ's death, our flesh, our temper, and our natural disposition are put to death. Furthermore, our natural goodness is terminated. We even come to hate this natural goodness because we realize that it is something derived from our natural birth. After praying

and contacting the Spirit, we realize that God does not want anything that has its source in our natural life. Natural goodness is an imitation of the Spirit.

When I was in China, I was bothered by the fact that the behavior of many disciples of Confucius was better than that of many Christians. These disciples of Confucius were patient, kind, sympathetic, and helpful. However, all that good behavior was natural. It had nothing to do with the Spirit.

The majority of Christians live a life of imitation. Unbelievers can also be kind, humble, patient, and helpful. This certainly has nothing to do with the Spirit. If we Christians live like this, we are making an imitation of the ointment, something that is strictly forbidden in Exodus 30. Nevertheless, in many religious gatherings, Christians are taught and encouraged to live a life of imitation. They are urged to be kind, loving, and honest, all without Christ and without the Spirit. This is an abomination in the sight of God. It is possible that we may practice the same thing. If we do not see the matter of the compound Spirit, in our daily living we may be the same as those who imitate the Spirit.

The disciples of Confucius practice his ethical teachings. They claim that they have been taught by Confucius and they respect him. This is an aspect of Oriental culture. But in the West something very similar is practiced under the name of Christ and in the atmosphere of Bible teaching. In both cases, people behave in a natural way. The culture of the West has been influenced by the Bible, in much the same way as the culture of China has been influenced by the ethical teachings of Confucius. This means that the teachings of Confucius exert a moral influence in China and that the teachings of the Bible exert a moral influence on western culture. If we live according to this influence, we shall have an imitation of the Spirit.

Actually, every kind of living that is according to ethics is artificial. People may act patient, but this patience is artificial. There are artificial flowers, and there are real

flowers. Because real flowers are organic, they live and grow. In these flowers, there is the element of life. Artificial flowers may have the same color, shape, and appearance as real flowers, but they do not contain the element of life. Certain Christians and certain disciples of Confucius may behave in a way that is humble, patient, and loving. Their humility, patience, and love outwardly may seem to be the same as the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5. However, the fruit of the Spirit is organic and full of life. But good natural behavior according to ethics is a dead work. It does not have anything of life. Those who live according to the ethics of Confucius have dead works. Then what about those Christians who imitate the Spirit by living according to their natural goodness? In their case also there is a kind of living that is artificial and lifeless, an imitation of the compound Spirit.

We should not take this word concerning the compound Spirit merely as a doctrine. Rather, we need to understand it in an experiential way and learn to apply it in a practical way.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY

THE COMPOUNDED OINTMENT— THE COMPOUND SPIRIT

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:23-30; Gen. 1:2; Judg. 3:10; Luke 1:35; John 7:39; Rom. 8:2, 9; Acts 5:9; 16:6-7; John 14:17; Phil. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 10:29; Rev. 1:4; Rom. 8:16; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 2:7; 22:17

The holy anointing oil described in 30:23-30 is a compound ointment. In the Scriptures the Spirit of God is first typified by oil. This oil is one element, one entity, without any compounding, mingling, or blending. But in Exodus 30 the oil is compounded with four kinds of spices: myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. These four spices, precious and fragrant, were blended, mingled, compounded, with the oil. As a result, the oil becomes a compound ointment.

According to the Bible, these spices have much to do with the Lord Jesus. Both at His birth and at His burial, myrrh was used by those who gave honor to Him. In the Song of Songs certain spices have a spiritual significance either with respect to the Lord Himself or to the one seeking Him.

The record concerning the compound ointment in Exodus 30 is extremely significant. The Lord's charge to Moses to make the compound ointment is very important. This charge was given after both the tabernacle with all its furniture and utensils and the priesthood had been revealed. This means that before the description of the ointment we have two entities. The first is the tabernacle, God's dwelling place; the second is the priesthood, God's serving ones.

GOD'S DWELLING PLACE AND THE PRIESTHOOD

First Peter 2 speaks of both God's dwelling place and the priesthood. According to this chapter, God desires two things. First, the Lord Jesus is the living stone. As those who come to Him, we also are living stones, being built up a spiritual house and into a holy priesthood. Here we have the spiritual house, God's dwelling, and also the priesthood, a body of serving ones. Actually, these two entities, the spiritual house and the priesthood, are one entity in two aspects. On the one hand, we are God's dwelling place; on the other hand, we are God's priesthood. We are a house for God to dwell in, and we are the priesthood to serve God. God needs a dwelling place on earth for His expression. At the same time, He also needs a serving priesthood. God wants to express Himself, and He wants to be served. Therefore, He desires a spiritual house and a holy priesthood.

The revelation concerning the compound ointment was not given in chapter one of Exodus. It was not given even in chapter twenty-nine, but toward the end of chapter thirty, after God's dwelling place and the priesthood had been revealed. This indicates that the compound ointment is solely for the purpose of anointing God's dwelling place and His priesthood. According to 30:26-28, the ointment was used to anoint the tent of meeting, the ark, the table and its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering and its utensils, and the laver and its base. Furthermore, verse 30 says, "And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and you shall sanctify them to serve as priests to Me." These verses make it very clear that the compound ointment was strictly for the purpose of anointing the tabernacle and the priests.

THE ENJOYMENT OF THE LORD IN EXODUS

In the book of Exodus there is a great deal of enjoyment. For example, the Passover was an enjoyment for the children of Israel. It was a feast that eventually was made an ordinance. Every year the first of the feasts was the feast of the Passover. The focus of this feast is the lamb, which

typifies Christ as our Redeemer. This indicates that Christ is the initial enjoyment of God's chosen people. Even while the children of Israel were still in Egypt, they could have a good enjoyment of the Passover lamb. Not only did they apply the blood to the lintel of the door, but they ate the flesh of the lamb. Hence, that lamb was for their enjoyment.

After the children of Israel came into the wilderness, they began to enjoy the manna and the living water out of the cleft rock. The children of Israel, therefore, enjoyed at least three things—the Passover, the manna, and the living water. It is important for us to realize that they had all this enjoyment before the tabernacle and the priesthood were revealed. This means that even without the tabernacle and the priesthood, they could have the enjoyment of the lamb, the manna, and the living water.

If we are clear concerning the situation of the children of Israel, we shall be able to see where today's Christians stand. Where are most Christians: before the revelation of the tabernacle and the priesthood, or after? No doubt, the majority of Christians are before the revelation of the tabernacle and the priesthood. This means that the situation of today's Christians is one without God's dwelling and without God's priesthood. At best, most Christians enjoy the Passover lamb, the manna, and the living water. However, the number of those who enjoy the living water is actually very few. When I was young, I heard much talk about the Passover lamb and also about the manna, but I did not hear nearly as much concerning the living water out of the cleft rock.

We need to ask ourselves where we are with respect to the enjoyment of Christ. Do we have only the enjoyment that comes before the revelation of the tabernacle and the priesthood, that is, the enjoyment of the Lamb, the manna, and the water? Where are you concerning the enjoyment of Christ? Are you before the revelation of the tabernacle and the priesthood, or after? This question is extremely important. If in your enjoyment of Christ you are before the tabernacle and the priesthood, then you cannot have any

share in the compound ointment. This ointment can be enjoyed only after God's dwelling place and the body of serving ones have come into existence. It is not for God's chosen people to enjoy apart from God's dwelling and His priesthood.

When asked whether your enjoyment of Christ is before or after the tabernacle and the priesthood, you may find it difficult to answer. You may hesitate, not knowing whether to say yes or no. However, I have the assurance that the vast majority of us have had at least some experience of the compound ointment. What we have enjoyed in our experience is not only the oil but the ointment.

Whereas the oil is simple, containing just one element, the ointment is rich. As we have pointed out again and again, it is a compound produced by blending four spices with olive oil. It is extremely significant that in Exodus 30 we have a record of the divine revelation concerning this compound ointment. The elements and the quantity of these spices are also significant. Although there are four kinds of spices, there are actually only three complete units of five-hundred shekels each.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUMBERS THREE AND FIVE

In the record concerning the compound ointment, we have the numbers three and five. In the Bible, when the numbers three and five are put together, this combination is related to God's building. God's first building was the ark of Noah. In the description of the ark there are multiples of the numbers three and five: "The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits" (Gen. 6:15). Furthermore, the ark was to be made "with lower, second, and third stories" (Gen. 6:16). God's second building was the tabernacle. The tabernacle was of three sections: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. With the tabernacle, the number five occurs frequently. For example, the tabernacle was made with ten curtains of fine linen. According to

Exodus 26:3, five curtains were joined to one another, and the other five curtains were also to be joined to one another. Furthermore, the curtains in the outer court were squares each measuring five cubits by five cubits. Also, the altar of burnt offering was five cubits in length and width, and three cubits in height. Therefore, with God's second building we have the numbers three and five.

In the Bible the number three signifies the Triune God in resurrection. Resurrection, as we know, was on the third day. Therefore, the Triune God and resurrection are both signified by the number three. As we have mentioned several times, in the Bible the number five, formed of four plus one, signifies responsibility. Therefore, the numbers three and five together signify the Triune God in resurrection bearing responsibility for His people. This is for the building.

DECIPHERING THE WORD

Some may complain that to say that the numbers three and five signify the Triune God in resurrection bearing responsibility for His people and that these numbers are related to God's building is too much allegorization of the Word. However, what they regard as allegorization is simply recognizing what is revealed in the Bible. We may compare this allegorization to reading and pronouncing a word. Suppose the word "availability" is spelled out like this: a-v-a-i-l-a-b-i-l-i-t-y. As we read this word, we need to pronounce it correctly and know its meaning. This process is comparable to what we do when we allegorize the Scriptures in the proper way. The Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul both allegorized the Bible, for they recognized the significance of the spiritual alphabet contained in the Word. We may regard the four spices in Exodus 30 as letters of the spiritual alphabet. Furthermore, the measurements of the spices are also letters in this alphabet. The way to read and understand these letters is to allegorize them.

When I was a young man, I worked for a corporation that daily received telegrams. Unlike today, fifty years ago

international trade depended upon communication by way of telegram. Sometimes a telegram contained just one word written in ciphers. At first, I was not able to decipher this kind of telegram. Eventually, by studying a code book that explained the meaning of the different ciphers, I was able to read a message written in ciphers. Many times two letters represented a long sentence. I came to understand that, when deciphered, a code word of ten letters could actually be a long message.

The best way to study the Bible is to learn to decipher it. To decipher the Bible simply means to untie the Lord's word. If we do not know how to decipher the Bible, we shall be like someone reading a telegram written in ciphers who does not know how to decode what he is reading. For many Christians today, the Bible is like a word written in ciphers that they are not able to decipher. Such is the superficial situation among Christians concerning God's holy revelation. Virtually every chapter of the Word contains something that they cannot decipher. For example, 1 Peter 1:2 says that we have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through the sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ. What does all this mean? Someone may have been a Christian for over forty years and yet not be able to understand this verse.

SEEING THE REVELATION CONCERNING THE COMPOUND OINTMENT

I am deeply concerned about the situation among Christians today. On the one hand, daily I am happy in the Lord. On the other hand, when I consider the situation of the believers and pray about it, I am very sad. Often I am sad even when I consider the situation of all the saints in the local churches. Not many of the saints have truly been brought into the depths of God's revelation. Rather, many have been drugged and are in a spiritual stupor. Because they are in such a stupor, they are satisfied with their condition, even though that condition is far from satisfactory.

Moreover, those who are satisfied with their condition are not so seeking after the Lord. Oh, we need to treasure the Lord's word and appreciate it! In particular, we need to seek to touch the depths of the divine revelation concerning the compound ointment in Exodus 30.

For more than fifty years I have been reading books written by others to see how they interpret the type of the compound ointment. The Brethren teachers have paid more attention to this than other Bible teachers have. They have been almost the only ones to touch this matter. They all agreed that the oil signifies the Spirit of God. Some even related the compound ointment in Exodus 30 to John's word regarding the anointing in 1 John 2:20 and 27. However, although they had some light, they did not say definitely and in detail why the Spirit of God needed to be compounded.

First the Bible uses oil to typify the Spirit of God. But after the revelation of the tabernacle and the priesthood, God gave a formula for the compounding of oil and spices to make an ointment. Why did God require a compound, instead of pure oil with only its own element, after His dwelling place and His serving ones came into existence? Why is the compound ointment not revealed before this? Realizing that this is an important matter, I studied it for years. As a result, I was able to touch the depth of the truth in the Word concerning God's Spirit. By His mercy, I began to understand little by little the divine revelation regarding the compound Spirit.

Immediately after I was saved, I began to seek the experience of being dead to sin. I knew what Romans 6 said, and I wanted to be delivered from the bondage of the law of sin. I was told to reckon myself dead. But as I have pointed out elsewhere, this reckoning did not work in my experience. Gradually, through more experience, I learned that the energy, the strength, and the effectiveness of Christ's death dwell in the Spirit. Then I heard Brother Nee say that the subjective aspect of the death of Christ can be experienced only by the Spirit in Romans 8. His word conmfirmed what I

had discovered in my experience, and I was very happy to know that the subjective experience of Christ's death is possible only through the Spirit. I was helped to know that something is included in, or mingled with, the Spirit of God. I learned from experience that the death of Christ presented in Romans 6 is implied or mingled with the Spirit in Romans 8.

As I spent more time to study the Old Testament and the New Testament, one day the Lord showed me from Exodus 30 that here we have a compound of oil and spices and not merely oil as a single element. Then I began to study the spices. I knew from past study that in typology myrrh refers to the Lord's death. I went on to study the other spices and their measurements. I began to see that here we have three units of five hundred shekels and that the middle unit is divided into two parts. Then my eyes were opened to see that this signifies the Triune God. It was in this way that the revelation came concerning the compound ointment and the compound Spirit.

TITLES OF THE SPIRIT

In the next message we shall consider the different titles of the Spirit found in the Bible. One of these titles, mentioned in Hebrews 10:29, is the Spirit of grace. In the New Testament two matters are crucial: the sanctifying blood and the Spirit of grace. Actually, the New Testament is composed of the blood that sanctifies us and the Spirit of grace, the Spirit who supplies us with the Triune God.

In the Bible we have thirteen titles of the Spirit of God: the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9, 14; 1 Cor. 2:14); the Spirit of Jehovah, the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 5:9; 8:39; 2 Cor. 3:17); the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6; Rom. 15:13, 16); the Spirit of reality (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13); the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7); the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9); the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19): the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2); the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6); the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18); the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29); the seven Spirits (Rev. 1:4); and the Spirit (Rom. 8:16, 23, 26, 27; Gal. 3:14; 5:16-18, 22, 25; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 2:7; 14:13; 22:17). The Spirit of reality has all

the further elements promised in John 14:17; 15:26; and 16:13. The Spirit of Jesus has the elements of humanity, human living, and crucifixion. The Spirit of Christ has the element of resurrection. The Spirit of Jesus Christ has the bountiful supply of all the elements of humanity, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection. The Spirit of life has the riches of the divine life. The life-giving Spirit is for the impartation of the divine life. The Lord Spirit has the elements of ascension and lordship. The Spirit of grace is for supplying us with the divine riches as our enjoyment. The seven Spirits are for the sevenfold intensification. Finally, the Spirit includes all the elements of the foregoing titles. Hence, the Spirit is the all-inclusive Spirit. This means that the Spirit is the aggregate, the totality, of all the aspects of the Spirit of God.

We need to turn from the traditional Christian teaching concerning the Spirit of God and come back to the divine revelation in the pure Word of God. Why does the Bible give us the type of the compound ointment? Why does the Bible contain so many titles of the Spirit? In Genesis 1 the Spirit of God moved upon the surface of the waters. But in the last chapter of the Bible we are told, "The Spirit and the bride say…" (Rev. 22:17). Why does the divine revelation proceed from the Spirit of God in Genesis 1 to the Spirit in Revelation 22? We also need to know why, in between these titles of the Spirit, we have the Spirit of Jehovah, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of reality, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of life, the life-giving Spirit, the Lord Spirit, the Spirit of grace, and the seven Spirits. We should not take these matters in the holy Word for granted. We need to get into the depths of the divine revelation concerning the Spirit, we need to understand the type of the compound ointment, and we need to know how to apply in our experience the marvelous compound Spirit.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-ONE

THE COMPOUNDED OINTMENT— THE COMPOUND SPIRIT

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:23-30; Gen. 1:2; Judg. 3:10; Luke 1:35; John 7:39; Rom. 8:2, 9; Acts 5:9; 16:6-7; John 14:17; Phil. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 10:29; Rev. 1:4; Rom. 8:16; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 2:7; 22:17

In this message we shall consider the elements of the compound Spirit.

IN GOD'S CREATION—THE SPIRIT OF GOD WITH THE ELEMENT OF DIVINITY

In God's creation the Spirit of God was active: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2b). Anything substantial must have an element, and the Spirit of God is surely something substantial. What element is in the Spirit of God? The element of the Spirit of God is God, divinity.

As we have pointed out in a foregoing message, the spirit of a certain substance is the extract of that substance. For example, the spirit of a grape is not merely the grape itself; it is the extract of the grape. In the same principle, we may say that the Spirit of God is the extract of God. This Spirit has divinity, that is, the element of what God is. Because creation came into being by the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God has the element of divinity, then, according to Romans 1:20, creation manifests God's eternal power and divinity.

IN GOD'S RELATION WITH MAN— THE SPIRIT OF JEHOVAH WITH THE ELEMENT OF THE DIVINE TRINITY

After God created man, He came to contact him. Jehovah

is the name of God in relation to man. In Genesis 1 we have only the title God, but in Genesis 2 we also have another title, Jehovah, because in this chapter God begins to have contact with the man created by Him. Therefore, Jehovah is a title used for God's contact with man. It denotes God's relationship with man.

The name Jehovah is derived from, or is a form of, the verb to be. Exodus 3:14 says, "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Jehovah is the One who was, the One who is, and the One who is to be. "Was," "is," and "will be"—all these are forms of the verb to be. Actually, the verb to be can be applied only to God. He alone is, was, and will be. He alone is the eternal, self-existing One. Our life is short. If we do not have God, we shall not continue to be and even we are not actually existing now, for the verb to be cannot be applied to us as it is uniquely applied to God. The verb to be is the basic verb. Everything else depends on this. For example, eating depends on being, on existence. If I did not exist, how could I eat? All other verbs, perhaps numbering in the thousands, depend on this unique verb, the verb to be. Only God is the One who is; He alone is the I Am, the ever-existing and self-existing One.

In order for God to be related to man, He must be triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. According to Exodus 3, Jehovah refers to the Triune God. This is indicated in 3:6, where God says, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." After God said to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM" and told him to tell the children of Israel, "I AM hath sent me unto you," He went on to say to him, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (v. 15). In 3:14 God says, "I AM hath sent me unto you," but in the next verse He says, "Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of

Jacob, hath sent me unto you." This indicates that Jehovah is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. This title of God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—implies the Three of the Godhead, the Trinity. In our Life-study of Genesis we pointed out that much of the book of Genesis is related to God as the God of three persons: Abraham, the father; Isaac, the son; and Jacob, the supplanter, the subtle one who was eventually transformed. The God of Abraham signifies the Father; the God of Isaac, the Son; and the God of Jacob, the Spirit. Jehovah, God in His relationship with man, is the Triune God. Therefore, the Spirit of Jehovah is the Spirit with the element of the divine Trinity.

Many verses in the Old Testament speak of the Spirit of Jehovah: Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Samuel 10:6; 16:13, 14; 2 Samuel 23:2; 1 Kings 18:12; 22:24; 2 Kings 2:16; 2 Chronicles 18:23; 20:14; Isaiah 11:2; 63:14; Ezekiel 11:5; 37:1; Micah 3:8; Zechariah 7:12. Whenever God came to contact people in the Old Testament, He was the Spirit of Jehovah with the element of the Trinity. Actually, the Spirit of Jehovah is the extract of the element of the Triune God.

IN INCARNATION—THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE ELEMENT OF THE HOLY DIVINE NATURE

Before the incarnation, the title the Holy Spirit was not used. However, the King James Version does not make this fact clear in its translation of Psalm 51:11 and Isaiah 63:10-11. "Thy Holy Spirit" in Psalm 51:11 should be "the Spirit of Thy holiness," and "his Holy Spirit" in Isaiah 63:10 and 11 should be "the Spirit of His holiness." The title "the Holy Spirit" was first used with respect to Christ's incarnation, to the time when the Spirit came to Mary to conceive the Lord Jesus.

According to Luke 1:35, the angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; wherefore also the holy thing which is born will be called, Son of God." The Greek words rendered "holy thing" may also be rendered "holy one." Both

are correct. Before the incarnation of Christ, no one had been holy in nature. Rather, everyone from the time of Adam onward was common, ordinary. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit did not make anyone holy with the holy nature of God. Of course, certain persons and things were holy in the sense that they were separated unto God. For example, Aaron was separated unto the Lord to serve as high priest, but he did not become holy with the holy nature of God. Not until the Lord Jesus was born was there One who was holy in nature. This was possible because He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit has the element of the divine nature, which is holy. Therefore, Matthew 1:18 says that Mary "was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit." Also, the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, "Fear not to take Mary your wife, for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit" (v. 20).

In the New Testament sometimes the Greek says "the Spirit, the holy." This expression indicates that the Spirit is the holy. This reveals that the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of Jehovah, is now something further—the Holy Spirit with God's holy nature, to bring forth someone who is holy in nature just as God Himself is holy. God is holy in His nature, not just in position. Because the Lord Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, He also is holy in nature.

The Holy Spirit is of such a nature as to make us, the believers, holy with God's nature. If we understand this, we shall know the meaning of sanctification in the New Testament. New Testament sanctification is to make us holy not merely in position but also in nature. It is to make us holy in nature, even as God is holy. Therefore, we say that the Holy Spirit has the element of the holy divine nature.

THE SPIRIT NOT YET, NOT COMPOUNDED WITH MORE ELEMENTS, BEFORE CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

John 7:39 says, "But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

This verse indicates that before Christ's resurrection, the Spirit—the Spirit compounded with other elements—was "not yet." The Spirit of God was there from the very beginning, but the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19) was "not yet" when the Lord spoke this word, because He was not yet glorified. Jesus was glorified when He was resurrected (Luke 24:26). After His resurrection, the Spirit of God became the Spirit of the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Jesus Christ, who was breathed into the disciples by Christ in the evening of the day He was resurrected (John 20:22). The Spirit is now "another Comforter," who is the Spirit of reality promised by Christ before His death (John 14:16-17). When the Spirit was the Spirit of God, He had only the divine element. When He became the Spirit of Jesus Christ through Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, He had both the divine and human element, with all the essence and reality of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. Hence, He is now the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus Christ.

From the time of Genesis 1 until the time of John 20:22, the Spirit was not yet. The term "the Spirit" is all-inclusive, for it includes all the elements of all the other titles of the Spirit. As we shall see, the Spirit includes the Spirit of reality, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of life, the life-giving Spirit, the Lord Spirit, the Spirit of grace, and the seven Spirits. How marvelous!

Concerning the Spirit, I urge you not to follow the traditional teachings. Those teachings have drugged many believers. I myself was drugged for a number of years, and it took a long time for the Lord to de-drug me. I am concerned that some of us, especially the older ones, are still under the drugging influence of the traditional teachings. This influence may cause you to be in a stupor whenever you read the Bible. This is the reason you do not receive light when you study the Word. You may still be too much under the influence of tradition and of your own natural understanding.

Whenever we come to the Bible, we must come with a sober mind, with a mind that has been unloaded and de-drugged. Furthermore, we need to be poor in spirit and pure in heart. The Lord Jesus said that those who are poor in spirit and pure in heart are blessed (Matt. 5:3, 8). We need to have a spirit that is not filled, occupied, with anything, and we need to have a heart that is pure, seeking only the Lord. If we have such a mind, spirit, and heart when we read about the Spirit in the Word, we shall see the significance of all the titles of the Spirit of God.

Not one title of the Spirit is without meaning. For instance, Hebrews 10:29 speaks of insulting the Spirit of grace. It is significant that this verse does not speak of insulting the Spirit of God. The Spirit of grace enables us to taste the Triune God as our enjoyment. This is the taste of grace. It is a very serious matter to insult the Spirit of grace. According to the book of Hebrews, we need to care for the sanctifying blood of Jesus and also for the Spirit of grace, the Spirit for our enjoyment. Hebrews 10:29 illustrates the fact that every title of the Spirit is significant, for each title points to a particular element of the Spirit.

THE SPIRIT OF REALITY

After the Lord's resurrection, His word concerning the Spirit as another Comforter, as the Spirit of reality, was fulfilled. He had said that He would pray that the Father would give us another Comforter, and that this One would be the Spirit of reality who would be in us. Then the Lord went on to say that in that day we would know that He is in the Father, that we are in Him, and that He is in us. He told the disciples definitely that He would not leave them orphans, but that He would be coming to them. The coming of the Spirit of reality was actually Christ's coming, for Christ is this Spirit. On the day of His resurrection, the Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples, breathed upon them, and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). This was the Spirit of reality, the Spirit containing all the further elements of the Spirit.

We should not think that since the resurrection of Christ

the Spirit is no longer the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord or of Jehovah, or the Holy Spirit. No, the Spirit still is the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9, 14; 1 Cor. 2:14), still the Spirit of Jehovah, the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 5:9; 8:39; 2 Cor. 3:17), and still the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6; Rom. 15:13, 16). But in addition this Spirit is the Spirit of reality (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS WITH THE ELEMENTS OF HUMANITY, HUMAN LIVING, AND CRUCIFIXION

According to Acts 16:6, Paul and his co-workers were "forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia." But verse 7 says that the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go into Bithynia. In these two verses first we have the Holy Spirit, then the Spirit of Jesus. If we study the context of verse 7, we shall see that Paul was suffering. For this reason, the Spirit of Jesus was with him. The Spirit of Jesus has the elements of humanity, human living, and crucifixion. Because Paul in Acts 16 was experiencing human suffering and was experiencing the death of Christ, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit at that juncture were the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of the incarnated One who lived on earth as a man and died on the cross.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST WITH THE ELEMENT OF RESURRECTION

Romans 8:9 says, "But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." Verses 9, 10, and 11 of Romans 8 are concerned with the resurrection of Christ. The Spirit of Christ in verse 9 has the element of resurrection. This Spirit is the Spirit of God mentioned in the same verse and also the Spirit of life mentioned in verse 2.

In the Spirit we have Christ's incarnation, humanity, human living, death, and resurrection. This is revealed by the different titles of the Spirit. If the Spirit did not contain the elements of incarnation, human living, and crucifixion,

why would He be called the Spirit of Jesus? Likewise, if the Spirit did not contain the element of resurrection, why would He be called the Spirit of Christ? Furthermore, if the Spirit did not contain the divine life, why would He be called the Spirit of life? The titles of the Spirit denote certain facts. Therefore, based on the titles of the Spirit used in the New Testament, we can say that in the Spirit of Jesus we have incarnation, humanity, human living, suffering, and crucifixion, and in the Spirit of Christ we have resurrection, the power of resurrection, and the divine life.

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST WITH THE BOUNTIFUL SUPPLY OF ALL THE ELEMENTS OF HUMANITY, HUMAN LIVING, CRUCIFIXION, AND RESURRECTION

In Philippians 1:19 Paul speaks of the Spirit of Jesus Christ: "For I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." When Paul wrote this word, he was in prison. But even though he was a prisoner, he could rejoice because he had the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. He enjoyed the Spirit of Jesus, the suffering One, and the Spirit of Christ, the resurrected One. This Spirit supplied and supported Paul in his suffering and enabled him to rejoice. Therefore, Paul could say in Philippians 1:20 and 21, "According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death; for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE WITH THE RICHES OF THE DIVINE LIFE

Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." Actually, it goes without saying that the Spirit of life contains the element of the divine life. With the Spirit of life we have the riches of the divine life.

THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT WITH THE IMPARTATION OF THE DIVINE LIFE

First Corinthians 15:45 says that Christ, the last Adam, became a life-giving Spirit. Then 2 Corinthians 3:6 says that although the letter kills, the Spirit gives life. According to these verses, the Spirit is also the life-giving Spirit. This is the Spirit with the impartation of the divine life.

The life-giving Spirit has the ability to give us life. Now we have life within us. However, we do not have the ability to impart this life to others. But the Spirit of life is also the life-giving Spirit. This title indicates that He has the ability to impart life. Therefore, in this title of the Spirit the element of the impartation of life is implied.

THE LORD SPIRIT WITH THE ELEMENTS OF ASCENSION AND LORDSHIP

Second Corinthians 3:18 says, "And we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit." In this verse Paul does not speak of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of life. Rather, he refers to the Lord Spirit. In this aspect of the Spirit the element of lordship is included. The Lord Jesus became the Lord after His ascension to the heavens. This means that a man from Nazareth named Jesus has been made the Lord of all. This lordship is now in the Spirit. In the Lord Spirit we have the elements of ascension and lordship.

THE SPIRIT OF GRACE WITH THE ELEMENT OF THE ENJOYMENT OF THE TRIUNE GOD

The compound Spirit is also the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29). The Spirit of grace has the element of the enjoyment of the Triune God. This element is grace.

THE SEVEN SPIRITS WITH THE SEVENFOLD INTENSIFICATION

Revelation 1:4 says, "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is, and

who was, and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne." The Spirit has not only the element of life-impartation, but also that of intensification. The seven Spirits in the book of Revelation imply the Spirit with the element of sevenfold intensification.

THE SPIRIT WITH ALL THE ELEMENTS OF THE TITLES— THE ALL-INCLUSIVE SPIRIT

When all the aspects and elements of the Spirit are put together, we have a totality, an aggregate, known in the New Testament as the Spirit (Rom. 8:16, 23, 26, 27; Gal. 3:14; 5:16-18, 22, 25; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 2:7; 14:13; 22:17). As the Bible is *the* book, so the Spirit of God today is *the* Spirit. The Spirit is the all-inclusive, processed, compound Spirit. This Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of reality, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of life, the life-giving Spirit, the Lord Spirit, the Spirit of grace, and the seven Spirits.

We have seen that at the time of John 7:39, the Spirit was "not yet." That was before the Lord Jesus was crucified and glorified in resurrection. But now we who believe in Christ may fulfill our destiny of enjoying the Spirit, and this Spirit will become rivers of living water flowing out of our innermost being. According to John 7:38 and 39, the Spirit, the all-inclusive Spirit, will become rivers of living water flowing out of us. This means that in our experience the one Spirit becomes many rivers of living water. This is the enjoyment of the Spirit.

In their writings John, Paul, and Peter all speak of the Spirit. Paul uses the term the Spirit more than any other title of the Spirit. In 1 Peter 1:2 Peter speaks not of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, but of the sanctification of the Spirit. The reason is that the Holy Spirit is not as rich as the all-inclusive Spirit is. In the book of Revelation John does not use the titles the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, or the Holy Spirit. In Revelation only two titles of the Spirit are used: the seven Spirits and the Spirit. In 1:4; 4:5; and 5:6 we have the seven Spirits. In chapters two and three

the title the Spirit is used again and again. It is also found in Revelation 14:13, and for the last time, in Revelation 22:17. Revelation 22:17 says, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." This reveals that the Spirit as the totality of the Triune God has become one with the church, who is now fully matured to be the bride. Hence, the Spirit and the bride are one and speak as one. How wonderful!

With regard to the preaching of the gospel beforehand to Abraham, Galatians 3:14 says, "In order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." God in preaching the gospel to Abraham promised him the Spirit. Once again, in Galatians 3:14 we do not have Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, or the Holy Spirit. In this verse we have the Spirit because the Spirit was the unique blessing of the New Testament economy promised by God to Abraham. This means that to Abraham God preached the gospel of the Spirit.

We have pointed out that in the Bible the Spirit is the consummation of the Triune God after the process of becoming the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving Spirit. Hence, the Spirit is nothing less than the Triune God Himself. However, this is not the Triune God apart from the process through which He has passed. The Spirit is the Triune God after He has passed through the process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Having passed through this process, the Triune God is now this consummate Spirit as the blessing of the New Testament. The Spirit is the blessing of God's economy. First the gospel concerning this blessing was preached to our father Abraham. Now, as children of Abraham, we should follow his steps to enjoy the Spirit as the unique blessing of God's New Testament economy.

THE FUNCTION OF THE COMPOUND SPIRIT

Having seen the elements of the compound Spirit, we may now say a word regarding the function of this Spirit. The function of the compound Spirit is to anoint the dwelling place of God with its furniture and utensils (Exo. 30:26-29)

and to anoint the priesthood of God (30:30). This indicates that the compound Spirit is for God's building and for His priesthood. If we are not for God's building and priesthood, we cannot have any share in the compound Spirit, although we may have some enjoyment of and participation in the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit. Only those who are for the building of God and the priesthood of God can have the enjoyment of the compound, all-inclusive, processed Spirit. All the ingredients, all the rich elements, of the compound Spirit are for God's house and God's priesthood.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-TWO

THE COMPOUNDED OINTMENT— THE COMPOUND SPIRIT

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:23-30; Gen. 1:2; Judg. 3:10; Luke 1:35; John 7:39; Rom. 8:2, 9; Acts 5:9; 16:6-7; John 14:17; Phil. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 10:29; Rev. 1:4; Rom. 8:16; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 2:7; 22:17; 1 Pet. 4:14

First Peter 4:14 says, "If you are reproached in the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." In this verse Peter speaks of the Spirit of glory. Recently I was asked how the Spirit of glory is related to other aspects of the Spirit. The Spirit of glory is not related as much to the nature of God as other aspects of the Spirit are. Furthermore, the type of the compound ointment in Exodus 30 does not indicate much that is related to the glory of God. The four spices that were mingled with the olive oil are all elements. These elements are not for expression; they are not for glory.

CONSTITUTED OF GOD'S NATURE

Apart from 1 Peter 4:14, all the verses quoted above are related to the nature, the essence, or the element of the processed, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit. The Spirit of God has the element of divinity, the element of what God is. The Spirit of Jehovah has the element of the divine Trinity, the element of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has the element of the holy divine nature. Because the Holy Spirit has this element, the Holy Spirit can make us holy in nature, even as God is holy. This process of sanctification began with the conceiving of the

Lord Jesus in the womb of Mary. Luke 1:35 speaks of Him as "the holy thing." Because the Lord Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, He is holy in constitution, not merely in position.

Not one of those who lived from the time of Adam until the birth of the Lord Jesus was holy in nature. Many had been sanctified in the sense of being separated unto God, but none of these sanctified ones was made holy with God's nature. In other words, none of them had been constituted of the holy nature of God. For example, although Aaron was sanctified to serve God as a priest, he was not constituted of God's holy nature. Therefore, the Spirit of God with the element of divinity and the Spirit of Jehovah with the element of the Trinity came as the Holy Spirit, the Spirit with the element of the holy divine nature, to produce a child who would be constituted of God's holy nature. According to Luke 1:35, that child is called the "holy thing" or "the holy One." He was holy not only in the sense of being separated unto God, but He was holy in nature, for the holy divine nature had been constituted into Him.

In the New Testament sanctification includes being constituted of the holy nature of God. In this sense, sanctification is a continuation of incarnation. In the incarnation, the Lord Jesus was constituted of the holy nature of God. Now through the process of sanctification, we who believe in Christ are also being constituted of God's nature. If we see this, we shall realize that the teachings concerning sanctification among Christians today are very shallow, even more shallow than the concept of sanctification found in the Old Testament. Actually, New Testament sanctification is incarnation. It is the incarnation of the holy divine nature into our humanity so that we may become holy in nature, even as God Himself is holy.

The title "the Holy Spirit" implies the element of God's holy nature. As we pointed out in the foregoing message, this title is not used in the Old Testament. In Psalm 51:11 "thy Holy Spirit" should be "the Spirit of Thy holiness." In

Isaiah 63:10 and 11, "his Holy Spirit" should be "the Spirit of His holiness."

THE SPIRIT OF REALITY

The aspects of the Spirit as the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, and the Holy Spirit are all preliminary to God's New Testament economy. In God's New Testament economy we first have the Spirit of reality. Apart from the Spirit of reality, in our experience we could not have divinity, the Trinity, or the holy nature of God. These would be nothing more than terms to us. We would not have the reality of divinity, the reality of the Trinity, and the reality of the holy divine nature, if we did not have the Spirit of reality. The reality of all these matters is the Spirit of reality.

While the Lord Jesus was still on earth, reality had not yet entered into man. The reality was present, for Christ Himself is reality. But this reality was only among the disciples; it had not yet come into them. Therefore, the Lord told the disciples that it was expedient for them that He go away. The purpose of His going was for Him to have a change in form, a change from the form of the flesh to the form of the Spirit. As soon as this change had been accomplished, His reality would become the reality of the Spirit, and the Spirit would become the Spirit of reality. Then this Spirit of reality would come to abide in the disciples. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:17, "Even the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you." Because the Spirit of reality has come into us, reality now abides in us.

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS

The Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of incarnation, humanity, human living, and crucifixion. In particular, it is the aspect of the Spirit that includes the Lord's sufferings. The entire life of the Lord Jesus from birth to burial was a life of suffering. He was born in a manger, an indication that He would

live a life of suffering. Shortly after He was born, He became a refugee. That was part of His sufferings. When His family returned to the holy land after fleeing to Egypt, it was not possible for them to stay in Judea. They had to live in Galilee, in the despised city of Nazareth. The title "the Spirit of Jesus" implies the Lord's sufferings in His human life. The extract of the Lord's human life is included now in the Spirit of Jesus.

OTHER TITLES OF THE SPIRIT

The Spirit is also the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of life, the life-giving Spirit, and the Lord Spirit. The Spirit of Christ includes the element, the extract, of Christ's resurrection. The Spirit of Jesus Christ includes incarnation, humanity, human living, suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection. The Spirit of life is the reality of the divine life. Christ is both life and the Giver of life. The Spirit is both the Spirit of life and the life-giving Spirit. As the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit has the ability to impart life to us. The title "the Lord Spirit" implies the ascension and lordship of Christ. Today the man Jesus Christ is the Lord of all. The reality of His lordship is in the Spirit. When we contact the Spirit, we touch the element of the Lord's ascension and lordship.

The Spirit is also the Spirit of grace. This aspect of the Spirit is related to the enjoyment of the Triune God, for the Triune God is Himself our grace. Hebrews 10:29, a very important verse, speaks of both the sanctifying blood and the Spirit of grace.

Eventually, in the book of Revelation, the Spirit is called the seven Spirits. The title "the seven Spirits" indicates that the Spirit has been intensified sevenfold. This Spirit intensifies all the elements of the Spirit: He intensifies divinity, the Trinity, incarnation, crucifixion, the power of resurrection, the essence of reality, the imparting of the divine life, and grace as our enjoyment.

Ultimately, the Spirit of God is the Spirit. As we have pointed out, the Spirit is a totality, an aggregate, of all the

elements of all the titles of the Spirit. Hence, the Spirit is the all-inclusive Spirit.

THE SPIRIT OF GLORY

The Spirit of glory in 1 Peter 4:14 is the Spirit of expression. In his First Epistle, Peter refers to the Spirit only three times. He speaks of sanctification of the Spirit, of the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of glory (1:2, 11; 4:14). In our Life-study of 1 Peter we pointed out that Peter even had the boldness to indicate that the function of the Spirit of Christ is not only with the New Testament believers, but was also with the prophets in the Old Testament.

In God's economy a fact is one thing, and the accomplishment of the fact is another. For example, the accomplishment of the Lord's crucifixion occurred approximately nineteen hundred years ago. But long before the incarnation, even from the foundation of the world, the fact of the crucifixion of Christ existed in the sight of God. From God's point of view, everything, including the death of Christ, is eternal. What God cares for is the fact, rather than the accomplishment of the fact in time. Consider the divine fact of God's selection. God the Father selected us before the foundation of the world. But this fact still had to be accomplished in time.

Peter's brief writing concerning the Spirit indicates that the sanctifying Spirit is the Spirit of Christ who indwells us. Peter does not say anything about Christ being in us. There is not a word in his Epistles concerning the indwelling of Christ. One verse indicates that the Spirit of Christ is in us. If the Spirit of Christ was in the Old Testament prophets, then how much more is this Spirit in us?

Last, Peter mentions the Spirit of glory. The context of this reference to the Spirit is the saints' experience of suffering and persecution. To the suffering saints, the Spirit was not only in them as the indwelling of the divine element, but the Spirit was also upon them as glory. This is true of any genuine martyr. I have already told you of the case of the young woman who was martyred during the Boxer Rebellion in China. A young man who saw her, later

testified to me that she was shining with glory. He told me that her face was full of light. This light was the shining of the Lord's glory. The Spirit of glory surely was upon her.

Years ago I was told about a missionary who was martyred. This missionary had written a poem which says that the face of every martyr is like the face of an angel, and the heart of every martyr is like the heart of a lion. I would also say that with every genuine martyr there is the shining of the Spirit of glory. The Spirit of glory is the indwelling Spirit, the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of grace, becoming the glory shining upon the believers.

THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS

In Romans 1:4 Paul refers to the Spirit of holiness: "And was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead." The Spirit of holiness here is in contrast to the flesh in Romans 1:3. As the flesh in verse 3 refers to the human essence of Christ, so the Spirit in this verse does not refer to the person of the Holy Spirit of God, but to the divine essence of Christ, which is "the fullness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9). This divine essence of Christ, being God the Spirit Himself (John 4:24), is of holiness, full of the nature and quality of being holy.

Those who persecuted Christ and opposed Him regarded Him as nothing more than a common man. Through the Spirit of holiness He was designated, marked out, in resurrection as the Son of God. Yes, He is a man, but He has the nature of the Son of God.

The term "the Spirit of holiness" is actually very difficult to understand or interpret. Translators have found it hard to decide whether or not to spell the word "Spirit" in this verse with a capital letter. Does the Spirit here refer to the Holy Spirit, or does it refer to the human spirit of the Lord Jesus? When the Lord died, He committed His spirit to God (Luke 23:46). However, although this matter of the Spirit of holiness cannot be clearly defined, we do know that it was by

the Spirit of holiness that Christ in resurrection was designated the Son of God.

NOT SYSTEMATIZING THE DIVINE REVELATION

If we try to systematize the divine revelation in the Bible, we shall get into trouble. It is difficult to analyze our human life, much less the nature of the Triune God and the Spirit. As human beings, we have life. We have a *bios* life and also a *psuche* life. When we die, what kind of life is it that dies? Is it the *bios* life or the *psuche* life? Atheists claim that when a person dies, his life is extinguished. They say that nothing remains after death. They regard human beings the same as animals. The late Premier of China, Chou En-Lai, instructed that his body be cremated and that his ashes be scattered from an airplane. He was an atheist who believed that nothing remains after death. But we believe in the living God and in the Scriptures.

Also, in a living way, we believe in trichotomy: we believe that man is of three parts—spirit, soul, and body. After a person is regenerated, he has three lives: a *bios* life, a *psuche* life, and a regenerated spirit with the divine life. Because of this, it is extremely difficult for us to define life. When you speak of life, what do you mean? According to the Lord's word in Luke 16, both the rich man and Lazarus died. Although they died in their *bios,* they were still alive in their soul, in their *psuche*.

I say this in order to point out that we do not agree with the systematizing of the theologians. It simply is not possible to systematize the mysterious things of life. As we consider the Spirit and in particular the Spirit of holiness in Romans 1:4, we should not become involved in the attempt to systematize the revelation in the Word of God. We should also be cautious when considering the Trinity. Instead of trying to systematize the revelation concerning the Triune God, we should simply believe whatever the Bible says concerning the Trinity.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THREE

THE INGREDIENTS OF THE COMPOUND SPIRIT TYPIFIED BY THE COMPOUNDED OINTMENT

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:23-30; 1 John 2:18-27; 4:1-3, 6; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 5:22-24; Rom. 8:13

We have seen that the compounded ointment is a type of the compound Spirit. In this message and in the two messages following we shall first consider the ingredients of the compound Spirit, and then we shall consider the function of the compound Spirit. Actually, our main concern will be with the function. But in order to understand the function of the compound Spirit, we need to see the ingredients of this Spirit. Knowing this will also help us to understand 1 John 2:18-27.

If we read 1 John 2:18 through 27 carefully and consider the context, we shall see that John speaks of the anointing in relation to dealing with the Antichrist. Verse 18 clearly says, "Young children, it is the last hour, and even as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come; whereby we know that it is the last hour." Then in verse 19 John goes on to say that these antichrists "went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out that they might be manifested that they all are not of us." After this, in verse 20, John says that we the believers have an "anointing from the Holy One." This indicates that John's word concerning the anointing has something to do with his warning concerning Antichrist.

John's Gospel and Epistles were written at a time when different heresies concerning the Person of Christ were

creeping in. According to one of these heresies, it was claimed that Christ was divine, but it was denied that He was human. According to this heretical teaching, Christ was God, but He was not a man. This is a heresy related to Christ's humanity. According to another heretical teaching, Christ was human, not divine; it was claimed that He was a man, but not God. This is a heresy with respect to Christ's deity. Therefore, these two heretical schools represent two extreme positions.

In his Gospel John declares that the Word, which is God, became flesh (1:1, 14). The word "flesh" in John 1:14 no doubt refers to Christ's humanity. The Word is God, and this Word became flesh, a man. This reveals that Christ is both God and man. All genuine Christians confess that Jesus Christ is both God and man. Throughout the centuries, a number of great teachers have used the term "God-man" to express the fact that Christ is God and man. He was God before incarnation, but through incarnation He became a man. Therefore, after His incarnation, Christ was both God and man, the God-man.

First John 2:20 and 27 speak of the anointing typified by the compound ointment in Exodus 30. The anointing in these verses is a sign that has its source in the type of the anointing oil in Exodus 30. The anointing oil was a compounded ointment, an ointment containing a number of elements. The basic element was olive oil. We may use today's oil-based paint as a simple illustration of the compounded ointment. The basic element of this kind of paint is oil, and to this oil other ingredients or elements are added. In the same principle, to the basic element of olive oil the four spices were added to produce a compounded ointment. This compounded ointment was formed by blending olive oil with four spices. It is very helpful for us to know all the elements of this compound and what they signify.

The Spirit of Christ is the fulfillment of the type of the compounded ointment. The Spirit of Christ is the compound Spirit, and this Spirit is the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. If we understand the ingredients of this Spirit,

we shall be able to understand the function of the compound Spirit. As we shall see, the function of the Spirit is to anoint us. This is the reason 1 John 2:20 and 27 speak of the anointing.

THE INGREDIENTS OF THE COMPOUND SPIRIT

The Only God—the One Hin of Olive Oil

What are the ingredients, the elements, that constitute the compound Spirit? The first element is the only God, the unique God, signified both by the olive oil itself and also by the quantity of olive oil, a hin. In Hebrew measurement, a hin is a complete unit. In this sense, a hin can be compared to a pound as a complete unit of sixteen ounces. A hin is, therefore, a Hebrew expression signifying a complete unit. The one hin of olive oil in Exodus 30 signifies the only God, the Creator (1 Tim. 1:17; Rom. 16:27; Exo. 30:24).

One hin of olive oil as the base of the compounded ointment signifies the unique God as the base of the compound Spirit. This understanding is logical and meaningful. We believe in God, but not in the simple way of the Jews. Instead, we believe in God according to the complete revelation of the New Testament. In the New Testament God is no longer merely God with the single element of divinity, for He has been mingled with other elements.

Consider again the blending of the spices with the olive oil to produce the compounded ointment. First, the olive oil was of one element. But after it was compounded, or blended, with four kinds of spices, it no longer had just a single element. It had become a compound of five elements. Of these five elements, one—the oil—is the base, and the others—the four spices—are the ingredients for compounding. This indicates that in the Old Testament the Spirit of God was of one element, and that element was the unique God, the Creator. However, the New Testament reveals that a process of blending, of compounding, has taken place. This process involved Christ's incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. After passing through this process of blending, compounding, the Spirit of God is no longer simply the Spirit

with one element. Now He is the compound Spirit. However, this Spirit still has the unique God as the base. This base, the one God, is typified by the hin of olive oil.

The Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—the Three Units of the Measure of the Four Spices

In the compound Spirit we also have the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Perhaps you are wondering how it is possible to see the Triune God typified by the compounded ointment. In this ointment the Triune God is typified by the three units of the measure of the four spices (Exo. 30:23-24). In the compounded ointment there were five hundred shekels of myrrh, two hundred fifty shekels each of cinnamon and calamus, and five hundred shekels of cassia. Although there were four spices, there was a total of three units of five hundred shekels in measure. But how can we apply this to the Triune God? The first unit is five hundred shekels of myrrh. However, the second unit of five hundred shekels is split in half: two hundred fifty shekels of cinnamon and two hundred fifty shekels of calamus. The third unit is five hundred shekels of cassia. Notice that it is the second unit, the middle one, that is split into two parts. Surely this points to the Second of the Triune God, the Son, and to His crucifixion.

The greatest teaching in the Bible is that of the Trinity of the Godhead. According to the Hebrew language, the first time God is mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 1:1), the word *Elohim* is used. The name *Elohim,* meaning God, is in the plural. This is a hint of the Trinity. Furthermore, we are told in Genesis 1:26 that when God was about to create man, He said to Himself, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." This is another indication that God is triune. However, it is not, of course, a clear revelation of the Trinity. We have such a clear revelation in Matthew 28:19, where, after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus gave this charge to His disciples: "Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and

of the Holy Spirit." Here we have one name for the Three of the Godhead, for the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

In John 14, 15, and 16 the Lord Jesus revealed the Trinity of the Godhead to His disciples. To a certain extent, He even defined His relationship to the Father and the Spirit. In John 14:8 Philip said to the Lord, "Lord, show us the Father and it suffices us." Seemingly surprised at Philip's request, the Lord replied: "Am I 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?" (v. 9). The Lord seemed to be telling Philip, "You have been seeing Me all these years, and still you ask Me to show you the Father? Philip, if you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." Then the Lord Jesus went on to say, "I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me" (v. 10). At that time the disciples must have become at least somewhat clear concerning the Son and the Father.

In John 14:16 and 17 the Lord Jesus went on to say to the disciples, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever; even the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you." A little later the Lord said to them, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him" (v. 23). If I had been one of the disciples, I might have asked the Lord, "How can You and the Father come to us and make an abode with us?" Actually, the answer to this question is the Lord's word concerning the Spirit of reality abiding in the disciples, not only among them. The Lord seemed to be saying here, "The Spirit of reality will come not only to be among you, but also to be in you. When He comes to be in you, that will be My own coming to be in you. I shall not leave you orphans. I am coming to you. My going is My coming back. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, that you are in Me, and that I am in you. Don't think that the Father and I are two. No, We are one."

The disciples heard the words recorded in John 14 several weeks before they were given the charge in Matthew 28:19. In that verse the Lord told the disciples to baptize the nations into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. We know from John 14 that the Lord had already spoken to them concerning the Father and the Spirit. We can see from John 14 and Matthew 28 that before the ascension of the Lord, the Trinity was fully revealed to the disciples. In Matthew 28:19, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three, yet there is one name. The disciples were commanded to baptize the believers into the name, not the names, of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Therefore, in this verse the Trinity is revealed.

Returning to the three units of five hundred shekels each in the compounded ointment, we see that it was the middle unit that was split in half. This signifies the putting to death of the Lord Jesus on the cross. The cutting into two pieces of the second unit of five hundred shekels points to the death of Christ. The fact that it was the middle unit, signifying the Son, that was split is a strong indication that these three units of five hundred shekels signify the Trinity. The first unit signifies the Father; the second the Son, who was cut, was put to death, on the cross; and the third, the Spirit. Therefore, the three units of the measure of the spices signify the Triune God. To have this understanding of the three units is to decipher the heavenly language in Exodus 30.

Man, the Creature of God—
Four Spices of the Plant Life

Next in the ingredients of the compound Spirit we have man, the creature of God. This, of course, refers to the humanity of Jesus, or to the Man Jesus. When some hear that man, the creature of God, is an ingredient of the compound Spirit as typified by the compounded ointment, they may say, "There is nothing said here about man. How can you say that man as the creature of God is an ingredient in the compounded ointment?" This answer is that man is typified by the four spices of the plant life (Exo. 30:23-24).

The number four in the Bible signifies God's creation. A strong proof of this is the four living creatures in Ezekiel and Revelation. In Revelation 4 John explicitly mentions four living creatures. Which of these living creatures is the leading one? The leading one among the four living creatures has the face of a man. This indicates that man is the leading one of God's creation, a fact that corresponds to Genesis 1. Although God created man last, God made him to be the head over creation. God gave man the dominion to rule all His creatures. In Exodus 30 man is signified by the four spices.

Let us now consider two verses in the New Testament related to the humanity of Christ. John 19:5 gives a word uttered by Pilate shortly before the Lord was crucified: "Then Jesus came out, wearing the thorny crown and the purple garment. And he said to them, Behold, the man!" First Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God and one Mediator of God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus." This word was written by Paul after the Lord's ascension. Paul's statement reveals that even after His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the Lord Jesus is still a man.

However, many Christians have the concept that Christ was a man only from the time of His incarnation until the time of His burial. Then, according to their understanding, after His resurrection He was no longer a man. Perhaps you held this concept before you came into the Lord's recovery. Others may never have given this matter serious thought. They may have been satisfied to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior, and the Redeemer, and that, since His resurrection, He is now in the heavens.

Once a brother, a seminary graduate, told me how surprised he was when he first sang the following words from a hymn on the exaltation of Christ (*Hymns,* #132):

Lo! in heaven Jesus sitting,
  Christ the Lord is there enthroned;
As the man by God exalted,
  With God's glory He is crowned.

He hath put on human nature,
Died according to God's plan,
Resurrected with a body,
And ascended as a man.

Lo! a man is now in heaven
As the Lord of all enthroned;
This is Jesus Christ our Savior,
With God's glory ever crowned!

The brother told me that he was greatly surprised by what this hymn says concerning the fact that the Lord is still a man even after His ascension. He said, "I graduated from a leading seminary, but I never heard that the Lord Jesus on the throne is still a man and that He still has the human nature."

We should be very clear regarding the truth that Jesus Christ is still a man. He still has His human nature. It is a very serious matter not to believe this. Therefore, we all must realize that Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, is today both God and man. He was a man from the time of His incarnation until His crucifixion. This was the reason Pilate declared, "Behold, the man!" But even after His resurrection and ascension, the Lord is still a man. For this reason, Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 2:5 that there is one Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus.

The unique God, the Triune God, and the Man, Christ Jesus, are all elements of the compound Spirit. We shall consider the other ingredients in the next message.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOUR

THE INGREDIENTS OF THE COMPOUND SPIRIT TYPIFIED BY THE COMPOUNDED OINTMENT

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:23-30; 1 John 2:18-27; 4:1-3, 6; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 5:22-24; Rom. 8:13

We have seen that the first three ingredients of the compound Spirit typified by the compounded ointment are the only God, the Triune God, and the man Jesus, typified respectively by the one hin of olive oil, the three units of the measure of the four spices, and the four spices of the plant life. In this message we shall continue to consider the ingredients of the compound Spirit typified by the compounded ointment, and then we shall go on to consider the anointing of the compound Spirit.

The Precious Death of Christ

The flowing myrrh in 30:23 typifies the precious death of Christ. This precious death is, according to this type, compounded with the anointing Spirit. In Romans 6:3 and 6 Paul says that we who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death, and that our old man has been crucified with Christ. The death of Christ into which we have been baptized is actually included in the Spirit. Without the Spirit, the death of Christ is only a historical fact, and it can never become our experience. It is in the Spirit that we share the death of Christ. This is also a part of the anointing of the Spirit.

The Sweetness and Effectiveness of Christ's Death

The fragrant cinnamon in 30:23 typifies the sweetness

and the effectiveness of Christ's death. The effectiveness of the death of Christ can be compared to an antibiotic used to kill germs. If someone is suffering from a disease caused by certain bacteria or germs, he may take a certain medicine to kill those germs. The effectiveness of Christ's death can be regarded as the spiritual antibiotic to kill the "germs" within us.

Galatians 5:22-24 indicates that the death of Christ functions like a spiritual antibiotic. Verses 22 and 23 speak of the fruit of the Spirit. Then verse 24 says, "But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts." Physically speaking, no one can crucify himself. A person can commit suicide many different ways, but he cannot commit suicide by crucifying himself. Anyone crucified in ancient times was hung on a cross by others. Since crucifixion is not an action that we can perform on ourselves, why does Paul say in Galatians 5:24 that they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh? If we read the context of this verse with understanding, we shall see that we do not actually crucify ourselves by ourselves alone. Rather, this crucifixion is carried out by the Spirit from whom is the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit who bears fruit within us is the One by whom we crucify ourselves. This corresponds to Romans 8:13: "For if you live according to flesh, you are about to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." By ourselves we are not able to put to death the practices of the body. Likewise, we are not able to crucify ourselves. We need a crucifier, someone to crucify us. Christ was crucified by Roman soldiers. Today we experience crucifixion through and by the indwelling Spirit.

Do you know where the effectiveness of the death of Christ is? The effectiveness of the death of Christ is in the all-inclusive Spirit. This Spirit includes the element of the effectiveness of the wonderful death of Christ. This means that the death of Christ spoken of in Romans 6 has become an ingredient of the indwelling Spirit spoken of in Romans 8. The "medicine" of the Spirit thus contains the

effectiveness of Christ's death as the element to kill the germs, the harmful bacteria, within us.

Throughout the years many have taught from Romans 6 that our old man has been crucified with Christ. However, few have seen the proper way to experience our death with Christ described in Romans 6. Only when we realize that the effectiveness of the death of Christ has been compounded into the all-inclusive Spirit can we have the proper experience of being crucified with Christ. Once we realize that the death of Christ in Romans 6 has been compounded into the all-inclusive, indwelling Spirit, we should simply walk in this Spirit. This is to take the "medicine" of the Spirit containing the killing element of Christ's death. There is no need for us to try to kill ourselves or the germs within us. We simply need to take the antibiotic, which will then do an excellent work within us to kill all the germs. Our experience testifies of this. We can testify that when we walk in the Spirit, a killing work is taking place within us.

We can experience this killing work in our daily lives. Suppose a brother does not care for the indwelling Spirit, but instead, rejecting the Spirit, quarrels with his wife and says some very unkind things to her. However, suppose this same brother prays himself into the Spirit, lives in the Spirit, and walks in the Spirit. This will make it extremely difficult for him to argue with his wife. As soon as he opens his mouth to quarrel with her, he will experience the element of Christ's death operating within him. Then he finds it impossible to argue with her. Many married brothers have had this kind of experience.

I believe that a good number of sisters have experienced the "antibiotic" in the Spirit in relation to their shopping. If a sister does not pray herself into the Spirit, live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, then she may go shopping without any inward restriction. For this reason, I would encourage the sisters to pray thoroughly and properly before they go shopping. A sister may say, "Lord, let us go shopping together. In the matter of shopping, I don't want to leave You. Rather, I want to stay with You." If a sister goes

shopping in this way, she will experience the Lord's limitation and restriction. She may pick up a certain item and consider buying it. But then, sensing the restriction of the Spirit, she will put it down. Sometimes she may leave the store without buying anything, because she paid attention to the Spirit within her. This is an experience of the effectiveness of the Lord's sweet death being applied to us by the all-inclusive Spirit. Many of us can testify that whenever we have this kind of experience, we feel that we are with the Lord in the heavens.

The Precious Resurrection of Christ

Exodus 30:23 speaks of fragrant calamus. This calamus signifies the precious resurrection of Christ (1 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1). After we experience the sweetness and effectiveness of Christ's death, we are ushered into resurrection. For example, suppose a sister experiences the effectiveness of Christ's death applied to her shopping. Spontaneously she will have the experience of being in resurrection. She will experience the precious resurrection of Christ.

The Power of Christ's Resurrection

The cassia in 30:24 signifies the power of Christ's resurrection. In Philippians 3:10 Paul expresses the desire to know the power of Christ's resurrection. In a foregoing message we pointed out that cassia functions as a repellent. It repels snakes and insects. Likewise, the power of the Lord's resurrection also functions as a repellent. It repels the demons and all negative things.

The Mingling of Divinity with Humanity

The mingling of divinity with humanity is typified by the blending of the olive oil with the four spices. We have seen that the olive oil signifies the unique God, and that the four spices signify man as the leading one in God's creation. Therefore, the mingling of God and man is typified by the blending of the oil and spices.

Do not listen to those who say that there is not such a

thing in the Bible as the mingling of divinity with humanity. There is a clear revelation of this matter in the Word. In Exodus 30 we have a type of the mingling, but in the New Testament we have the fulfillment. The fulfillment of the type is the mingling of the divine Spirit with our regenerated human spirit. Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God." Here we see the mingling of the Spirit with our spirit. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 6:17 says, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." This proves that our spirit has been joined to, mingled with, the Spirit.

The Power for Responsibility

The power for responsibility is also an element in the compound Spirit. I can testify that when I walk in the all-inclusive Spirit, I have the power to bear responsibility. Recently it was necessary for me to spend twenty-one hours in fellowship with certain brothers. We had six long meetings. I could not merely sit in these meetings, but I had the responsibility to lead the fellowship and direct it. My wife was very concerned that I would be exhausted. Knowing that a large conference was scheduled very soon, she encouraged me not to tire myself out. Nevertheless, I can testify that in those days I experienced the all-inclusive Spirit with the element of power for bearing responsibility.

The fact that the compound Spirit typified by the compounded ointment contains the element of power for responsibility is indicated by the five elements of the compounded ointment and the three times five hundred shekels of the four spices. In the Bible five is the number of responsibility (Matt. 25:4, 8). The number five is seen in the five elements of the compounded ointment. As we pointed out in the previous message, we see the number three signifying the Triune God, with the three units of five hundred shekels of the four spices. The middle unit is split in half and signifies the cutting of the Lord Jesus on the cross. Furthermore, the number three signifies resurrection. After the cutting, we have the calamus signifying

resurrection. Therefore, here the number three signifies the Triune God in resurrection. When we experience the compound Spirit, the Triune God in resurrection becomes our portion. This is the power, the capability, for bearing responsibility.

The Building Element

The numbers three and five indicate that the building element is also included in the compound Spirit. Here we have three complete units of five hundred shekels each. Therefore, we have the number three. The number five appears in the number five hundred. Furthermore, we have the five elements, the olive oil and the four spices.

According to the Old Testament, the numbers three and five are related to God's building. The first building of God was the ark made by Noah, and the second was the tabernacle. Concerning the ark, Genesis 6:15 says, "And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits." Here with the dimensions of the ark we have multiples of the numbers three and five. Moreover, Genesis 6:16 says that the ark was to be made with "lower, second, and third stories."

The tabernacle was of three sections: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. According to Exodus 27:13, the width of the outer court on the east side was to be fifty cubits. Then verses 14 and 15 say that the hangings on either side of the gate were to be fifteen cubits with three pillars and three sockets. Furthermore, verse 18 says that the height of the linen curtains of the outer court was to be five cubits. Actually, each curtain of the enclosure in the outer court measured five cubits by five cubits.

If we believe that everything in the Bible has a significance, then we should believe that the numbers three and five signify something. A careful study of the Word shows that these numbers are related to God's building. Therefore, in the compound Spirit we have the Triune God in resurrection mingled with His creature, man, for the power

to bear responsibility, and we also have the element for God's building.

All together we have ten ingredients, giving us a full portrait of the compound Spirit. In the compound Spirit we have the unique God, the Triune God, the man Jesus, the death of Christ, the effectiveness of the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the power of Christ's resurrection, the mingling of divinity with humanity, the power for responsibility, and the element of God's building. All these are ingredients of the compound Spirit.

THE ANOINTING OF THE COMPOUND SPIRIT

To Anoint the Believers with the Father and the Son

Now we come to the function, or the anointing, of the compound Spirit revealed in 1 John 2:18-27. The function of the compound Spirit is to anoint us. According to typology, the tabernacle with its furniture and the priests were anointed with the compound ointment. This indicates that we are anointed with all the ingredients of the compound Spirit. We are anointed with God, the Trinity, the humanity of Jesus, Christ's death, the effectiveness of His death, His resurrection, the power of His resurrection, the power for responsibility, and the building element.

First, the compound Spirit anoints the believers with the Father and the Son, conveyed in the anointing Spirit. This is to be anointed with the Triune God, for it is to be anointed with the Father and the Son, conveyed in the Spirit. We may use as an illustration painting a wall with oil-based paint, a paint that includes oil as the base along with other ingredients. The Spirit of God is the base, with the Father and the Son as elements. Now we are being anointed with the Triune God by the compound Spirit. According to 1 John 2:23 and 24, the Spirit is anointing the believers with the Father and the Son.

To Anoint the Believers with the Eternal Life

The compound Spirit also anoints the believers with the

eternal life conveyed in the anointing Spirit. This is referred to in 1 John 2:25: "And this is the promise which He promised us, the eternal life." Eternal life here is mentioned in relation to the anointing.

To Inoculate the Believers against the Heretical Teachings concerning the Person of Christ

The anointing of the compound Spirit inoculates the believers against the heretical teachings concerning the Person of Christ. Before John speaks of the anointing in 1 John 2:20, he speaks of the antichrists in verse 18 and refers to them again in verse 19. Furthermore, in verse 26 he writes to the believers "concerning those who are leading you astray." In 1 John 4:3 John speaks of the "spirit of the antichrist." According to the full context of this Epistle, the anointing functions to inoculate the believers against heretical teachings.

The Anointing Teaching the Believers to Abide in the Lord

Eventually, we have the abiding in the Lord according to the teaching of the anointing that abides in us. First John 2:27 says, "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him." In the next message we shall consider in more detail the anointing of the compound Spirit as seen in 1 John 2:18-27.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIVE

THE INGREDIENTS OF THE COMPOUND SPIRIT TYPIFIED BY THE COMPOUNDED OINTMENT

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:23-30; 1 John 2:18-27; 4:2-3

In the previous two messages we have considered the ingredients of the compound Spirit and the anointing of the compound Spirit. The ingredients of the Spirit include the unique God, the Triune God, the humanity of Jesus, the precious death of Christ, the sweetness and effectiveness of Christ's death, the precious resurrection of Christ, the power of Christ's resurrection, the mingling of divinity with humanity, the power for responsibility, and the building element. We have seen that the anointing of the compound Spirit is to anoint the believers with the Father and the Son, conveyed in the anointing Spirit, and to anoint the believers with the eternal life conveyed in this Spirit. The anointing of the compound Spirit is also to inoculate the believers against the heretical teachings concerning the Person of Christ. Furthermore, the believers may abide in the Lord according to the teaching of the anointing that abides in us. In this message we shall consider further the anointing of the Spirit as revealed in 1 John 2:18-27. We shall consider this portion, of course, in the light of the type of the compounded ointment in Exodus 30:23-30.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SEPARATING JESUS FROM CHRIST OR THE SON FROM THE FATHER

First John 2:22 says, "Who is the liar if not he who is denying that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, who

is denying the Father and the Son." This verse was written according to the background of John's first Epistle. If we do not know anything about this background, we shall not be able to understand this verse adequately. Those who denied that Jesus is the Christ separated Jesus from Christ, making them two persons. Hence, to say that Jesus is not Christ is to divide Jesus from Christ, as if Jesus and Christ were different persons. The existence of such heretical teaching was part of the background of John's word in verse 22 regarding those who denied that Jesus is the Christ. The truth is that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus and Christ are one. It is heresy to say that Jesus is not the Christ.

Verse 22 does not say that the antichrist denies Jesus *and* Christ. First, this verse says that the antichrist denies that Jesus is Christ. Then the verse goes on to say that antichrist denies the Father and the Son. This indicates that Jesus Christ, the Father, and the Son are all one.

A serious problem in theology related to the Person of Christ and the Trinity is caused by those who try to divide the Father from the Son, and the Son from the Spirit. This is to attempt to systematize Jesus Christ and the Triune God. It is wrong to try to separate Jesus Christ, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. It is also wrong to try to systematize the Trinity. Actually, we cannot divide Jesus Christ, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, because They all are one.

Some Bible teachers try to separate the Father from the Son, and the Son from the Spirit. These teachers deny that the Son is the Father and also that the Son is the Spirit. As a result of their attempt to separate the Father from the Son, and the Son from the Spirit, they have three Gods.

Just as we cannot divide the Father, Son, and Spirit, we cannot divide Christ's divinity from His humanity. There is no way to divide Christ's divinity from His humanity. Trying to divide Christ's divinity and humanity can be compared to dividing a person's body from his soul, and his body and soul from his spirit to make three separate,

distinct entities. Anyone who could be divided in this way would no longer be a whole person. This is an illustration of the seriousness of the mistake of trying to divide and separate the Father from the Son, and the Son from the Spirit. That attempt results in the heresy of tritheism, the belief that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three Gods.

In verse 23 John goes on to say, "Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who confesses the Son has the Father also." Does this not indicate that the Father and the Son are one? According to this verse, if we deny the Son, we do not have the Father, but if we confess the Son, we have the Father.

Verses 22 and 23 indicate that Jesus Christ, the Father, and the Son are all one. They cannot be separated. The error of heretical teachings concerning both Christology and the Trinity has been to divide, to separate, the Son from the Father, and the Spirit from the Son. But especially in these verses, the Bible puts the Father and the Son together as a compound. It is the work of antichrist to divide the Father from the Son.

LETTING THE REALITY OF THE TRIUNE GOD ABIDE IN US

In verse 24 John says, "That which you heard from the beginning, let it abide in you. If that which you heard from the beginning abides in you, you will abide both in the Son and in the Father." What was it that the believers heard from the beginning? From the beginning they heard the apostles preaching concerning the Trinity. Therefore, in this verse John is telling the believers to allow the truth of the proper Trinity to abide in them. If they allow this truth to abide in them, they will abide in the Son and in the Father. Actually, what they heard through the apostles' preaching was the Father and the Son, not merely a doctrine. They heard the reality of the Father and the Son.

Here John seems to be saying, "We spoke to you the reality of the Father and the Son. We taught this to you, and

you heard it and received it. You did not receive merely a doctrine. Rather, you received the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit." But where is the Spirit here? The Spirit is the anointing spoken of in verses 20 and 27.

ETERNAL LIFE

Verse 25 says, "And this is the promise which He promised us, the eternal life." For many years I was unable to understand this verse. With my logical mind I asked, "What is this verse saying? First, John talks about Jesus Christ, then the Son and the Father. Now he brings up the matter of eternal life. What is John talking about? Is the subject of his writing here Jesus Christ, the Father and the Son, or eternal life? It seems to me that John actually has three subjects." Viewing this portion in this way, I could not understand it or reconcile the various subjects in it. Recently I have come to understand that here we have a compound, a mingling or blending, of Jesus Christ, the Father, the Son, and eternal life. Theologians may be bothered by this understanding of these verses. But I believe that if we receive light from the Lord, we shall see that this interpretation is correct. Here we have the compounding, the mingling, of Jesus Christ, the Father and the Son, and eternal life.

In verse 26 John continues, "These things I have written to you concerning those who are leading you astray." Actually, the word "things" is not found in this verse, as indicated by the fact that some versions print it in italics. Hence, John is saying that "these" he wrote to the saints concerning them that would seduce them. To what does "these" refer? It must refer to Jesus Christ, the Father and the Son, and eternal life. Furthermore, "I have written" actually means "I am writing." Therefore, John could say, "I am writing to you concerning those who seduce you." Antichrist and the false prophets teach that Christ is separatefrom Jesus and that the Son is separate from the Father. This kind of heretical teaching is seductive and misleading.

THE COMPOUND ANOINTING ABIDING IN US

After telling the believers that he has written to them concerning those who seduce them, John goes on to say in verse 27, "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him." To be sure, this anointing that abides in us is the moving of a Person. The anointing that abides in us is a Person moving, acting, within us. This anointing Person is the anointing. Who is this anointing Person? To answer this question we need to go to Exodus 30.

In chapter thirty of Exodus we see that the anointing of the tabernacle and the priesthood was the function of the compounded ointment. Whenever a priest was anointed with this compounded ointment, the olive oil, the myrrh, the cinnamon, the calamus, and the cassia were all applied to him. As we pointed out in the previous messages, the compound Spirit typified by the compounded ointment includes the effectiveness of Christ's death, the power of His resurrection, the mingling of divinity with humanity, the power for bearing responsibility, and the building element. Such a compound anointing abides in us.

Verse 27 indicates that because we have the anointing abiding in us, we do not need any man to teach us. We do not need anyone to tell us that the Father is separate from the Son, or that the Father is one with the Son. If we consider the context, we shall see that the word "teach" is related to Jesus Christ and to the Father and the Son.

THE TEACHING OF THE ANOINTING

In verse 27 John also points out that "His anointing teaches you concerning all things." What does John mean by "all things"? We may interpret this in a general way as I did for many years and regard "all things" as referring to all the things in our daily living—the way we dress, cut our hair, spend our money, and our attitude toward others. But

strictly speaking "all things" refers to Jesus Christ, the Father, the Son, and eternal life. The anointing abiding in us is teaching us concerning this. Therefore, we should not listen to nonsensical heresies that say that Jesus is not the Christ or that the Father and the Son are not one. We should not pay attention to those who separate Christ from the Father or who deny that Christ is the Spirit.

Check with your inner experience. You have the compound anointing within you. What does this anointing tell you? Does it not tell you that Jesus Christ, the Father, the Son, and eternal life are all in you? Many of us can say that, according to our experience of the inner anointing, Jesus Christ, God the Father, the Son, eternal life, and the Spirit are all within us. We have no way to divide them. There is no need for us to go to theologians, for we have the compound anointing within us. The teaching of this anointing tells us that Jesus Christ, the Father and the Son, eternal life, and the Spirit are inseparable and that they all abide in us. Do not consult theologians, pastors, or Bible teachers. Instead, pay attention to the teaching of the inner compound anointing.

ABIDING IN THE ANOINTING

In verse 27 John also says that the anointing is truth and is no lie. Then he tells us, "Even as it has taught you, abide in Him." Translators have had a difficult time deciding whether the pronoun at the very end of this verse should be rendered "him" or "it." The margin of the King James Version says "or, it." I would prefer to say, "even as it hath taught you, ye abide in it." Actually the Greek word means "it," although it is not wrong to render it "him." Why do I prefer to say "it" instead of "him" in this verse? The reason is that the meaning here is that we abide in the anointing. The anointing is all-inclusive, for it is the all-inclusive Spirit who includes the Father, the Son, Jesus Christ, eternal life, the death and resurrection of Christ, the power for responsibility, and the building element.

CHRIST—THE CREATOR AND A CREATURE

First John 4:2 says, "In this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ having come in the flesh is out of God." In verse 3 John goes on to say, "And every spirit which does not confess Jesus, is not out of God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist. . . ."

Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. This refers to His incarnation. Concerning the incarnation, the flesh in John 1:14 denotes the Lord's humanity. John 1:1 says that the Word is God. This denotes Christ's divinity. But John 1:14 says that the Word became flesh. In this verse "flesh" refers to the humanity of Christ. Since the Lord Jesus partook of humanity, He had a body with flesh, blood, bones, and skin. Certainly these are elements created by God. Therefore, with respect to His humanity, the Lord Jesus is a creature. If the Lord had never come in the flesh as a creature, how could He have had the blood to shed on the cross for our sins? Only human blood can redeem human beings. Angels, of course, do not have blood. But even if they did, their blood could not serve for the redemption of human beings. Likewise, God the Creator does not have blood. Who then has the blood that can be shed for man's redemption? The answer is that as a creature man has blood. For this reason, we say that regarding His humanity, including all the elements of His physical body, the Lord Jesus is a creature.

Recently a brother told me that a certain preacher stood up in a conference and said, "Some claim that, according to Colossians 1:15, where we are told that Christ is the Firstborn of all creation, this means that Christ is a creature. No! Our Christ is the Creator. He was never created!" If this preacher actually believes this way, he should be categorized with those in 1 John 4 who deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

I know the teachings of those who use Colossians 1:15 to teach heresy concerning the Person of Christ. Arius, who was condemned at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, taught that Christ was a created being and was not God. He tried to

use Colossians 1:15 to prove this. Arius asserted that Christ was created by God, but was created before the ages, preceding all other created things. Hence, according to Arius, there was a time when Christ did not exist. The Bible says clearly that "the Word was God" (John 1:1), yet Arius asserted that the Word is not the self-existent God, and therefore he maintained that Christ's divinity cannot compare with that of God Himself. This is truly a great heresy!

The Bible reveals that Christ is the very God who exists from the beginning and who is self-existent and without beginning. However, Arius said that there was a time that Christ did not exist. This kind of teaching is a great insult to Christ's Person! Arius totally denied Christ's uncreated divinity. Justifiably, his teaching was pronounced a heresy and rejected by the general council at Nicea. We also reject utterly the heretical teaching of Arius.

Colossians 1:15 does say that Christ was the Firstborn of all creation. Colossians 1:18 speaks of Him as the "Firstborn from among the dead." These verses indicate that Christ is the Firstborn in two different ways: He is the Firstborn in the old creation, and He is also the Firstborn of the new creation in resurrection. God has only two creations, the first creation, which is physical, and the new creation, which is spiritual. Christ is the Firstborn in both creations of God.

We may say that Christ has taken two great steps—incarnation and resurrection. Through the step of incarnation Christ partook of the created nature of man. Christ became a real man through incarnation. As a man, Christ was created. If we deny that Christ was created with respect to His humanity, we deny the fact that He was a genuine man. What, then, was He? A phantom? Absolutely not! Christ became a true man with flesh and blood. In this sense, He was created. In His flesh He was the Firstborn of God's old creation. Then in resurrection He was made the Firstborn from among the dead, that is, the Firstborn of God's new creation. Therefore, the Lord Jesus is God, the Creator, and He is also man, the creature. This is the teaching concerning the Lord's all-inclusiveness.

According to the complete revelation of the Bible, Christ is both the Creator and the creature, because he is God and He is man. He is God who creates, and He is also man who is created. As to His being God, He is the uncreated Creator, the I AM who is without beginning. But as to His being man, He is created, the Firstborn, with a beginning. We must see and know these two aspects of Him. We must see that He is God and that He is also man; that He is the Creator and also a creature; that He is the I Am and also the Firstborn; that He is without beginning and also with a beginning. The Bible, on the one hand, says that Christ is the Creator. On the other hand, it also says that He is the creature. This is the complete, clear revelation of the Word of God.

To those who claim that Christ is only the Creator and that He was never created, I would say this: "You insist that Christ is the Creator, but not a creature. Did Christ become a man or not? Did He die on the cross and shed His blood? How could Christ have blood to shed if He were not a creature? A phantom cannot be crucified or shed his blood."

The very Christ today who is on the throne of God is still a man. In 1 Timothy 2:5 Paul tells us that there is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. This Mediator is not a phantom—He is a true man. A phantom could never be a mediator for us. The real mediator must be both God and man; he must have both divinity and humanity.

We may use translation as an illustration. A translator must know at least two languages in order to translate from one into the other. How could anyone translate from Chinese into English if he does not know English, but only knows Chinese? This lack of knowledge of English would make translation by him impossible. In the same principle, Christ must have two natures—divinity and humanity. He must be both God and man in order to "translate" God to man, and man to God.

What blindness and ignorance there are with many of today's teachers! Because they are ignorant and blind, they

condemn the truth when it is proclaimed. Actually, at least in principle, such teachers are antichrist according to the word of the Apostle John. If John were among us today, he would certainly identify as a false prophet or false teacher anyone who would deny that Christ was created with respect to His humanity. To deny that Christ has been created is actually to deny the fact that He has come in the flesh. Our Lord Jesus Christ is all-inclusive. He is both God and man, both the Creator and a creature.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Christian life is altogether a life of being anointed by the compound Spirit. Everything related to the Christian life is wrapped up with this anointing. Here in the anointing of the compound Spirit we have holiness, victory, life, light, power, and real spirituality. The Christian life is a life in the anointing of the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. Oh, may the Lord open our eyes to see that the Christian life is not a matter of teaching, improvement, adjustment, or correction! The Christian life is absolutely a matter of the compound anointing!

We may in fact apply this anointing to everything in our daily life. We may apply it to our family life, to our life at work, and to the way we do our shopping. By anointing us the compound Spirit teaches us concerning all things. Therefore, we should live the Christian life according to the teaching of this compound anointing, not according to anything else. We all need to see this vision.

If we see the vision of the anointing of the compound Spirit, we shall realize that what the vast majority of today's Christians have is a religion. This religion is very different from the anointing of the compound Spirit. Instead of the teaching of the anointing, Christians have theology, regulations, organization, and teachings related to improvement of character. Because the eyes of so many Christians have been covered by religious, natural, and ethical veils, they do not have this understanding, the proper interpretation, of this portion of the Word. May the

Lord open our eyes to see what is revealed here. May we see the compound anointing for the living of the Christian life.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SIX

THE INGREDIENTS OF THE COMPOUND SPIRIT TYPIFIED BY THE COMPOUNDED OINTMENT

(4)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:23-30; 1 John 2:22-27

In this message we shall give a further word on 1 John 2:22-27 in relation to the compound Spirit typified by the compounded ointment described in Exodus 30.

JESUS, CHRIST, THE FATHER, AND THE SON BEING ONE

First John 2:22 speaks of the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, and then it goes on to speak of antichrist as one who denies the Father and the Son. Why does this verse put these two matters together? Why does it speak both of the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ and of the one who denies the Father and the Son? The answer to these questions is that to deny that Jesus is the Christ is to deny the Father and the Son. It is also the case that to deny the Father and the Son is to deny that Jesus is the Christ. This indicates that Jesus is the Christ and that Christ is the Father and the Son. It also indicates that Jesus, Christ, the Father, and the Son are all one. If we deny one, we also deny the others because They all are one. Verse 23, a confirmation of verse 22, goes on to say: "Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who confesses the Son has the Father also." If we deny the Son, we deny the Father. But if we confess the Son, we shall have the Father. Here we have the same matter viewed from different aspects. On the one hand, if we deny the Son, we deny the Father. On the other hand, if we confess the Son, we confess the Father. The reason for this is that the

Son and the Father are one. Not only are the Father and the Son one, but Jesus, Christ, the Son, and the Father are all one.

AN ALL-INCLUSIVE PERSON

First John 2:25 says: "And this is the promise which He promised us, the eternal life." In verses 22, 23, and 25 we have Jesus, Christ, the Son, the Father, and eternal life. All these are one all-inclusive Person as the one compound ointment in Exodus 30. What is eternal life? Eternal life is Jesus, Christ, the Son, and the Father. The all-inclusive Person revealed in these verses is the eternal life.

At the time of the Apostle John certain heretical teachings tried to separate Jesus from Christ, and Christ from the Father. Heretical teachers used their natural, human mentality to analyze the all-inclusive divine Person of Christ. But they had no way to systematize this Person. They could not figure out how Jesus could be the Christ or how Christ could be the Father. Some even claimed that Christ was God but not man. They argued that it was not possible for one person to be both God and man at the same time. Others claimed that Jesus was a man but not God. However, the Apostle John wrote, "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). The Word is God (John 1:1), and the flesh here denotes humanity. This means that, according to John's word, there is one Person who is both God and man.

In dealing with certain opposers, we need to ask four questions. First, is not Jesus the Christ? Second, is Christ not the Son of God? Third, is the Son of God not God Himself? Fourth, is God not triune, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit? All genuine Christians would agree that Jesus is the Christ, that Christ is the Son of God, that the Son of God is God, and that God is triune. If we agree to all this, then we must go on to say that Christ is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Furthermore, we need to see that Jesus, Christ, the Son of God, God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all one all-inclusive Person.

There are some who teach a trinity of separation; we teach the Trinity in the way of all-inclusiveness. The teaching of

certain ones concerning the Person of Christ and the Trinity is based upon the principle of separation, which is the attempt to separate the Father, the Son, and the Spirit one from the other. Actually this principle of separation is the source of many heretical teachings concerning the Person of Christ and the divine Trinity. This attempt at separation has caused serious problems.

The divine revelation in the holy Word is not based on this principle of separation. On the contrary, it is based on the principle of inclusiveness. The divine Person is all-inclusive, and He cannot be divided. Some, however, have declared strongly that the Three of the Trinity are three separate Persons. This attempt to separate the Father from the Son, and the Son from the Spirit has led to heresy both in ancient times and today.

According to what John teaches in chapter two of his first Epistle, whoever denies even a part of Christ's all-inclusive Person is an antichrist. Here we have a principle that applies to many of today's teachers. These teachers may be genuine Christians, yet, at least in part, they are antichrist in their teaching because they deny Christ in a particular aspect of His all-inclusive Person. To deny Christ in any way is to be antichrist, at least to a certain extent. This is the reason John refers to the heretics as antichrist. Their teachings were antichrist in that in some way or in some aspect they denied Christ. For example, the teaching that says that Christ is God is pro-Christ, not antichrist. But the teaching that Christ is only God and not man is antichrist.

Some admit that Christ is the Creator, but they deny strongly that He is also a creature with respect to His humanity. To say that Christ is the Creator is pro-Christ, but to deny the fact that with respect to His humanity He is a creature is to utter something that is antichrist. We must be pro-Christ in an all-inclusive way and say that He is both the Creator and a creature.

THE TRIUNE GOD

The Bible reveals that the Son is called the Father

(Isa. 9:6) and that He is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). Consider the revelation of the Triune God in chapter fourteen of John. In verse 8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father and it suffices us." Apparently surprised at Philip's request, the Lord Jesus answered, "Am I so long a time with you, and you have not know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father. How is it that you say, Show us the Father?" (v. 9). Then the Lord went on to say, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?" Here the Lord seems to be saying, "Philip, have I been with you so long and still you don't know Me? Don't you realize that when you see Me, you see the Father? I am one with the Father. The Father is in Me, and I am in the Father. Apart from Me and outside of Me, there is not such a Person called the Father."

Isaiah 9:6 says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given…and his name shall be called…The mighty God, The everlasting Father." According to this verse, the Son given to us is called the everlasting Father, or the Father of eternity.

Not long ago a certain preacher said that the Father in Isaiah 9:6 is merely similar in meaning to the title "father of his country" applied to Washington and the "father of electricity" applied to Edison. Even if we accept this kind of understanding, we need to ask of what father is the Son. According to Isaiah 9:6, He is the Father of eternity. The title "Father of eternity" actually means "the eternal Father." Some versions translate the Hebrew in this way. The Father of eternity means the Father who exists forever, the eternal Father. The phrase "of eternity" denotes One who is self-existing and everlasting. Therefore, the Father of eternity is the Father who is self-existing and everlasting. Who is this Father who is self-existing and everlasting? Are there two such Fathers—the Father in the Godhead and another Father who is the Son in Isaiah 9:6? The answer to this question is that the Father in the Godhead is the Father of eternity, and according to Isaiah 9:6 the Son is also the Father of eternity. There are not two divine Fathers! There

is only one Father of eternity, the Father who is self-existing and everlasting.

After the Lord Jesus made it clear in John 14 that He and the Father are one, He went on to speak concerning the Spirit as another Comforter: "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever; even the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you" (vv. 16-17). Actually, this other Comforter is the Lord Himself in another form. First He was the Comforter in the form of the flesh. Then He became another Comforter as the Spirit. This Comforter is the Spirit of reality. According to John 14:17, the Spirit of reality will not only be among the disciples, but will also be within them.

In John 14:20 the Lord Jesus went on to say, "In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." The day spoken of here is the day of the Lord's resurrection. Here the Lord seems to be saying, "In that day you will know that I am in the Father. Then you will no longer ask Me to show you the Father. Realizing that I am the Father, you will also know that you are in Me and that I am in you as the Spirit is in you (v. 17). This is possible because I am also the Spirit."

If the Lord were not the Spirit, how could we be in Him, and how could He be in us? If He were not the Spirit, we could not enter into Him, and He could not enter into us. For this, the Lord must be the Spirit, the holy *pneuma,* the heavenly air. Because He is the Spirit, the *pneuma,* the air, He can be in us, and we can be in Him. The disciples came to know this on the day of Christ's resurrection. On that day they knew that He was in the Father, that they were in Him, and that He was in them.

The Lord's words in John 14 indicate that the Three of the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—are one. This is confirmed by the Apostle Paul. First Corinthians 15:45 says, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." This

means that the Lord Jesus as the last Adam in the flesh has become a life-giving Spirit. Furthermore, in 2 Corinthians 3:17 Paul declares, "Now the Lord is the Spirit."

ANOINTED WITH THE ELEMENTS OF THE ALL-INCLUSIVE PERSON

In 1 John 2 we see that Jesus, Christ, the Son, the Father, and the Spirit who is the anointing are all one. Jesus is the Man, the Redeemer, and the Savior. Christ is the anointed One, the Messiah. He is also the resurrected One, the Lord, and the Master. With Jesus we have incarnation, human living, and crucifixion. With Christ we have anointing, resurrection, and ascension. Furthermore, the Father is the source of life, the Son is life expressed, and the Spirit is life flowing. All are included in the all-inclusive Person, and all have been compounded into one ointment. This was the reason we spent much time to consider all the ingredients of the compound Spirit as typified by the compounded ointment in Exodus 30.

We have seen that in this ointment there are ten ingredients: the only God, typified by the one hin of olive oil; the Triune God, signified by the three units of the measure of the four spices; the Man Jesus, a creature of God with respect to His humanity, typified by the four spices of the plant life; the precious death of Christ, typified by the flowing myrrh; the sweetness and effectiveness of Christ's death, signified by the fragrant cinnamon; the precious resurrection of Christ, indicated by the fragrant calamus; the power of Christ's resurrection, typified by the repellent cassia; the mingling of divinity with humanity, seen in the blending of the olive oil with the four spices; the power for responsibility, shown by the five elements of the compounded ointment and the three times five hundred shekels of the four spices; and the building element, seen in the numbers five and three. All these ingredients have been compounded to produce the compound Spirit, the anointing in 1 John 2:20 and 27.

In chapter two of his first Epistle the Apostle John was

innoculating the believers against any heresy, even a partial heresy concerning the all-inclusive Person of Christ. Even a partial heresy is antichrist. As he was innoculating the believers against heresy, John used a metaphor—the metaphor of the compound ointment in Exodus 30. In his writings John often uses metaphors, signs, or symbols taken from the Old Testament. For example, in the Gospel of John we have the tabernacle and the Lamb (John 1:14, 29), and in the book of Revelation we have the lampstand, the hidden manna, the tree of life and the tabernacle (Rev. 1:12; 2:7, 17; 21:3; 22:2). Now we see that in 1 John 2 he uses a unique metaphor—the compounded ointment, oil compounded with four spices—to portray an all-inclusive Person. The Spirit is now anointing us with all the elements of this Person. He is anointing us with every part, aspect, element, and ingredient.

We may use the matter of painting a wall as an illustration of the anointing of the compound Spirit. Suppose you are painting a wall with oil-based paint, paint that is a compound of oil and other elements. When this paint is applied to a wall, all the elements in the paint are applied also. In like manner, we may say that as the compound Spirit anoints us, He is "painting" us. He paints us with all the elements of this all-inclusive Person: the Father, the Son, the Spirit, the Man Jesus, Christ's divinity and humanity, and His incarnation, living, death, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

We have already pointed out what Jesus, Christ, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit include. Jesus includes incarnation, human living, human suffering, and crucifixion. Christ includes the anointed One, resurrection, Lordship, and ascension. The Father includes the source of life; the Son, the expression of life; and the Spirit, the imparting, or giving, of life. All these elements are included in the compound Spirit with which we are being anointed. Day by day, the compound Spirit is anointing us with all these ingredients.

In chapter two of 1 John we see the elements of the

compound Spirit: Jesus, Christ, the Son, the Father, and the eternal life. What these titles include is immeasurable.

The function of the compound Spirit is to anoint us. When the ointment of the Spirit works within us, it becomes the anointing. Because the ointment has been compounded, the anointing also has been compounded. Using again the illustration of painting a wall, we may say that when we paint a wall with oil-based paint, we do not paint the wall merely with oil, but with all the ingredients contained in this paint. Likewise, when we are painted with the divine paint, we are painted with all the ingredients included in it. Today the compound Spirit is anointing us with all the elements of the compound ointment. May this matter be clearly understood and richly experienced by all of us.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SEVEN

THE INCENSE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:34-38

Toward the end of the section concerned with the revelation of the tabernacle two things are described: the anointing oil and the incense. I believe that in the foregoing messages we have considered thoroughly the matter of the anointing oil. We have seen that this oil is a fine and all-inclusive type of Christ being the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. As the life-giving Spirit, Christ not only comes to us from God, but He is also God coming to us. His coming is not only from God but also with God, for Christ comes as God. Eventually, this coming One passed through death and resurrection and has become the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. There is a divine traffic in this universe that moves in two directions. The coming of God to us in Christ is the first direction of this divine traffic. With the incense we have the other direction of this divine traffic, Christ going from us to God. Therefore, the anointing oil is Christ as God coming to us from God, and the incense is Christ going from us to God. It is important that we all see this two-way traffic.

This traffic has much to do with our Christian experience. Do you know what our Christian experience is? It is God coming to us in Christ and our going to God in Christ and with Christ. God's coming to us is a matter of the anointing, and our going to God is a matter of prayer. This divine traffic is the proper Christian experience. In particular, our going to God in Christ requires experience.

THREE FRAGRANT SPICES

Without adequate spiritual experience, we shall not be able to understand the type of the incense or interpret it. This type is actually very strange, more strange than that of the anointing oil. The incense is strange because its three spices—stacte, onycha, and galbanum—are unusual. Even the words themselves are not common. Rather, they are peculiar words used to refer to unusual things.

More than twenty years ago, I spent a good deal of time to study the incense and its ingredients. Then I gave messages on the incense on at least two occasions. Some of those messages were published in the book *How to Meet.*

Exodus 30:34 says, "And Jehovah said to Moses, Take to yourself fragrant spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum—fragrant spices, and pure frankincense; there shall be an equal part of each." In this verse the Lord twice speaks of fragrant spices. Stacte, the first of these spices, is a resinous gum used as the purest myrrh, a myrrh that is edible. Years ago I read that this kind of myrrh can be used as an expectorant. In particular, it can heal the throat and reduce excess saliva. It is an edible medicine. However, the other two spices, onycha and galbanum, are not edible. Actually, they are poisonous. Galbanum has a very disagreeable odor that is even poisonous. Nevertheless, the Lord indicates that it also is a fragrant spice. Later we shall see how this disagreeable and poisonous element can be fragrant.

PRAYER ASCENDING TO GOD

Most Christians, including those who have been in the Lord's recovery for many years, still do not have much knowledge of what genuine prayer is. Furthermore, we may not have much experience of genuine prayer. We thank the Lord that sometimes our prayer is genuine. But most of the time our prayers have not been genuine. Only a small percentage of our prayers have been genuine. For the most part, our prayers have been natural.

Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament

incense signifies our prayer. In the Psalms the saints' prayer is likened to incense that is offered to God and ascends to Him (Psa. 141:2). However, incense is not actually for offering; it is for ascending. We often speak of a prayer being offered to the Lord. Strictly speaking, this understanding is not scriptural. According to the Bible, prayer is not an offering; it is an incense that ascends to God.

We have seen that with the tabernacle there were two altars: the bronze altar in the outer court and the golden altar in the Holy Place. The bronze altar was for burning offerings, sacrifices. On that altar offerings were presented to God. Of course, with the burning of the offerings on the bronze altar in the outer court something did ascend to God.

The golden altar inside the tabernacle was close to the ark in the Holy of Holies. At this golden altar of incense no offerings were offered. The burnt offering, the meal offering, or any other kind of offering could not be presented there. This altar was only for the purpose of burning incense to God. Therefore, the incense that was burned at the golden altar ascended to God. This is not an offering; it is an ascending. The incense that ascends to God typifies our prayer.

THE SWEETNESS OF GENUINE PRAYER

The incense was not for God to see; it was for Him to smell. This indicates that God smells our prayer rather than sees it. What does your prayer smell like? This question may help us to realize that the incense is a deeper type, a type that cannot be understood merely according to doctrine or teaching. We can understand this type only by our experience.

Both the ointment and the incense are Christ. God's coming to us is Christ, and our prayer ascending to Him is also Christ. The anointing is from God and is also of God, for the anointing actually is God Himself. We have used paint as an illustration of the ointment. Just as we paint a wall with paint, so God anoints us with Himself. He "paints" us with Himself as the divine paint. When God anoints us with

Himself as the ointment, He is applied to us and comes into us. In other words, when God anoints us with Himself, He is added to us. His divine element is added to our being in somewhat the same way as paint is added to a wall. This anointing is God's coming.

Now we must go on to realize that our prayer is our going to God in Christ. Furthermore, because the incense is Christ, our prayer is actually a matter of going to God as Christ. What is genuine prayer? Genuine prayer is Christ. This kind of prayer, prayer which is actually Christ, is our going to God in Christ. This is not merely our going to God; it is our going to God through Christ and with Christ. The anointing brings God to us for our participation in the divine element. The incense is our going to God with Christ and as Christ in prayer for God's enjoyment. At the altar in the outer court God has food. But the fragrance that makes God happy and satisfies Him ascends from the golden altar of incense. What God desires is not only food to satisfy His appetite, but also a pleasant fragrance to please Him.

Day by day we may eat healthy, nourishing food. But sometimes this food has little taste. Often people go to a restaurant not to enjoy nourishing food but to enjoy pleasant-tasting food. Children, in particular, like to eat things that taste good. God also has a sense of taste and smell. Do not think that God is so majestic that He does not enjoy a fragrant aroma. God not only eats—He also enjoys a pleasant fragrance.

At the bronze altar we offer Christ to God as food. The burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering all typify Christ as food for God to eat. Whenever we offer Christ to God as the peace offering, there is food for God to eat. However, we need to remember that God also enjoys tasting and smelling.

Very few Christians are interested in hearing about things like this. Only those Christians who truly seek the Lord have the desire to know these things. If you are not seeking the Lord Himself, you will have no interest in messages on the incense. Such messages will not tickle your ears. But the genuine seeking ones surely will want to hear

a word concerning the incense. They will be interested in hearing about what is sweet smelling to God. I can testify that genuine prayer is sweet.

With the two altars, the bronze altar and the golden altar, there is both nourishment and enjoyment for God. The altar in the outer court is larger than the altar in the Holy Place. The altar in the outer court is made of bronze, and the altar in the Holy Place is made of gold. Furthermore, the golden incense altar is finer than the bronze altar of burnt offering. On the bronze altar there was a great deal of wood and, consequently, a big pile of ashes. But on the golden altar of incense only a small fire burned, and the ashes were very limited in quantity. This altar is not for nourishment, for feeding. It is for fragrance and satisfaction. The purpose of the incense altar is to cause a fragrant aroma to ascend to God for His enjoyment. This is the way our prayer should be.

We have a short hymn in our hymnal that speaks of the two-way traffic between God and us and between us and God. The last stanza of this hymn, a hymn on both the ointment and the incense, goes like this:

Ointment is Christ for us,
Exceeding glorious!
Incense is Christ for God,
  Wholly for Him.
Ointment flows down to us,
Christ is our portion thus;
Incense ascends to God,
  Fragrant to Him.

'Tis by th' anointing
Christ we experience
And then the incense burn.
Christ in our prayer and praise—
O what a Christ we raise
From our experience,
  Precious to God.

Hymns, #1116

This hymn well expresses the burden of this message. My

burden is to show you the divine traffic; it is to help you see that God comes to us through Christ, and we go to God in Christ and through Christ. In fact, God's coming is Christ, and our going to God should also be Christ.

We need to be impressed with the fact that our going to God is our prayer. Perhaps you have never imagined that our going to God is our prayer and that this prayer should be Christ Himself.

CHRIST FOR GOD'S ADMINISTRATION

In one of the messages on the golden incense altar we pointed out that the incense altar is the administrative center of God's plan. The tabernacle with the outer court reveals God's plan, God's economy. This plan, this economy, is carried out by means of an administration. The incense altar is the center of God's administration, the divine "White House." Everything else in the tabernacle and the outer court is for the incense altar. This means that the bronze altar is for the golden altar. Furthermore, the lampstand, the showbread table, and even the ark are for the golden altar of incense.

In our experience we begin at the altar of burnt offering, the bronze altar in the outer court. Then we go to the showbread table, to the lampstand, and to the ark. After we have been to the ark, we come to this administrative center to burn the incense. The incense we burn at this altar is Christ Himself. Hence, the incense that ascends to God is our going to God in Christ. This matter is deep. It means that our going to God in a proper way is Christ for God's administration.

A deep matter such as the burning of the incense can only be understood by experience. When you reach the point where you have this experience, you will see that your experience is exactly portrayed by the type of the incense in Exodus 30. You go to God in prayer, and your prayer is your going to God. Furthermore, this going to God is Christ. This is your prayer, a sweet-smelling fragrance to God. The prayer that ascends to Him as a sweet-smelling fragrance

is God's administration and carries out God's plan. God has no other way to carry out His economy.

If we persist in seeking the Lord, eventually our experience will bring us into the realization of the fact that our prayer is simply Christ Himself. Our prayer is Christ, and it is also our going to God in Christ, with Christ, and even as Christ. This kind of prayer not only satisfies God with a sweet-smelling fragrance, but simultaneously carries out God's administration.

THE WAY TO THE INCENSE ALTAR

In the Old Testament the serving priests were required to come to the altar before entering the tabernacle. At that point the priests had two needs—they needed the blood to cleanse them, and they needed food to nourish them. The bronze altar in the outer court supplied the priests these two needs. The blood washed them of their sins, and the meat nourished them. When they came to this altar, they were unclean and empty. Outwardly, they were defiled; inwardly, they were empty. Therefore, they needed the blood shed on the altar to cleanse them of their defilement, and they needed the meat of the offerings to satisfy their hunger.

After being cleansed and fed at the altar, the priests could move on. This means that the supply at the bronze altar equipped them and qualified them to enter the tabernacle. Spontaneously they could come to the showbread table to receive a further supply of life. This indicates that our eating must be continual. We do not eat once for all. There is one kind of eating at the bronze altar, and there is a continuation of our eating at the showbread table.

The life supply on the showbread table brought the priests to the lampstand, where they received light. The life supply always brings forth light. If we do not eat at the showbread table, we shall be in darkness. But feeding at this table brings us to the lampstand. This means that, experientially, this feeding produces light. Many of us have experienced this. Early in the morning we offer Christ as our sin offering

and as our trespass offering. We experience this at the bronze altar in the outer court, where we are cleansed and fed. This strengthens us to continue our enjoyment of Christ at the showbread table, where we take Him as our life supply. The life supply always turns us to the light. How much light we receive depends on how much of the life supply we enjoy.

The light received at the lampstand guides us to the ark. There at the ark we contact God, and God's presence leads us to the golden altar of incense, the place of prayer.

Once we are in God's presence, His presence turns us to the incense altar. In other words, it turns us to prayer. Spontaneously, anyone who comes into God's presence will pray; no one can hold back the prayer. When we pray, we are no longer at the ark. Instead, we are at the incense altar.

We have pointed out that the incense altar is very close to the ark. Regarding the incense, 30:36 says, "And you shall grind some of it very fine, and put some of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with you." What is the testimony? The testimony is the law inside the ark. For this reason, the ark is called the ark of testimony. Verse 36 indicates that the incense altar was directly in front of the ark. Although there was a veil separating the ark from the incense altar, they were still very close. According to the record in the Bible, sometimes the incense altar was within the veil. The meaning of the closeness of the ark and the incense altar is that the kind of prayer which is Christ Himself is the outcome of our contact with God. We may also say that it is the result of being in God's presence.

If we would enter into God's presence, we must first come to the bronze altar. Then we must spend time at the showbread table and the lampstand. The lampstand will eventually guide us to the ark, where God meets with us on the propitiatory-cover. Now we are in the presence of God. The outcome of being in His presence is the prayer that is Christ ascending to God as incense.

If your experience has not come to this point, this word

may seem strange to you, and you will not understand what I am talking about. But if you have had even some amount of experience, you will understand my word and feel very good about it, knowing that it is true.

A PICTURE OF TWO-WAY TRAFFIC

Have you ever paid careful attention to these two pictures in Exodus 30, the one of the ointment and the other of the incense? The significance of these pictures is tremendous. The significance here is that of two-way traffic, the coming and the going. As we have pointed out, the ointment is coming to us, and the incense is going to God. Christ as the Spirit coming to us is the ointment, and Christ ascending from us to God is the incense. The ointment is toward us; the incense is toward God. The ointment is for us to enjoy, and the incense is for God's enjoyment. We should not think that the incense is for our enjoyment. If we try to enjoy it ourselves, we shall be cut off. Exodus 30:38 speaks clearly concerning this: "Whoever makes any like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people." Incense is absolutely and entirely for God. However, there is an enjoyment for us, and this enjoyment is the ointment, the compound Spirit. We have emphasized the fact that with the ointment the priests and all the parts of the tabernacle were anointed. This is our portion. The incense is God's portion. The ointment is Christ for us; the incense is Christ for God.

In our experience we should not only have one-way traffic. This means that we should not only have Christ coming to us but also have Christ going back to God. We need to have two-way traffic, God coming to us through Christ and our going to God through Christ. We should complete the circuit by burning the incense. Therefore, we need the anointing ointment, and we need the burning of the incense as well. God anoints us with the ointment, and we burn the incense to God. In the next two messages we shall consider in detail the elements of the incense.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT

THE INCENSE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:34-38

In the foregoing message we saw the two-way traffic between God and us portrayed by the ointment and the incense. The ointment typifies God coming to us in Christ and through Christ for our enjoyment. The incense typifies our going to God through Christ in prayer for His satisfaction. In this message we shall begin to consider the elements of the incense.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE OINTMENT AND THE INCENSE

In both the anointing oil and the incense we have the numbers three, four, and five. Furthermore, in both the Triune God is portrayed. In both the anointing oil and the incense we see divinity, humanity, the mingling of divin ity with humanity, and the death and resurrection of Christ.

The Triune God

In the messages on the anointing oil we pointed out that although there were four spices, the quantity of these spices was three units of five hundred shekels each. The middle unit, formed of cinnamon and calamus, was divided into two parts, each measuring two hundred fifty shekels. Therefore, with the anointing oil we have four spices but only three units. These three units signify the Triune God. This is made especially clear by the fact that the middle unit signifies the Son who was "split" on the cross. With the incense we have three spices instead of four. As we shall

see, these three spices of the incense also signify the Triune God.

In the incense there are three kinds of spices—stacte, onycha, and galbanum—with pure frankincense. According to the numbers and items of the ingredients, there are three in one, that is, three kinds of spices with pure frankincense. According to the grammatical construction of verse 34, the three spices form one group, while the fourth item, the pure frankincense, is in a category by itself. Therefore, here we have three plus one, which equals four. Three is the number of the Triune God, and four, the number of the creature, the human being, used in a positive sense. The meaning here is that the Triune God becomes a human being. Divinity is brought into humanity. This, of course, refers to Jesus Christ. He is the very God becoming a Man; He is divinity brought into humanity.

All four ingredients were compounded and mingled into one incense. Therefore, here we have God mingled with man, God compounded with man, divinity mingled and compounded with humanity, to produce the incense.

Generating Life and Redeeming Life

Exodus 30:34 says, "And Jehovah said to Moses, Take to yourself fragrant spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum—fragrant spices, and pure frankincense; there shall be an equal part of each." Both the first spice, stacte, and the third, galbanum, are resinous gums produced by trees. The middle spice, onycha, is the shell of a little animal. The order of these three spices is significant. It is important that the onycha is not mentioned either first or last, but in the middle.

As we have pointed out a number of times in foregoing messages, there are two factors in the life of Christ: the generating or producing life, signified by the vegetable life, and the redeeming life, signified by the animal life. Both aspects of Christ's life can be seen in the Gospel of John. According to John 12:24, Christ is the grain of wheat that falls into the ground, dies, and produces many other grains. This is the

vegetable life as the generating, producing, life. The animal life, however, is for redemption, for it is a life that can be slain and from which blood may be shed. In John 1:29 we see the redeeming life of Christ: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Christ is the Lamb who was crucified for our redemption. Christ, therefore, has both a generating life and a redeeming life. As the Lamb of God, Christ has the life signified by the animal life, and as the grain of wheat, He has the life signified by the vegetable life, the plant life. The animal life is for redeeming, and the plant life is for generating, producing.

In order to redeem us, there was the need for the second of the Godhead, with the aspect of the animal life signified by the onycha, to be slain on our behalf. The Lord Jesus was such a redeeming One. As the second of the Godhead, He accomplished redemption for us. This is the reason that the second spice, not the first or the third, has the animal life. The onycha, therefore, the second of the spices, surely signifies the second of the Trinity, the One who was crucified for our redemption. Neither the Father nor the Spirit died for the accomplishment of redemption. It was the Son who shed His blood on the cross so that we may be redeemed. Therefore, the three spices with onycha in the middle give us another portrait of the Triune God.

Humanity

Where do we see humanity signified by the ingredients of the incense? Humanity is indicated by the number four implied in verse 34. Here we have three spices and pure frankincense, a total of four items. We have seen that in the Bible the number four signifies the creature, humanity in particular. Therefore, the four items used for the composition of the incense signify humanity.

The Resurrection of Christ

With the incense we can also see the resurrection of Christ. With the ointment Christ's resurrection is signified by the calamus and the cassia. But with the incense His

resurrection is signified by frankincense. Hence, with both the ointment and the incense we have Christ's death and resurrection.

The Picture of a Wonderful Person

With the ointment and incense we see the Triune God, divinity, humanity, and Christ's death and resurrection. In both we see divinity mingled with humanity. In both we see the Triune God in man passing through death and coming forth in resurrection. In both we have the numbers three and four signifying divinity and humanity. With the incense the three spices signify Christ's death for generating and redeeming, and the frankincense signifies His resurrection. This means that with the incense we have a picture of the wonderful Person of Christ. The incense is nothing less than Christ Himself with all the process through which He has passed and with all He has accomplished.

With the composition of both the anointing oil and the incense the principle is nearly the same. However, the anointing oil is for God's coming to us, and the incense is for our going to God. In the anointing we have the Trinity, divinity, humanity, and the death and resurrection of Christ. In the incense we also have the Trinity, divinity, humanity, and Christ's death and resurrection.

OILED AND SALTED

Eventually, in both the anointing oil and the incense we have the number five. With the ointment, the four spices are blended with olive oil to give us the number five. But with the incense four elements, the three spices and the frankincense, are tempered with salt to give the number five. With the ointment the tempering element is oil, but with the incense the tempering element is salt. This means that God's coming to us is a matter of our being oiled, but our going to God is a matter of our being salted.

Why is it that when God comes to us there is an abundance of oil, but no salt? The reason is that with God there is nothing unclean. He comes to us from a pure source. However, our

source is full of uncleanness. Therefore, our going to God requires salt in place of oil. Salt is a substance that is pure even though it is found in an unclean place. Salt is one of the most pure substances on earth. The tempering of the four elements of the incense with salt indicates that our prayer needs to be thoroughly salted so that all the "germs" may be killed and we may be purified. The salting element is also the element that tempers our prayer. Thank the Lord that He does not come to us with salt. It would be most unpleasant if He came to us with a large quantity of salt instead of an abundance of oil. But praise Him that when we go to God we are salted, seasoned, tempered!

OUR NEED TO BE SALTED

In today's church life we all need to be salted. Otherwise, there will be friction and controversy among us. The elders in particular need to be salted. Anyone who serves as an elder should expect to be salted. To be an elder is to be like fresh fish placed into a pot of salt. The eldership can be compared to a pot of salt. Be assured, elders, that the eldership will cause you to be salted.

Recently, in Anaheim we had a conference for the Chinese-speaking saints. I noticed that as the serving ones were preparing for this conference, they needed to be salted. If you were to ask some of the leading ones among them concerning this, they would say definitely that as they served together they needed to be salted. We need to be salted, for without the salt we cannot have fragrant incense ascending to God.

Many of us can testify that we need to be salted also in our married life. If you have not been married, you may be like a piece of fresh fish. But after you are married, you will begin to be salted immediately, perhaps even on your honeymoon. It is a very positive matter to be salted. If fish is not salted, it will give off a foul odor after a few days. But salted fish retains its flavor for a long time. Likewise, being salted in your married life will cause you to maintain your flavor in a positive way. Brothers, do you want to be

pleasant husbands? If so, you need to be salted. Sisters, do you want to be pleasant wives, or offensive ones? Those who are offensive have not been salted. If you want to be a pleasant wife, you need to be salted. If a sister is salted over a period of years in her married life, she will become very pleasant.

We all need to be salted. We cannot go to God without salt. The salt with which we are salted is the salt of God's everlasting covenant. More than once the Old Testament speaks of remembering the salt of the Lord's covenant (Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19). The salt used in tempering the incense is related to the salt of God's covenant. The main point here is that if we would experience the Christian life in a finer way, we shall learn that our prayer must be thoroughly salted.

THE SALT OF THE CROSS APPLIED TO OUR PRAYER

What is the element of the salt with which we are salted? This element is the cross. God's coming to us is not a matter of the daily working of the cross. Rather, His coming is altogether in the oil, in the Spirit. However, our going to God requires the cross. We need the cross all the time. The salt here signifies the cross of Christ, His killing death. We need to experience the killing death of Christ in our prayer. I can testify that I have much experience of this. If my motive, intention, and heart are not pure, I am not able to pray. Furthermore, if my spirit has some kind of bias, I cannot pray either. In order to pray, my spirit must be without bias, and my motive and intention must be pure. To be pure in this way requires salt; it requires the cross.

Young people may realize that if they commit sins, they will find it very difficult to pray. But as we grow in the Lord and come to a finer stage in the spiritual life, we shall see that even a little bias in our spirit can keep us from praying properly. It is not necessary to sin in order to have your prayer hindered. Even a small amount of bias in your spirit can hinder your prayer. You may still pray if you have bias

in your spirit, but deep within you may realize that this is not the kind of prayer the Lord desires. I dare not say whether or not the Lord will answer a prayer that issues from a biased spirit. However, I am assured that this is not the kind of prayer He desires.

I also know that such prayer does not have a pleasant fragrance to Him. Instead, He finds the odor of that kind of prayer very offensive. Many times our prayer has been altogether offensive and unpleasant to the Lord's sense of smell. I believe that those saints with experience can endorse this word and say amen to it. From their experience they know that prayer which issues from impure motives or from bias in our spirit is offensive to the Lord.

THE INCENSE TEMPERED WITH SALT

By now we should be clear that for God's coming to us the Spirit, the oil, is needed. But for our going to God the cross, the salt, is needed. Both the oil and the salt are tempering elements. The oil tempers the ointment for God to come to us, but the salt tempers the incense for us to go to God. Our prayer needs to be in the Spirit. However, the Bible in its clear portrait concerning our prayer indicates that what is needed is mainly the cross. Do you intend to pray? As you are about to pray, you need to be crossed out. Your natural being, your natural way, your natural thought, your natural desire, your natural preference, your natural choice—all must be crossed out.

You probably do not realize how many unclean elements or how much dirt there is in your being. There is dirt in your mind, in your emotion, and in your will. There may be much defilement both in your love and in your hatred. As a result, unclean elements may be expressed by your utterances in prayer. This means that even in your prayer there may be uncleanness or defilement. The prayer of some can be likened to the eruption of a volcano: it bursts forth with the release of many unclean things. These ones may feel that they are praying to God. Actually, they are expelling much uncleanness from their inner being.

In emphasizing our need to be salted, I am not saying that there is no need for the Spirit in our prayer. We do need the Spirit, but that is not our greatest need. Our greatest need is the cross, the salt. For us to enjoy God the main element needed is oil. When God comes to us to be our enjoyment, He must be the oil, the Spirit. Therefore, it is necessary for God Himself to be oil. Otherwise, there would be no way for us to enjoy Him. But for us to go to God in prayer, we need plenty of salt. We need to be salted thoroughly and absolutely.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-NINE

THE INCENSE

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 30:34-38

In the first message on the incense we considered the two-way traffic between God and us and between us and God. We saw that the ointment typifies God coming to us in Christ and through Christ, and the incense typifies our going to God in Christ and through Christ. In the second message on the incense we pointed out that with both the ointment and the incense we see the Triune God, divinity, humanity, and Christ's death and resurrection. We also saw that for the experience of God coming to us in Christ the oil is needed, but for the experience of our going to God in Christ the salt is needed. This means our prayers need to be salted by the effective death of Christ. In the previous message we strongly emphasized our need to have our prayers purified by the salt so that we may offer fragrant incense to God for His satisfaction. Let us now go on to consider the elements of the incense.

FRAGRANT SPICES

Stacte

The first of the fragrant spices used to make the incense is stacte. The Hebrew word for stacte is *nataph*. It signifies myrrh, a resinous gum used as purest myrrh. Hence, stacte is another kind of myrrh and signifies the sweet death of Christ. We should remember that the first spice in the anointing oil was also myrrh. This indicates that both for God's coming to us and for our going to God a basic need is the death of Christ. Without the death of Christ, it would be

impossible for us to go to God. Furthermore, it would even be impossible for God to come to us. This was the reason the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7). The Lord's word indicates that if He did not "go away" by dying on the cross for the accomplishment of redemption, there would be no way for God to come into us. When the Lord Jesus was with the disciples, God was present with them. But this was only a partial coming of God to the disciples. While the Lord Jesus was with His disciples in the flesh, God had come to man only halfway. He did not yet have the way to enter into His disciples. Therefore, the Lord had to go away; that is, He had to pass through death to open the way for God to come into fallen man.

The root of the Hebrew word for stacte, *nataph,* means drop (Job 29:22; S. S. 4:11; see Luke 4:22). We have already pointed out that the myrrh used as an ingredient in the anointing oil has the appearance of tears when it issues out from the tree. Now we see that the root of the Hebrew word for stacte means drop. This is very significant. It indicates that the Lord Jesus shed many tears in His human life. As He walked on earth experiencing the myrrh, He shed many tears. Even as He was ministering, inwardly there was the "dropping" of tears. On the cross there was a great dropping of the Lord's human life, His soulish life. Because of this, there can be the myrrh, the stacte, as the first element of the incense.

Onycha

The Hebrew word rendered onycha is *shecheleth.* This word denotes the shell of a little animal that grows in the marshes of the Red Sea, a shell that is good for medicine and is also used as a spice. This signifies that Christ with His redemptive life died for sinners.

In order for us to be redeemed, there was the need for the second of the Godhead, signified by onycha, to be slain on our behalf. Onycha grows in the marshes of the Red Sea, which signifies the corrupted world. The Lord Jesus became a little

"animal" living in the marshes of this corrupted world for thirty-three and a half years. This is the Christ who was crucified to redeem us.

As we have pointed out, the animal life typifies the redeeming aspect of Christ's life. Therefore, not only does the onycha indicate the death of Christ; it also indicates that the Lord Jesus has a redemptive life and that He lived a redemptive life for us. Then on the cross His redemptive life was given for sinners.

Galbanum

The Hebrew word for galbanum is *chelebnah.* This denotes a resinous gum. As the third element in the incense, galbanum signifies the powerful death of Christ's generating life.

The root of the Hebrew word for galbanum means fat, and the word ending means weeping. Fat signifies that Christ lived a life that was absolutely for God. This is the significance of the fat of the burnt offering. While He lived such a life absolutely for God, Christ wept for those who were not for God. On the one hand, He Himself lived a life absolutely for God; on the other hand, He wept for those who did not care for God.

The odor of galbanum as a resinous gum was exceedingly strong, disagreeable, unpleasant, and offensive. This unpleasant odor has three strange functions. First, although by itself it is offensive, it strengthens the fragrance of the other odors. When this spice is added to the other spices, the fragrance of the other spices is increased.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He certainly was offensive to the Pharisees and Sadducees. His rebuke of the Pharisees offended them to the uttermost. According to Matthew 23:33, He called them "serpents, brood of vipers." How strong and offensive the Lord was! Nevertheless, as the galbanum, He strengthened the fragrance of the other odors.

Myrrh is fragrant, and onycha gives off a pleasant fragrance when it is burned. The more onycha is burned, the more pleasant is its fragrance. Therefore, both myrrh and

onycha have a sweet fragrance. But when galbanum is added to these spices, the offensive odor of the galbanum strengthens the sweet fragrance of the myrrh and the onycha.

The second function of the galbanum was to cause the fragrance of the incense to remain and endure. In other words, it enabled the incense to retain its fragrance for a longer time. Therefore, the galbanum not only strengthens the fragrance of the other spices; it also causes the incense to retain its fragrance.

Third, the galbanum functions as a repellent. It repels and expels noxious insects and poisonous reptiles, including serpents. In itself galbanum is noxious. It is used to repel and expel insects and poisonous reptiles and snakes. This is especially true of the "old serpent, the Devil." The galbanum indicates that the death of Christ expels the serpent. In a sense, Christ's death is not pleasant, but it truly strengthens and preserves the other elements, and it expels the serpent. His death is a repellent; it has the repelling power to expel Satan.

From the picture in these verses we see that all three spices signify the death of Christ. In the essence of all the ingredients we have the death of Christ. The Triune God came into humanity to die in order to redeem us, to produce sons, and expel evil. The Triune God became a man to generate us as sons, to redeem us from the fall, and to expel all evil.

Whenever I consider the three spices used to make the incense, I am convinced once again that the Bible truly is something inspired by God and revealed by Him. Man's wisdom is not able to compose such a record. No doubt, these words were written according to the inspiration and revelation of God.

Frankincense

Frankincense is a white resinous gum signifying the sweet resurrection of Christ. The root of the Hebrew word for frankincense means white. Furthermore, there are five kinds of gum-producing trees from which frankincense is

derived, and these trees have flowers of five petals and fruits of five sides. This signifies responsibility in resurrection with the Trinity. It is also interesting to note that within the flowers of these trees are five pistils and five stamens. Therefore, with the tree that produces frankincense we see the number five again and again. We see this number with the kinds of trees, with the five petals on the flowers, with the five stamens and five pistils within the flowers, and with fruits of five sides. All this is related to the significance of the frankincense.

An Equal Proportion of the Four Basic Elements

According to 30:34, "there shall be an equal part of each." This means that there was to be an equal proportion of each of the four basic elements. This signifies that all the attributes of Christ's death and resurrection are even.

With the incense nothing should be unbalanced. However, many Christians today are not balanced in their experience. For example, certain believers place too great an emphasis on the experience of the cross. With them, there is no experience of resurrection. Rather, they are always talking about bearing the cross. It seems that they never have a happy, pleasant expression on their face. In the meetings of such Christians there may be much groaning, but there is very little praise, if any. I have attended meetings where the people spent a good deal of time groaning. The ones who attended those meetings emphasized the Lord's death, but neglected His resurrection.

Other Christians, at the opposite extreme, seem always to be soaring with excitement. Actually, this is not the experience of the resurrection of Christ. Instead, it is an expression of natural emotion. Certain Pentecostalists are in this category. Often they will excitedly say, "Praise Jesus! Praise Jesus!" With them there is little sighing or groaning.

I use these examples to point out our need to be balanced in our experience of Christ. We need an equal portion of the Lord's death and resurrection.

In the last message we emphasized the fact that we are salted by the death of Christ. Yes, we certainly need the salt of the Lord's cross. Nevertheless, the incense still contains frankincense, which signifies resurrection. Along with our experience of the death of Christ, we need the experience of His resurrection.

The three spices indicate that the Lord Jesus lived a generating life, signified by the plant life, and also a redeeming life, signified by the animal life. The first and third spices, the stacte and the galbanum, are of the plant life. The second spice is of the animal life. All three spices signify the Lord's death. According to the significance of the first spice, the stacte, Christ died to generate many sons. According to the significance of the second spice, onycha, He died to redeem fallen sinners. According to the significance of the third spice, galbanum, He died to expel the enemy. By this we see that Christ's death has three functions: to redeem fallen sinners, to produce sons of God, and to expel the old serpent, the Devil. Praise the Lord for the functions of generating, redeeming, and expelling!

In the prescription for the ointment recorded in Exodus 30, definite quantities are designated for each ingredient. But in the prescription for the incense, no quantities whatever are mentioned. This signifies that Christ is immeasurable, unlimited. With this incense there is no measurement and no weight. In this universe there are no means available to tell the measure of Christ. For this reason, in Ephesians 3:18 Paul tells us that Christ is the breadth, the length, the height, and the depth. In other words, Christ is unlimited. The unlimitedness of Christ is indicated by the fact that no measurements are given for the stacte, onycha, galbanum, and frankincense. We are simply told that there were to be equal parts, or portions, of each element used to make the incense.

Seasoned with Salt

Verse 35 says, "And you shall make of it incense, an ointment, the work of a perfumer, salted, pure, and holy." As we have seen, salt here signifies the effectiveness of Christ's

death. This salt kills negative things and also functions as a preservative (Lev. 2:13). In salt there is corruption-killing power. In typology salt signifies the preserving power of the death of Christ and also its killing power.

The elements of the incense are tempered together with salt. The anointing ointment is tempered with the olive oil, the Holy Spirit. But the incense is tempered with salt, the cross of Christ.

THE INCENSE GROUND AND PUT BEFORE THE TESTIMONY IN THE TENT OF MEETING

Verse 36 says, "And you shall grind some of it very fine, and put some of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with you; it shall be most holy to you." According to verses 35 and 36, the incense must be salted, ground, and burned. The grinding of the incense and putting it before the testimony in the tent of meeting signifies the blending of Christ's sweet death and His fragrant resurrection, and the offering of His death and resurrection to God on the incense altar as a base for the intercession of Christ and His members.

In order for our experiences of Christ to become a sweet fragrance to God, these experiences must be seasoned, ground, and eventually burned. When our experiences pass through such a process, they become a sweet fragrance to God. This means that not only do we need to experience the essence of what Christ is and does, but our experiences of this Christ need to be salted, ground, and burned. When something has been burned, it is reduced to ashes. Whatever we offer to God as incense will be consumed, but it will be fragrant to Him. Only when our experience of Christ has been salted, ground, and burned shall we have the incense to offer to God as a sweet-smelling fragrance. First we need the genuine experiences of Christ with all the ingredients of the incense. Then we need the salting, the grinding, and the burning of this incense. By this we see that experience is indispensable for the burning of the incense. We must have

experiences of Christ, and these experiences must be salted, ground, and burned.

NOT FOR MAN'S SMELLING

Exodus 30:37 and 38 say, "And the incense which you shall make, you shall not make for yourselves in its proportions; it shall be holy to you for Jehovah. Whoever makes any like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people." In these verses we see that the incense is not at all for man's smelling. The incense is absolutely for the Lord's enjoyment and satisfaction. What does this mean for our experience in a practical way? It means that we should not pray so that others in the meeting will listen to us. Many times prayers are uttered for the sake of human listeners. This is a serious mistake. The incense should be offered only to God, it should ascend to God, and it should be enjoyed by God. For this reason, we should not pray for the sake of human listeners, but for the Lord's satisfaction.

In these three messages on the incense we have covered a number of deep matters related to spiritual experience. I would encourage you to take an adequate amount of time to dwell on all these points by praying over them and by having fellowship with others concerning them.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY

THE WORKERS OF THE TABERNACLE, THE FURNITURE, AND THE PRIESTLY GARMENT

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 31:1-11; 35:10-19, 30—36:2

In this message we shall begin to consider the workers of the tabernacle, the furniture, and the priestly garments, as described in 31:1-11; 35:10-19, 30-36:2. I appreciate these portions of the Word. After studying them, I realize that not even in the New Testament do we have such a detailed picture showing us how to build up God's dwelling place.

Today God's dwelling place is the church. The building up of the church is truly a great matter and a very important subject in the Bible. Over a long period of time, I have often spoken with the leading brothers in Anaheim concerning the building up of the church. This is a heavy burden on our heart. But we are not able to say much with clarity regarding how to build up the church in a locality. Even though I have studied the book of Exodus a number of times, I did not have a clear understanding from this book about the way to build the dwelling place of God on earth. For this reason, I appreciate the record in Exodus that speaks of the workers of the tabernacle. This is the unique record in the entire Bible showing us the detailed way for God's people to build up His dwelling place on earth in this age. Therefore, we should treasure this record.

The record of the building up of God's dwelling place in Exodus is in three sections: the first, 31:1-11; the second, 35:10-19; and the third, 35:30—36:2. In this message and in the message following, we shall cover a number of points

from these sections related to the workers of the tabernacle, the furniture, and the priestly garments.

THE MASTER BUILDER

Exodus 31:2-5 speaks of the master builder of the tabernacle. Paul uses the term master builder in 1 Corinthians 3:10: "According to the grace of God given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid a foundation . . . ." A master builder is a leader in God's building.

Bezalel, the Son of Uri, the Son of Hur

Exodus 31:2 says, "See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah." Bezalel is a type in the Old Testament of the master builder. The name Bezalel means "in the shadow of God." This indicates that as a master builder, Bezalel was altogether under God's shadowing. He was a man under the shadow of God's grace. This corresponds to Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 3:10, where he says that it was by God's grace that he was made a wise master builder.

All of us, whether we are leaders in God's building or common builders, need God's grace. We need to be under the shadow of His grace. If we are not under the shadow of God's grace, many things may come to disturb us. But the shadow of God will keep these things away from us and cause us to remain in a peaceful situation and condition to do the building work.

Regarding the building up of God's dwelling place, there is a real conflict, a severe fighting between God and His enemy. The enemy does not like to see the building of God's dwelling place going on in a good way. Therefore, he will do everything he can to interrupt, interfere, frustrate, attack, and destroy. The leading brothers in the churches know that it is a troublesome matter to take care of a local church because the enemy often causes disturbances and frustrations. Certain things we know have been sent by the enemy purposely to damage the work of building. There is no logical reason for such things to happen. Nevertheless, they happen because they were caused by the enemy.

Especially the elders must realize that in order to build up a local church we need to be under the shadow of our God. For the building of God's dwelling place, we all should be named Bezalel. We all should be those under the shadow of God.

The name of Bezalel's father was Uri, which means "light of Jehovah." This name indicates that all the builders of God's dwelling place should be not only under God's shadow, but also full of the Lord's light.

The name of Bezalel's grandfather was Hur. Hur means free, noble, white. Not only should we be under God's shadow and full of light, but we should be free and noble. Those who build God's dwelling place are not low people. On the contrary, they are noble people doing a noble work. No other work is as noble as the building of God's dwelling place. Furthermore, the builders of God's dwelling place are "white," that is, they are clean and pure. When we put together the meaning of the names Bezalel, Uri, and Hur, we can see what kind of person the builders of God's dwelling place, especially the elders, must be.

Filled with the Spirit of God

Concerning Bezalel, 31:3 says, "And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all workmanship." If we would build God's dwelling place, we must be a people filled with the Spirit of God. By our natural life and ability and in our natural man, we are not able to do this work. Nothing natural is capable of building God's dwelling place. Only the Spirit of God can build His own dwelling place through us. We are the instruments, the means. The actual ability, capacity, strength, and power must be God Himself as the Spirit to us.

According to verse 3, this filling up with the Spirit of God involves four matters: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and workmanship. It is difficult to explain the difference between wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. The Hebrew word rendered workmanship also means craftsmanship. For the building of God's dwelling place, we need craftsmanship. It takes skill to be able to build even a small table. This skill, this

workmanship, involves knowledge. But it is not sufficient to have only knowledge; we also need understanding and wisdom.

It is possible for us to have knowledge without understanding. For example, the sisters may have some knowledge of how to measure materials used in making clothing and how to cut these materials. But it takes understanding to know how to put the materials together to make an article of clothing. I know something about the suits I wear, but I do not have any understanding at all concerning how they are actually made. I may know the length of my sleeves and the kind of material used in making my suits, but I do not understand how a tailor goes about making them. I use this as an illustration of the difference between knowledge and understanding and of the fact that we may have knowledge but still be lacking in understanding.

We may also take the matter of listening to messages as an illustration of the difference between knowledge and understanding. You may know all the verses used in a particular message. Nevertheless, although you know these verses and may even be able to recite many of them, if you put all the verses together, you may not have any understanding of them. For the understanding of the verses, you need to listen to the ministry of the Word. Then you will begin to have understanding as well as knowledge.

In listening to a message we first may have the knowledge of the verses and then an understanding of what the verses mean. However, we may have both knowledge and understanding of verses, but still not have any revelation concerning them. Someone may say, "I know these verses, and I also understand them. But as far as I am concerned, there is nothing here for me to see." But as a minister of the Word continues to open the Word to you, you eventually begin to see what is revealed in the verses being considered. This is a matter of wisdom.

When Moses was with the Lord on the mountain, God showed him the design of the tabernacle and all the furniture and utensils. Moses learned the dimensions of the ark,

the showbread table, the incense altar, and the bronze altar. He also learned what materials were to be used in making these things. But suppose Moses had said to certain ones of the children of Israel, "Here is a description of the design, dimensions, and material of the tabernacle and its furniture. Please go and make the tabernacle and all the furniture." No one could carry out this work without knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

Certain students in a history class may have a thorough knowledge of the material they are required to learn. They may spend hours reviewing the chapters in their history book, studying them very closely. They may become so familiar with much of the material that they can almost recite it word for word. If a history examination is based on the material in the textbook, these students will receive an excellent grade because they have knowledge. But should the professor ask them other kinds of questions, questions that go beyond the textbook, these students may not know how to answer. Although their knowledge is adequate, they are lacking in understanding. They may know the material in the textbook, but they do not understand how to put all this material together to present a certain view. For instance, they may not know how to summarize all the material related to a particular subject. Students with knowledge may do well on a test that calls for information. But they may not do well on an essay examination that requires reasoning and interpretation. A student without understanding may be able to recite a lot of material, but he will not be able to pass an examination that requires reasoning and interpretation. This is another illustration of the fact that knowledge alone is not sufficient; we also need understanding.

As we have already pointed out, knowledge and understanding are not adequate. We also need wisdom. Suppose an instructor in a history class asks the students to write how they would handle a particular matter if they were the minister of foreign affairs of a certain country. In order to answer such a question, not even understanding would be sufficient; it would be necessary to have wisdom.

Perhaps through these illustrations you can get some idea of the difference between knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

Beginning in Exodus 25, we have a description of the tabernacle and all its furnishings and utensils. First we have a knowledge of the design, the dimensions, and the materials involved with all these matters. But if we do not have understanding, we shall not be able to put our knowledge together to make a conclusion. Understanding is the ability to make conclusions based on knowledge. But even if we have both knowledge and understanding, we still need wisdom in order to construct the tabernacle. It takes wisdom to realize what part should be made first. If those who made the tabernacle did not have wisdom, they would have wasted a great deal of time before they found the right way.

Actually, the way of doing something is equal to the wisdom required for doing it. The Lord Jesus once said that He is the way (John 14:6), and Paul says that Christ is our wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30). By putting these verses together, we see that wisdom and the way are one. For example, there may be several ways to drive a car from one city to another. But if a driver is wise, he will have the wisdom to take the best way. Every good driver has wisdom. A foolish person may know how to drive a car, but he will not have the wisdom concerning the way he should take to get from one place to another. When he comes to a crossroad, especially a crossroad where three highways come together, he may be confused and not know which way to go. Although he has knowledge, that is not sufficient. The driver of a car needs understanding and also wisdom. This is another simple illustration pointing out the differences between knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

From my experience and observation in the church life, I have come to realize that elders in the churches may be short of knowledge. When some hear this, they may wonder how it is possible for elders in the Lord's recovery to be lacking in knowledge. Knowledge is a vast field. Who can claim to know everything related to the building up of the church? It is

impossible for anyone to have such a complete knowledge. For example, 31:4 and 5 say, "To devise skillful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in bronze, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all workmanship." Do you understand the significance of working in gold, silver, and bronze? Do you know how to cut stones for setting? Do you know how to carve wood? Do you know what it means in 35:35 to work in blue, in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen? The significance of all these matters has much to do with the building up of the church today. Elders, do you really know what sanctification is? Do you know what is the "wood" used in the building of God today? You may realize that wood signifies humanity, but do you know how to "carve" humanity? Many elders have never thought about these things. Therefore, they do not have the knowledge of them.

Most elders, however, do have an amount of knowledge, but they may not have understanding. Suppose a brother and sister in the church are having a difficult time in their married life. They are constantly fighting with each other. Do you as elders really understand their problem? You may know much about them, but do you truly understand their case? Perhaps you only know how they are behaving outwardly. You may not understand the reasons for the situation and the inner causes. You may not have any understanding of the influence of their background. This indicates that you may know what is happening between them, but you do not actually understand their case.

Perhaps some elders would be able to understand the problem of this married couple. However, they may still be lacking in wisdom. They may not have the wisdom to help this couple grow in life and gain more of Christ.

In order to build up the church, the elders need knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. If all the elders in all the churches had knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, after not too long a time the condition of all the churches would be glorious. In every church there would be a rich foretaste of the New Jerusalem.

In this message I am not relying on dictionary definitions

of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. My realization of the difference between knowledge, understanding and wisdom as all these are related to the building up of the church comes from years of experience and observation.

We may use family life as a further illustration of the difference between knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Taking care of children is a great burden, a serious responsibility. The parents, especially the mother, first need a knowledge of their children's condition and situation. Then the parents need an understanding of their children's motive, desire, disposition, character, and environment. The mother and father need to consider all the factors, including the influence of the relatives and the family background, that will affect the raising of the children. Then they need to look to the Lord and pray to Him for wisdom. They may pray, "Lord, we know the things concerning our children. Also we have some understanding of their disposition, character, and environment. Lord, give us the wisdom to know how to care for them and to raise them." In order to raise our children properly, we need knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. The principle is the same with the building up of the church. If we would be used of the Lord to build the church, we need knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

No human writings can compare with the Bible. The Bible is a book filled with divine wisdom. According to the Bible, the most noble task is the work of building up God's dwelling place with all the furniture portraying Christ and our Christian experience. For the carrying out of the noble work of building up the church, God's dwelling place on earth today, we need to be filled with "the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all workmanship" (31:3). Only when we have the proper knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and craftsmanship shall we be able to carry out the noble work of building God's dwelling place.

This message is not only for elders; it is for all the saints of all ages, including the young sisters. We are not an

organization, and we do not have either laymen or clergy. We all are simply God's people. Therefore, all of us may be like Bezalel, Oholiab, and the wise-hearted ones to whom God has given wisdom (v. 6). We all may be wise-hearted and have a part in building the most noble structure in the entire universe—God's dwelling place.

This message is neither a sermon nor an ordinary Bible teaching. My burden is to show you from these verses what is on God's heart and what He wants us to do. The Lord desires a dwelling place on earth, and He wants His people to build it for Him by being filled with the Spirit in knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and craftsmanship.

I can testify that I expect the Lord to do much with the saints in the Lord's recovery, especially with the young ones. Young sisters, do not say, "Oh, this matter of building the church doesn't have anything to do with us. We are young sisters, still in high school. This is a job for the elders or for the older saints." Instead of viewing the matter in this way, we all need to realize that the noble work of building up the church is for every one of us.

We all need to treasure the Lord's speaking concerning the building up of His dwelling place, the church. I hope that you will not take this message in a light way. May we all see what is on God's heart concerning the noble work of building His dwelling place. May we also see our need to be filled with the Spirit of God in knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and workmanship so that we may do the noble work of building.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-ONE

THE WORKERS OF THE TABERNACLE, THE FURNITURE, AND THE PRIESTLY GARMENT

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 31:1-11; 35:10-19, 30—36:2

In the foregoing message we began to consider the workers of the tabernacle, the furniture, and the priestly garment. We saw that in the book of Exodus the master builder was Bezalel, who was filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and all workmanship. We emphasized the fact that the building up of God's dwelling place, the church, is a noble work to be done by all the saints. Because this work cannot be done in our natural life or natural ability, we all need to be filled with the Spirit of God in knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and workmanship. In this message we shall go on to consider more details related to the workers of the tabernacle, the furniture, and the priestly garment.

To Devise Skillful Works

Verses 4 and 5 say, "To devise skillful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in bronze, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all workmanship." In doing the work of building, we do not use clay or brick. We use gold, silver, and bronze. We have already seen that gold signifies the nature of God, the divine nature, that silver signifies Christ's redemption, and that bronze signifies God's righteous judgment. If we would build up the church, all the saints must know how to use the divine nature as the gold, the redemption of Christ as the silver,

and God's righteous judgment as the bronze. Most Christians today have no way to build up God's dwelling place, because they do not know the gold, the silver, and the bronze, and they do not know how to use these materials. But by the Lord's mercy, even the young people in the Lord's recovery may know how to use the divine gold for the building up of the church in their locality. They may also know how to use silver and bronze in a practical way for the building up of the church. Even the young sisters should use these materials to build God's dwelling place.

Verse 5 speaks of "cutting of stones for setting." Here setting equals building. The cutting of the stones, therefore, is for building up. To cut stones for setting is to help the saints to be transformed into stones and to be adjusted to fit into God's building. We all need to know how to cut stones for setting.

Many Christian workers do not know how to cut stones for God's building. But I am also concerned that even in the local churches some elders do not know how to cut stones for this purpose. I do not have the confidence that all the elders in the local churches in this country know how to cut stones for setting. If all the elders were able to do this work, I would be very happy in the Lord. However, my heart is heavy, for I am somewhat concerned that some elders do not know how to cut stones for the work of building.

This word about cutting stones for building is quite enlightening and exposing. This is a word of warning for us all. Even the young sisters should know how to cut stones for setting. When the young sisters are fellowshipping with one another, they should know how to help others to be transformed and to fit into God's building. A certain sister may have experienced an amount of transformation. However, she may not yet fit into the building. Hence, there is the need for cutting. The proper setting of stones into a wall always requires cutting. Without the cutting, the stones would not be able to fit into the building.

We all need to be reminded that we are not cutting adobe or bricks; we are cutting precious stones, transformed materials,

for the building of God's dwelling place. I believe that most of the saints will be able to understand my word.

The "carving of wood" in verse 5 signifies dealing with our humanity. We are not to be either angels or spirits. God designed us to be human beings with a proper humanity, signified by wood. For the building up of the church, the elders, the serving ones, and all the brothers and sisters, including the young ones, should know how to "carve" humanity. This is a figure of speech to express the thought of working on the humanity of the saints for the sake of God's building. We all need to learn to fellowship, in the meetings, and in spiritual contact with the saints to cut stones for setting and to carve wood. Both the cutting of stones and the carving of wood are for the building up of the church.

The brothers and sisters in the churches should not place the burden of the building up of the church only on the shoulders of the elders. It is altogether not fair to put the whole burden on them. The elders are not magicians. They cannot be expected to accomplish all the building work. Nevertheless, nearly all the saints somehow expect the elders to do this. This is a dream. Some would even propose that the number of elders in their locality be doubled. Whoever makes this proposal is one who puts too much of the burden upon the elders. If you suggest that we increase the number of elders, I would reply that you need to bear your part of the burden as one of the builders. Do not expect the elders to do all the work of building. The reason the church in your locality is not built up is that many of the saints are not doing their share of the building work. Do not blame the elders. Be assured that I stand with the elders absolutely. If you are tempted to say that the elders have not fulfilled their responsibility, you should first blame yourself for not fulfilling your responsibility. I would urge you to forget about what the elders should do and to take care of your part in the building work.

For years it has been my practice to encourage the saints to take responsibility to do what needs to be done in

the church life. For example, if a sister would come to me and complain that the ladies' rest room needs to be cleaned, I would respond by encouraging her to clean it herself. Eventually, the word went out not to come to me with any complaints, because I would tell the complaining one to take care of the matter himself. The point here is that we all have a part in the work of building up the church.

To Work in All Workmanship

To build up the dwelling place of God, in addition to the work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting the stones, and in carving the wood, there is the need of the work in all workmanship, such as spinning, weaving, embroidery, and work on the animal skins, etc. These are the works to produce finer virtues in human character with the uplifted humanity of Christ, which are needed for the building up of the church as God's dwelling place.

THE CO-MASTER BUILDER

Verse 6 speaks of Bezalel's co-master builder: "And I, behold, I have given with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan." The name Oholiab means the tent or tabernacle of my father. This signifies that one's whole person cares for God's tabernacle. Ahisamach, the name of Oholiab's father, means a brother of strength or support. This co-master worker was a man for the tabernacle of God with strength and support. However, this co-master builder was of the tribe of Dan, the tribe of the lowest estate. The first master builder, Bezalel, was of the tribe of Judah. Judah is a kingly tribe, the tribe of the Lord Jesus. But the second master builder, Oholiab, came from the lowest tribe, the tribe of Dan. This indicates that the building work must include those of both the high estate and the low estate. No matter whether you are high or low, as long as you are one of God's children, you must be included in the work of building.

We see the same principle in the building of the temple under Solomon (2 Chron. 2:11-14). The master builder was

King Solomon, who was of the tribe of Judah. But the co-master builder was once again of the tribe of Dan. But his estate was even lower than that of Oholiab, for he was the son of a Danite woman and of a Tyrian father. How wonderful the Bible is! With the building of both the tabernacle and the temple the master builder was of the tribe of Judah, a kingly tribe, and the co-master builder was of the tribe of Dan, a lowly tribe. There is nothing coincidental here. This arrangement is according to God's sovereignty.

Exodus 35:34 indicates that Oholiab's main task was to teach. No doubt, Oholiab was wise. However, he must have received most of his knowledge, understanding, and wisdom from Bezalel. Receiving all this from the master builder, he then went out to teach others. Here we see a beautiful and pleasant coordination.

Exodus 35:34 says that both Bezalel and Oholiab did the work of teaching. But I believe that most of the teaching was done by Oholiab. This indicates that in the building up of the church there is the need of adequate teaching. We need some to be today's Oholiab to teach the saints concerning God's building according to the knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and skill received from the master builder.

Exodus 35:35 says of Bezalel and Oholiab that they were filled with wisdom of heart to do every work of the engraver or craftsman, the skilled workman, and the embroiderer in blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen. What is the difference between an engraver or craftsman and a workman? I believe that an engraver or craftsman has a special gift, whereas a workman does ordinary work with skill. The embroiderers, who may have been female workers, worked in blue, signifying heavenliness; in purple, signifying the kingship or royalty of Christ; in scarlet, signifying Christ's redemption; and in fine linen, signifying Christ's humanity.

Exodus 35:35 also speaks of the weaver, the doers of every work, and those who plan designs. By all this we can see that the building up of God's dwelling place is a fine,

detailed work. The fact that many of the words used to describe the workers are similar in meaning indicates that the work of building up the church is fine, delicate, and detailed.

THE BUILDERS

Wisehearted

Exodus 31:6b says, "And in the heart of everyone that is wisehearted I have given wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded you." Also, 36:2 speaks of "every wisehearted man, in whose heart Jehovah had put wisdom." These verses indicate that all the builders of the tabernacle were wisehearted. They all received wisdom and understanding from God. Here there is no mention of knowledge. It is common for people to have knowledge, at least in a general way. But what is needed for the work of building is wisdom and understanding, not only knowledge. If we have wisdom and understanding, we shall be wisehearted persons.

Stirred Up by the Heart

According to 36:2, the builders were those whose heart stirred them up to come to do the work of building. This is to have a heart burning for God's building. This burning heart stirs us up to participate in the building up of the church. We all need such a heart. This kind of heart is an inner motor motivating us to do the work of building up God's dwelling place.

THE THINGS BUILT

In 31:7-11 we have a list of the things built. Verses 7 through 9 say, "The tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the propitiatory cover which is upon it, and all the utensils of the tent; and the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand and all its utensils, and the altar of incense; and the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its base." We have already covered the

details concerning all these items. You may want to consult the foregoing messages on these matters. Here it is sufficient to point out that the ark of the testimony is Christ as God's testimony, that the table indicates that Christ is the life supply in the tabernacle to the serving priests, that the golden lampstand indicates that Christ is the light of life inside the dwelling place of God, and that the altar of incense indicates that Christ is the Intercessor to whom we should join to offer to God the incense of the salted prayer. Furthermore, to experience the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils means that we experience Christ as all the offerings offered to God for us on the cross.

Verse 10 says, "And the finely woven garments, both the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to serve as priests." This verse indicates that the workers also made the garments for Aaron and for his sons. These garments typify the garments of Christ and of all the believers. For the building up of the church we need the garment of Christ and the garments of all the serving ones. This should cause us to realize, once again, how much there is the need for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom for the work of building up the church.

Verse 11 concludes, "And the anointing oil, and the incense of fragrant spices for the holy place; according to all that I have commanded you, they shall do." The anointing oil, which typifies the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, is a very important item. Since I have been in this country, I have given many messages concerning the anointing oil. But due to the inaccurate teachings that have been promoted by certain ones, the truth concerning the anointing oil, the Spirit, has been a subject of debate. The fight over this matter is still going on, and it will continue, I believe, for quite a time. But the truth is the truth, and the Lord will gain the victory. For a time it is possible for the truth to be veiled but eventually, the veil will be removed, and the truth will be discovered.

I can testify that the more I speak on the all-inclusive Spirit, the more I am confirmed that what we teach

concerning the Spirit is according to the divine revelation in the pure Word of God. Therefore, we shall continue to place the truth concerning the all-inclusive Spirit before the Lord's people. Let those who wish to criticize our teaching consider all things in the light of the Word. Be assured that all our writings concerning the Spirit are done carefully and with consideration according to the pure Word of God.

We have seen that in order to do the work of building up God's dwelling place, we need to be filled with the Spirit of God in knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and workmanship. We also need to learn how to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in the carving of wood. The building work includes those of both high estate and low estate. What we need now is to become wisehearted, receiving wisdom and understanding from God, and to be stirred up by our heart to do the noble work of building up the church, God's dwelling place on earth today.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-TWO

THE SABBATH IN RELATION TO THE BUILDING WORK OF THE TABERNACLE

Scripture Reading: Exo. 31:12-17

In 31:12-17, after a long record concerning the building up of God's dwelling place, there is a repetition of the commandment to keep the Sabbath. We all know that keeping the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments, the fourth commandment. We need to find out why this particular commandment is repeated after the record concerning the full revelation of God's dwelling place.

The last verse of chapter thirty-one, verse 18, tells us that the Lord gave to Moses two tablets of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. This verse concludes a long section that began no later than chapter twenty. When the Lord called Moses to go up to the mountain, the Lord first gave Moses the law. Then He gave Moses the revelation concerning the building up of His dwelling place on earth. In this section we see the design of the tabernacle and its furniture and a full revelation regarding the priesthood. There is also a record concerning the builders of the tabernacle. After all this, the Lord repeats the requirement related to keeping the Sabbath.

The six verses about keeping the Sabbath, 31:12-17, are inserted between verses 11 and 18 of this chapter. What is the reason for this insertion? The reason for repeating the record of the Sabbath after the charge for the building work of the tabernacle is the first matter we need to cover in this message (see 20:8-11).

The fact that this insertion concerning the Sabbath follows the charge for the building work of the tabernacle indicates

that the Lord was telling these builders, these workers, to learn how to rest with Him. They should not work and forget about resting with the Lord. Therefore, in charging them to do the work of building His dwelling place, the Lord reminded them that as they worked for Him, they should learn how to rest with Him. If we only know how to work for the Lord but do not know how to rest with Him, we are acting contrary to the divine principle.

There has been much debate among Christians about the Sabbath, especially whether the Sabbath should be observed on the seventh day or on the eighth day. The Seventh-Day Adventists insist on keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day. Actually, the principle of the Sabbath is not a matter of the day on which it is observed. The principle of the Sabbath is that working with the Lord requires that we learn how to rest with Him.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SABBATH

Some may think that the significance of the Sabbath is merely to cease from work. This is not the real meaning of the Sabbath in the Bible. The Bible emphasizes the fact that God rested on the seventh day. Genesis 2:2 says, "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."

According to the book of Genesis, to God the Sabbath is the seventh day, but to man it is the first day. In six days God created the heavens, the earth, and everything necessary for man to exist for the fulfillment of God's purpose. After all things were made, man was created on the sixth day. This means that as soon as man came forth from the creating hand of God, his first day, which was God's seventh day, was about to begin. Thus, what was the seventh day to God was the first day to man. The significance of this is that to God the Sabbath was rest after work, but to man it was rest first and then work. God first worked for six days and then He rested on the seventh day. But man rested on his first day and then began to work.

God's Refreshment

I am happy that Exodus 31:17 tells us that "on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed." This indicates that the Sabbath was not only a rest to God, but was also a refreshment to Him. Both Genesis and Exodus tell us that God rested on the seventh day. But in 31:17 the words "and was refreshed" are added. This reveals that even God needs to be refreshed.

To rest is one thing, but to be refreshed is something further. For us to rest we do not need anything in particular. It is sufficient either to sit down or to lie down. But to be refreshed we need something to eat or drink. We often refer to food and drink as refreshment. The point here is that if we would be refreshed, we need something to be a refreshment to us. The same is true of God. God needs something to refresh Him. Do you know what God's refreshment is? What is it that refreshes God?

Perhaps you have read Exodus 31 a number of times without ever being impressed by the fact that God needs to be refreshed. I can testify that I have expounded the book of Exodus more than once, but only recently have I seen the significance of the word "refreshed" in 31:17. The Bible reveals that after God's work of creation was completed, He rested and was refreshed. On what did God rest? He rested on His creation. To illustrate, suppose a craftsman spends a long time making a very special chair. When his work is finished, he may rest on the very chair he has made, enjoying it and thinking about it. I often experience this kind of rest after I have finished my work of writing. When I have finished writing something, I may sit back, look at what I have written, and enjoy it. I particularly enjoy the light I have received from the Lord through His Word. Likewise, sisters who make their own clothing may enjoy a good rest after they have finished making a particular garment. In the same principle, after God created man, He rested. He could look upon His handiwork, at the heavens, the earth, and all the living things, especially at man, and say, "Very good!" Then God could rest and be refreshed.

With what was God refreshed? God was refreshed with man. Man was God's refreshment. God loved man. He created him in His own image with a spirit so that man could have fellowship with Him. Man, therefore, was God's refreshment.

According to Genesis 2:18, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." This word has a significance in typology, and indicates that it was not good for God to be alone. Before God created man, God could be compared to a bachelor. Some may criticize us for using the word bachelor to speak of our holy God. But I believe that God is happy to hear this word used with respect to Himself. Perhaps God would say, "My child, this word touches My heart. I truly was a bachelor before I created mankind." The Bible reveals that in eternity past God was a "bachelor." But in eternity future He will have a wife, the New Jerusalem, which is called the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9-10). Therefore, according to the revelation of the Bible that the New Jerusalem is the wife of the Lamb, I have the boldness to use the word bachelor with respect to God.

When God saw the man created by Him, He could rest and be refreshed. Man was like a refreshing drink to quench God's thirst and satisfy Him. When God ended His work and began to rest, He had man as His companion. To God, the seventh day was a day of rest and refreshment. However, to man, God's companion, the day of rest and refreshment was the first day. Man's first day was a day of enjoyment.

A Divine Principle

It is a divine principle that God does not ask us to work until we have had enjoyment. God first supplies us with enjoyment. Then after a full enjoyment with Him and of Him, we may work together with Him. If we do not know how to have enjoyment with God and how to enjoy God Himself, we shall not know how to work with Him. We shall not know how to be one with God in His divine work.

We do emphasize the matter of working with God and

not working for God by our own strength. Yes, we should work with God and even by God. But according to what the Bible reveals, it is not even sufficient merely to work with God. We need to be one with God in His work. This requires that we enjoy Him. If we do not know how to enjoy God and be filled with God, we shall not know how to work with Him, how to be one with Him in His work.

A very good illustration of this principle is found in the New Testament. The New Testament ministry of the apostles began with the enjoyment they had on the day of Pentecost. The disciples did not work for six days and then enjoy the Lord on the day of Pentecost. The actual situation was that the Lord had told them to wait until the Spirit came upon them to fill them. With what were the disciples filled when they were filled with the Spirit? No doubt, they were filled with the enjoyment of the Lord. Because they were filled with the Spirit, others thought that they were drunk with wine. Actually they were filled with the enjoyment of the heavenly wine. Only after they had been filled with this enjoyment did they begin to work with God. This is the way to work with God, the way to work in oneness with Him. When Peter stood up with the apostles to preach the gospel and thereby do a work for God, they all were one with God in His work.

The day of Pentecost was the first day of the week. Pentecost denotes the fiftieth day after a period of seven weeks, or forty-nine days. We know from Leviticus 23 that the day of Pentecost was fifty days after the feast of firstfruit. This means that Pentecost was the first day of the eighth week. Therefore, concerning the day of Pentecost, we see the principle of the first day.

To man, the day of rest has always been the first day. According to the Old Testament Sabbath, the day of man's rest was his first day. Likewise, according to the New Testament, the eighth day, the day of rest for man, was also the first day.

According to the principle in the Old Testament, man's day of rest is a day that comes after God's work has been completed. Man does not rest after his own work is finished;

he rests after the completion of God's work and enjoys it. God works, and man enjoys. Man enjoys what God has accomplished in His work.

As soon as man was created, he needed air to breathe and water to drink. God had already created the expanse, the atmosphere, on the second day because He knew that without air man would not be able to live. He had also prepared water and food for him. This is the reason the seventh day was a day of rest for God: He had worked for six days to make everything ready for man to enjoy. When man came forth from God's creating hand, his first day was God's seventh day. Therefore, he had enjoyment with God, he lived with God, he walked with God, and eventually he was ready to work with God. God had put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (Gen. 2:15). Perhaps after enjoying rest with God on his first day, Adam worked to care for the garden for another six days. Then on what was his eighth day, another first day, he again rested with God. This is a cycle that would continue again and again with intervals of resting and working. With God it is a matter of working and resting; with man, a matter of resting and working.

After God gave the revelation concerning the tabernacle and the furniture, and after God selected the builders and gave Moses a charge regarding them, He went on to speak again of the Sabbath. It seems as if God were saying, "Do not forget My Sabbath. Don't take the excuse that you are not laboring on your own business, but are doing a divine work. You should not think that because you are working to build My dwelling place, you can work every day continually. No, even in doing My divine work, the work of building the tabernacle, you must still bear a sign to indicate that you are My people and you need Me. Therefore you need to enjoy Me first. Then you will be able to work not only for Me, but also with Me and by being one with Me. I will be your strength to work and your energy to labor. But if you work in yourself and by yourself, that will be an insult to Me. You must do the work of building My dwelling place with Me, by Me, and in oneness with Me. I shall be very

happy if you work in this way. But if you try to do a good work for Me by yourselves, leaving Me aside, that would be an insult to Me, for that is a sign of the Devil's people. You are My people, and you should bear a sign that you need Me to be your enjoyment, strength, and energy. You need Me to be your everything so that you may be able to work for Me. By working in this way you honor Me and glorify Me. This is to bear a sign indicating that you are My people."

A Sign That We Are One with God

We all need to learn a basic lesson regarding the Sabbath. When I was young, I argued with others about which day, the eighth day or the seventh, should be kept as the Sabbath. Now I would say that that kind of argument is altogether a waste. The Sabbath means that before we work for God, we need to enjoy God and be filled with Him. If we have enjoyed God and if we have been filled with God, then we are ready to work for Him. Such work will not be by ourselves; it will be by God. Consider Peter's situation on the day of Pentecost. When Peter stood up to preach the gospel, he did not preach by himself. He preached by the very God who had filled him up. In preaching the gospel, Peter was not empty. He preached the gospel by the infilling God, by the infilling Spirit. Therefore, Peter had a sign that he was God's co-worker, and his gospel preaching was an honor and glory to God.

The people of the world all work by themselves. They do not have a sign on them that indicates that they belong to God. They do not enjoy God, they do not rest with God, and they do not work with God. Our situation is altogether different because we have a sign. What is the sign we bear? The sign is that we rest with God, enjoy God, and are filled up with God first, and then we work with the very One who fills us. Furthermore, we not only work with God, but we work as those who are one with God.

I can testify that every time I stand up to minister the Word, my unique prayer is that I would be one with the Lord in my speaking. I pray repeatedly, "Lord, in my speaking I

want to practice being one spirit with You so that my speaking will be Your speaking. Lord, it must be that You speak in my speaking. If You are not one with me, I will not speak anything. I would never speak in my empty self. That would be a blasphemy to You, an insult to You. Lord, I would speak not only with You, but also by being one with You. Those who listen must have the impression that while I am speaking, You are one with me. Lord, my speaking involves the practice not only from my side, that I am one spirit with You; it also involves the practice on Your side, that You are one spirit with me." If we would speak this way, what an honor and glory it would be to the Lord! This is the sign of the Sabbath. In my speaking I always seek to bear a sign that my Lord is my Sabbath. He is my rest, my refreshment, my energy, my strength, and my everything for ministering the Word.

In 31:12-17 we see that the builders of the tabernacle were charged not to begin working until they had rested with the Lord and had been refreshed. Then they could work for Him and with Him. However, this work would not go on continuously. Rather, it would be a work in intervals of six days of labor and one day of rest. With every interval, the beginning is a day of rest, followed by six days of work. Then there would be another interval beginning with rest and continuing with work.

We have emphasized that to God the Sabbath is the seventh day and to man, the first day; that God worked for man's enjoyment and rest; and that man enjoys what God has accomplished in His work in order to work with God. Man in his first day enjoyed what God accomplished in the previous six days. Then in the following six days man worked with God. After six days' work, man again first enjoyed what God had accomplished, and then he worked again the following six days. This proceeds as a cycle. This cycle is a sign that we are one with God.

An Eternal Covenant

Keeping the Sabbath is also an agreement or covenant. When we begin to keep the Sabbath, this indicates that we

have signed an agreement, a contract, that assures God that we shall be one with Him in this way. We would be one with Him by first enjoying Him and then by working for Him, with Him, and in oneness with Him. This is an eternal covenant. It is not merely for one age, dispensation, or generation. It is an eternal agreement between us and God.

A covenant is stronger than an agreement, an agreement is stronger than a promise, and a promise is stronger than ordinary words. God wants us to sign a contract with Him that assures Him that from now on we shall enjoy Him and be filled with Him before we go to work for Him, with Him, and in oneness with Him. Once we sign such a contract with God and give God the assurance that we intend to keep it, we should not break the contract. If we break our agreement with God, He may take us to the heavenly court and blame us for not keeping our contract. It is important for us to see that the Sabbath in relation to the building work of the tabernacle is both a sign and an eternal covenant, a covenant that cannot change.

It is a serious matter to work for the Lord by ourselves without praying to Him and without trusting in Him. Actually, what we need is not mainly to trust in the Lord, but to take Him in and enjoy Him by eating Him. On the day of Pentecost Peter was not only trusting in the Lord; he was filled with the Lord, even drinking Him. Do you not believe that as Peter was speaking, he was drinking of the Lord and eating Him? This means that while Peter was preaching Jesus, inwardly he was partaking of Jesus. In fact, he preached what he had been eating. He testified what he had been enjoying. Peter had signed the agreement with the Lord. He had made a covenant with Him. Both parties, the Lord and Peter, had to keep their part of the agreement. If Peter was eating the Lord and the Lord left him, the Lord would have broken the contract. But if He were supplying Peter everything he needed, and Peter turned aside from the Lord, Peter would have broken the contract. The crucial point here is that the Sabbath is a sign and also a covenant, a contract, an agreement.

A Matter of Sanctification

The Sabbath is also a matter of sanctification. The Sabbath day sanctifies us, designates us, marks us out. When we enjoy the Lord and then work with Him, for Him, and by being one with Him, spontaneously we are sanctified. We become holy, separated from what is common.

Suffering Spiritual Death

Exodus 31:14 and 15 say, "And you shall keep the sabbath, for it is holy to you; everyone who profanes it shall certainly be put to death; for whoever does work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a sabbath of rest, holy to Jehovah; whoever does work on the sabbath day shall certainly be put to death." These verses say clearly that if anyone did not keep the Sabbath, bear the sign, and honor the covenant in order to be sanctified, that one would be put to death. This signifies the suffering of spiritual death. The principle applies in our experience today. If I do not speak in oneness with the Lord, I shall suffer death in my speaking, and I shall be cut off from God's people. To be cut off from God's people is to be cut off from fellowship.

In the church life we may do many things without first enjoying the Lord, and without serving with the Lord and by being one with the Lord. That kind of service results in the suffering of spiritual death. Any service to the church that is without the enjoyment of the Lord and that is without the oneness with Him brings in spiritual death. Whenever we serve in that way, we cut ourselves off from the fellowship in the Body.

ALL THE TABERNACLE AND ITS FURNITURE LEADING TO THE SABBATH OF GOD

All the tabernacle and its furniture lead to the Sabbath of God. All of these things lead to the enjoyment of what God has purposed and done. This means that the tabernacle and all its furniture leads us into rest. The offerings are for us to

rest. If we do not come to the altar of burnt offering to experience Christ as the offerings, we shall not have rest. Instead, we shall have condemnation and accusation. Likewise, if we do not come to the showbread table, we shall be hungry and not have satisfaction. This is another indication that we do not have rest. If we do not come to the lampstand, we shall not have any light. We shall be in darkness, and darkness will not give us rest. In the same principle, if we do not come to the ark within the veil and to the incense altar, we shall not have rest. Everything related to God's dwelling place leads us to one matter—to the Sabbath with its rest and refreshment of the Lord. Therefore, the tabernacle with its furniture leads us to the enjoyment of what God has purposed and done. Hallelujah, in the church life we are in the tabernacle, and the tabernacle leads us to rest, to the enjoyment of God's purpose and of what He has done!

THE BUILDING WORK OF THE TABERNACLE BEGINNING WITH THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD

The building work of the tabernacle and all its furniture should begin with the enjoyment of God and continue in intervals with the refreshment by enjoying God. This will indicate that we do not work for God by our own strength, but by the enjoyment of Him and by being one with Him. This is the meaning of the Sabbath, and this is the reason that a word about the Sabbath immediately follows the word concerning the building up of God's dwelling place on earth. May we all see this matter and be impressed with it.

This message is not simply an expounding of the Bible. I believe that what we have covered in this message is the genuine extract of the record in Exodus 31 concerning the Sabbath.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE

THE BREAKING OF THE LAW

Scripture Reading: Exo. 31:18—32:8, 15-20

I believe that we all are familiar with the story in Exodus concerning the breaking of the law. In this message we shall seek to find out the principles implied in this story. In the past we have pointed out that in studying the Bible, a basic need is to touch the spirit of the writer expressed in his writing. Now I would add that it is also important to discover the principles implied in any portion of the Word. In the account in Exodus regarding the making of the golden calf there are a number of basic principles. Our main concern in this message will be to see the principles related to worshipping the golden calf.

THE WAY OF GRACE PREPARED BEFORE THE LAW WAS BROKEN

After the decree of the law and before the breaking of it, God called Moses to His mount to give him the tablets of the law (24:12). The Lord called Moses to Mount Sinai first in Exodus 19:20. That was the time the Lord gave Moses the law of the Ten Commandments with all the subordinate ordinances. Then, according to 24:12, the Lord called Moses to go to the mountain again. The Lord wanted to give him the tablets of the law. The law had been decreed, but the tablets of the Ten Commandments had not yet been given to Moses. The tablets of the law were given to Moses in 31:18: "And He gave to Moses, when He finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God."

Both 24:12 and 31:18 refer to the giving of the tablets of the law. But between these verses is a long insertion of seven

chapters. This indicates that after the Lord called Moses to the mountain for the purpose of giving him the tablets of the law, He first spoke to him about other things. In chapters twenty-five through thirty-one the Lord revealed to Moses the design of the tabernacle and its furniture, and He spoke to him concerning matters related to the priesthood. We have seen that the tabernacle and the priesthood typify Christ. The tabernacle with its furniture typifies Christ, and the priesthood with the garments and the priestly food are also detailed types of Christ. If we would know Christ, we need to study chapters twenty-five through thirty-one of Exodus. God's intention in calling Moses to the mountain was to give him the tablets of the law. But before giving Moses these tablets, God first gave him the design of the tabernacle and instructions concerning the priesthood. Only then did the Lord give Moses the tablets.

The fact that God showed Moses the tabernacle with its furniture and the priesthood before giving him the tablets of the law indicates that while God was giving the law, He knew that man could not keep it. This also indicates that God had prepared the way of grace for man to contact Him and enjoy Him. The way of grace is Christ typified by the tabernacle and the priesthood. God prepared Christ as the way of grace for man to contact God and enjoy Him. While God was giving the law, He knew that man would not be able to keep it; therefore, He prepared this way of grace. Christ is our tabernacle, the offerings, and all the aspects of the priesthood. The writings of John reveal that Christ is the fulfillment of the tabernacle and the offerings.

After showing Moses the tabernacle and the priesthood, God gave him the two tablets of the law. God could do this in peace, even though He knew that the law would be broken. God was not troubled by this, because, before the law was broken, God had already prepared the way of grace so that man would be able to contact God and enjoy Him. It was not God's intention, therefore, to trust in the law; His trust was in Christ as the prepared way of grace. Even though God was giving the law, He did not have any trust in the law. God's

trust was, and still is, absolutely in His Christ as the tabernacle and the priesthood.

I believe that Moses was happy to have the tablets of the law and that he put his trust in them. As he was coming down the mountain, he may have said to himself, "Oh, I have two stone tablets in my hands! On these tablets are words written by the finger of God." No doubt, Moses treasured these tablets containing the law engraved in stone by God Himself.

Moses was on the mountain with God for a period of forty days. In the Bible forty is a number of testing and trial. For example, the Lord Jesus fasted in the wilderness for forty days. It is doubtful that the golden calf was made earlier than Moses' thirty-sixth day on the mountain. It may have been made during the last two or three days, when the people could no longer bear to wait for Moses to come back. Some of them may have said, "The one whom we respected and who brought us out of Egypt and led us to this place has been gone for more than five weeks. He went up the mountain, and we do not know what has happened to him. We cannot wait any longer." It may have been that at the very time God was giving the tablets to Moses, to the mediator, the people at the foot of the mountain were making the golden calf.

THE BREAKING OF THE LAW THROUGH IDOLATRY

Now we come to the breaking of the law (32:1-20). Why is it that we human beings cannot keep the law, but break it instead? The answer to this question involves an important principle. The principle here is that we break the law because we have idols. Everyone has his own idol. There is no need for us deliberately to try to break the law of God. As long as we have an idol, the first three commandments of the law are already broken. The first three commandments are related to not having any other god, not making images, and not using the Lord's name in vain. These commandments are all related to God. The fourth commandment concerns the Sabbath, and the last six commandments involve our relationships with

others. The first three commandments are broken by everyone who has an idol.

We cannot keep the law because we have idols. If we have God and allow no idols to replace Him, the very God whom we enjoy will become to us the ability to keep His commandments. As a result, we shall keep the law of God.

This principle is seen in John's writings. Both in the Gospel of John and in the first Epistle of John we are charged to keep the commandments. We are able to fulfill this charge because, according to the New Testament, we have the Lord within us as our enjoyment. Not only is the indwelling Christ who becomes our enjoyment the strength to keep the law, but the enjoyment of Christ is itself the keeping of the law. This means that the indwelling Christ becoming our enjoyment is actually the keeping of the commandments. There is no need for us to try in ourselves to keep the commandments. Our enjoyment of the indwelling Christ spontaneously becomes the keeping of the commandments.

Why are human beings not able to keep the law? People cannot keep the law because they have idols that replace God. But as we have pointed out, if we have God and do not allow idols to replace Him, the God we have and enjoy will be the strength to keep the law. In fact, God Himself as our enjoyment is the real keeping of the law. If we have God in us as our enjoyment, we would never have another god, we would never make an image, and we would not take God's name in vain. We would rest with God, and we would honor our parents. Furthermore, we would not murder, commit fornication, steal, lie, or bear false witness. And we would not be greedy, covetous. We would keep all the commandments of the law, and this keeping of the law would actually be the experience of the indwelling God becoming our enjoyment. This is the first principle we see in the account in Exodus 32 of the breaking of the law.

In the New Testament we see that the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes were all law-breakers. They broke the law because they were filled with idols. But the disciples of the Lord Jesus could keep the commandments

because the Lord had become their enjoyment. Eventually, the disciples, including Peter, John, and James, were filled with the Lord Jesus, and He became their enjoyment. As a result, spontaneously they became keepers of the commandments.

Before the children of Israel received the law, they had already broken it. They broke it through having an idol. They did not have the intention to break the law. They broke the law simply by the fact of having an idol. Therefore, the first principle here is that the law of God is broken whenever people have idols.

SELF-BEAUTIFICATION LEADING TO IDOLATRY

Another principle implied in this portion of Exodus concerns what an idol is, or what is the principle of an idol. We see this principle in 32:1-3: "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves unto Aaron, and they said to him: Rise, make for us a god who shall go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what has become of him. And Aaron said to them, Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me. And all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he took the gold from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it into a golden calf."

Here we see the kind of material that was used to make the idol. An idol, of course, must be made with something material. The material used in making the golden calf in Exodus 32 was the gold of the earrings belonging to the wives, sons, and daughters of the children of Israel. It may be that the only ones without golden earrings were the elderly men. The old men were an exception because they do not care for beautification. I can testify that, as an elderly man, I have no interest in beautifying myself. However, it is common for young men and women and also for older women to beautify themselves. Therefore, in Exodus 32 the gold rings were taken from the

ears of the wives, the sons, and the daughters and used to make the idol, the golden calf.

People put on earrings in order to beautify themselves. Today's culture promotes self-beautification. Men and women spend a great deal of money on items used to beautify themselves.

Self-beautification leads to idolatry. This is the reason the Lord in 33:5 and 6 gave the children of Israel a commandment related to ornaments: "Now Jehovah had said to Moses, Say to the sons of Israel, You stiff-necked people! If I should go up in the midst of you for one moment, I would consume you! And now, put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what I shall do to you. And the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb onward." The Lord issued this commandment concerning ornaments because, as the record of chapter thirty-two makes clear, self-beautification leads to idolatry.

Before the children of Israel made the idol of the golden calf, idols were already present among them in a different form, in the form of self-beautification. The wives, the sons, and the daughters of the children of Israel wore gold rings in their ears for the purpose of self-beautification. Here we see the principle that self-beautification is the preliminary form of an idol. Before the gold became the calf, it already existed in the idolatrous form of self-beautification. In the sight of God, self-beautification is an idol. This was the reason the Lord commanded the people in 33:5-6 not to have any ornaments. Those ornaments were preliminary idols. Before the people had the idol of the golden calf, they already had the preliminary idols hanging from their ears.

Now we should be able to see the principle of an idol. The principle of an idol is self-beautification. An idol, therefore, is the consummate expression of a person's self-beautification.

In this country there are not many idol temples containing images or idols. However, with the people in this country there are idols of another kind—the idols of self-beautification.

Self-beautification is popular, prevailing, and strong among the people in the United States. This means that for many Americans self-beautification is a form of idolatry. People in undeveloped countries do not have as much self-beautification, although they may have in their temples idols of wood or stone. Those who live in modern, scientific cultures, on the contrary, do not have that kind of idols. But they have the idols of self-beautification. The idols of self-beautification can be found almost everywhere—in homes, in offices, and in schools.

Do you know what many Americans are worshipping today? They are worshipping the idols of self-beautification. For example, before a young woman goes to work, she may spend a great deal of time beautifying herself. She may even spend more money on items for self-beautification than she does for food. My concern here is to point out the fact that self-beautification leads to idolatry. First the children of Israel wore golden earrings for self-beautification. Then these golden earrings were fashioned by Aaron into the idol of the golden calf.

SATAN'S USURPING OF GOD'S GIFTS

Another principle related to idolatry is that idolatry is Satan's usurping of what God has given us in order to make it a waste. In Exodus 32 the children of Israel wasted much of the gold that had been given to them by God. Before the children of Israel left Egypt, God caused the Egyptians to give the children of Israel gold and other precious things. This gold was to be used for building up the tabernacle. The tabernacle required a large quantity of gold to overlay the standing boards. God defeated the Egyptians, and they gave gold to the people of Israel. But before this gold was used for the building up of God's dwelling place, Satan came in to usurp the gold and use it to make an idol. Actually, before the calf was made, Satan had already usurped the gold so that it might be used to make earrings. If the children of Israel had loved the Lord to the uttermost, they would never have wasted the gold by

using it for earrings. Instead, they would have kept it for the Lord's use.

In chapter thirty-five the people were commanded to offer gold and other materials for the building up of God's tabernacle. The first item of the offering for God's dwelling place was gold. But in chapter thirty-two a large quantity of gold was used to make a calf. No doubt the golden calf was not something small. It may have been quite large. A lot of gold was wasted in making that golden calf.

God has given us many things not for self-beautification, but for us to worship God and glorify Him. But before we use these things to worship and glorify God, the enemy tries to come in to usurp what God has given us and to waste it. This is the second principle of idolatry, and it is an offense to God.

THE WORSHIP OF ENJOYMENT

Another principle is implied by the fact that the people did not make an image of Moses, or one of a horse or other work animal. Instead, they made a golden calf. A calf is not for labor but for enjoyment, in particular, for eating. Both in the Old Testament and in the New, a calf was used to feed guests. In Genesis 18 Abraham had a fatted calf prepared for his guests, and in the parable in Luke 15 the father had the fatted calf killed when the prodigal son came home. A calf, therefore, signifies enjoyment. The ones who beautified themselves in Exodus 32 liked enjoyment. Enjoyment was their idol. Likewise, many people today worship a calf; that is, they worship their enjoyment.

This interpretation of the significance of the calf is confirmed by 32:6: "And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play." After the golden calf was made, the people ate, drank, and played. C. A. Coates says that they sported. On the weekends many people in this country care only for eating, drinking, and sporting.

According to verse 18, Moses heard the sound of singing,

and according to verse 19, he "saw the calf and the dancing." Along with the eating, drinking, and sporting, the people were singing and dancing. All this took place in front of the golden calf. The picture here indicates that the calf signifies enjoyment and that the children of Israel were worshipping what they enjoyed.

PRETENDING TO WORSHIP THE TRUE GOD

Yet another principle is that idolatry is pretension. Every idolater pretends to be worshipping the true God. Verse 4 says, "And they said, This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." Verse 5 says that when Aaron saw this, "he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, A feast to Jehovah—tomorrow!" The next morning they rose up early and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings (v. 6). The offerings and the way of worship were proper, but the object of worship was wrong. The children of Israel had changed the object of their worship from the true God Himself to an idol. "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory to the likeness of an ox that eateth grass" (Psa. 106:19-20). Jehovah God was their glory, but they changed their glory to an ox that eats grass. This is very similar to what is described in Romans 1:23: "And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of corruptible man and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." Nevertheless, every idol worshipper claims that the idol he worships is the true God.

MIXTURE IN WORSHIP

Another principle related to idols is that here there is mixture in worship. This principle can be applied to today's Christians. Many Christians worship a calf, but they think that they are worshipping the Lord Jesus or the true God. Actually what they are worshipping is their enjoyment. Much of today's Christian worship is a matter of sitting down to eat and drink and rising up to sport, sing, and dance around a certain kind of enjoyment, around a golden calf.

Some of the Brethren teachers pointed this out in a very thorough way. They said that the worship of the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai was a mixture, for a calf was worshipped as if it were God with the proper offerings and in the proper way. The offerings were right and the way was right, but the object of worship was wrong. This is what we mean by mixture.

However, we should not mainly consider the way others worship. We need to inquire about our own worship. Is our worship pure, or is it a mixture? Mixture in worship is related to enjoyment that comes out of self-beautification.

As we have seen, idolatry involves five principles: self-beautification, Satan's usurping God's gifts and making them a waste, the worship of the things we enjoy, pretending to worship the true God, and mixture in worship.

IDOLS MADE BY GIFTED PEOPLE

Aaron was not a Balaam; he was a true high priest, a yokefellow with Moses. He was one who took the lead among God's people. But even such a person could make an idol. We should not think that Aaron was able to do such a thing, but that we are not. Any leader in the church is capable of doing this. For this reason, I am always in fear and trembling lest I make some kind of idol. We all need to be careful concerning this matter, especially those who are capable, gifted, and talented.

Exodus 32:4 says that Aaron took the gold and "fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it into a molten calf." It was not easy to take a pile of gold and fashion it into a calf. Aaron used a graving tool to accomplish this. We have seen that the basic principle of an idol is self-beautification. If an idol is not beautified, who would worship it? The point here is that it takes skill to fashion gold into a calf. Some may have the gold, but not have the skill to fashion it into a calf. But every maker of idols, like Aaron, is skillful, capable, gifted, and talented. Who knows how many skillful idol-makers there are among Christians today? These craftsmen are knowledgeable, cultured, capable, and

skillful. Whereas others are not able to make idols because they do not have the skill, these ones have the ability to fashion gold into idols. They know how to make beautiful idols. Sometimes I ask myself, "What are you doing here? Are you making an idol? Are you beautifying your own work for others to worship?" I am fearful lest I make some kind of idol.

It is important for us to see that the golden calf was made by Aaron, God's high priest. Furthermore, he made this calf in the name of Jehovah, and he took the lead to worship the idol in the way of presenting offerings to God and worshipping God. When Moses came down and asked Aaron what he had done, Aaron told a lie. Aaron said that he took the gold and threw it into the fire, and a calf came out. Aaron seemed to be telling Moses, "Don't condemn me, Moses. I simply cast the gold into the fire, and a calf came out." The idol, of course, was made by Aaron. He was the typical idol-maker.

I hope that our eyes will be opened to see the idolatrous situation among many of today's Christians. Do you think that none of the famous leaders among Christians are makers of idols? I wish that no one of today's Christian leaders was an idol-maker. If this were the situation, I would truly thank God and worship Him for it. I would be able to praise the Lord that no Christian worker is a maker of idols. However, the Lord knows that today there are many Aarons, many skillful Christian leaders who are making idols. These Aarons are not false prophets nor even genuine Gentile prophets like Balaam. They are genuine priests appointed by God. Nevertheless, they make idols in the name of the very God whom they serve, and they teach others to worship these idols with offerings that should be offered to God and in the way of worshipping God. This is mixture, and it is very subtle.

If you were to argue with one of today's Aarons concerning this matter, he would probably say, "We are not worshipping an idol. We are worshipping the Lord. We are feasting with Him, and we are offering His burnt offerings

and peace offerings. How can you say that we are worshipping an idol?" Yes, everything may be the same as if it were actually God who is being worshipped. But God is not really the object of worship. Instead, there is a golden calf as the replacement of the true God. Originally it was the gold of self-beautification. But now the gold has changed in form and has been fashioned into a calf.

Because there was an idol among the children of Israel, they broke the law unconsciously and unintentionally. Aaron might have said that they did not have any intention of breaking the law. Although none of them had this intention, the law was broken nonetheless. When Moses saw the idolatrous situation among the people, his anger burned within him. Unable to control himself, "he flung the tablets from his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain" (v. 19). Moses was the mediator used by God in the giving of the law. When he flung the tablets from his hands and broke them, the entire law was demolished, destroyed. In a message to come we shall see how Moses dealt with the idolaters.

One important matter in this message is that God did not give the law to the children of Israel with the expectation that they would be able to keep it. God's intention in giving the law was that His people would realize that they were not able to keep the law. They could do nothing except break the law. By worshipping the golden calf, they broke the law of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FOUR

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE GOLDEN-CALF IDOL

Scripture Reading: Exo. 32:7-14; 19-29

In the foregoing message we pointed out that in reading chapter thirty-two of Exodus we need to find out the principles implied in this record. Before we go on to consider the matter of the dealing with the idol and the idolaters, we need to consider the principle of the golden-calf idol.

Although there were idol worshippers in Genesis, the worship of the idol in Exodus 32 is unique. At least two million people had been rescued out of the hand of Pharaoh and brought out of the land of tyranny. They crossed the Red Sea and passed through the wilderness. These people had witnessed many great miracles done for them by God. Even in the days when they were making the idol and worshipping it, they still gathered the manna that came down from the heavens. They were in a situation under God's miraculous care. Nevertheless, they made an idol and worshipped it as the very God who had brought them out of Egypt and led them to Mount Sinai.

Moses had already gone up the mountain once and descended. All the people knew about this. Moses must have told them something concerning the decree of God's law. I believe that, at least, Moses must have spoken to the people about the Ten Commandments. Then Moses was called back to the mount and stayed there for forty days. According to the context, the idol, the golden calf, was not made in the earlier part of these forty days. As we mentioned already, the golden calf was probably made toward the end of these forty days.

TWO SCENES

In Exodus 32 we have two scenes: one on the mountain

and the other at the foot of the mountain. The scene on the mountain was wonderful. Here the design of the tabernacle and its furniture was given to Moses. It may have been that while God was inscribing the law on the tablets of stone with His finger, Aaron and his helpers were making the golden calf at the foot of the mountain. In the scene at the top of the mountain, the inscribing of the law was taking place. But in the scene at the foot of the mountain, the fashioning of an idol was taking place. The comparison here is very significant.

The situation of God's people today can be compared to that of the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. The Lord Jesus has gone into the heavens, where He is today. In the heavens the Lord reveals the design concerning God's dwelling place on earth. In the Old Testament Moses was on the mount. But according to the New Testament, the Lord Jesus is now in the heavens. If you read the book of Hebrews carefully, you will see that Moses' experience on Mount Sinai was a type. What was revealed to Moses concerning the tabernacle was a type of today's revelation concerning God's dwelling place. This is true especially regarding the matter of the priesthood. The priesthood revealed to Moses was a type of the New Testament priesthood revealed through the Lord Jesus in the heavens.

While Moses was tarrying on the mountain, God's people began to worship the golden-calf idol. In principle, the situation is the same today among Christians. What is happening on earth among Christians while the Lord Jesus is tarrying in the heavens? Golden calves are being fashioned and worshipped by God's people. The situation at the time of Exodus 32 and the situation among God's people today are very similar. In fact, today's situation is almost a copy of what happened in the Old Testament.

Moses received a revelation concerning the tabernacle for God's dwelling place and the priesthood for God's service. Likewise, after the Lord Jesus ascended to the heavens, He gave the revelation concerning the dwelling place of God and God's priesthood. In writing the various New Testament

books, apostles such as Paul, Peter, and John were working together with the Christ in heaven to reveal God's design. As we read the New Testament Epistles, we can see the pattern and design of God's dwelling place and His priesthood. In the Epistles of Paul, Peter, and John we can see the pattern of the tabernacle, the ark, the lampstand, the showbread table, the incense altar, the bronze altar, the laver, and all the utensils related to the dwelling place of God. Moreover, in all these Epistles we can also see the priesthood. This revelation has been given in the heavens. But at the bottom of the mountain Christians are making a golden calf.

MIXTURE IN WORSHIP

It is important for us to see that the worship of the golden calf in Exodus 32 was a mixture. It was an idol that was worshipped, but it was worshipped in the way that God's people were supposed to worship God. This is a common practice among many Christians today. Christians may worship in the way that is suitable to the worship of God, but actually the object of their worship may be something other than God. If we have a clear, heavenly view, we shall realize that much of the worship among Christians today is a mixture. Something that pretends to be God is worshipped as if it were actually God Himself.

After Aaron made the golden calf, the people said, "This is your God, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (Exo. 32:4). The people worshipped the golden calf as if it were the very God who had brought them out of Egypt. Was that not a mixture? Furthermore, 32:5 and 6 say, "And when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, A feast to Jehovah—tomorrow! And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings." Here we see that an altar was built before the idol, and the people offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. This indicates that they worshipped the idol in the way that they were supposed to worship God. That was utterly a

mixture. In other words, that worship was not pure. We can compare the worship among Christians today with that of the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. The worship of the golden calf by the children of Israel is a picture of the impure worship among Christians today.

The worship of the golden calf was different from the pagan worship of idols. The golden calf was worshipped by a redeemed people in the name of the Lord their Redeemer. After the golden calf was made, the people declared that it was the Lord who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. This indicates that they worshipped an idol in the name of Jehovah their God.

Furthermore, they worshipped that idol in the way they should have worshipped God, that is, in the way ordained by God. They offered to the idol the kind of offerings that they should have offered to God. This is a shameful mixture.

People would easily condemn the pagan worship of idols. But in its present-day expression it is not easy for anyone to condemn the kind of impure worship we see in Exodus 32, a worship that is full of mixture. Do you have the assurance that the so-called worship services that take place in today's cathedrals and chapels are a pure worship of God? Is it really God who is being worshipped? If God is not the One who is being worshipped, then who is the object of worship? If the worship is not purely the worship of God, it must be the worship of something other than God. Holy songs may be sung to God and prayers may be offered to God, but actually the worship is to someone or something other than God.

NOT USING GOD'S GIFTS FOR GOD'S PURPOSE

Let us go on to see what is the principle of this kind of worship. The principle of the golden-calf idol is that wealth and treasures—gifts from God, both material and spiritual—are not properly used for God's purpose. We need to be careful regarding both material things and spiritual gifts received from God, for we may not use these gifts

properly for God's purpose. For example, suppose you have the ability to teach the Bible, and you use this ability to establish a work. Your ability to teach the Bible is a gift from God. But do you use that gift properly for God's purpose, or do you use it to build up something other than God's purpose? If you are doing the latter, you are making a golden calf. This is not an extreme statement. I believe that one day, either in this age or in the next, we all shall realize that, in principle, this is the making of a golden calf and is condemned by God. Many golden calves have been made by today's Aarons.

Those with the gift of gospel preaching may also use this ability to make a golden calf. A certain brother may be an evangelist. God has truly given him the gift of preaching the gospel. But this brother needs to ask himself what is his purpose in exercising this gift. Is his purpose pure? Is it genuine? These questions deserve serious consideration.

We need to examine ourselves and ask what we are doing and what is our purpose for doing it. With Christian workers who are gifted, no temptation is greater than the work itself. The work we are doing is itself the biggest temptation. If you study the history of the church and the biographies of different preachers and evangelists, you will see that many have built idols. Some even fashioned themselves into an idol; that is, they themselves became an idol, a golden calf. This is according to the principle of the golden-calf idol, the principle of not properly using for God's purpose the gifts received from God.

AN IDOL MADE BY GOD'S REDEEMED PEOPLE

The golden-calf idol is different from a pagan idol. It is difficult to describe this golden-calf idol. We should not call it a Christian idol. Perhaps we may say that the golden calf in Exodus 32 is a made-by-God's-redeemed-people idol. Pagans do not make a golden-calf idol and worship it. Only a God-redeemed people, those who were redeemed by the blood of the Passover lamb, who were brought out of Egypt, and who enjoyed the miracles of God, even while they

were making the idol, were the ones to make a golden calf. The children of Israel certainly were not pagans. Even while they were making the golden calf, they were eating the manna that miraculously came from heaven. Furthermore, they knew the name of Jehovah and knew how to worship God with the offerings. But even though they were not pagans, an idol was made among them.

Do not think that there are no idols among Christians today. Christians do not have pagan idols, heathen idols. But they may nonetheless have Christian-made idols. Many idols have been made by Christians, especially by Christian leaders, evangelists, and Bible teachers.

DIVISION, IDOLATRY, AND FORNICATION

If you know the principles in the New Testament, you will realize that three matters are related to one another: division, idolatry, and fornication. Division goes with idolatry, and idolatry, with fornication, both spiritual and physical. Actually division is spiritual fornication.

As soon as there was the golden calf among the children of Israel, there was a division. Suppose there had been more than one idol made by God's redeemed people in Exodus 32. Immediately there would have been another division. If there had been ten idols, there would have been ten divisions.

The divisions among Christians may be related to idols built in the name of the Lord. Suppose a group of Christians meet together to worship the Lord. But after a period of time some brothers, unhappy with the situation in that group, decide to start another meeting in the same locality. That is a division which involves idolatry. In 1 Corinthians 1 Paul asks the question, "Has Christ been divided?" (1 Cor. 1:13). In the same principle we may ask, "Is our God divided?" Since we all worship the same God, what reason is there for us to be divided? Division may indicate, or at least imply, that some are worshipping something other than the genuine God. We may worship something or someone in the name of Jehovah, but that thing is not the Lord

Himself. Furthermore, we may worship something other than God with offerings that should be offered to God and in the way in which we should worship God.

We have seen that division is related to idolatry. When a person commits idolatry, he may go on to commit fornication. Fornication means confusion. If anyone is confused with respect to God, how can he avoid being confused with respect to man? In the letter to Thyatira in Revelation 2 we see both idolatry and fornication. Idolatry and fornication, two evil sisters, always go in a pair. If the one is present, the other will be present also.

The main source of division and fornication is idolatry. Aaron made a golden calf, and that caused a division. The division among the children of Israel was due to the worship of the golden calf.

In principle the making of the golden calf was a matter of abusing God's gifts. The children of Israel used the gold miraculously given them by God to make the calf. Because God miraculously subdued the Egyptians, they gave gold to the children of Israel. God's intention was that the gold given to the children of Israel would be used for the building up of His tabernacle. But before the tabernacle was built, the people abused the gold by using it for self-beautification. Then the gold that was used to beautify themselves was turned into a golden calf. Here we see the principle that idolatry involves abusing what God has given us and not using His gifts for His purpose.

THE IDOL RELATED TO AMUSEMENT AND ENTERTAINMENT

The people also abused what God had given them and used it for their amusement and entertainment. The worship of the golden calf was a kind of amusement and entertainment. The children of Israel amused themselves with this idol. Exodus 32:6 says, "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play." When Moses and Joshua came down from the mountain, they heard the sound of singing, and they "saw the calf and the dancing"

(vv. 18-19). This is a picture of amusement and entertainment. We should be warned by this not to have meetings for the purpose of our amusement and entertainment. Yes, we have the enjoyment of the Lord, but this is not a form of entertainment.

I would ask you to consider the situation among Christians today regarding the desire for entertainment. It is difficult to find a so-called church service where there is not any entertainment. Various forms of entertainment are used to attract a crowd. If there is no entertainment in a certain place, people will not want to go there. They want to go where they will be entertained. Many today worship some kind of golden calf for the sake of their entertainment.

We need to be careful not to abuse God's material gifts or His spiritual gifts. None of the material things given to us by God should be used for our amusement and entertainment. If we use material things in this way, we shall have a golden calf. Likewise, spiritual gifts, such as the gifts of teaching and preaching, should not be abused or usurped for our amusement and entertainment. There is the danger that those who have received spiritual gifts may abuse these gifts to build up something for their own purpose, for their own amusement and entertainment. This is to make a golden calf.

If we truly see this principle, we shall realize how pitiful and even tragic is the situation among Christians today. There are golden calves almost everywhere. People sing to a golden calf, praise it, and rejoice before it. In the presence of a golden calf, people eat, drink, sport, even dance. They may claim to be praising God, singing to God, and rejoicing before God. But we must ask who is being worshipped—Jehovah God, or the god of the golden calf?

Concerning this situation and concerning my speaking about it, I have prayed desperately to the Lord. It is necessary for me to point out the principle to the Lord's people. However, I do not want to go to an extreme. I do not believe that in this message I have gone too far regarding this matter. I must testify that deep in my spirit I have a view of

the scene of Exodus 32 as it applies today. I can also testify that through the years I have been on the alert not to build something for my own purpose or for my amusement or entertainment. In the sight of God, anything we build for our purpose or entertainment is a golden calf. Such a calf will always cause division. Again and again, golden calves have been fashioned, and the result of the worship of these golden calves has been division. There is a real possibility that this situation will be repeated among Christians today.

We all need to see the difference between the pure worship of the Lord and worship that is a mixture. Worship that is a mixture is worship of a golden calf in the name of the Lord. In this kind of worship people worship a calf in the way they should worship the Lord. We have seen that this is different from pagan worship, for worship that is a mixture is a matter of worshipping an idol in the name of the Lord and in the way the Lord should be worshipped.

MAN-MADE MIRACLES

Exodus 32:21 says, "And Moses said to Aaron, What has this people done to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?" Aaron tried to excuse himself by saying, "And they said to me, make for us a god who shall go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what has become of him. And I said to them, Whoever has any gold, let him tear it off; and they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out" (vv. 23-24). In Genesis Jacob commanded his household to take off their earrings and bury them under an oak so that they may be pure to go up to Bethel to build an altar to the true God (Gen. 35:2-4). Aaron also told the people to take off their earrings, but he did so for a very different purpose. Aaron told Moses that he threw the gold into the fire and a calf came out. Perhaps Aaron was trying to say that it was through some kind of miracle that the calf was made. Maybe Aaron was saying, "I threw the gold into the fire, and this calf came out miraculously. Wasn't that something of God?

How could I do something like this? It was a miracle." This "miracle" was wrought by Aaron's hands, not by God.

Today it is common for Christians to have man-made miracles. For example, certain preachers may claim that there are many cases of healings in their meetings. However, these healings may not come from God's hand, but from the hand of those preachers themselves. Years ago, I attended such a meeting and observed many cases of man-made healings. In some instances people are healed temporarily. After a short while, their illness returns. Nevertheless, those who conduct these meetings may boast that these healings are genuine. Actually what they have in their meetings is a golden calf. The claim may be made that certain things are done by God when they are actually accomplished by human effort, promotion, and advertisement. I do not believe that the crowds that gather around certain preachers today are the result of miracles done by God. No, the golden calf did not come out of the fire miraculously; it was fashioned by the hands of man.

If we are clear concerning the principle of the golden-calf idol, we shall be careful not to "throw gold into the fire" and not to shape gold with our engraving tools. We shall be fearful lest we use our ability to make a golden calf. This is the reason I have often fellowshipped with the leading ones and the co-workers that we should not do too much. If something is truly of the Lord, He will accomplish it. There is no need for us to do so much. If we try to do too much on our own, we may end up making a golden calf. We all need to be careful, for even in the local churches it is possible for us to make golden calves. We all need to see the principle of the golden-calf idol and be warned by it.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE

THE DEALING WITH THE IDOL AND THE IDOLATERS

Scripture Reading: Exo. 32:7-14, 19-29

In the foregoing messages we considered the breaking of the law and the principle of the golden-calf idol. Now we shall go on to see how Moses dealt with the idol and with the idolaters.

MOSES' PETITION FOR THE IDOLATROUS PEOPLE

Jehovah's Word regarding the Idolatrous People

Moses was not the first to know that the children of Israel were practicing idolatry at the foot of the mountain. It was God who told Moses about this: "And Jehovah spoke to Moses, Go! Get down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves" (v. 7). God specifically told Moses that the people had corrupted themselves.

Do you believe that there are groups of Christians on earth today who have not corrupted themselves? The elements used by the enemy of God to corrupt Christians are the idols. Idols are corrupting factors. Nothing corrupts us more than idols. Whatever you love more than God is an idol, and that thing corrupts you. Once you have been corrupted by an idol, many sinful things will come in. If we love a certain thing more than God, that will become a factor of our corruption. This will be followed by sins. Therefore, we need to be careful not to corrupt ourselves by having idols, by having things that we love more than God.

Concerning the idolatrous people, the Lord went on to tell Moses, "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made for themselves a

molten calf, and have bowed themselves down to it and have sacrificed to it; and they said, This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (v. 8). The children of Israel had been under God's dealings and training for approximately a year. They had seen many miracles performed by God. It is difficult to believe that they could have so quickly turned aside from God's way.

What is the situation of today's Christians regarding God's way? Christians have the Bible, but very few take God's way. Instead, many have turned aside by making a golden calf and worshipping it.

According to verse 9, the Lord also said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people." This means that the people were stubborn and were not willing to be subdued or convinced to have a change. Not only was their neck stiff, but their entire being was unbending. This is also the condition of many Christians today. Who can subdue those Christians who are worshipping a golden calf? Who can convince them to act otherwise? If you try to speak to them, they may condemn you as being heretical.

In verse 10 the Lord went on to say, "And now, let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make you into a great nation." This word indicates that God was considering that He would wipe out the children of Israel. He certainly would not have spoken this way to Moses to threaten him. The Lord surely meant what He said. He was thinking of preserving Moses and his family and of making of Moses a nation to fulfill His purpose and to fulfill His promise to the forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Moses' Word of Petition

In 32:11-13 we have Moses' petition for the idolatrous people. Verse 11 says, "And Moses appeased the face of Jehovah his God, and he said, O Jehovah, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a strong

hand?" The Hebrew word rendered "appeased" means to mollify, entreat the favor of. The literal meaning is to make the face of anyone sweet or pleasant. God had an angry expression on His face, and Moses was trying to appease God's face, to make His face happy. Moses was trying to cause God to be in favor of the idolatrous people. This was Moses' petition.

It seems that Moses was not tempted by God's word about making him into a great nation. The Lord was saying that the people were hopeless, that He would consume them, and that He would make of Moses a great nation. If I had been there, I probably would have been tempted by this situation. It would be easy for us to say, "Amen, Lord. Whatever You say, Lord," humbling ourselves somewhat. However, Moses did not give in to this kind of thought. Instead, he appeased God's angry face for the favor of the idolatrous people.

In verse 7 the Lord said to Moses that the people were his people and that he had brought them out of the land of Egypt. But in verse 11 Moses asked the Lord, "Why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a strong hand?" Here Moses seems to be saying, "Lord, You say that these are my people and that I brought them out of Egypt. But, Lord, this is Your people, not mine. You brought them out of the land of Egypt, not I. I did not have the strength to do that." Moses was a true mediator, an ancient attorney, as he made his petition to God.

Then Moses continued, "Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, With evil intent He has brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your fierce anger and repent concerning this evil toward Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself, and You spoke to them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your seed, and they shall possess it forever" (vv. 12-13). Moses told the Lord that if He consumed His people, the Egyptians would slander Him. It

was necessary for the Lord to take care of His name and not to allow Himself to be slandered by the Egyptians.

After saying this, Moses urged the Lord to repent, and then he reminded Him of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. Moses had a strong ground on which to pray. He stood upon God's faithful word, the unchanging promise, that He had given to Moses' forefathers as a covenant. Moses seemed to be saying, "Lord, if You consume this people, You will break Your word. You will break the covenant You made with our forefathers. Not only would You give ground to the Egyptians to slander You, but You would act contrary to Yourself. You are the faithful God, and You cannot swallow Your words."

Verse 14 indicates that Moses' appeal was effective: "And Jehovah repented concerning the evil which He spoke of doing to His people." We would never expect God to repent. But Moses was a very able petitioner. He was able to convince God that He should repent. Therefore, God changed His mind and decided not to consume the people. The expression in the Lord's face changed from one of anger to one of pleasantness.

If we had been Moses, we would have acted differently. Once we heard words of anger spoken by the Lord, we might have run down to the bottom of the mountain to deal with the idolatrous people. But before Moses came down, he appeased the Lord. He settled the case in the heavenly law-court. Only then did he come down to deal with the idol and the idolaters.

MOSES' DEALING WITH THE IDOL

In verse 20 we see how Moses dealt with the golden-calf idol: "And he took the calf which they had made and burned it with fire, and ground it until it was powder; and he scattered it upon the surface of the water, and made the sons of Israel drink it." Aaron said that the calf came out of the fire (v. 24). Aaron had used fire to shape the golden calf. But Moses used fire to destroy the calf. After burning the calf with fire, Moses ground it until it was powder. Then he

scattered it upon the surface of the water and forced the sons of Israel to drink it. What is the significance of this? This signifies that eventually those who worship an idol must drink the very idol they worship. This can be compared to the saying that we reap what we sow, or that we eat the result of what we do.

Certainly the water with gold powder sprinkled on it did not taste very good. Tea-water may be pleasant, but not gold-water. It is never pleasant for an idolater to drink the idol he worships. We can testify this from our experience. Whatever we worship as an idol eventually becomes the water we must drink. In the past, we all had idols, and eventually we drank of them. This drinking of our idols is not an enjoyment; it is a punishment. This is a principle. The idols we worship will always become the water that we must drink.

There is no record of God telling Moses to burn the golden calf, grind it to powder, scatter the powder on the water, and make the idolatrous people drink it. Nevertheless, Moses took this action according to God's heart, and God was pleased with what Moses did.

MOSES' DEALING WITH THE IDOLATERS

In 32:21-24 Moses dealt with the idol-maker, Aaron. Then in verses 25-29 he dealt with the idol worshippers. Seeing that the people were broken loose "Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Whoever is for Jehovah, come to me! And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves to him" (vv. 25-26). Here Moses sounded a call for the overcomers. The worship of the golden calf caused division. Moses' call did not cause a division; it produced a purification.

When the Levites gathered themselves to Moses, he said to them, "Thus says Jehovah, God of Israel, Every man put his sword upon his thigh; pass through and return from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor" (v. 27). Verse 28 says, "And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people on that day

about three thousand men." As a result, the sons of Levi were separated from their brethren to replace the nation of Israel for God's priesthood (v. 29; Deut. 33:8-10). Deuteronomy 33:9 speaks concerning this: "Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." In other words, the Levites denied even their closest relationships with those who were worshippers of the golden calf.

These close relatives signify ourselves. Within us we have many "relatives" who are worshippers of the golden calf, and we must "kill" these relatives. Otherwise, we shall be counted among those who have lost the priesthood.

According to Exodus 19, God intended that the entire nation of Israel would be a priestly nation, a kingdom of priests. This means that, in God's estimation, every one among them was a priest. But due to the worship of the golden calf, the majority of the children of Israel lost the priesthood. The priesthood was then given to a single tribe, the tribe of Levi, because the Levites were willing to kill the worshippers of the golden calf. The killing of the idol worshippers separated the Levites from their brethren and qualified them to have the priesthood of God. From that time onward only one tribe, not the entire nation, continued to be God's priests.

Today there are millions of Christians. Are all of these Christians God's priests? No, most of them are worshippers of a golden calf; they are partners in the practice of impure worship. God's intention is that every believer in Christ, every child of God, would be a priest. Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 indicate this. Christ's redemption has the goal of making all the believers priests of God. But through the centuries impure worship, the worship of the golden calf, has disqualified a great many Christians from serving God as priests. Impure worship has caused the majority of the believers to lose their priesthood. But we thank the Lord that just as there was one tribe in the Old Testament that kept the priesthood, so there is a minority today who are

faithful to the Lord to kill the impure worship and thus to keep the priesthood.

I can testify that we have been faithful to the Lord for more than half a century. We have suffered persecution, opposition, slander, and libel because we are not willing to lose our priesthood. Because we have the priesthood, the Urim and the Thummim are with us. This is the reason we receive light from the Bible. Whenever we open up the Word of God, we are enlightened. This is the experience of the Urim and the Thummim, which are a great blessing to those who keep God's priesthood.

Deuteronomy 33:8 and 9 say, "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." Because the Levites were faithful to God and killed those who worshipped the golden calf, they received the right to have the priesthood with the Thummim and the Urim. God's priesthood depends upon the Urim and the Thummim. Later, when the Levites became unfaithful, they also lost the Urim and the Thummim. When they lost the Urim and the Thummim, they lost God's priesthood.

The crucial point here is that we need to be pure, and we need to kill the impure worship, the worship of the golden calf. For the sake of ourselves and for God, we need to kill the impure worship among today's Christians. Then we shall be qualified to be God's priests.

We should not read chapter thirty-two of Exodus merely as a story or as part of the history of Israel. We need to see the principles in this chapter. All these principles are applicable to our situation today. We need to eliminate self-beautification, and we need to kill the worship of the golden calf and that part of our being which participates in such worship. Then we shall preserve ourselves on the standing of God's priesthood. If we do this, God will continue to have a minority of believers for

the fulfillment of His purpose. May we all see these principles so that we may know the way that we must take.

Our way is not that of division; it is the way of purification. The Lord's recovery is a purification, not a division. The recovery depends on a group of Levites who are faithful to God and who do not lose the qualifications to be God's priests. Thank the Lord that we have God's priesthood and that He gives us the Urim and the Thummim.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SIX

A COMPANION OF GOD

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 32:30—33:23

In this message we come to the record of a very particular matter, a record that reveals that Moses was a companion of God (32:30—33:23).

THE NEED OF A MEDIATOR

The making of the golden calf was a severe blow to both God and Moses. Before the calf was made, everything was going smoothly. Moses was on the mountaintop with the Lord, and the Lord was revealing to him the design of the tabernacle and its furniture and utensils. No doubt, God and Moses were very happy. But at the end of the forty days Moses spent on the mountain with God, the children of Israel did evil in making a golden calf and worshipping it. By doing that, they broke the first four of the Ten Commandments.

The worship of the golden calf caused a serious problem. What should God do? Should He give up the children of Israel? Should He forsake His purpose in bringing them out of Egypt? Surely God could not do this. If you had brought more than two million people out of Egypt, not according to your mood, but according to your promise, would you have been able to give them up? Certainly not. God delivered the children of Israel in order to fulfill His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God brought the people out of Egypt, led them through the wilderness, and brought them to Mount Sinai, where He gave them training. Suddenly, as a great surprise, the children of Israel did evil by worshipping the

golden calf What the children of Israel did caused God a big problem. What should He do? In principle, we may have the assurance that God would not give up His people or abandon His project with them. On the contrary, He would still go on with them. But how could He go on with the children of Israel in such a situation?

The problem God faced with His people can be compared to certain problems between husband and wife or between parents and children. Although a wife may cause her husband a serious problem, and although the children may cause their parents serious problems, the husband cannot give up the wife, and the parents cannot give up their children. There must be a way for the husband and wife and the parents and children to go on together. Likewise, it was necessary for God to find a way to go on with His people. He needed a way out of the problem that had arisen regarding them.

God's way out was through Moses as the middleman, the mediator. In order to be a middleman, a mediator, between God and the children of Israel, it was necessary for Moses to be intimately involved with both parties. Moses was uniquely qualified to be the mediator. He had had nothing to do with the worship of the golden calf. He had been kept from that evil thing and was preserved in the presence of God. Therefore, he was the only one among God's people who was clean. Furthermore, Moses was very close to God. As we shall see, the way Moses expressed his petition to God indicates that his relationship with God was an intimate one.

I believe that, deep in His heart, God expected Moses to come in as the mediator between Him and the people. It was God's desire that Moses would give Him a way out of the problem. Without a middleman who could speak to God intimately, God would not have had a solution to His problem. No doubt, God wanted to be appeased. In 32:30 Moses indicated that propitiation was necessary: "And it came about on the next day that Moses said to the people, You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to Jehovah; perhaps I can make propitiation for your sin."

The offense caused by the children of Israel was extremely serious. What they did was inexcusable. They did not merely do something wrong; they made an idol and worshipped it as if it were God. They used the name of the Lord in vain. In so doing, they offended God to the uttermost, and it was as if they left no ground for Him to forgive them. It seemed that there was no possibility for God to come in to forgive this offense or to say anything to the people. Apparently, the only thing He could do was destroy the children of Israel there in the wilderness. Therefore, there was the need of a middleman, a mediator. How good that Moses was there to be the mediator between God and the children of Israel!

INTIMATE WITH GOD

At this point I would like to say to all the saints, especially the young people, that to serve the Lord is not simply a matter of a way or a method. Serving the Lord is something very personal. If we would serve the Lord, we must be a person who has an intimate relationship with Him. Otherwise, we may be good Christian workers, but we cannot be those who are able to touch God's heart.

Moses was a man greatly used by God. In previous messages we have seen how Moses was raised up by God and trained by Him. Moses was raised up by God during the first forty years of his life, and he was trained by Him during the next forty years. When Moses was eighty years old, God came in to call him and use him. God gave him a vision of a burning bush (3:2). Although the fire was burning in the bush, the bush was not consumed. Through this vision God seemed to be saying, "Moses, you are like this bush. I intend to use you, but I shall not burn you. I shall not consume you. I shall burn in you according to what I am."

When Moses was called by God in Exodus 3, there was not yet any intimacy between him and God. Moses was new to God. Their relationship can be compared to that between an employer and a new employee. God, the employer, spoke to Moses, the new employee, and asked him if he would accept

the job. We know that eventually Moses was convinced to take the "job" the Lord offered him.

The period of time from the day Moses was called in Exodus 3 to the conversation between him and God in Exodus 32 and 33 was probably not more than two years. During the course of this period of time, Moses became intimate with God.

According to the record in Exodus, Moses twice spent a period of forty days alone with God on the mountaintop. During the first forty days, God gave Moses the design of the tabernacle and the furniture. This is described in six chapters, Exodus 25 through 30. Do you think that the content of these six chapters occupied God for those entire forty days? This certainly would not seem to be the case. What were God and Moses doing all that time? They may have been enjoying intimate fellowship.

The children of Israel may have tried to excuse themselves for making the golden calf by the fact that Moses was gone so long. Some of them may have said, "We have not heard from the Lord or from Moses for a long time. They have left us here at the foot of the mountain, and we have been here for nearly forty days. The Lord and Moses brought us out of Egypt and led us to this place. But we don't know what has happened to them. We can't see God, and we can't see Moses either. Therefore, we must do something for ourselves." God, of course, did not give the people a chance to excuse themselves. Likewise, Moses did not allow the children of Israel, especially Aaron, to make an excuse. If Aaron and the children of Israel had been allowed to excuse themselves, they probably would have blamed Moses for being gone too long. They may have said, "Moses, where have you been? You have been gone too long. Does the Lord intend to have us for His people, or does He plan to have only you? It seems to us that you and God have forgotten about us."

We may say that the Lord and Moses stayed together so long because they were intimate with each other. They had a happy time together on the mountaintop. But that pleasant

time was a time of testing to the children of Israel. Later God asked Moses to go up to the mountain again, and they were together for another forty days. Moses and God simply liked to stay together. They loved each other, and they wanted to be together.

KNOWING WHAT IS ON GOD'S HEART

The record in the book of Exodus gives many details concerning the person of Moses. According to this record, before the first forty days Moses spent on the mountain with God, his relationship with God was not yet one of intimacy. But in the incident of the making of the golden calf, we see that Moses and God had an intimate talk. This indicates the beginning of Moses' intimacy with God. Moses knew what was on God's heart. He came down from the mountain, cast away the tablets, ground the golden calf into powder, and forced the people to drink water on which this powder had been sprinkled. He also called for a group of overcomers to slay the idolaters. Moses did all this according to God's heart.

Moses knew that God did not want to give up the children of Israel. But he also knew that God needed a way out of the problem between Him and His people. If we read Exodus 32 and 33 carefully, we shall see that Moses had the assurance that he could work out the problem with God concerning the inexcusable offense committed by the people. Moses knew that he could appease God in this situation. In 32:30 Moses seemed to be saying to the children of Israel, "You have committed such a great sin that it seems you cannot be forgiven. What you have done is altogether inexcusable. But I shall go to make propitiation for you." Moses had the assurance that propitiation could be made, for, as a result of staying with God on the mountaintop for forty days, he knew what was on God's heart.

During the forty days he was with God, Moses gained a thorough knowledge of God's heart concerning the children of Israel. Moses knew that God wanted this people to be His own, that He wanted to take them for His bride. Moses knew

that not even the people's sin of worshipping the golden calf could change the desire of God's heart. Although this offense created an extremely difficult problem, Moses had the assurance that God could be propitiated. He knew God's heart, and he knew the way to approach Him concerning His people.

As those who would serve God, we also need to know what is on God's heart. Many Christians today emphasize the fact that we need to take the Word of God. Of course, we must know God's Word and take it. However, if Moses had done nothing more than take the word of God, there would have been no way for him to work out a reconciliation between God and the people. The Lord said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will wipe him out from My book" (32:33). That was God's word, but was it the intent of God's heart? No, it was not. God's word was one thing, but the desire of His heart may have been something else. Moses realized that God said that He was about to wipe out the people. But, knowing God's heart, Moses also realized that He would not give up His people. As the middleman between God and the children of Israel, Moses knew what was on God's heart.

When Moses came to God about this situation, he did not pray in a religious way. He did not say, as we probably would do, "Lord, thank You that You are full of mercy." According to 32:31 and 32, Moses spoke to the Lord in an intimate way, like a man talking to a close friend.

It is not sufficient merely for us to know the Word concerning the economy of God and the ground of the church. If you know the Word concerning God's economy and the church, you may be only a man of the Word, but not a man according to God's heart. In addition to knowing the Word, we all must come to know God's heart. This is especially needed among the elders. All the elders should be those who are according to God's heart. With Moses in Exodus 32 and 33, we see a man who is not only right in all he does; we see a man who knows what is on God's heart and who is according to God's heart.

The sin committed by the children of Israel in worshipping the golden calf caused a problem not only to God, but also to Moses. Moses may have said to himself, "What should I do about this? This whole situation may cause Pharaoh and the Egyptians to mock us and to mock God." We are not told, however, that Moses considered the situation for a long period of time, or that he fasted and prayed to seek the Lord's leading. There is no indication that Moses questioned whether he should go back to the Lord concerning the matter. Rather, immediately after he dealt with the idolaters, he told the children of Israel that they had sinned a great sin, but that he would seek to make propitiation for them. Moses could do this because he was clear concerning the situation of the children of Israel and especially concerning the desire of God's heart. During those forty days on the mountaintop, the Lord surely did not leave Moses alone for long periods of time and then occasionally speak something about the tabernacle and its furniture. Moses and the Lord may have had some lengthy conversations. As a result of his intimate fellowship with God, Moses knew the real situation among the people, and he also had the assurance that he could appease the Lord.

MORE THAN A FRIEND

At this juncture the Bible recognizes that Moses was a companion of God. Exodus 33:11 says, "And Jehovah would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his companion." The Hebrew word rendered "companion" here is different from the word for "friend" used with respect to Abraham in 2 Chronicles 20:7 and Isaiah 41:8. As a friend of God, Abraham had been separated from idolatrous people (Josh. 24:2-3), and he interceded for Lot (Gen. 18:16-33). The Apostle James also tells us that Abraham was God's friend (James 2:23). Not only was Abraham justified by God, but he also became a friend of God. God regarded Abraham as a beloved one, a person held in affection. However, Moses was not only a friend of God like Abraham; he was also a companion of God.

Between two people there is first friendship and then companionship. For example, before a couple get married, the two may be friends. Then their friendship develops into companionship. After they are married, they no longer regard each other as friends, but they continue to be companions.

The word "companion" includes the elements of friendship, but it goes much further to include the thought of intimate association. One meaning of the Hebrew word for companion is associate. A companion is an associate. If you and someone else are associates, you have a common interest, a common enterprise, in a common career. I do not wish to imply that there was no common interest between Abraham and God. They did share a common interest, but it was not of the same degree as that between Moses and God. To the uttermost, God and Moses were partners in a great enterprise. They were both involved in the same "career." Moses and the Lord were not only intimate friends; they were associates, partners, companions.

In Genesis 18 Abraham behaved himself as a friend of God. God came to visit Abraham, and Abraham welcomed Him and served Him a feast. Not wanting to leave immediately, God lingered with Abraham for a while. Because God regarded Abraham as His friend, He knew that He could not conceal from him what He was about to do. Instead, He wanted to reveal to His dear friend what was on His heart. Therefore, He told Abraham that Sodom was soon to be destroyed. The Lord's intention in making that disclosure was that Abraham would remember Lot and intercede for him. This means that God's purpose here according to what was on His heart was to burden Abraham to pray for Lot. God's intention was to save Lot. However, in keeping with His principle, God knew that He could not do anything for Lot without someone to intercede for him. In that occasion also God needed a middleman.

We have seen that God and Abraham were intimate friends. Sometimes when we want an intimate friend to do something for us, we do not tell him about it clearly. Instead, we may give hints and let the other party infer what we

want or need. When God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 18, He did not say anything explicit concerning Lot. Nevertheless, Abraham came to realize what was on the heart of his divine Friend. Therefore, Abraham prayed for Lot. But in his intercession, he did not mention Lot by name. Instead, he prayed for him in a rather indirect way. Eventually, God saved Lot in answer to Abraham's prayer.

In Genesis 18, both parties, the Lord and Abraham, were friends. They both had the desire to do something for Lot. I believe that in Genesis 18 we have the basis for God to say that Abraham was His friend. If you read this chapter again, you will see that it is the record of a conversation between friends.

The point we are making here is that with the Lord and Moses there was something more than friendship. The conversation between them was not only that between friends but that between companions, partners. God and Moses were both concerned with their "corporation," with their "enterprise" and "career." Both parties had the wisdom not to speak about the situation in an altogether direct and detailed way. First the Lord spoke to Moses concerning the people and the golden calf. Then He left it up to Moses to deal with the situation. The Lord seemed to be saying to him, "Moses, I give this matter to you. Go down to the foot of the mountain and see what can be worked out." Contrary to what we would expect, the Lord did not give Moses detailed requirements about grinding the calf to powder, scattering the powder on water, and forcing the idolaters to drink this water. Neither did the Lord tell Moses to call for the overcomers to slay the idolaters and, after that, to speak to the people in behalf of the Lord and then to return to the Lord again on the mountaintop. The Lord simply pointed out to Moses what the people were doing. But because Moses knew what was on God's heart, everything he did concerning the worship of the golden calf was pleasing to God. For example, it was a very serious matter to cast away the tablets on which were engraved the commandments carved by God's hand. But not even that act offended God, for it was done according to God's

heart. Moses realized that it was according to God's heart to break those tablets. As a companion of God, Moses had an intimate relationship with Him and knew what was on His heart. Therefore, everything Moses did was according to the heart of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SEVEN

A COMPANION OF GOD

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 32:30—33:23

In the foregoing message we saw that Moses was not only a friend of God, but also a companion, an associate, of God. Moses and God were partners in a single enterprise. As God's companion, Moses knew God's heart and could converse with Him in an intimate way.

MADE MANIFEST BY AND AMONG THE IDOLATROUS PEOPLE

The fact that Moses was a companion of God was made manifest by the idolatrous people and among them. From this we who serve the saints in the churches may learn an important lesson. This lesson is never to blame the situation. The elders should not say, "Oh, all the brothers and sisters here are troublemakers. This makes it hard for us to go on. Let us resign, and let others come in to be the elders. Then they will taste how bitter it is to be an elder in this locality." Sometimes this thought is in the heart of the elders. On a number of occasions I have heard elders speak in this way.

The elders need to see that how much we have been dealt with by the Lord and how much we have learned of the Lord will always be made manifest by the difficulties we face with the saints. It was the idolatrous people who made manifest Moses' qualifications as God's companion. Likewise, it will be troublesome saints who will create an opportunity for the Lord to manifest what He has done in us. If the elders only have to be involved with positive

brothers and sisters, what the elders are would not be manifest.

The making of the golden calf was a severe blow to Moses. What should he do about the situation? This was determined by the kind of person he was. The evil situation among the children of Israel provided an opportunity for Moses to be manifested as a companion of God.

PROPITIATING FOR THE STIFF-NECKED AND IDOLATROUS PEOPLE

In 32:30 Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to Jehovah; perhaps I can make propitiation for your sin." Here we see that Moses was willing to make propitiation in behalf of a people who were stiff-necked and idolatrous. In a human sense, this required a great deal of patience. If you had been Moses, would you have been willing to appease God for the sake of such a rebellious people? If we had been there, we might have urged God to wipe out such a people. It requires patience to do the work of appeasing or propitiating.

By Conversing with God Intimately

Moses sought to propitiate God by conversing with Him intimately. Exodus 32:31 says, "And Moses returned to Jehovah and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and they have made for themselves a god of gold." Notice that Moses here uses the neutral expression "this people." He does not say to the Lord "Your people"; neither does he refer to them as "my people." God had said to Moses that it was Moses who had brought the people out of Egypt (32:7). But Moses said to God that it was God who had brought them out (32:11). But here Moses, following the way of a middleman, a mediator, uses a neutral expression and speaks neither of God's people nor of his own people, but of "this people."

There is no record that Moses gave God a report of how he dealt with the idolatrous people. He did not tell God that he ground the calf into powder, scattered the powder on the water, and forced the people to drink the water. Neither did

he tell the Lord that he had called for some to slaughter the idolaters. What we have is a friendly, intimate conversation between Moses and the Lord. Moses simply told God that the people had sinned a great sin in making a god of gold.

Interceding at the Risk of His Eternal Destiny

Moses sought to make propitiation for the people even at the risk of his eternal destiny. According to verse 32, he said to the Lord, "And now, if You will forgive their sin—and if not, wipe me out, I pray, from Your book which You have written." Notice that Moses did not complete the first part of his statement. He simply said, "If You will forgive their sin." If we had been Moses, we may have said something like this: "Now, if You will forgive their sin, everything will be all right." Moses, however, left the matter open. To indicate this, some translations use an ellipsis and say, "If You will forgive their sin . . . ." Sometimes it is necessary to speak in this way to those close to us. In speaking to our husband or wife we may need to say, "If you will do this . . . ." We should not always complete our thought. Moses spoke in such a way because he realized that he was not the Lord. Only the Lord is the Lord. Therefore, Moses did not presume to say what would be the result or consequence if the Lord forgave their sin.

The latter part of Moses' word in verse 32 makes it clear that he was propitiating for the people at the risk of his spiritual destiny. He said to the Lord, "If not, wipe me out, I pray, from Your book which You have written." It seems that Moses was saying, "Concerning my own destiny, Lord, I would ask you to wipe me out if you would not forgive this people. But I leave with You the question concerning the destiny of the people. Only you can say what their destiny should be."

Do you think that Moses' word in verses 31 and 32 is an ordinary prayer? He did not pray in an ordinary way for the children of Israel; instead, he conversed with God intimately in their behalf. That was the wise way followed by Moses to appease God in that situation.

According to God's Heart

Moses made propitiation for the people according to God's heart (32:33—33:3). From what the Lord says in verse 33, apparently He did not heed Moses' word. Outwardly it may seem that God resisted Moses' word, but inwardly He had already honored it. God was happy to have such a companion. God may have said to Himself, "I am glad to have Moses for a companion. He is intimate with Me, and He knows My heart and what I want to do. Moses knows that I want to forgive this people and continue to use them. However, I would not initiate this conversation in their behalf. But Moses, My companion, one who knows My heart, has initiated this talk."

In verse 33 God said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will wipe him out from My book." This word was an outward expression to uphold God's honor. But what the Lord goes on to say in verse 34 indicates that He had forgiven the people: "And now, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My angel shall go before you, and in the day of My visitation I will visit their sin upon them." Moses, the mediator, realized that God's word here was an indication that He had forgiven the people. Moses had said, "If You will forgive their sin…." It seems that he was saying to the Lord, "Lord, I won't say anything further. You speak a word. Now You tell me to go lead the people to the place of which You have spoken to me. I have no problem with this."

The King James Version and Darby's translation capitalize the word angel in verse 34. I agree with this, for it is an indication that the angel here is Christ. The Lord promised Moses that His angel would go before him, and in the day of His visitation He would visit the people's sin upon them. On the one hand, the people were forgiven. But on the other hand, there was still a problem, and God said that He would deal with it. Sometimes the relationship between a father and his children is like this. The children may do something wrong, and the father will forgive them and release them. However, he may intend to deal with them in some way at a later time.

Causing the People to Mourn and to Cleanse Themselves

Exodus 33:1-3 say, "And Jehovah spoke to Moses, Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, To your seed I will give it (and I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite), unto a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in the midst of you, because you are a stiff-necked people, lest I consume you in the way." This indicates that the conversation between the two partners, the Lord and Moses, had arrived at an agreement. God, the first party, agreed to let the offenders go, but He still insisted that He would deal with the people at a later time. When Moses and the children of Israel heard this, they knew that it was not a pleasant word. Verse 4 says, "And when the people heard this evil word, they mourned, and no man put on his ornaments."

Verses 5 and 6 say, "Now Jehovah had said to Moses, Say to the sons of Israel, You stiff-necked people! If I should go up in the midst of you for one moment, I would consume you! And now, put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what I shall do to you. And the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb onward." Here we see that Moses caused the people to mourn and to cleanse themselves.

This can be compared to what happened in Genesis 35:1-4. The Lord told Jacob to go up to Bethel and make an altar there unto God. Then Jacob said to his household and everyone with him, "Put away the strange gods which are among you, and be clean, and change your garments" (Gen. 35:2). Then we are told that "they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods that were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears" (v. 4). In order to be cleansed, it was necessary for them to put off all their ornaments.

As we mentioned in a previous message, the ornaments

worn by the children of Israel were for their self-beautification. This self-beautification was the preliminary stage of the golden-calf idol. The idol came out of self-beautification, for the gold of the ornaments was used to make the golden calf. Even after the golden calf had been destroyed and three thousand of the children of Israel had been slain, the people still had their ornaments. But when they heard the "evil word" about the Lord's not going up in their midst, "no man put on his ornaments." Actually, the people should have put on sackcloth and ashes as a sign of true repentance, repentance from a broken heart. The people, however, still had their ornaments. When they heard this evil word, they began to realize that they could no longer wear these ornaments. Therefore, we are told that "the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb onward" (v. 6).

In chapters thirty-two and thirty-three we see the result of Moses' work as a mediator between God and the children of Israel. First, he appeased God's anger for the sake of the people. Then he caused the people to repent and to put off their ornaments as the sign of repentance. The people gave up their self-beautification. This was the outcome of Moses' making propitiation for the stiff-necked and idolatrous people.

TO BE WITH GOD IN THE TENT OUTSIDE THE CAMP

Exodus 33:7 says, "Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And it came about that everyone who sought Jehovah would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp." According to verses 9 and 10, the glory of the Lord was at the door of the tent. In verse 11 we are told that "Jehovah would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his companion." All the children of Israel who wanted to seek the Lord went out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp.

Moses, an experienced person, knew that God according to His holiness would no longer stay among the people, for the camp had become idolatrous. Therefore, Moses took his tent,

which formerly had been in the camp, and pitched it outside the camp. This action was according to God's heart.

Knowing the heart of God, Moses realized that he could not stay in an idolatrous situation. This was the reason he moved his tent outside the camp. This tent then became the tent of God. The tabernacle had not yet been constructed. Hence, Moses' tent became the tent of meeting for the meeting between God and His people. "And it came about, when Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and He would speak with Moses" (v. 9). If the people wanted to seek God, they had to go to the tent of Moses.

Moses' tent outside the camp is a type. In Hebrews 13:12 and 13 we have the fulfillment of this type: "Wherefore also Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach." The Lord Jesus was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem. The people of God rejected Him, the sent One of God. Even though He is the Son of God, the children of Israel had Him crucified outside the city. In Hebrews 13:13 we are urged to go forth unto Christ outside the camp, which signifies human organization.

In the last century certain teachers wrote strongly on this matter. They pointed out that today's Christianity is a "camp," and this camp has become idolatrous. The Lord would not remain in such an idolatrous camp. Because He has come out of that camp, whoever seeks the Lord must go forth unto Him outside the camp. We need to go unto this rejected One, the One rejected by idolatrous religion. We need to leave the idolatrous camp and go to the rejected One. This is the narrow way we must follow.

We need to ask ourselves if we are still in the "camp," or if we have gone forth unto the Lord outside the camp. We may be able to testify that we are outside the camp. Nevertheless, we need to be careful lest we again become a camp. As soon as there is idolatry among God's people, they become a camp.

Whatever Moses did in these chapters was according to God's heart. He made propitiation in behalf of the children of Israel according to God's heart, and he moved his tent outside the camp also according to God's heart. Moses, therefore, had the ground to bargain with God for His presence and glory (33:12-23).

BARGAINING WITH GOD FOR HIS PRESENCE AND GLORY

For God's Presence to Go with His People

In 33:12-17 we see that Moses bargained with God for His presence (His face) to go with the people He had set apart as the way for them to take. In verses 12 and 13 Moses said to the Lord, "See, You are saying to me, Bring up this people, but You have not let me know whom You will send with me; and yet You have said, I know you by name, and you have also found favor in My eyes. And now, I pray, if I have found favor in Your eyes, let me know, I pray, Your way, that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your eyes; and consider that this nation is Your people." Although Moses did not make known his request altogether clearly in words, God understood him. In verse 14 He replied, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." Then Moses further said to the Lord, "If Your presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. And by what shall it be known then that I have found favor in Your eyes, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, that we might be distinguished, I and Your people, from all the people which are on the face of the earth?" (vv. 15-16). Once again the Lord agreed to Moses' request: "Even this thing which you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in My eyes, and I know you by name" (v. 17).

If we read this portion of chapter thirty-three carefully, we shall see that God's glory is His presence, and His presence is His way. If we have God's presence, we have His way. God's presence is the "map" that shows us the way we should take. For example, when God called Abraham, He

did not tell him exactly where to go, because God's presence was itself His guidance of Abraham.

In 33:12-17 we see that Moses wanted God's presence and glory. God had already been appeased by Moses, but He had made it known that He would not go with them. However, Moses was not entirely satisfied with the terms of the agreement. Hence, after he had gained a certain amount of ground with the Lord, he sought to gain more ground. He did this by asking the Lord who it was that would go with the people. Moses said to Him, "You have not let me know whom You will send with me." Eventually the Lord agreed to Moses' request and seemed to say, "Moses, I will give you what you want. I know that you want Me to go with you. All right, I will go."

For God's Glory to Be Shown to Him

Still not completely satisfied, Moses went on to say to the Lord, "Show me, I pray, Your glory" (v. 18). Moses surely was experienced and knew how to negotiate with the Lord. We should learn from Moses that the proper way to pray is not to offer religious prayers. On the contrary, it is to have prayers that are an intimate conversation with God.

The Lord replied to Moses' request by saying, "I will make all My goodness to pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of Jehovah before you; and I will show favor to whom I will show favor, and have compassion on whom I will have compassion. And He said, You cannot see My face, for no man shall see Me and live" (vv. 19-20). Here we see that the Lord's goodness, name, favor, and compassion would be shown and proclaimed directly to Moses. However, the Lord's face, His glory, could not be seen. Here the Lord seemed to be saying, "Moses, I can show you My goodness, My favor, and My compassion. I can also declare to you My name. But one thing I cannot do—I cannot show you My face. If you were to see My face, Moses, you would die. Therefore, for your sake, I will not let you see My face."

According to 33:21-23 the Lord said to Moses, "Behold,

there is a place with Me, and you shall stand upon the rock. And it will come about, while My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by. And I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen." Christ is the cleft rock, the everlasting rock cleft for us. Only in the crucified Christ can we see God. I am not able to explain in full what this means. I can only speak in a general way that in the cleft Christ we can see God to some extent. According to 33:23, we can see His back, but not His face.

In these verses Moses' bargaining with God has reached the "bottom line." Moses could not proceed further in his negotiations with the Lord. He had received everything that he could receive. He realized from the Lord's direct word that he could not see His face, only His back.

SOME DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

In this portion of the Word there are some theological problems for which there is no solution. First, in 33:2 the Lord said that He would send His angel before the people. No doubt, the angel here refers to Christ, and Christ is God Himself. As long as Christ goes with the people, this means that God goes with them. Why, then, did God say that His angel would go, but that He Himself would not go? Furthermore, why, after further bargaining by Moses, did God say that His presence would go with them? God said that both His angel and His presence would go with the people. The angel refers to Christ, and the presence actually denotes God's face. Therefore, we have the problem of God's angel and His presence going with the people, yet God still said that He Himself would not go with them.

Another problem is related to God's word to Moses in verse 20 concerning seeing His face. The Lord said, "You cannot see My face, for no man shall see Me and live." However, verse 11 says, "Jehovah would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his companion." How can we explain this?

Furthermore, in these verses we see that God's face is His glory, that His glory is His presence, and that His presence is His face. How are we to understand all this?

As I have indicated, I do not have the solution to these problems. I can only speak according to our limited understanding of what God is. In a sense, we can talk to God face to face. But in another sense, we cannot see God's face. This is not a contradiction. Rather, it is a matter of degree or extent.

The principle is the same with God's angel going with the people. For the angel of God to go with the children of Israel meant that to a certain extent God went with them. For God's glory to go with them meant that God went with them to a further extent. In Exodus 14 we see that the angel of God is one thing and the pillar of cloud is another (v. 19). Both the angel of God and the pillar of cloud were there leading the way. It was possible, however, for the children of Israel to have one without the other. It is better, of course, to have both.

After Moses pitched his tent outside the camp, God's glory was at the door of the tent, but it was not within the camp. This indicates that God's presence was at the door of Moses' tent, not in the camp. However, we should not say that God was not at all in the camp with the children of Israel. This principle applies to us today. We may say that God's glory is not present in a situation where there is idolatry among Christians. However, we cannot say absolutely that God is not among these Christians. As we have pointed out, this is a matter of degree.

From 32:30—33:23 we learn the serious lesson that we need to know God's heart and also be a person according to God's heart. Then we shall have God's presence as Moses did. Moses had God's presence to the full extent. But the children of Israel had God's presence in a very limited way, for they were far from God's heart. Moses, however, was a person very near to God's heart, a person according to His heart. This was the reason he could have God's presence to the full extent. We all need to learn that only a person like Moses can be a companion of God. Only this kind of person

can share a common interest with God and be used by God to carry out His enterprise on earth.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-EIGHT

MOSES' STAY WITH GOD

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 34

Exodus 34 is a chapter that is not easy to understand. After we read through this chapter, we still may not be able to grasp what is spoken in it, because so many matters are covered. Therefore, at the beginning of this message I would like to point out two matters that may help our understanding of this chapter.

TYPES, FIGURES, AND SHADOWS

The first is that when we, the New Testament believers, read the Old Testament, especially certain books, we need to realize that in the Old Testament there are types, figures, and shadows of the divine and spiritual things revealed in the New Testament. Things that are divine and spiritual are mysterious, beyond the understanding of our natural mentality. However, we may understand these divine, spiritual, and mysterious things by the types, figures, and shadows in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, there is a problem here in that we may read about all the Old Testament types, figures, and allegories, but find it very difficult to see the significance of these things.

As a help to knowing the significance of the Old Testament types, we should realize that the record in the Old Testament does not merely concern the history of an ancient people. This record is also about us. Hence, when we read the Old Testament, we are reading about ourselves and not only about the children of Israel. We should not read the book of Exodus merely as history. We need to see ourselves

in this book. Exodus contains not only the history of an ancient people; it also contains our story. It is the story of our present Christian life. Moreover, many spiritual and divine things related to our Christian experience are typified in this book. It is very important that we realize this.

RECOVERY OF THE BROKEN COVENANT

Second, as we come to chapter thirty-four with this understanding, we also need to see that in this chapter we have a full recovery of the broken covenant. For this reason, many things recorded in this chapter are a repetition of what was given earlier. Exodus 34 is a chapter of repetition, a chapter that repeats what God has already spoken. Nearly everything in this chapter is a repetition.

The covenant God had made with His people during Moses' first stay with Him on the mountain had been broken. The two tablets of testimony, which signified that covenant, had been broken and cast aside. This covenant was not broken by God, the One who gave the law; it was broken by the one who received the tables of the law. We have seen that if it had not been for Moses as God's companion, everything would have ended there with the breaking of the covenant. The special relationship between God and His people would have been seriously damaged. However, this companion of God knew God's heart, and he knew that God would not give up His purpose with the children of Israel. Moses knew that this purposeful God had a very strong intention, and that no one could stop Him from doing what He intended to do. Perhaps God may be temporarily delayed or frustrated, but He cannot be stopped.

Because it was necessary for God to keep His standing, His position, He needed a companion to be the mediator between Him and His people. This mediator could make propitiation in behalf of the people and appease God's anger in that situation. As we have seen, Moses went to God as a mediator. Every point that Moses covered in his talk with God was a matter related to what was on God's heart. This

was the reason God sanctioned what Moses said and granted his petitions.

After God had been appeased, it was necessary for the broken covenant to be recovered. The tablets signifying the covenant had been broken. Now in order to recover the situation between God and His people, it certainly was necessary for the broken covenant to be recovered. Chapter thirty-four, therefore, is a chapter concerned with the recovery of the broken covenant.

Exodus 34:1 says, "And Jehovah said to Moses, Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write upon the tablets the words which were on the first tablets, which you broke in pieces." Because God had been appeased and because Moses had made propitiation in behalf of the people, the Lord had the ground to speak this way to Moses. The proposal in 34:1 was not made by Moses; it was made by the Lord. The propitiation made by Moses for the people meant a great deal to God. Apart from that propitiation, God would not have had the ground to do anything to recover the broken covenant.

In 34:2 the Lord went on to say to Moses, "And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and stand by Me there on the top of the mountain." It was necessary for Moses to come up to the mountaintop to meet with the Lord. The Lord could not go down to where Moses was. The mountaintop was the meeting place for both parties, for both God and Moses. The meeting on the mountaintop involved Moses going up and God coming down.

MEETING WITH THE LORD ALONE

Verses 4 and 5 say, "And he hewed two tablets of stone like the first ones; and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai as Jehovah had commanded him, and he took in his hands two tablets of stone. And Jehovah descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Jehovah." In these verses we see that Moses went up to Mount Sinai, and the Lord descended to

Mount Sinai. Hence, to Moses it was a matter of going up, but to God it was a matter of coming down.

In verse 2 the Lord charged Moses to be ready in the morning and to come up in the morning to Mount Sinai. According to verse 4, "Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as Jehovah had commanded him." I appreciate this word about meeting with the Lord in the morning. How marvelous it would be if we could meet together every morning!

If we read chapter thirty-four carefully, we shall see that God did not tell Moses explicitly to meet with Him in the morning of the next day. Rather, God simply said for him to come up "in the morning." However, this must refer to the next morning available to Moses, that is, to the morning of the next day.

To meet with the Lord in the morning means not only to meet with Him early in the day; it also means that we should meet with God in a situation that is full of light. Our meeting with God should be at sunrise, not at sunset. The entrance both of the tabernacle and of the temple was toward the east, toward the sunrise (27:13-15). The way we take should be in the light. Proverbs 4:18 says, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The way we take should be toward the sunrise, not toward the sunset.

In 34:3 the Lord said to Moses, "And no man shall come up with you, neither let any man be seen on all the mountain; neither let the flocks and the herds feed before that mountain." Here the Lord told Moses not to bring anyone with him on the mountain. Moses was not permitted to bring Joshua, Aaron, or anyone else. He was to come to the Lord alone. Furthermore, he was to leave all the flocks and herds. No doubt, he was also to leave behind all his possessions. This means that when Moses went up the mountain to meet with the Lord, he was not to bring with him anyone or anything except the tablets of stone.

The Lord's charge to Moses in verse 3 indicates that we all need a time to contact the Lord alone. We all need a

private time to meet with the Lord. During this time alone with the Lord, we should not bring with us anyone or anything. When we go to the Lord early in the morning, we should go to Him alone. We need to leave even our husband or wife behind. Some brothers have the practice of taking their wives with them wherever they go. This practice is good. However, when it is time to meet with the Lord on the mountaintop, a brother should leave his wife at the foot of the mountain. When we meet with the Lord in this way, we need to forget everything and everyone. Forget your possessions, your education, your occupation, your future. Go to the Lord alone without anyone or anything.

When it is time to meet with the Lord alone, we should be free even from our necessities. Moses did not bring anything to eat or drink, and he did not have something on which to sleep. This indicates that when we stay with God, we need not be concerned for our eating, drinking, or sleeping. Actually, there is no time for these things. When we go to meet with the Lord alone, we must be totally free from everything. We must be free from our relatives, our possessions, and even our necessities. Moses was free in this way when he went to the mountaintop to meet with the Lord early in the morning.

We have seen that in order to meet together, Moses went up and the Lord came down. They met at a neutral place, and this neutral place was the mountaintop. This indicates that the Lord was not too demanding of Moses. On the one hand, He asked Moses to come up. On the other hand, He came down to meet with Moses on the mountain.

Exodus 34:29 says, "And it came about, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai—and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hands when he came down from the mountain—that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone in His speaking with him." The last part of this verse is a problem for Bible translators. Should the rendering be "in His speaking with him," or "in his speaking with Him"? The rendering "His speaking with him" indicates that the Lord was speaking with Moses. But the rendering "his speaking with Him" means that Moses was speaking with

the Lord. I definitely prefer the former because here the main thing is not Moses' speaking but God's speaking. Therefore, verse 29 is saying that the skin of Moses' face shone in the Lord's speaking with him.

Actually in this chapter Moses spoke hardly at all. In fact, when the Lord was declaring His name, Moses may even have been frightened. Verses 6 and 7 say, "And Jehovah passed by before his face and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah, God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great in kindness and faithfulness; keeping kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons, and upon the sons' sons, upon the third and upon the fourth generation." According to verses 8 and 9, Moses bowed himself down and said to the Lord, "If I have found favor in Your eyes, O Lord, let the Lord, I pray, go in our midst, for it is a stiff-necked people; and forgive our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Your possession." After Moses spoke like this to the Lord, the Lord continued speaking with him. The point here is that this was not the time for Moses to speak. Instead, it was the time for God to speak. Moses received an infusion not through his speaking to God, but through God's speaking to him.

When we meet with the Lord alone early in the morning, we should not speak too much. Rather, we should let God speak to us. If we talk too much in our meeting with the Lord, we shall not receive an infusion. God's infusion comes with His speaking. If God would not speak to you, this indicates that He would not infuse you with anything of Himself. But if God speaks to you, you will receive an infusion from Him.

At the very beginning of this chapter, the Lord told Moses that He would "write upon the tablets the words which were on the first tablets." But, instead of doing this right away, the Lord talked to Moses about many other things. Only toward the end of His long conversation with Moses did God write upon the tablets "the words of the covenant, the ten words" (v. 28). This indicates that it was not God's main intention to write the Ten Commandments on the two stone tablets. God's

main burden was to speak to Moses concerning the things covered in this chapter in verses 10 through 27. In these verses we have a lengthy record of God's conversation with Moses, a conversation that covered many points. In these verses nothing is mentioned regarding the Ten Commandments. If I had been Moses, I may have asked God about this and said, "Lord, what are You doing here? You asked me to bring two tablets, and here they are. The tablets are ready for You to write on them. Why, then, are You talking to me about so many other things?" Moses, of course, may have been frightened at that time, and he did not presume to say anything about what the Lord was doing.

THE LORD'S DECLARING HIS NAME

Before God did anything, He first gave Moses a warning by declaring His name (v. 6). For God to declare His name means that He assumed His position. He would never leave His position, but He would keep it by declaring who He is. When Moses heard this declaration, "he hastened and bowed his head toward the earth, and bowed himself down" (v. 8).

THE LORD'S PROMISE

After declaring His name, the Lord went on to say, "Behold, I am making a covenant: before all your people I will do marvels which have not been wrought in all the earth, nor in all the nations; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of Jehovah, for it is a fearful thing which I am doing with you. Observe what I am commanding you this day; behold, I will drive out from before you the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite" (vv. 10-11). Here we see that the Lord promised to do marvelous things before the people, and these marvelous things were to be accomplished for a specific goal—to bring His people into the good land. Whatever God did for the children of Israel, whether in giving them manna or in defeating their enemies, was for the purpose of bringing them into the good land. The good land was God's goal.

God wanted His people to enter into the good land so that eventually He could have a temple on earth. That temple was to be God's testimony. The temple was to be for God and also for His people. As long as God could have the temple as His testimony on earth, the situation with His people would be all right. When the Israelites had a proper relationship to God's temple, they were in a proper condition in the land. But when they lacked a proper relationship to God's temple, they had serious difficulty. Eventually, they lost both the temple and the land.

We have seen that God's goal in doing marvelous things for His people was to bring them into the good land. In typology this indicates that God is doing marvelous things for us and with us with the intention of bringing us into Christ. According to the record in the Old Testament, it was not an easy matter for the children of Israel to enter the good land. Outwardly they were frustrated by circumstances and by the enemy; inwardly they were frustrated by certain things within themselves. This was the reason it took forty years for them to be brought into the good land. Today it is also difficult for us to be brought into Christ. I know this from experience. For more than fifty years I have been laboring in the ministry for the one purpose of helping the saints to get into Christ as the good land. How many of us have been brought into Christ experientially? Some may say that we are all in Christ. Of course, this is true doctrinally and objectively. But how much of Christ are you enjoying day by day?

God's marvelous doings are for the one goal of bringing His people into the good land for the building up of the temple. God told Moses that He would bring the people into the land. He would take care of their needs and defeat all the enemies. He would do everything necessary to bring the children of Israel into the good land.

A WARNING CONCERNING IDOLATRY

Then the Lord went on to give a warning concerning the snare of idolatry: "Guard yourself, that you make no

covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you are going, that it may not become a snare in your midst. But you shall break down their altars, and break in pieces their pillars, and cut down their Asherim; for you shall not bow yourself down to another god, for Jehovah—Jealous is His name—is a jealous God" (vv. 12-14). In verse 17 the Lord continued this warning: "You shall not make for yourselves molten gods." In these verses the Lord seemed to be saying, "Beware of the snare of idolatry in the land of Canaan. At present, the whole land is occupied by idols. There is the danger that after you come into the land, you will be snared by pagan idolatry."

This is not only a word for the children of Israel; it is also a word for us. There are many idols among God's people today. These idols preoccupy them and keep them from the enjoyment of Christ. It is possible for almost anything to be an idol to us. Even a necktie or a tiepin can become an idol to us. Many Christians are fully occupied by things, matters, and persons other than Christ. As an example of these occupations, I would refer to talking on the telephone. Some saints claim that they are too busy to pray. However, they have much time to spend talking on the telephone. For them, talking on the telephone has become an idol.

An idol is anything that keeps us from the enjoyment of Christ as our good land. This means that any thing, matter, or person that preoccupies us and keeps us from the full enjoyment of Christ is an idol.

According to the history in the Old Testament, many of the wars and battles in which the children of Israel were involved were due to the fact that they had idols. Whenever God's people had idols, the enemies came to attack them. Today we all desire to live a victorious life, a holy life, and a spiritual life. However, many Christians experience failure because they have idols. Actually, if we have idols, things that preoccupy us and keep us from enjoying Christ, we have already lost the battle against the enemy. We simply have no way to fight. With God there is no problem bringing us into the full enjoyment of Christ. But with God's

people there is still the problem of idolatry. Therefore, at the beginning of a chapter concerned with the remaking of the broken covenant, God declared that He would do everything to bring the people into the good land. But He also pointed out the danger of idolatry. God seemed to be saying, "I am fully able to bring you into the good land. But idolatry will nullify your enjoyment of the land. It will cause whatever I give you to be destroyed."

God has done many marvelous things for His people. But the experience of Christians testifies that much of what God has done has been nullified or destroyed by preoccupations, by idolatry. How many Christians enjoy Christ? There are a great many Christians who know very little of the enjoyment of Christ. Many of us may know about the enjoyment of Christ. But to know about it is one thing, and to actually have the enjoyment of Christ is another thing.

Many of us have been kept from the enjoyment of Christ by different kinds of preoccupations. Why would you spend so much time talking on the telephone, yet you would not take ten minutes to pray? You have the time and the energy to talk, but you seem to have no time or energy to pray. This indicates that for you talking on the telephone has become an idol. Others may be able to spend much time reading a newspaper, but they easily become tired when reading the Bible. Some may say that they simply do not have the appetite for the Bible or the desire to read it. Yes, that is their situation. They do not have the desire to worship God, for their desire is to worship an idol. Spontaneously and unconsciously, they care for their idols. What a pitiful and tragic situation!

God's warning in 34:12-17 concerning idolatry was actually a repetition of the first three commandments. On the positive side, these commandments are related to God; on the negative side, they are related to idolatry. Idolatry involves having another god. To practice idolatry is to make an image and then serve it and worship it. Idolatry also involves taking the name of God in vain.

Later in this chapter God spoke a word concerning the

fourth commandment, the commandment about observing the Sabbath. Therefore, in this chapter the first four commandments, those related to God, are all covered. However, in this word of repetition, the six commandments concerned with our relationship to others are not repeated.

I hope we shall all be impressed with the fact that the Lord has promised to do everything necessary to bring us into the good land, into the all-inclusive Christ for our enjoyment. But we must take heed to His warning concerning idolatry. On the one hand, God will bring us into Christ. On the other hand, He condemns idolatry.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-NINE

MOSES' STAY WITH GOD

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 34

Verses 18 through 35 of Exodus 34 cover three important matters: God's charge to His people to feast and rest with Him, five conditions for enjoying the Lord, and God's infusion into Moses. In this message we shall consider the charge related to feasting and resting with the Lord.

FEASTING AND RESTING

In verse 18 the Lord says, "You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread: seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt." Then in verses 21 and 22 He goes on to speak of keeping the Sabbath and observing the feast of weeks and the feast of ingathering. In these verses God commanded the people to feast with Him and rest with Him. If I had been Moses, I might have said, "Lord, when You called me to come to the mountaintop, You told me to bring two tablets. You promised to rewrite the Ten Commandments on these tablets. But now You wouldn't say a word about these commandments. Instead, You are telling me that we should feast with You and rest with You."

It was not God's intention that His people would try to keep the Ten Commandments. God's intention was to command His people to enjoy Him—to feast with Him and rest in Him. This is contrary to our natural desire to want always to do something for God.

Consider the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. When the prodigal son came back to his father, he said to the

father, "Make me as one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:19). This indicates that the returned prodigal wanted to do something for his father. The father, however, did not have the heart to listen to that kind of talk. Immediately he said to the servants, "Bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry" (v. 23). The father's desire was that they all would have a feast. In feasting together they would have enjoyment and rest.

Moses did not know that it was not God's intention to charge His people to keep His commandments. The keeping of the commandments must be secondary; it must be the issue of feasting with the Lord and resting with Him. If the children of Israel would feast with the Lord properly and rest with Him continually, they would not have a problem in keeping the Ten Commandments.

This principle also applies to us today. If we feast with the Lord every day and rest with Him during the day, everything will be all right in our daily living. However, a brother may endeavor to be a good husband without feasting with the Lord and resting in Him. Likewise, a sister may try to be a good wife without this feasting and resting. But if we do not feast with the Lord and rest in Him, we shall be a poor husband or wife. Instead of trying to fulfill Ephesians 5, we should simply feast with the Lord a number of times during the day. In the morning we should enjoy the feast of unleavened bread; during the day, the feast of Pentecost; and in the evening, the feast of tabernacles. The children of Israel enjoyed these feasts yearly, but we should enjoy them daily. Furthermore, we should rest with the Lord many times throughout the day. The children of Israel had a Sabbath once a week, but we should have a Sabbath rest many times during the day. Actually, every hour, we should rest with the Lord. If we feast with the Lord and rest in Him in this way, we shall surely experience Ephesians 5.

THREE FEASTS

According to the Old Testament, God had ordained that seven feasts be observed annually by the children of Israel:

the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of firstfruit, the feast of weeks (Pentecost), the feast of trumpets, the feast of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles (also called the feast of ingathering or harvest). The feast of unleavened bread was held immediately after the feast of Passover in the month of Abib, at the beginning of the year. Abib, the first month of the year, indicates a new beginning. The word Abib means a tender sprout. In a very real sense, the feast of the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread were one feast. We may say that the first day was the feast of Passover and the following days were the feast of unleavened bread. This indicates that immediately after we enjoy the Passover, we need to cleanse ourselves of all leaven in order to keep the feast of unleavened bread. For us today to keep the feast of unleavened bread means that we live a clean life, a life without sin, without leaven.

The feast of firstfruit issues in the feast of Pentecost. Between the feasts of unleavened bread and of ingathering, there is some enjoyment of the produce of the good land during the feast of firstfruit. Toward the end of the year, at the feast of ingathering, God's people had the full enjoyment of the produce of the good land.

The feasts in Exodus 34 are all for enjoyment. At the beginning we may say that we have sowing and farming, and then we start to enjoy the produce. But at the end we have the full harvest for our full enjoyment. The feasts that were observed in the intervals were not as crucial as far as the enjoyment of the good land was concerned. The important point here is that the record in Exodus 34 indicates that God wanted His people to have the full enjoyment of the good land.

In addition to the feasts, the children of Israel were to keep the Sabbath every week. No matter how busy they were, they had to take one day a week to stop work and rest with the Lord.

DAILY FEASTING AND RESTING

In these verses in Exodus 34 we have feasting and

resting. These are two matters for us to enjoy today. Every day we need to feast and rest. It is not possible for us to feast all day long. However, we can enjoy a feast three times a day, at morning, at noon, and in the evening. Moreover, we need to rest with the Lord many times during the day. At least three times a day we should feast with the Lord, and many times a day we should rest with Him. Again and again we should take a break to remember the Lord and rest with Him. Suppose we took a break every twenty minutes to enjoy a rest with the Lord. If we deduct eight hours spent in sleeping, this would allow us to rest with the Lord at least forty-eight times during the day. How good it would be to have a Sabbath every twenty minutes!

The significance of the Sabbath is that it is a time to remember the Lord, a time to remember our Creator. If we do not take the time for a Sabbath rest, this means that we forget the Lord. But whenever we have a Sabbath, we remember Him. Certainly it is not too much for us to remember the Lord every fifteen or twenty minutes. Let us practice to remember the Lord and rest in Him time after time during the day.

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

As we have pointed out, 34:18 does not mention the feast of Passover, but the feast of unleavened bread. The reason is that the concern here is not salvation; it is our fellowship with God. We have already been saved, but what is the situation with respect to our fellowship with the Lord? If we desire to maintain fellowship with God, we need to clear away all the leaven from our lives. This is to keep the feast of unleavened bread.

THE FEAST OF WEEKS

The second feast spoken of in chapter thirty-four is the feast of weeks, which came in between the feast of unleavened bread and the feast of ingathering. The feast of weeks or Pentecost is the full issue of resurrection life. We know that the feast of weeks is observed seven weeks after the feast of firstfruit. This is my reason for saying that the feast

of Pentecost is the full issue of the feast of firstfruit. Firstfruit produces Pentecost. This is true both in the type in the Old Testament and in the fulfillment of the type in the New Testament.

The firstfruit signifies the resurrected Christ. Christ was the first one raised from among the dead as the firstfruit of resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20). This was typified by the firstfruits in Leviticus 23:10-11 offered to God on the day after the Sabbath, the day of resurrection (Matt. 28:1).

From the day of Christ's resurrection to the day of Pentecost was exactly fifty days. After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus stayed with the disciples for forty days. Then He left them and ascended to the heavens. Following that, the disciples prayed for ten days. Then on the day of Pentecost (Pentecost means fifty), fifty days after the resurrection of Christ, there was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was the full issue of the resurrected Christ. The resurrected Christ was the firstfruit, the barley sheaf, on the day of resurrection. Then this resurrected Christ had a full issue manifested on the day of Pentecost. This means that the resurrected Christ became the Spirit poured out upon His believers for their full enjoyment.

As I consider the feasts in the Old Testament and their fulfillment in the New, I am convinced once again that the Bible is the Word of God. The Bible is not a book written according to the human mentality. No, the Bible truly is the divine revelation. Augustine once said that the New Testament is concealed in the Old and that the Old is expressed in the New. This understanding is correct. Regarding the types of the feasts and their fulfillment, we see that the New Testament and the Old Testament correspond to each other.

ENJOYING THREE FEASTS DAILY

We need to clear all the leaven, all the sinful things, out of our daily life so that we may have the enjoyment of Christ. This means that if we have the feast of unleavened bread, we shall also have the feast of Pentecost for the

enjoyment of Christ. We have seen that daily we need to take Christ as the sin offering and the trespass offering. If we apply Christ in this way every morning, we shall clear away the leaven from our daily life. This will lead us to a daily Pentecost, to the daily enjoyment of Christ. Then at the end of the day we shall have a time of ingathering, a time of harvest. Ingathering means to gather in the full harvest of produce in order to have a full enjoyment. To experience the feast of ingathering is to dwell with God in the full enjoyment of Christ. How marvelous it would be to have a feast of ingathering every evening! To end the day with a feast of ingathering is to enjoy the Lord in a full way as we dwell with God. This is the real feast of tabernacles.

However, many saints do not have the feast of unleavened bread in the morning. Neither do they enjoy the feast of Pentecost during the day. As a result, at the end of the day there is no feast of ingathering, no feast of tabernacles. Often our situation has been like this. But now we see that daily we need to feast with the Lord and rest with Him. Daily we should enjoy Christ as the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of ingathering, and daily we should have many Sabbaths to remember the Lord and rest in Him.

FIGHTING THE ENEMY BY ENJOYING THE LORD

Let us now go on to consider 34:23 and 24: "Three times in the year every male shall appear before the Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel. For I will dispossess the nations from before you and enlarge your borders, and no one shall covet your land when you go up to appear before Jehovah your God three times in the year." In these verses we have a very crucial matter indicated by the word "for" at the beginning of verse 24. This word indicates the reason we need to enjoy the Lord as the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of ingathering. According to verses 23 and 24, every male was to appear before the Lord three times a year, for the Lord would dispossess the nations and enlarge the borders for the children of Israel. The nations

had been possessing the land. But the Lord promised that He would dispossess them, that He would drive them away. Furthermore, the Lord promised to enlarge the borders for the children of Israel. This signifies the enlargement of our capacity to enjoy Christ.

Perhaps some of the children of Israel said to themselves, "If we spend seven days at the feast of unleavened bread, none of the males will be available to stand guard against the enemy. Suppose the Philistines attack our land during the feast? How would we be able to defend ourselves?" Here the Lord seems to be saying, "You may all be at peace. If you go up to feast with Me three times a year, this feasting will keep away the covetous enemy from your land."

The principle here is very significant. The Lord's word about dispossessing the nations and enlarging the borders indicates that if we do not care for the enjoyment of the Lord, the enemies will come to attack us. For example, if you do not enjoy the Lord daily, you may be attacked and overcome by your temper. Furthermore, many other things will come in to take you over. However, if you take care of the enjoyment of the Lord, this enjoyment will keep the evil ones away from you.

I would call your attention to the word "covet" in verse 24. Many negative things covet us and desire to take us over. However, because of our lack of understanding, we may still expect the enemies to be kept away from us even when we do not enjoy the Lord. But from experience we know that if we do not enjoy the Lord, many "germs" will attack us. We may use our physical body as an illustration. If you want to have a healthy body, you need to eat properly and have a sound diet. If you eat healthy food, many "bugs" will be killed, and many germs will be kept away from you. This is an illustration of the fact that the best way to fight against the enemy is to enjoy the Lord.

I can testify that the enjoying of the Lord is the real fighting against the enemy. We fight by feasting. Every day I fight against disease germs by eating healthy food. I do not know how many germs have been defeated through my daily

diet of healthy food. In the same principle, we need to enjoy the Lord daily by feasting with Him. If we care for the enjoyment of the Lord, the enemies will be kept away from us. This is marvelous!

We should not fear that the enemy will come in to attack us while we are taking the time to enjoy the Lord. According to the Lord's promise in 34:23 and 24, we may be at peace. If we take care of feasting with the Lord, He will take care of the covetous enemy. Actually, our enjoyment of the Lord will keep the enemy away.

The Lord has promised to dispossess the nations, enlarge the borders of the good land, and keep away the coveting enemies from the good land. This means that He will demolish all our preoccupations and usurpations, enlarge the borders of Christ, and guard the enjoyment of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY

MOSES' STAY WITH GOD

(3)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 34

In the foregoing message we saw that in 34:18-35 there are three important matters: feasting and resting with the Lord, five conditions for enjoying the Lord as our feast, and God's infusion into Moses by His speaking with him. In the previous message we considered the matter of feasting with the Lord and resting with Him. In this message we shall go on to consider the five conditions that must be fulfilled in order for us to feast with the Lord.

TO REDEEM THE FIRSTLING OF A DONKEY WITH A LAMB

The first of the five conditions is described in verse 20: "And the firstling of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, and if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of your sons you shall redeem, and none shall appear before Me empty." This signifies that our natural man must be replaced with Christ so that we may live a sanctified life for God. Even though we have been redeemed, we still are natural. We are a "donkey," an unclean animal; we are not a lamb. Yes, we have been redeemed, but we are not clean. Therefore, as "donkeys" we need our natural being to be replaced with Christ as the Lamb.

As far as sanctification is concerned, we are not sheep or oxen; we are donkeys. Even though we have been redeemed, our natural man is still unclean in the sight of God. Hence, in order to be sanctified to the Lord, we need Christ to be our Substitute. The Passover lamb typifies Christ as our

Redeemer. Through Him as our Substitute, we have been redeemed. However, because we are still unclean and natural, we cannot be a living sacrifice for God's satisfaction. We need Christ to be our Substitute in sanctification. For more regarding the firstling of a donkey being redeemed with a lamb, see Life-study of Exodus, Message 27, pages 305-307.

No matter how nice we may be, or how good, we still are natural. On the one hand, I like to meet nice people. On the other hand, I realize that the nicer a person is, the more natural he is. I am not implying, of course, that in order to be spiritual we should be crude instead of nice. The point here is that even our natural niceness needs to be replaced with Christ. We need to remember that in our natural life we are a "donkey." We have been redeemed, but we are still donkeys. So many "donkeys" have been gathered together in the church life. Now there is the need for all of us to be replaced with Christ. If our natural "donkey life" is not replaced with Christ, we shall be hindered in the enjoyment of the feasts and also in the keeping of the Sabbath. Having our natural life replaced with Christ is a condition both of feasting with the Lord and resting with Him.

NOT OFFERING THE BLOOD OF THE LORD'S SACRIFICE WITH LEAVENED BREAD

The second condition is found in 34:25a: "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread." This indicates that we should not mix Christ's redemption with our sinful life. We should never mix Christ's redemption with a sinful life. We should not declare that we are redeemed and then continue living in sin. To do this is to offer the blood of the Lord's sacrifice with leavened bread. A person who is still living in sin should not boast that he has been redeemed.

We have pointed out that we need to keep the feast of unleavened bread. This is to purge away everything sinful as evidence that we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. When a believer clears up his sinful life, this is a testimony that he has been redeemed by Christ.

It is not hard for us to realize that if we still live in sin, yet claim that we have been redeemed, we shall not be able to enjoy Christ. We all have been redeemed by the blood of Christ in order to enjoy Christ. Nevertheless, we still must fulfill the condition of clearing away all leaven, the requirement of not mixing Christ's redemption with a sinful life.

NOT ALLOWING THE SACRIFICE OF THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER TO REMAIN UNTIL THE MORNING

A third condition of feasting with the Lord and resting with Him is found in the second part of verse 25: "Neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover remain until the morning." What is the significance of not allowing the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover to remain until the morning? This signifies that we should enjoy the riches of Christ in this age and not leave them until the next age. We need to enjoy Christ today. We need to enjoy Him in full in this age. We cannot exhaust the enjoyment of Christ. We can enjoy to the utmost our particular portion of Him. Whatever portion we receive of Christ should be enjoyed today. We should not leave anything for the next "morning"; that is, we should not postpone the enjoyment of Christ until the coming age. Enjoy Christ now. Do not wait for the future to enjoy Him.

Some saints may have the thought of waiting for a period of time before they enjoy Christ. Certain young people may say to themselves, "I am still young. Let me enjoy the worldly things for a time. Later I'll come back to the enjoyment of Christ." Do not make this mistake. If you put off the enjoyment of Christ until the future, you will not fulfill the third condition of feasting with the Lord—the requirement that we not hold the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover until the morning. Do not wait to enjoy the riches of Christ.

BRINGING THE FIRST OF THE FIRSTFRUITS TO THE HOUSE OF GOD

Exodus 34:26a says, "You shall bring the first of the

firstfruits of your ground to the house of Jehovah your God." Here we see another condition: bringing the first of the firstfruits to the house of God. This signifies bringing the topmost experience of Christ to the church meetings for God's satisfaction.

Many saints are very poor in the experience of Christ. As a result, they do not have any fruit. Some may have fruit, but most of this fruit is not firstfruit. We all need to have some of the topmost experiences of Christ. We should not share these experiences of Christ with anyone until we bring them to the church meetings for God's satisfaction. Those who have adequate experience know what it means to bring the topmost experience of Christ to the church meetings for God's satisfaction.

NOT BOILING THE KID IN ITS MOTHER'S MILK

Now we come to the last condition, a condition that may seem very strange: "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk" (v. 26b). You may be surprised at the significance of the requirement not to boil a kid in its mother's milk. This requirement indicates or typifies that we should not seethe young believers with the milk of the word; that is, we should not "boil" them with the word of life that is for nourishment (1 Pet. 2:2).

In ancient times some people probably did have the practice of boiling a kid in its mother's milk. This may have been regarded as a delicious dish. As we have indicated, we should not use the milk of the word to seethe young believers. This is to use the milk of the word, which is for life-nourishment, to kill the young ones. The point here is that the milk of the Word of God is for nourishment. However, today many Christians use the Word to kill young believers. Be careful never to use the Word to kill the young ones. The Word is for the nourishment of the believers. It is possible to use the Word either to nourish the saints or to seethe them, to kill them. In the past many of us have used the Word of God to seethe the saints.

It took a good deal of time and effort for me to learn why in

such a crucial chapter as Exodus 34, a chapter concerned with the recovery of the broken covenant, these five seemingly small points are mentioned. Why did God not replace these points with the last five of the Ten Commandments? To us, these commandments are much greater in significance than the five conditions covered in these verses. However, it is important for us to see that it was not God's intention for His people to keep His commandments. God's intention was for the children of Israel to enjoy the produce of the good land. Today God's intention is that we enjoy Christ. He does not want us to try to be good, ethical, or moral. This certainly does not mean that we should be unethical or immoral. If we enjoy Christ daily and rest with Him hourly, we shall live Christ, and Christ's life surpasses the highest standard of morality. The important point is that God's concern is whether or not His people enjoy Christ.

Chapter thirty-four is a chapter of repetition. It contains many things that have already been spoken. The aim of this chapter of repetition is to recover the broken covenant. This is related to the enjoyment of Christ typified by the three feasts mentioned here—the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of ingathering—and the resting with the Lord as typified by the keeping of the Sabbath. Feasting with the Lord and resting with Him requires the keeping of five conditions. First, we need to have our "donkey life," our natural life, replaced with Christ. Do not have any trust in your "donkey nature." No matter how good it seems to be, it still needs to be replaced. Second, you need to clear all the leaven out of your life. Then you need to enjoy Christ today as your portion and have the firstfruit of the experience of Christ to offer to God in the meetings for His satisfaction. Finally, you must be careful not to use the Word of God to kill the young ones, but rather feed them and nourish them with the milk of the Word. If we have the proper spiritual experience, we shall realize that these five conditions are crucial to our daily enjoyment of Christ.

THE SEQUENCE OF THE FIVE CONDITIONS

In order that we may be deeply impressed with these conditions, especially with the sequence in which they are presented, let me say a further word concerning them. Not only is every condition meaningful, but the sequence of the five conditions is particularly meaningful. The first condition is that of redeeming the firstling of a donkey with a lamb. This indicates that if we would enjoy the Lord, we need to realize that we are "donkeys," that we are poor beasts under the load of a heavy burden. Furthermore, as donkeys we are unclean. According to Leviticus 11, a donkey is listed among the unclean animals. We have seen that the donkey here signifies our natural life and natural being. We cannot enjoy the Lord with our natural being. If we remain unclean beasts under a heavy burden, we cannot have the enjoyment of Christ as the feasts, and we cannot rest with Him. Therefore, our natural life needs to be replaced. Concerning this matter, the New Testament is full of light. The natural life has been crucified on the cross. Now it must be rejected and fully abandoned by us in our Christian life.

According to the sequence, the next condition is that, as redeemed ones, we should not mix the redeeming blood with a sinful life. If we intend to enjoy the Lord, we must stay away from leaven.

It is logical that this condition is second and not first. It would not make sense to first require that we not mix the redeeming blood with leaven and then go on to require that our natural life be replaced. The proper sequence is that first our natural life is replaced with Christ. Then after this replacement, we must learn to stay away from sinful things. This is to fulfill the condition of not mixing the redeeming blood with leaven.

The third condition is that we enjoy our present portion of Christ to the uttermost and not leave any part of it for the next age. However, very few of today's Christians exhaust the enjoyment of their portion of Christ. Not many Christians, including us, enjoy Christ to the uttermost.

As an illustration of the third condition, we may speak of a mother who tells her little child to finish his food, to clean his plate. She may say to him, "I want you to finish your food. Clean your plate. If you don't finish what you have, I won't give you anything else to eat." Certain mothers are strong with their children regarding this. But some mothers are too lenient and easily let their children have their way. They may give a child something to eat, and if he does not like it, they will offer him something else instead. However, other mothers will insist that the children eat what they have before they give them something else. I believe this illustrates the way God would train us to enjoy Christ today. He may say, "Finish what I have already given you of Christ. If you do not enjoy the portion you have now, I will not give you anything else. You must exhaust your portion of Christ today."

The next condition in the sequence is that as we enjoy our portion of Christ in a full way, we should reserve the topmost portion, the firstfruit, for God's enjoyment and satisfaction. We should bring this topmost portion of our enjoyment of Christ to God's house for His satisfaction.

The last condition is that we should not kill any believers, especially young ones, in the sphere of the life supply. The milk in 34:26 indicates the sphere of the life supply. As we are enjoying Christ to the uttermost and offering God something of Christ for His satisfaction, we should be careful to avoid killing others. We should never boil a kid in its mother's milk.

These five conditions describe the actual experience of the enjoyment of the Lord. I came to understand these conditions through my experience in the Christian life. Through my experience I see that in my natural life I am a donkey and that I need to be replaced. I also see that I need to stay away from leaven, that I need to be obedient to the requirement to enjoy Christ today, that I need to have the topmost experience of the enjoyment of the Lord for God's satisfaction, and that I must not commit any kind of spiritual killing in the sphere of the life supply. I believe that many of us can testify

that what is signified by these five conditions corresponds to our spiritual experience.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE

MOSES' STAY WITH GOD

(4)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 34

Chapter thirty-four of Exodus, the record of Moses' stay with God, covers three main subjects: feasting with the Lord and resting with Him, five conditions for enjoying the Lord, and God's infusion of Himself into Moses. In the two foregoing messages we covered the three feasts and the Sabbath and the five conditions. In this message, after a word of introduction and review, we shall consider God's infusion of Himself into Moses.

THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING EXODUS 34

We have seen that Moses broke into pieces the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments. This indicates that the covenant made by God with the children of Israel was broken. A covenant was made in chapters twenty through twenty-four, and this covenant was sealed by the sprinkling of the blood of the redeeming sacrifice. We may say that the sealing of the covenant was actually the signing of the covenant by God. God signed the covenant by sprinkling it with the redeeming blood of the sacrifice. The terms of this covenant were the Ten Commandments with all the ordinances. God wanted to have His people completely and thoroughly covenanted to Him. But because of the incident of the golden calf, the covenant was broken. However, in His mercy God came in to recover this broken covenant. This was the reason God told Moses to hew out two tablets of stone and to come up to the mountaintop to meet with Him. God's intention was to recover the covenant.

Moses no doubt expected God to repeat the giving of the Ten Commandments and the ordinances. He may have been happy as he prepared the two tablets of stone for this purpose and brought them with him to the mountaintop. But after Moses arrived there and God descended to him, God did something else instead of giving Moses the Ten Commandments. What God spoke to Moses before giving him the Ten Commandments the second time was according to the real desire of His heart. It was not God's intention merely to have a people to keep His commandments and ordinances. God's intention was to dispense Himself into His chosen people so that they would be fully infused with Him in order to express Him.

From the very beginning, the law did not have a standing as part of God's original intention. In typology, the position of the law is that of a concubine, typified by Hagar. This indicates that in the sight of God and in His economy the law does not have a place of honor just as a concubine does not have a legal position. The Bible says that the law was something added. It was not a part of God's original intention and therefore does not have a place of honor. In a sense, God was forced to decree the law.

God was not unhappy because the two tablets were broken. God was angry not because of the breaking of the tablets, but because of the idolatry of the golden calf. When He met with Moses in chapter thirty-four, He did not at first say anything about the Ten Commandments.

First God told Moses that He would do marvels in order to bring the people into the good land: "And He said, Behold, I am making a covenant: before all your people I will do marvels which have not been wrought in all the earth, nor in all the nations; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of Jehovah, for it is a fearful thing which I am doing with you. Observe what I am commanding you this day; behold, I will drive out from before you the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite" (vv. 10-11). God would do miracles for the

purpose of bringing the people into the good land where they could enjoy Him.

Second, God warned the people regarding idolatry (vv. 12-17). The Lord said, "You shall not bow yourself down to another god, for Jehovah—Jealous is His name—is a jealous God" (v. 14). He also said, "You shall not make for yourself molten gods" (v. 17). God definitely warned the people to stay away from every kind of idolatry. We must not allow anything to be a substitute for God or a replacement for Him. We must take Him and Him alone as God.

Then the Lord went on to speak to Moses concerning feasting with Him and resting with Him. In verse 18 He said, "You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread: seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt." In verse 22 He continued, "You shall observe the feast of weeks, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the feast of the ingathering at the turn of the year." In verse 21 the Lord spoke to Moses about keeping the Sabbath: "Six days you shall work, and on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest." We can see, therefore, that the Lord spoke to Moses about idolatry and about feasting and resting. But at this time He did not say a word concerning the Ten Commandments and the ordinances. Instead, He told Moses that the males were to feast with Him three times a year and that every seven days they were to remember Him by resting with Him.

In a previous message we pointed out that the three feasts mentioned in this chapter indicate that we need to feast with the Lord three times a day. Furthermore, we have seen that the weekly Sabbath indicates that during the day, perhaps every fifteen or twenty minutes, we should take a break to remember the Lord by resting with Him. A year is a turn of time, and a day is also such a turn. Daily we should feast with the Lord and rest with Him. Both the feasting and the resting are for the enjoyment of the Lord.

In Exodus 34 the Lord not only spoke to Moses about feasting and resting; He also charged him with five matters that are conditions to be fulfilled in order for God's people to enjoy Him. According to our natural understanding, each of these five points is insignificant. The first of these conditions is the matter of redeeming the firstling of a donkey with a lamb (v. 20), and the last is the word about not boiling a kid in its mother's milk (v. 26). Why did the Lord not speak to Moses about the honoring of parents or about the commandment concerning murder? Why did He speak to him about such things as redeeming the firstling of a donkey with a lamb and about not boiling a kid in its mother's milk? The reason is that if we do not fulfill these five conditions, our enjoyment of the Lord will be broken. If we would maintain our enjoyment of the Lord by feasting and resting with Him, we must take care of these five seemingly insignificant requirements.

If we study Exodus 34 only with our mentality, we shall not be able to understand this chapter. But if we consider this chapter in the light of our spiritual experience, we shall see that the key here is the enjoyment of the Lord. This chapter reveals that we need to enjoy the Lord all day long by feasting with Him and resting with Him. Furthermore, along with this enjoyment and as a requirement for maintaining it, we need to fulfill five conditions.

It seems that in Exodus 34 Moses was concerned for the decree of the law, not for the enjoyment of the Lord or for the infusion of the Lord into him. If we are enlightened as we read this chapter, we shall realize that we should not focus our attention on the Ten Commandments and the ordinances, because God is more concerned that we take care of the feasts and the Sabbaths. We need to take care of the repeated feasting and resting with the Lord. We need to feast on Him and rest with Him for our full enjoyment of Him. Then we shall be infused with Him. As a result, we shall be filled inwardly, and we shall shine outwardly.

If we do not have the key, we shall find Exodus 34 very difficult to understand. Who can explain why in this chapter God mentions only three of the seven feasts? Why are so

many important commandments and ordinances set aside, and instead there is mention of five requirements related to redeeming a donkey with a lamb, not offering the blood of the sacrifice with leavened bread, not allowing the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover to remain until the morning, bringing the firstfruits of the ground to the house of God, and not boiling a kid in its mother's milk? If we have the key of the enjoyment of the Lord, we shall see that these five matters are not insignificant. On the contrary, concerning the enjoyment of the Lord, these matters are crucial.

A WORD OF REPETITION

We have seen that Exodus 34 is both a brief sketch and a conclusion of the preceding thirty-three chapters. Whatever is repeated here is very important. If it were not important, it would not have been repeated. Verse 27 says, "And Jehovah said to Moses, Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." The Hebrew word rendered "tenor" literally means mouth. Therefore, in verse 27 the Lord is telling Moses that according to the "mouth of these words" He made a covenant with him and with Israel. All these words were terms, conditions, of the covenant that the people were required to keep. Why does verse 27 say "according to the mouth of these words"? The Lord may have been saying to Moses, "These words were spoken already. Now I wish to speak them again. I shall mouth them again." What we have in this chapter is the speaking, the mouthing, of a word already spoken once. This repetition gives the terms for the keeping of God's covenant by the children of Israel.

I would emphasize the fact that here there is no mention of the commandments or the ordinances. After the warning concerning idolatry, we have the Lord's speaking concerning the feasts, the Sabbath, and the five conditions for enjoying the Lord. Here we have three feasts for our enjoyment, the Sabbath for our rest, and the five conditions for our daily life. If we fulfill these conditions, we shall feast

with God and rest with Him in full enjoyment for the fulfillment of His purpose. Further, according to the following chapters, a tabernacle, a dwelling place, will be built up for God.

GOD'S INFUSION

Exodus 34:28 and 29 say, "And he was there with Jehovah forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread, and he did not drink water. And he wrote upon the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten words. And it came about, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai—and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hands when he came down from the mountain—that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone in His speaking with him." Here we see that after God wrote the words of the covenant upon the tablets, He sent Moses down to the foot of the mountain. God's intention was that His people would enjoy Him. However, Moses' intention was to bring the commandments to the people. I believe that as Moses was coming down the mountain, he was very happy. He knew that this time there was not the problem of a golden calf. Verse 29 says that Moses did not know that the skin of his face was shining. God had infused Moses with Himself. But Moses did not realize that his face was shining. Perhaps his heart was filled with thoughts concerning the Ten Commandments on the two stone tablets. He may not have had any concern for God's infusion.

We need God's infusion. However, when we come to the Bible, we may regard it as "tablets" and take every word as a commandment for us to fulfill. Our intention may be to receive commandments, not to experience God's infusion. For example, in morning watch we may receive a living word from the Bible, but that word may become a commandment to us. We may not realize that it is not God's desire to give us a word of commandment; God's desire is to infuse Himself into our being. Sometimes we may come from morning watch with a shining face because of God's infusion. But because we

care more for commandments than for infusion, we may not know that our face is shining.

THE VEIL ON MOSES' FACE

Verse 30 says, "And Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come near him." Moses did not know that his face was shining, but Aaron and the children of Israel knew it, and they were frightened by his shining face. After Moses met with them, he also realized that the skin of his face was shining. Therefore, "when Moses finished speaking with them, he put a veil upon his face" (v. 33). But when Moses returned to God, he took off the veil: "When Moses went in before Jehovah to speak with Him, he took the veil off until he came out; and when he came out, he spoke to the sons of Israel what he was commanded. And the sons of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. And Moses put the veil on his face again until he went in to speak with Him" (vv. 34-35). This indicates that Moses had an open face to converse with God. This also reminds us of Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 3:18 about beholding the Lord with an unveiled face and reflecting Him as we are transformed into His image. This too is a matter of shining, for the shining is the appearing of God's image. Today we need to take off the veil to behold and reflect the Lord with an unveiled face. Then we shall be transformed into His image, and that will be our shining.

We have pointed out that when Moses went to God, he took off the veil, but when he spoke to the people, he put the veil on. The situation with many Christians today is the opposite. When they go to God, they put the veil on, but when they speak to others, they take the veil off.

In 2 Corinthians 3:13 Paul explains why Moses put a veil on his face when he spoke to the children of Israel. Paul says that Moses "put a veil on his face, that the sons of Israel should not gaze unto the end of that which was being done away." While Moses spoke the word of God to the children of Israel, he kept his face unveiled. After speaking, he

veiled his face lest they should see the end of his ministry, which was passing away. He did not want them to behold the termination of the fading glory of his ministry of the law. For the people to see the fading away of the shining would have been for them to see the termination of the law.

The shining we experience today is not in the law; it is in the enjoyment of Christ. In the New Testament, we do not have the keeping of the law—we have the enjoyment of the feast. The teaching of the New Testament is focused on enjoying Christ. The law has been replaced by feasting on Christ. Therefore, we do not need to have a veil, and we do not need to fear a termination of the glory. We can keep our face unveiled before both God and man.

A LENGTHY STAY WITH GOD

We may need to be reminded that the title of this message is "Moses' Stay with God." It was as a result of his long stay with God that Moses' face was shining. If we would shine with the Lord's glory, we also need to have a lengthy stay with God. Exodus 34:28 says, "And he was there with Jehovah forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread, and he did not drink water." We cannot explain how Moses could have been with the Lord for forty days without eating or drinking. No doubt, it was God who made this possible.

As we have already mentioned, if we would stay with God, we need to forget everything else. When the Lord told Moses to come to the top of the mountain to meet with Him, He said to him, "No man shall come up with you, neither let any man be seen on all the mountain; neither let the flocks and the herds feed before that mountain" (v. 3). This indicates that when we meet with God, we should forget our possessions, our necessities, and even our family. Furthermore, we should not care for ourselves. We should simply stay in the presence of God.

We are not told what God and Moses did together those forty days. However, we do know that during that period of time Moses was fully infused with God and saturated with

Him. It seems that Moses did not do anything for those forty days except receive God's enlightening and His infusing. This was glorious. Something wonderful was taking place during those forty days: God was infusing Himself into Moses and saturating Moses with Himself. If we see the significance of this, we shall receive much help concerning our fellowship with the Lord and our Christian life.

THE KIND OF SPEAKING THAT INFUSES US WITH GOD

If we read all of chapter thirty-four, we shall see that God's infusing into Moses was by His speaking. If God had done nothing more than speak the Ten Commandments and the ordinances, I do not believe that Moses would have received much infusion. Do you know what kind of speaking infuses you? It is the Lord's speaking about the enjoyment of Him, His speaking about feasting and resting and the conditions for enjoying Him. This kind of speaking infuses us with God and causes us to shine.

I can testify that I did not receive much infusion from sitting in Bible study meetings many years ago. But when I listened to Brother Nee speaking on the experience of the Lord, I received an infusion from the Lord. Many of us can testify of having had this kind of experience. There began to be a shining within us because of the Lord's speaking with us.

The last part of verse 29 should be translated "in His speaking with him," not "in his speaking with Him." This indicates that the shining of Moses' face resulted not from his speaking with God, but from God's speaking with him. The more we talk, the more we may hinder the Lord's infusing of us. But the more He speaks to us concerning the enjoyment of Himself, the more we shall be infused. Let us all be like Moses and let the Lord do the speaking. Let us allow Him to speak to us concerning the feasts, the Sabbath, and the conditions for enjoying Him. God's word concerning the enjoyment of Himself is always a word of infusion.

We thank the Lord for opening Exodus 34 to us. Praise

Him that in this chapter we see the feasting and the resting, the five conditions for enjoying the Lord, and the infusion of God into us by His speaking concerning the enjoyment of Himself.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-TWO

THE MAKING OF THE TABERNACLE WITH ITS FURNITURE AND THE GARMENTS FOR THE PRIESTS

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 35:1-10, 20-35; 36:1-7; 39:32, 42-43

In this message we shall begin to consider a section containing five chapters, chapters thirty-five through thirty-nine. In these chapters we have a record of the making of the tabernacle with its furniture and the holy garments for the priests. Since we have covered most of the details related to these matters in previous messages, we do not need to consider all these details again. Rather, in this message and in the message following we shall consider certain basic matters found in these chapters.

A WORD CONCERNING THE SABBATH

Exodus 35: 1-3 says, "And Moses gathered all the congregation of the sons of Israel together and said to them, These are the words which Jehovah has commanded to do. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy sabbath of rest to Jehovah; whoever does work on it shall be put to death. You shall not kindle a fire in all your dwellings on the sabbath day." At the beginning of this section we have a word concerning the Sabbath. It seems that this has nothing to do with the making of the tabernacle with its furniture and the garments for the priests. Why does this section begin with a serious word about the Sabbath? According to 35:2, working on the Sabbath was a crime punishable by death. The failure to rest with the Lord on the Sabbath was a capital offense.

According to verse 3, not even cooking was allowed on the Sabbath.

Apparently these three verses, 35:1-3, have nothing to do with the making of the tabernacle with its furniture and the priestly garments. Actually there is an important connection here, but we need adequate spiritual experience in order to understand this point in the Word.

A REVIEW OF CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

As a help to understanding why a command about keeping the Sabbath is mentioned at the beginning of chapter thirty-five, let us review some points from the messages on chapter thirty-four. There we covered three main matters: the feasting and resting with the Lord, the five conditions for enjoying the Lord, and God's infusion of Himself into Moses.

Five Conditions for Enjoying the Lord

We have seen that the first of the five conditions was the redeeming of a donkey with a lamb and that the last was the requirement not to boil a kid in its mother's milk. When I read this portion as a young Christian, I was not able to understand why such matters were included in the Bible. God had called Moses to the mountain for the purpose of recovering the broken covenant. If God wanted to review with Moses the details of the law, why did He not speak about honoring parents or the commandment related to murder? Why did He instead speak about redeeming a donkey and about not boiling a kid in its mother's milk? It seemed to me that such matters were not important.

By means of human reasoning we cannot understand why these five conditions were given or what they mean. But these conditions were very important requirements related to the enjoyment of the feasts by God's people. If the children of Israel did not fulfill these conditions, they would lose the enjoyment of the feasts. These conditions are

also meaningful for us today in their spiritual interpretation according to our experience.

To redeem a donkey with a lamb indicates that we as fallen ones who are unclean, are redeemed by Christ. Do you intend to enjoy feasting and resting with the Lord? If you do, you need to remember that according to your old man, your natural man, your flesh, and according to the fact that you are a descendant of Adam, you are a "donkey." No matter who you may be, in the sight of God your natural man is a donkey. If you intend to enjoy Christ as your feast and your rest, you need to realize this. We have seen that in John 3:14 the Lord Jesus indicated to Nicodemus that he was a serpent. In Exodus 34 we see that, according to the natural life, all those who would enjoy Christ are donkeys needing to be redeemed. Leviticus 11 says that a donkey is an unclean animal. Furthermore, a donkey is a beast of burden. In our natural man and according to our natural life, we can be compared to beasts under a heavy burden. We are unclean, and we are heavily burdened. The best way for a donkey to be free from its burden is to die. In a similar manner the way for us, unclean beasts of burden, to enjoy Christ and rest with Him is for us to be replaced by Christ.

The second condition mentioned in Exodus 34 is not to mix leaven with the redeeming blood. Verse 25 says, "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread." Immediately after having our natural person replaced with Christ, we must clear away all leaven. Do you want to enjoy the blood of Christ? If this is your desire, do not mix the redeeming blood with the leaven of your sinful life.

First our natural man needs to be replaced by Christ. In Paul's words, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me"(Gal 2:20). This means that the "donkey" has been crucified and the Christ who replaces us now lives in us. Now we must go on to clear away all the leaven. We need the redeeming blood, but we cannot offer this blood along with our sinful life. Such a thing is strictly prohibited.

Exodus 34:25b says, "Neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover remain until the morning." Here we have the third condition for enjoying Christ. After we have been replaced by Christ and have cleared away all leaven, we need to exhaust today's portion of Christ. This means that we must enjoy Christ to the uttermost today, not leaving anything of today's portion for the future. However, many Christians do not have an appetite to enjoy Christ fully today. They can be compared to naughty children who do not eat all their food at dinnertime. These believers have a portion of Christ, but they do not enjoy it. The requirement that the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover not remain until the morning means that we need to exhaust the portion of Christ we have for our enjoyment today. We should not postpone the enjoyment of Christ until tomorrow or until the next age. Instead, we must fully enjoy the portion of Christ that has been given to us today.

The fourth requirement for feasting with Christ and enjoying Him is found in 34:26a: "You shall bring the first of the firstfruits of your ground to the house of Jehovah your God." As we are enjoying today's portion of Christ, we need to bring the firstfruit, the top portion, to the meeting to offer to God for His satisfaction. We need to bring the topmost experience of Christ to the house of God, to the church meetings, and there offer this portion to God.

Exodus 34:26b gives us the fifth condition: "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk." A mother is for producing life, and milk is for the nourishment of life. We should not produce young ones and then turn around and kill them. After producing them, we need to nourish them. This means that when we are enjoying Christ, we should not cause anything of death to enter into the realm, the sphere, of the nourishing life.

Recently in a meeting some of the saints were declaring, "Eating Jesus is the way!" While they were declaring this, I was saying to myself, "You say that eating Jesus is the way. But have you eaten Him?" Yes, eating Jesus is the way. But we need to consider how much of the Lord we ourselves

have eaten. For some of us, the proclamation that eating Jesus is the way may simply be a slogan. If we would enjoy Christ, we need to fulfill the five conditions. We need to be replaced by Christ, we need to clear away all leaven, we need to exhaust our present portion of Christ, we need to bring the topmost experience of Christ to the church meeting and offer it to God, and we need to keep death away from the sphere of nourishing life.

Three Feasts

In Exodus 34 three feasts are mentioned: the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks, and the feast of ingathering. Although according to Leviticus 23 there were seven annual feasts celebrated by the children of Israel, only these three are mentioned here. The first of the yearly feasts was the feast of Passover, and the second was the feast of unleavened bread. In the chapter concerned with the recovery of the broken covenant, God does not mention all the feasts, and the first of the feasts mentioned is not the Passover. According to the record of the seven annual feasts, the most crucial feast was the Passover, which was for salvation. But in this record of the recovery of the broken covenant, there is no mention of the Passover. Rather, the first feast mentioned is the feast of unleavened bread. We know that the feast of unleavened bread was actually a continuation of the Passover. The Passover lasted one day, but the feast of unleavened bread continued for another six days. However, all seven days are called the feast of unleavened bread. Therefore, the feast of unleavened bread includes the Passover.

Why does Exodus 34 mention the feast of unleavened bread but not the feast of Passover? The reason is that the record here is not related to salvation, but is related to the enjoyment of Christ following salvation. This enjoyment begins with the feast of unleavened bread. Do you intend to enjoy Christ after your salvation? If this is your intention, you need to clear away all leaven. You cannot live a sinful life and at the same time enjoy Christ. If we want to enjoy

Christ and rest with Him and with God, the first thing we must do is have a clearance of the past. We must eliminate all leaven. We need to have an unleavened life so that we may enjoy Christ.

Exodus 34:22 says, "And you shall observe the feast of weeks, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the feast of the ingathering at the turn of the year." The feast of weeks is the feast of Pentecost, which means fifty days. Pentecost is the rich issue of the harvest of the firstfruit. Concerning the enjoyment of Christ, we first need to eliminate all leaven by clearing up our sinful life. Then we shall enter into the rich enjoyment of Christ as the firstfruit. First Corinthians 15 reveals that Christ is the firstfruit in resurrection. Pentecost came fifty days after Christ's resurrection. After Christ was resurrected, He stayed with His disciples for forty days. Then He ascended to the third heaven, and the disciples prayed for ten days. Following those ten days, Pentecost came, and Christ was poured down upon the disciples in the form of the Spirit. This Spirit is the rich issue of the resurrected Christ.

As I consider the feasts in the Old Testament and how they fit in with the New Testament and our spiritual experience, I am again convinced that the Bible is truly inspired by God.

After we are saved and have a clearance of the past, purging the leaven away, we enter into the enjoyment of the riches of Christ in resurrection. This is our Pentecost. Our Pentecost is not a matter of speaking in tongues. For us, Pentecost is to enter into the full issue of the resurrected Christ. Pentecost is the result of enjoying Christ as the firstfruit. The feast of Pentecost is enjoyed by those who have been saved and who are now living a clean life, a life without leaven.

The last of the feasts in Exodus 34 is the feast of ingathering, which is also the feast of tabernacles. The feast of tabernacles was the time when the full harvest was brought in. This feast signifies the rich, full, and ultimate enjoyment of all that Christ is. We begin the enjoyment of Christ from the feast of unleavened bread, we continue by

enjoying the riches of the resurrected Christ, and eventually we come to the ultimate enjoyment of Christ as the feast of tabernacles.

Feasting and Resting

In chapter thirty-four the feasts are mentioned in verses 18 and 22 and the Sabbath is mentioned in verse 21: "Six days you shall work, and on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest." The fact that the word concerning the Sabbath is inserted between the word concerning the feasts indicates that, while we are enjoying Christ, simultaneously we rest with Him. In our feasting, in our enjoyment of Christ, there should be the Sabbath. Therefore, the feasting and the resting are mingled.

For the children of Israel the feasts were held yearly and the Sabbath was kept weekly. But what is portrayed in Exodus 34 describes our daily experience of Christ. Every day we should have three feasts. In the morning we should have the feast of unleavened bread. When we take Christ as our sin offering and trespass offering, we cleanse away the leaven. This is our feast of unleavened bread. Then during the day we should enjoy Christ richly. If we have such an enjoyment of Christ during the day, then at the end of day we shall enjoy Christ to the fullest. Furthermore many times during the day, perhaps every fifteen or twenty minutes, we should take a short break to rest with Christ. I realize that because we are not in the habit of doing this, we may not find it as easy at first. Nevertheless, let us try to remember the Lord during the day and rest with Him. We have seen that the Sabbath signifies resting with the Lord in remembrance of Him. Let us not forget the Lord during the day, but let us remember Him and rest in Him.

RESTING BEFORE WE WORK

In the light of the foregoing let us now consider 35:1-3. When God was about to charge His people to make the tabernacle with its furniture and the garments for the priests, the

first thing He told them to do was to keep the Sabbath. This means that before they worked in building the tabernacle they should rest. This corresponds to the record in Genesis 2:2 and 3: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." We have seen that after man came forth from the creating hand of God, the first thing he did was rest. Man's first day was the Creator's seventh day. The first thing man did after he was created by God was to rest with God. This indicates that before we can do anything for God, we must first rest with Him. If you intend to work for God, you must receive grace, enjoy grace, and rest with God. Then you may proceed to do something for God. We should not first work for God and then enjoy grace and rest. That way is according to the law. According to grace, we first enjoy grace and then we work. First we rest with the Lord, and then we work for Him.

This principle should be applied in our daily living. Often I will pray before I do a certain thing. For example, I take a walk every day. Before taking my walk, I may pray, "Lord, I thank You for the peace I am now enjoying. You know that I intend to go out to take a walk. Lord, grant Your blessing upon my walk." If I do not pray like this, I may not have peace when I take my walk, for in that case I do not rest with the Lord before doing the little work of taking a walk.

We can apply this principle to many things. Suppose you need to write a letter to your parents. Before writing the letter, take a minute to rest with the Lord. You may say, "Lord, I thank You that I can be with You. Lord, I need to write a letter to my parents. Lord, be with me as I write this letter. I would like to rest with You and then write the letter with You. Lord, I ask You to write this letter with me." This is an illustration of the principle of resting with the Lord before we work with Him and for Him.

Resting with the Lord in this way may even affect the

way we dress ourselves in the morning. If you rest with Him before you dress yourself, I believe that you will clothe yourself according to the image of the Lord. Suppose a brother has recently purchased a worldly item of clothing. If he rests with the Lord before putting on that article of clothing, he may realize that he should not wear it.

I can testify that regarding resting with the Lord, I know what I am talking about. From experience I know what it means to rest with the Lord before doing things.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SABBATH

Do you know the real significance of the Sabbath? According to Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 12, the significance of the Sabbath is to remember the Lord as our Creator and Redeemer. When we remember the One who created us and redeemed us, we keep the Sabbath. If we are busy day and night, we shall forget the Lord and push Him aside. But there is a principle, a spiritual regulation, that before doing anything we need to remember the Lord and rest with Him. Let us rest with Him in remembrance of Him as our Creator and Redeemer and also as our Savior, Lord, Master, and life. How wonderful it would be if we did this regularly!

This understanding of the word concerning the Sabbath in 35:1-3 comes not only from my experience, but also from the sequence of the record in chapters thirty-four and thirty-five. When Moses was on the mountain with the Lord, the Lord spoke to him concerning three feasts to be held yearly and the Sabbath to be kept weekly. Then Moses came down to tell the people to make the tabernacle with its furniture and to make the garments for the priests. Moses, however, did not forget what the Lord had told him. Therefore, charging the children of Israel to make the tabernacle for God, he told them first to rest with Him and thereby to remember Him as their Creator and Redeemer. I believe that this is the reason the record concerning the making of the tabernacle with its furniture and the garments for the priests begins with a word concerning the Sabbath.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-THREE

THE MAKING OF THE TABERNACLE WITH ITS FURNITURE AND THE GARMENTS FOR THE PRIESTS

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 35:1-10, 20-35; 36:1-7

In chapters thirty-five through thirty-nine of Exodus we have a record of the making of the tabernacle with its furniture and the garments for the priests.

THE OFFERING OF THE MATERIALS

In 35:4-9, 20-29 and 36:3-7 we have the offering of the materials. Exodus 35:4 and 5 say, "And Moses said to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, This is the word which Jehovah has commanded, saying, Take from among you a heave offering to Jehovah; everyone whose heart is willing shall bring it, Jehovah's heave offering." Then various materials are mentioned: gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the incense of fragrant spices, and onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod and for the breastplate.

In the matter of offering these materials, the people who had been idolatrous now became faithful to God. Formerly they used their gold to make an idol. But now they were faithful and offered everything to God for the building of the tabernacle, His dwelling place. This thought is conveyed in the record in chapter thirty-five regarding the offering of the materials. However, it is somewhat superficial. The emphasis in this message will be on the spiritual significance of the offering of the materials.

The materials offered for the building of the tabernacle typify the Christ experienced by us in different aspects. Although these materials were gained by the children of Israel while they were in Egypt, they are nevertheless called heave offerings, wave offerings, and freewill offerings (35:5, 21-22, 24, 29; 36:3). Some translations do not point out that these offerings were heave offerings, wave offerings, and freewill offerings. Instead, certain versions say only that these offerings were gifts or contributions. The heave offering signifies the ascended Christ; the wave offering, the resurrected Christ; and the freewill offering, the Christ we offer to God of our free will. God does not force us to experience Christ. Whether or not we experience Christ and then offer Him to God is a matter of our free will.

According to the spiritual interpretation, all the offerings here are types of the Christ whom we experience. Sometimes we experience Christ as the reality of God. This is gold. At other times we experience Christ as our Redeemer or as our redemption. This is silver. At other times we may experience Christ as the One judged by God for us, as the Christ who takes our place in judgment, as the One who is our Substitute to suffer God's judgment for us. This is bronze. All these are different aspects of the Christ experienced by us.

For the building of the church, God's dwelling place, we all need to experience Christ. If we do not experience Christ, we shall not have anything to offer to God as a heave offering, wave offering, or freewill offering for the building up of His dwelling place. Suppose some of the Israelites were empty-handed, having nothing to offer to the Lord for the building of the tabernacle. They may have said, "Moses has spoken to us concerning offerings for the building of the tabernacle. But we are pitiful and have nothing to offer." What a shame that would have been! Nevertheless, this is the situation of many saints today. As far as the experience of Christ is concerned, they do not have an offering to bring. Regarding the building up of the church, their hands are empty.

We all need to have some riches of the experience of

Christ. At least we need to have a brooch or an earring (35:22). We should at least have Christ as a small brooch that we can offer for the building of the church. Perhaps you are wondering what this means in our practical experience. Suppose a sister wears a little brooch. If in wearing that brooch she experiences Christ, eventually that experience, in its spiritual significance, will be an experience of Christ as a golden brooch. Likewise, a brother may experience Christ even in the small matter of wearing a tiepin. If a brother experiences Christ in the buying and wearing of a tiepin, that will become an aspect of Christ experienced by him. Then in the sight of God he will have Christ as a spiritual tiepin. The important point here is that we should not have anything by ourselves, but we should have everything by Christ and with Christ. If we experience Christ in a certain thing, we shall have Christ in a particular aspect to offer to God for the building up of the church, His dwelling place.

It is possible to experience Christ even in buying a tie and in wearing that tie. If I experience Christ in the wearing of a tie, then in spiritual experience I shall have Christ as my golden tie.

A married brother can experience Christ when he is tempted to argue with his wife. When he is about to argue with her, he should say, "Lord, I'm going to argue with my wife. Lord, I don't want to argue without You. If You are not my way to argue with my wife, I will not argue with her." If a brother experiences Christ in this way, he will gain Christ, even in a situation where he is about to argue with his wife. This is an illustration of how practical the experience of Christ needs to be. However, among many Christians today there is a shortage of the subjective teaching concerning the practical experience of Christ in our daily life.

We need to experience Christ in every aspect of our daily life, for example, in the clothes we wear, in the way we cut our hair, and in our attitudes. In everything, great or small, we need to experience Christ. In wearing shoes, in cutting our hair, and even in expressing our attitudes, we should

have Christ. A sister should not show a "long face" to her husband by herself. Instead, she should say, "Lord, I intend to show a long face to my husband. Will You do this with me? If You are not one with me in this matter, I will not do it." Before showing her husband a long face, a married sister should first abide in the Lord and pray to Him concerning it. If she prays like this, she will not show a long face to her husband. On the contrary, she may show him a broad, happy face. I use this as an illustration to point out that we need to apply the truth of experiencing Christ as the materials offered to God for the building of His dwelling place in a practical way. If we are practical with this truth, we shall have something of Christ to offer to God for the building up of the church, His dwelling place on earth today.

THE PREPARING OF THE WORKERS

We have pointed out that many Christians do not have anything of Christ to offer. But even if we do have Christ in many aspects as the materials, that is not yet the building. In order to have the building, we need not only the materials but also the skillful workers. Therefore, the next matter to be covered in these chapters is the preparing of the workers, the preparing of the gifted ones to function (35:10, 30-35; 36:1-2; 38:22-23).

According to Exodus 35, the two leading workmen were Bezalel and Oholiab (vv. 30, 34). Bezalel was of the tribe of Judah, a kingly tribe, and Oholiab was of the tribe of Dan, a lowly tribe. This indicates that God does not care about our human estate, whether we are high or low. For the work of building His dwelling place, He can raise up one from a kingly tribe and also one from a lowly tribe.

An Uplifted Heart

Exodus 35:21 says, "And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whose spirit made him willing." Literally, the Hebrew word rendered "stirred" here means lifted. I prefer to use the word "lifted" in this verse. We need to have a heart that always lifts us up. We need an

upward heart, not a downward heart. Many times I have been told that a certain brother or sister is discouraged, disappointed, or disheartened. Whenever we are disheartened, we are through with the work of God's building. We constantly need an uplifted heart, even an uplifting heart, a heart that lifts us up. Every one of us needs such an uplifted heart. If we do not have this kind of heart, who then would be able to help us?

Filled with the Spirit of God

Concerning Bezalel, verse 31 says, "And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all workmanship." This indicates that even if we are a Bezalel or an Oholiab, we still need the Spirit of God. For the building up of the tabernacle, a material dwelling place for God, there was the need for the Spirit of God. How much more is this true concerning the church today!

God filled with the Spirit those whose hearts lifted them up. By filling them with the Spirit, God gave them wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and skill. This is a picture of what we need today. For the building up of the church we need brothers and sisters whose hearts lift them up and who are filled with the Spirit of God to have wisdom and knowledge. In order to be an elder, a co-worker, or one who shares in the building up of the church, we need wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and skill.

After we have some experience of Christ as the materials to be offered to God for His building, there is still the need for us to carry out the work of building. For this, there is the need of many workers. All these workers should have an uplifted heart so that God may come in to fill them with the Spirit. According to the record here, we must first have a heart that lifts us up. Then God will come in to fill us with the Spirit as our wisdom, understanding, knowledge, skill, and craftsmanship.

THE SEQUENCE IN MAKING THE TABERNACLE

Now we come to the actual making of the tabernacle and

its furniture (36:8—38:20). The sequence of the making of the tabernacle and its furniture is different from the sequence of the revelation. According to the sequence of the revelation, we first have the ark and then the tabernacle, the showbread table, the lampstand, the bronze altar, and the holy garments of the priests. This revelation is according to God's desire, according to what He wants. What God wants first is the ark of testimony. Everything revealed concerning the tabernacle and its furniture is according to the desire of God's heart. But the sequence of making the tabernacle and its furniture is according to the practical need. For this reason, the first item to be made was the tabernacle, and then the furniture was made as the content of the tabernacle.

Let us consider briefly the sequence in the making of the tabernacle and its furniture. First the curtains and the coverings of the tabernacle were made (36:8-19) and then the boards (36:20-34). Thus, the first two items made were the roof and the walls. Next we have the inner veil and the door curtain of the tabernacle (36:35-38). With these items the tabernacle itself was completed. Then we have the contents of the tabernacle: the ark of the testimony (37:1-9), the table of the bread of the Presence (37:10-16), the golden lampstand (37:17-24), and the altar of incense (37:25-28). When we have the ark, the table, and the lampstand, we are qualified to be at the altar of incense to carry out the interceding work with Christ. After the altar of incense, we have the holy anointing oil and the pure incense (37:29), the altar of burnt offering (38:1-7), and the laver of bronze (38:8). Last we have the court of the tabernacle (38:9-20).

COUNTING THE OFFERED MATERIALS

In 38:21-31 we have the counting of the offered materials. The fact that the materials were counted indicates that everything was carried out in an orderly way. By this Moses and the leading ones knew definitely how much gold, silver, and bronze had been offered. Moses charged the priests to count what had been offered. First, according to 38:21, the material was counted by the priests for the service of the Levites. This

signifies that all the offerings should first be considered by the leading ones for the church service. For this service, we need a proper counting and record. Next the gold was counted, twenty-nine talents and seven hundred thirty shekels. The gold was for the interior decoration of the tabernacle and the furniture within the tabernacle (38:24). For example, the ark and the table were overlaid with gold, and the lampstand was made entirely of gold. In 38:25-28 we have the counting of the silver, one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred seventy-five shekels, paid for the propitiation by those numbered from twenty years old and upward, for the sockets and pillars of the tabernacle. Finally, in 38:29-31, we have the counting of the bronze, seventy talents and twenty-four hundred shekels for the sockets of the door of the tabernacle, the bronze altar, the sockets of the court of the tabernacle and its door, and all the pegs of the tabernacle and its court. Here there is no mention of the bronze used in making the laver because that bronze came from the looking glasses of women who loved the Lord.

MAKING THE GARMENTS FOR THE PRIESTS

In 39:1-31 we have the making of the garments for the priests. In 39:2-7 we have the making of the ephod, the central item of the holy garments. Following that we have the breastplate (39:8-21) and the robe of the ephod (vv. 22-26). The ephod was like a vest, rather than like a robe. The long robe of the ephod was worn underneath the ephod. After the making of the outer robe, we have the making of the inner tunics, which were worn inside the robe. Then we have the turban for the high priest, the turbans for the priests, and the breeches and girdles for both the high priest and the priests. Finally, we have the making of the plate of the holy crown to be worn by the high priest (vv. 30-31), a plate that was inscribed with the words "Holy unto Jehovah."

At the end of chapter thirty-nine, the work was completed, and everything was presented to Moses for his examination. Moses was happy and blessed everything that had been made. This indicates that after everything was finished, the blessing

came down. I hope this will be the situation concerning the building up of the church among us. I hope that one day we shall present everything to the Lord, today's Moses, and that He will be happy and grant us His blessing.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOUR

THE ERECTION OF THE TABERNACLE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 40:1-38

As the conclusion of the Life-study of Exodus, in this message and the following we shall consider 40:1-38.

In Exodus we have the record of God's revelation concerning the tabernacle and its furniture and also the record of the making of the tabernacle and its furniture. In chapter forty of Exodus we have two records. The first is God's commandment concerning the erecting of the tabernacle and the placement of the furniture and utensils. The second record describes how Moses did everything according to God's commandment. These two records, of course, are almost exactly the same. In the book of Exodus there are actually four records related to the tabernacle and its furniture and utensils. In the foregoing message we pointed out the reason for the difference in sequence between the record of the revelation of the tabernacle and its furniture and the record concerning the making of the tabernacle and its furniture. Here I would like to point out that in each of the four records the most important matter is the ark of the testimony.

GOD'S SIDE AND OUR SIDE

We have seen that the revelation of the tabernacle and its furniture begins with the ark of the testimony. God begins with the ark of the testimony and then proceeds outward to the outer court. But according to our experience, we begin with the altar of burnt offering and proceed onward until we reach the ark. Here we see the contract between

God's viewpoint and our viewpoint, between God's end and our end. God begins with the ark of the testimony, and we begin with the altar of burnt offering.

If we compare the books of Romans and Ephesians, we shall also see a contrast between God's side and our side, between God's end and our end. The book of Romans begins with our side, with the situation of fallen man. In Romans 1 there is detail concerning the sinful things, and in Romans 3 we see the altar. Ephesians, however, begins from God's side. Even in the first chapter of Ephesians we can see God's intention. This means that in Ephesians 1 we see Christ as the ark of testimony.

As far as the tabernacle and its furniture are concerned, the book of Exodus does not begin from our side and proceed to God's side. Rather, it begins from God's side and proceeds to our side.

God is in the heavens, and we are on earth. We need to ask not only how we can reach God, but also how God can reach us. It is not an easy matter for God to reach us. However, some may say that because God is sovereign and almighty, He can do whatever He desires and can easily reach us. It is, of course, true that God is sovereign and almighty. But we need to remember that God is not lawless; rather, He is a God of law, regulation, and order. Because God is an orderly God, He cannot act contrary to His nature. He cannot do anything that is contrary to His righteous way. In order for the holy and righteous God to reach man, He must act in a way that matches His holiness and corresponds to His righteousness. Therefore, in order for God to come from heaven to earth to reach us, His righteousness must be upheld, and His holiness must be honored. This means that God cannot come to us in a careless way. God's coming requires a number of steps, or turns, from the ark in the Holy of Holies to the altar in the outer court. These turns can be compared to the turns one makes in driving a car. The driver of a car may first turn right and then left, but all these turns are necessary for him to reach his destination. Likewise, within the tabernacle there are a number of turns.

GOD'S INTENTION TO HAVE THE ARK

The book of Exodus reveals that God's intention is to have the ark. This ark is the ark of testimony, and this causes the tabernacle to become the tabernacle of testimony. What God wants is the ark of testimony in the tabernacle of testimony. We, however, may want nothing more than our own salvation. Because we care for our salvation, we may not have any thought concerning God's testimony. Our salvation is at the altar, but God's testimony is at the ark. Most of today's Christians do not have any idea about God's testimony. They are mainly concerned with their salvation. If you were to talk with them about other matters in the Word of God, they may say, "Does this have something to do with my salvation? Will this determine whether I go to heaven?" This is the way many Christians view things. Today's Christians do not have much thought regarding God's testimony.

Do you know what is the main subject of the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible? In answer to this question, some Christians would say that Revelation is a book of prophecy that tells us about a beast that comes from the sea and another beast that comes from the land. But this is not the main subject of Revelation. In the first chapter of Revelation we see the main subject of this book—the testimony of Jesus. The last book of the Bible is concerned with the testimony of Jesus.

Once again we must appreciate the wonderful fact that the Bible truly is the divine revelation. The human mind is not capable of composing such a book.

Eventually, in the last of the sixty-six books of the Bible, we have a book concerned with the testimony of Jesus. This testimony is the ark of God. According to Revelation, the ark of God eventually consummates in a tabernacle which will be the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will be the ultimate fulfillment of the tabernacle. It is God's eternal goal to have the New Jerusalem.

In our reading of the book of Exodus, we need to pay careful attention to the significance of the ark of testimony. I hope that all the young people especially will see the

importance of the ark of testimony in this book. In reading and studying the Word of God, we should not be controlled by our natural mind, religion, or culture. We should not merely be concerned with receiving some kind of blessing from God. We need to see that what God desires is the ark of testimony in the tabernacle of testimony.

In the revelation of the tabernacle and its furniture, the ark is mentioned first. In the making of the tabernacle and the furniture and in the two records concerning this matter in chapter forty, the ark of testimony also has a central place. We have seen that the ark of testimony typifies Christ. The first item of furniture to be put into the tabernacle was the ark. The ark, therefore, is the central item of the tabernacle and its furniture.

TWO BEGINNINGS

Exodus 40:2 says, "On the first day of the first month you shall raise up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting." It is very significant that God commanded Moses to erect the tabernacle on the first day of the first month of the second year. We know that the first month of the first year was the time of the Passover. Hence, from the Passover to the erection of the tabernacle was one year.

In Exodus 12 and 40 we see that God's people had two beginnings. The first beginning was with the Passover, which was for the salvation of the children of Israel. The second beginning was their beginning with God's dwelling place. These two beginnings are clear types or signs. The first beginning is to be saved, to experience the Passover, to have God's judgment pass over us. Every genuine Christian has experienced this beginning. But what about the second beginning, the beginning related to the building of God's dwelling place? It is a fact that not many Christians realize the need to have this second beginning.

When I was young I read some books that spoke about a so-called second blessing. Pentecostal people would say that to have this second blessing is to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They encourage believers to seek this second

blessing. But those Christians who emphasize the inner life claim that the second blessing is something inward. They may say something like this: "You need to experience the cross of Christ. If you experience the cross, then inwardly you will be filled with life. This inward filling is the second blessing." But have you ever heard anyone speak about a second blessing, a second Abib, in the second year? The first month of the holy calendar is called the month of Abib, which means green ears, and signifies a new, fresh beginning in life.

We all need to have the two beginnings, one typified by the Passover in Exodus 12, and the other, by the erection of the tabernacle in Exodus 40. This is a matter of great significance. The second beginning is not related to tongue-speaking nor even to the inner filling for the inner life. Neither is it the second blessing spoken of by so-called holiness people. They say that if we receive holiness, we have received the second blessing. But from Exodus we see that the second beginning is related to the building of God's dwelling place. When in our Christian life we experience the building of God's dwelling place in a practical way, we have the second beginning. What is the dwelling place of God today? God's dwelling place is the church, which is called the house of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). The building of this house is the second beginning, the genuine second blessing, the beginning that takes place on the first day of the first month of the second year. How glad I am to have the assurance that I have experienced the second beginning! Many among us also have the assurance that we have had this second beginning. This is truly a blessing! To have the second beginning with the building of the dwelling place of God is much better than tongue-speaking, inward filling, or holiness. None of these things can compare with God's dwelling place. None of them can compare with the building of the church.

When certain ones hear this, they may say, "Witness Lee is always talking about the church. Wherever he goes he emphasizes the church because this is his cargo." Actually, I am not promoting my "cargo"—I am promoting God's cargo. What do we see at the end of Exodus? We see God's dwelling

place. We see a tabernacle occupied by God and possessed by Him in the way of glory to express Him. We see the same thing at the end of the Bible. In the last chapters of the book of Revelation we see a tabernacle, the New Jerusalem, occupied and possessed by God in the way of glory for His expression. In Exodus 40:34 we are told that "the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle," and in Revelation 21 we see that the New Jerusalem has the glory of God (Rev. 21:10-11). Both at the end of Exodus and at the end of Revelation we see the glory of God filling the tabernacle, God's dwelling place.

MOSES DOING WHAT THE LORD COMMANDED

Exodus 40:16 says, "And Moses did according to all that Jehovah had commanded him; so he did." Again and again the words "as Jehovah had commanded Moses" are repeated (vv. 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32). When I read this portion of the Word as a young person, I thought that it was too repetitious. It seemed to me that it would have been sufficient to say at the end that everything was done according to what God had commanded Moses. However, the fact that the words "as Jehovah had commanded Moses" are repeated again and again indicates something important.

Although the record in chapter forty is not very long, it is quite detailed. First we are told that "Moses raised up the tabernacle, and placed its sockets, and put up its boards, and put in its bars, and raised up its pillars" (v. 18). Then we are told that Moses "spread the tent over the tabernacle" and "put the cover of the tent over it from above" (v. 19). The curtains were placed above the boards to form the ceiling, and the layers of coverings were put on top of the curtains to form the roof. Thus, inside, the curtains formed the ceiling, and outside, the coverings formed the roof.

Verses 20 and 21 speak about the ark: "And he took the testimony and placed it into the ark, and he put the poles on the ark, and he placed the propitiatory cover upon the ark from above. And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and he put up the veil of the curtain, and covered the ark of the

testimony, as Jehovah had commanded Moses." Verse 20 speaks of the cover of the ark as the propitiatory cover. The King James Version uses the expression "mercy seat." According to the New Testament, the propitiatory cover is the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16), where God meets with His people. After the ark was placed in the tabernacle, the veil covering the ark of testimony was set up.

THE NEED FOR REALITY

According to verse 22, Moses placed the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil. Then he set in order upon the table the loaves of bread. The bread is for feeding, for nourishing. Opposite the table, on the south side of the tabernacle, Moses put the lampstand, and he lighted the lamps before the Lord. Following this, Moses put the golden altar of incense before the veil. Then, as the Lord had commanded him, he burned upon it the incense of fragrant spices. At the incense altar the priests could pray and intercede for God's people.

In chapter forty of Exodus, the bread is mentioned along with the table; the lighting of the lamps, along with the lampstand; and the burning of incense, along with the golden altar of incense. This indicates that we should not have a table without bread, a lampstand without light, or an incense altar without incense. As soon as the table was put in the Holy Place, the bread was arranged upon it. Likewise, as soon as the lampstand was put in place opposite the table, the lamps were lighted. Furthermore, once the golden altar had been set up before the veil, incense was burned upon it. Anyone entering the Holy Place could see the bread and the light and smell the incense. This indicates that in the Lord's recovery we should not have outward things without the reality of those things. For example, we should not have baptism without the reality of the Lord's death and resurrection, or the Lord's table without the reality of the Body of Christ. If we do not have reality, we shall simply have empty forms.

FINISHING THE WORK

Exodus 40:28 says, "And he put up the curtain of the door to the tabernacle." Once this curtain had been put up, the entire tabernacle was finished. Therefore, verse 30 goes on to speak of the laver and the altar of burnt offering, and verse 33, of the raising up of the court round about the tabernacle and the altar and the hanging up of the curtain of the gate of the court. Then verse 33 concludes with the words, "And Moses finished the work." At this point, all the work regarding the erecting of the tabernacle and the outer court was completed. In the following message, the last message in this Life-study of Exodus, we shall see that the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

LIFE-STUDY OF EXODUS

MESSAGE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FIVE

THE ERECTION OF THE TABERNACLE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 40

THE SEQUENCE IN ERECTING THE TABERNACLE

In 40:1-16 we have the commandments of the Lord to Moses concerning the raising up of the tabernacle, and in verses 17 through 33, the actual erection of the tabernacle. Regarding the erection of the tabernacle, we see the following sequence: the raising up of the boards (v. 18); spreading the curtains and the coverings (v. 19); placing the ark of the testimony into the Holy of Holies (vv. 20-21a); putting up the veil to cover the ark of the testimony (v. 21b); placing the table in the Holy Place on the north side, outside the veil, and setting in order upon it the bread before the Lord (vv. 22-23); placing the lampstand in the Holy Place, opposite the table, on the south side, and lighting the lamps before the Lord (vv. 24-25); placing the golden altar in the Holy Place before the veil and burning upon it the incense of fragrant spices (vv. 26-27); putting up the curtain of the door of the tabernacle (v. 28); placing the altar of burnt offering at the door of the tabernacle and offering upon it the burnt offering and the meal offering (v. 29); placing the laver between the tabernacle and the altar and putting water there for washing the hands and the feet of the priests (vv. 30-32); raising up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar (v. 33a); and hanging up the curtain of the gate of the court (v. 33b).

THE CLOUD COVERING THE TENT OF MEETING AND THE GLORY FILLING THE TABERNACLE

In 40:34-38 we have a record of the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle. Verse 34 says, "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle." This verse speaks of two aspects; it speaks of something that happened outside the tent of meeting and something that happened inside the tabernacle. The cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory filled the tabernacle. The same structure was both the tent of meeting and the tabernacle. With respect to man, it was the tent of meeting. But with respect to God, it was the tabernacle. We may also say that outwardly it was the tent of meeting and that inwardly it was the tabernacle.

In the church life today there is a difference between the tent of meeting and the tabernacle. We may have the church life and be in the church life, but we may be on the outside and not on the inside. This means that our church life may be merely the tent of meeting, not the tabernacle.

If we study the book of Exodus carefully, we shall see that the first mention of the tent of meeting was shortly after the children of Israel practiced idolatry by making a golden calf and worshipping it. Moses moved his tent outside the camp, and then his tent became the tent of meeting.

In the church life we may simply be gathered around the tent of meeting. We may not be in the tabernacle. In Exodus 40 the tent of meeting was covered by the cloud, but the tabernacle was filled with glory. Those who only gather around the tent of meeting may have the cloud. However, we need to enjoy not only the cloud upon the tent of meeting, but also the glory within the tabernacle.

By the Lord's mercy I can testify that during the early years I was under the cloud, but today I am inside the tabernacle that is filled with glory. No longer is my enjoyment only that of the cloud, but it is also that of the glory. How about you? Are you enjoying only the cloud upon the tent of meeting, or are you also enjoying the glory within the tabernacle? Certain saints who are very happy and bubbling in

the church life may be under the cloud, not in the glory. Such saints need more experience of the church life in order to enter into the tabernacle and see the glory that is inside.

The Tent of Meeting and the Tabernacle

The term "tabernacle" in the Bible refers to something deep concerning God and His testimony. The phrase "tent of meeting" is positive; however, the significance is not as deep as that of the tabernacle. The tabernacle is related to God's testimony, but the tent of meeting is related mainly to God's interest on earth and to His move. You may wish to keep this distinction in mind as you read through the Old Testament. Remember that the word "tabernacle" points to something directly related to God's testimony and that the term "tent of meeting" points to something that is more outward, external, related to God's interest and move.

As an illustration of this distinction, let us consider chapter one of Leviticus. According to Leviticus 1:1, the Lord spoke to Moses out of the tent of meeting. In this verse we are not told that the Lord spoke to Moses out of the tabernacle. When we read this verse, we may think that it is a wonderful matter for God to speak out of the tent of meeting. Yes, God's speaking out of the tent of meeting is wonderful. However, it is not as wonderful as His speaking in the tabernacle.

The Relationship between the Cloud and the Glory

It is important for us to understand the relationship between the cloud and the glory. We may say that the cloud is the outer part, the "shell," of God's glory. By shell we mean an outer covering. If we understand the word shell in this way, we may say that an orange has a peeling as its shell, and we may say that the human body has the skin as its shell. The skin covers the body, and the body contains our being. But the shell covering the human body is not our actual being. Rather, our being is the spirit. Those who were outside the tabernacle could see the shell. Anyone who

entered into the tabernacle would see not the shell, but would see the inward glory of the tabernacle.

The young people may enjoy the church life and testify how wonderful it is. However, they may be enjoying only the shell of the church. But this does not mean that they should give up this enjoyment. On the contrary, they should go on to enjoy the inward glory of the tabernacle. Young people, do not be disappointed by my word, and do not throw away the shell because you do not yet have much of the inward glory.

I believe that many of us can testify that when we were in Elden Hall in Los Angeles, we were on the "roof" of the church life enjoying the cloud. Perhaps some would say that the church life in Anaheim is not as exciting as that in Elden. I agree. Nevertheless, we must admit that what we are enjoying today is something deeper and more inward than what we enjoyed in Elden Hall. We may no longer be on the roof enjoying the cloud, but we are learning to intercede at the incense altar. Anyone who intercedes at the incense altar is no longer in the cloud that covers the tent of meeting. Rather, this one is encompassed by the glory that is on the inside of the church life. I hope that more of us will see this and experience it.

Some of the older saints may feel bothered or frustrated. They may say to themselves, "Why are we not as fresh as we used to be? Why is the church life not so exciting?" It is good to be excited and it is also good to be able to excite others. However, it is mainly the young ones who are excited and exciting, for they are enjoying the cloud outside the tent of meeting. But it is difficult for the older ones who are experiencing the glory within the tabernacle to be excited. I can testify that as an older one I may not be excited outwardly, but I find it wonderful to intercede at the incense altar. How I love to enjoy the bread at the table and to linger at the incense altar!

Those in the outer court may gather around the altar of burnt offering and see the cloud covering the tent of meeting. But if they want to see the glory, they need to come inside the tabernacle. The glory is not on the roof; it is

within the tabernacle. When we come into the tabernacle, we shall see that the glory is there.

MOVING WITH GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

According to 40:36-38, the cloud of Jehovah's glory became the guidance of the sons of Israel. When the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people journeyed: "And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel journeyed in all their journeys." But if the cloud was not taken up, they would stay where they were: "And if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey until the day it was taken up." Verse 38 tells us that the "cloud of Jehovah was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel in all their journeys."

Today Christians often talk about the Lord's will, leading, and guidance. But according to the typology in Exodus 40, apart from God's dwelling place there is no guidance or leading. The dwelling place of God is the unique leading. When the cloud moved, all the people of Israel moved as well. But if the cloud did not move, they stayed. This means that the children of Israel followed the tabernacle with the cloud. Our Christian journey must be a journey that follows God's move with His dwelling place. This is clearly portrayed by the picture in Exodus 40.

In the book of Numbers we can see that everything that God does is related to His dwelling place. This was true even in the matter of fighting against the enemies: God fought them with His dwelling place. His dwelling place, the tabernacle, was the best weapon. Whatever God's people did and wherever they went was according to the situation with respect to God's dwelling place. We need to apply this principle today in the church life. When God's dwelling place stays, we stay with it. But when it moves, we move with it. Furthermore, when God's dwelling place fights, we also fight.

Genuine leading and guidance are not according to our feeling, opinion, sight, or view. However, many believers seek the knowledge of God's will or what they call God's

leading mainly according to their point of view, sight, feeling, or concept. Have you ever heard anyone speak about the Lord's leading and will according to the church? There is very little talk of such a thing today. This is a further indication that the situation among God's people is far from normal. This is the reason there is the need of the Lord's recovery.

The Lord's recovery, which is based upon the full revelation of the holy Word, is very different from the traditional way of religion. The living house of the living God is our leading concerning whether we should stay or move, whether it is time to fight or work. We would engage in all these activities not according to our opinion or viewpoint and not even according to the Bible in dead letters, but according to God's dwelling place with His glory. When we have a proper relationship with God's dwelling place, we enjoy rest, victory, and blessing. When we are one with God's dwelling place, which is filled with His glory, we have everything we need. We have the Lord's leading and guidance; we have His blessing and victory. Furthermore, we have righteousness and holiness. We thank the Lord for this clear picture in 40:36-38.

A COMPARISON OF GENESIS AND EXODUS

A Coffin and a Tabernacle

As a concluding word to this Life-study, I would like to compare the books of Genesis and Exodus. Genesis begins with God's creation (Gen. 1:1) and ends with a coffin in Egypt containing a dead body (Gen. 50:26). Exodus begins with slavery in Egypt (Exo. 1:11) and ends with the tabernacle covered by and filled with the glory of God on account of His redemption (Exo. 40:34-38). The book of Genesis does not have a glorious conclusion. At the end of that book we see a man dead, placed in a coffin in the world (Egypt), the very man created by God in His image for His expression and dominion. The last verse of Genesis says, "So Joseph died … and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." In this verse we

can see death, which is the result of sin, and also the world. This is the conclusion of Genesis.

How different is the conclusion of the book of Exodus! At the end of Exodus we do not have a coffin containing a dead body; we have a tabernacle containing the glorious God.

At the beginning of Exodus we have a continuation of the conclusion of Genesis. We have seen that the book of Genesis ends with a dead person in a coffin in Egypt. Exodus begins with a picture of God's people serving as slaves in Egypt. As we consider the situation both at the end of Genesis and at the beginning of Exodus, we see that we were dead, on the one hand, and also slaves of Satan, typified by Pharaoh, on the other hand. We all were usurped by Satan and were enslaved to him. But Christ as our Passover has delivered us, released us, from this slavery. Christ's redemption has brought us out of the satanic slavery in Egypt into a land of freedom (the wilderness). In the wilderness God's further activity brings us to a glorified tabernacle. Here there is no death, no sin, no world. Instead, we have God with His presence and glory. No longer are we dead and in the world, but now we are part of a living and moving tabernacle for the accomplishment of God's purpose on earth.

An Individual Israel and a Corporate Israel

There is also a second important comparison between the books of Genesis and Exodus. In Genesis an individual Israel was produced to express God and exercise His authority for Him. In Exodus a corporate Israel was produced to express God. This is more glorious than what we have in Genesis.

The individual Israel produced in Genesis bore God's image and expressed Him, and he represented God and exercised His authority on earth. By the time this individual Israel had come to maturity, he was actually more powerful than Pharaoh. Even Pharaoh was under his blessing. The corporate Israel produced in Exodus also bore the image of God and exercised His authority. We must admit that the corporate

Israel in Exodus is more glorious than the individual Israel in Genesis.

A Transforming Vision

It is urgent that we all see this vision. Such a vision, such a revelation, will revolutionize our concept, change our daily life, and even transform our being. This vision is very different from a teaching presented from a human point of view. What we need is a revelation from God's point of view. I believe that if you bring this concluding word to the Lord in prayer and consider it before Him, you will eventually have a clear view of these two books.

A Sketch of Genesis and Exodus

I believe it would be helpful to present a brief sketch of Genesis and Exodus. In Genesis 1 we were created by God, and in Genesis 3 we became fallen. Then, after Babel, we were called with Abraham and became river-crossers, Hebrews. Although we were called with Abraham, we became dead and also enslaved to serve Satan's purpose in the world. Then one day we were saved. The calling was with Abraham in Genesis, but the saving was through Christ as the Passover lamb in Exodus.

Having been redeemed by the Passover lamb, we traveled through the wilderness and experienced Christ as the heavenly manna and enjoyed Him as the living water out of the cleft rock. Eventually, we were brought to Mount Sinai, and it is here that we have the church life, typified by the living of the children of Israel around the tent of meeting. Even if not all of us have entered into the tabernacle, we all are gathered around the tent of meeting, and we can see the cloud on the tent of meeting. Here there is no sin, no death, and no world. Here at the tent of meeting we have God in His presence and glory. Here we become His dwelling, and He becomes our dwelling. This is a mutual abode. With the tent of meeting what we have is not merely an individual expression; we have a people as God's corporate expression. The goal of God's purpose is to have such an expression

through His redeemed people. This expression is the goal not only of God's redemption, but also of His eternal purpose. What God desires is to have a corporate expression of Himself through His called and redeemed people.

The Recovery and God's Purpose

We need to be deeply impressed that the Lord's recovery is a great matter. We are here in the recovery not merely for spirituality, holiness, victory, or blessing. Rather, we are here for God's eternal purpose. The books of Genesis and Exodus consummate with God's tabernacle, His dwelling place, filled with glory. In like manner, the entire Bible will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal tabernacle, a tabernacle filled with glory. In the church life as God's dwelling place we have the leading and guidance of our God. He is one with us, and we are one with Him. How wonderful! Now we are in the proper position to hear the Lord's voice, His speaking, as recorded in Leviticus.

We thank the Lord for what we have seen in the books of Genesis and Exodus. I have the full assurance that those who have been with us throughout the years can never be the same. Eternity will reveal what the Lord has been doing within us and among us for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. Praise Him for the glorious conclusion of the book of Exodus!