

The Priesthood

Witness Lee



LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

THE PRIESTHOOD

by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee during the summer conference meetings of 1966 in Los Angeles, California.

PART ONE:
THE THREE MAIN MINISTRIES
IN GOD'S ECONOMY

CHAPTER ONE

THE PRIESTHOOD DEFINED AND ILLUSTRATED

To define what we mean by the word *priesthood*, let us read several verses of Scripture. “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My personal treasure from among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a *kingdom of priests* and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel” (Exo. 19:4-6, italics ours).

“You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

“To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen...And they sing a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made them a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign on the earth...Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years...And there will no longer be a curse. And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him; and they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads” (Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 20:6; 22:3-4).

The word *priesthood* has two meanings, which are expressed by two different Greek words. The first meaning is the office or ministry of the priest (Heb. 7). The second and more important meaning is a priestly body, or a corporate body of priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). In the King James Version these two

Greek words are translated the same, yet in Greek they are two different words with two different meanings.

THE LEADING MINISTRY IN GOD'S ECONOMY

In God's dispensation and economy, the leading ministry is the priesthood. In this universe God has an administration, a divine economy. His economy is the way He arranges or dispenses. Therefore, it is a kind of dispensation. According to the Bible, there are three main ministries in God's divine dispensation: the priesthood, the kingship, and the prophethood. The priesthood is the leading ministry of the three and brings the kingship and prophethood into function. In other words, both the kingship and the prophethood depend upon the leading ministry of the priesthood.

THE DEFINITION OF A PRIEST

The dictionary tells us that a priest is a person who serves God professionally. Most Christians would tell us that a priest is one who serves God. This is right, but what does it mean to serve God? Today's Christians would answer that to serve God is to work for God. This answer is wrong! To say that a priest is a person who serves God is right, but to say that to serve God is merely to do something *for* God, is wrong.

To realize what a priest is, we must first see God's eternal plan. God is a God of purpose. He has a purpose which He wants to accomplish. According to the revelation of the Scriptures, God has a plan to work Himself into a group of people in order that He might be their life and they might become His expression. Based upon this plan, God created man.

Man was destined to receive God, to be filled, saturated and permeated with God, and to have God flow out of him that he might be the living expression of God. This is a brief definition of a priest. He must contact God, be filled with God, and be possessed by God completely that he may be built up with others in the flow of the life of God. Then the priesthood will be God's living, corporate expression.

Christianity's concept is that if we love the Lord, we must work for Him. This is a natural, religious concept, not the revelation of the Bible. God never intended to call us merely to work for Him. God's intention is that we must

first open ourselves to Him that He may come into us to fill and flood us until He has taken possession of every part of our being. Our whole being must be saturated and permeated with Him. Then we will be one with Him. We will not only be clothed outwardly with Him as power, but permeated inwardly with Him as everything. Then spontaneously, God will flow out of us, and we will be built up with others in this flow of life.

I must repeat that a priest is not one who merely works for God. God has no intention of calling us to do something *for* Him. His intention is that we answer His call by opening ourselves to Him and saying, “Lord, here I am, not ready to work for You, but ready to be filled and possessed by You and to be one with You.” Not until we are one with the Lord can we ever work for Him and be a real priest. The main function of a priest is not to work but to spend time in the presence of the Lord until he is one with Him in the spirit. The priesthood that God plans to have is a corporate man who is saturated and permeated with Himself.

THE PRIESTS IN THE BIBLE

Adam

The first priest was the first person, Adam. Some may argue with me that according to the record of the Old Testament, a priest is one who offers sacrifices for sins, but Adam, when he was in the garden of Eden, did not have sin. Therefore, it was unnecessary for him to offer a sacrifice for sin. How then can we say that Adam was the first priest? A priest is not one who merely offers sacrifices. This was done in the outer court and is only a part of the service of a priest. The priest must also enter the Holy Place to spread the bread of the Presence on the table, light the lamp, and burn the incense on the golden altar. To enter the Holy Place is a much finer work than to offer sacrifices. Spreading the bread on the table, lighting the lamp, and burning the incense are related to the finer experiences of Christ. But there is still something deeper. After this, the priest must enter into the Holy of Holies. What work did the priests do in the Holy of Holies? There was no work. All human activity was stopped. The Lord does not need us to work for Him. What He needs is that we stop our work and be filled with Him.

Although Adam had no need to offer any kind of sacrifice, we must realize that before the fall he was in the presence of God all the time. After creation

God did not ask Adam to do anything. He simply put him in front of the tree of life. Adam was to spend his time in the presence of God and enjoy God Himself as the tree of life. Adam was not to do anything for God but to take Him again and again as the life supply so that he would be filled with God. Then Adam would be saturated and permeated by and with God. We know that Adam eventually failed God.

Abel, Enoch, Noah

Abel, the second priest, still did nothing *for* God. He simply approached and worshipped God according to the plan of God's redemption. Abel did nothing but seek God's face by offering the sacrifice according to God's redemptive plan.

The Bible then tells us that Enoch walked with God. There is a sharp contrast between Cain and Enoch. Cain was cast away from the presence of God, but Enoch walked in the presence of God. Thus, Enoch was a priest. Did Enoch do anything for God? No. The Bible simply says that he walked with God. To walk with God means to be one with God, to be filled with Him, and to express Him as a priest. A real priest is one who is always in God's presence.

After Enoch, there was Noah. Noah did a work for God by building the ark, but we must realize how Noah built the ark. By first walking with God, he came to know the will of God. It was through his walk with God that he received the revelation from God to build the ark. His work came from a priestly revelation. This is the priestly service.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob

Abraham was also one who lived in the presence of the Lord. He was called by God, yet he did not know where to go. This is because he was called to live in the presence of God. The presence of God was his destination. He did not know where to go, but he did know where to be! He also offered the offerings to the Lord just as Abel and Noah did. They were not called priests that early in the Bible, but they really were priests. Abraham offered sacrifices to God and lived a life in His presence. If we read the history of Abraham carefully, we will see that he was a real priest. His whole life was in the Holy of Holies in the shekinah glory of God.

Isaac was one who was brought into the Holy of Holies in the person of his father. He was born in the Holy of Holies. So he simply remained there all the time enjoying the presence of the shekinah glory of God. Therefore, Isaac was not only a priest but even the high priest. He lived continuously in the Holy of Holies.

Jacob differed much from Isaac. He was neither in the Holy of Holies nor in the Holy Place. Many times he was out of the outer court, far from the entrance of the tabernacle. But the mercy and sovereign grace of God brought him back again and again to the outer court, the Holy Place, and eventually the Holy of Holies. Then he became Israel, the prince of God. Jacob the supplanter was transformed into a priest of God who lived in the presence of God in the Holy of Holies. Therefore, being a priest, he offered the sacrifices himself.

Moses

Then we come to Moses. When he was in the wilderness, he was in the outer court. After he was called by God to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt, he was at least in the Holy Place. He helped them pass through the Red Sea and eventually was brought to Mount Sinai where he stayed for forty days. No doubt that was the real Holy of Holies to him. He was with God. When he came down from the mountain, the people saw the shekinah glory of God on his face.

All Israel

At the time of the passover, all the children of Israel offered the lamb without the help of priests. This was because they all were priests. Every house was a part of the priesthood. All the people offered the same sacrifice to God at the same time. Not one family had a special priest to offer the passover lamb for them, because all of them were priests. When they were brought out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, the Lord told them that He would make them a kingdom of priests. They all were to be His priests. All were to be in His presence, to be saturated with Him, and to become His corporate expression. This is the real priesthood. I must say again that the priesthood is not to do something for God. It is a group of people filled, saturated, and permeated with God, in order that God might flow out of them as His corporate expression. However, the people of Israel also failed God.

Then God turned to the tribe of Levi. They became the priests. Actually, the Levites did not do much for the Lord. They spent their time in His presence to be dealt with by Him and to be one with Him. We will see more of this in the following chapters. As the priesthood they continually enjoyed the Lord and bore Him as their testimony.

We cannot leave the Old Testament without considering the psalmists. When we read their writings, we must admit that they were real priests. Their writings indicate that they spent most of their time in God's presence to be filled and permeated with Him.

As we come to the New Testament, we realize that the apostles were priests. They were continually opening themselves to the Lord to be saturated with Him. Thus, they were a real corporate expression of the Lord. In fact, according to the New Testament, a believer must be this kind of person. Peter and John especially emphasized this. Peter was the first apostle, and John ministered as the last one. Both of them told us that we are priests and that we are a priesthood.

A TRANSFORMED CONCEPT

Our concept of serving God has to be transformed and adjusted. To be a priest is not mainly to do something for the Lord but to be taken over by the Lord. We must spend much time in the presence of the Lord and let Him come in to fill and saturate us.

In the beginning of my Christian life, I liked to talk with people about the Lord's work. Now I simply do not have the appetite to talk about work. It is not a matter of working for the Lord but a matter of being possessed by the Lord in the presence of His shekinah glory. Then He will flow out, and that flow will be the real work! The outflow of God is the real service. Only this flow can fulfill the purpose of the Lord. It is not a matter of a message, a form, or any kind of teaching. It is a matter of being fully and thoroughly permeated by and with Him. Then He will flow out of us. In this flow we will not only be one with Him but also one with all who open themselves to Him. In this flow is the work, the service, the flow of life, the Body life, and the building up of the Body. We must realize that the building up of the Body is not a work or a kind of organization. It is a corporate life in the flow of God Himself.

We must be saturated and permeated by His shekinah glory. Then we will be one with Him and one with one another in Him. All Christian work and service must issue out of this priesthood. Please be impressed that God has no intention for us to work for Him. No, absolutely not! If we realize His heart's desire, we will be fully opened to Him that He may flood us with Himself. This is the priesthood, and this is the kind of person God desires to have today.

What a blessing, what a priv'lege!

Called of God a royal priest,
That this glorious, holy office
I should bear, though last and least.

All the building of the Body
On the priesthood doth depend;
Ever praying in the spirit
I this office would attend.

If I keep this royal calling
Under Thine authority,
Priestly duty thus fulfilling,
Then the church will build be.

Now the church is but the priesthood;
Thus the priesthood formed we need;
When the priests are knit together,
Then the church is built indeed.

Through the church's degradation,
Saints this office desolate;
Through the weakness of their spirits
Preaching doth predominate.

Most are leaning on the message
And the preaching emphasize,
Yet neglect the priestly praying
And their spirits' exercise.

Deal with me and make me balanced,
As in preaching, so in prayer;

Leading others oft in praying,
As Thy Word I too declare.

Only serving by our praying
Will our spirits mingled be;
Stressing prayer as much as preaching—
Thus the church is built for Thee.

(*Hymns*, #848)

CHAPTER TWO

GOD'S PURPOSE FULFILLED THROUGH THE PRIESTHOOD

Psalm 23 is familiar to us, but perhaps we have not noticed what is stressed at its end. “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me / All the days of my life, / And I will dwell in the house of Jehovah / For the length of my days” (v. 6). We know that this psalm starts with the green pastures and continues through the paths of righteousness and the battlefield until the psalmist eventually comes to the point where he dwells in the house of Jehovah forever. The goal of this whole psalm is that of dwelling in the house of Jehovah.

Now let us read more verses in the Psalms noticing the relationship of the speaker to God's house. “O Jehovah, I love the habitation of Your house, / And the place where Your glory abides” (26:8).

“One thing I have asked from Jehovah; / That do I seek: / To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the beauty of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple” (27:4).

“They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, / And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures. / For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light” (36:8-9).

“How lovely are Your tabernacles, / O Jehovah of hosts! / My soul longs, indeed even faints, / For the courts of Jehovah; / My heart and my flesh cry out / To the living God. / At Your two altars even the sparrow has found a home; / And the swallow, a nest for herself, / Where she may lay her young, / O Jehovah of hosts, my King and my God...Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, / In whose heart are the highways to Zion” (84:1-3, 5). “A day in Your courts is better than a thousand; / I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God / Than dwell in the tents of the wicked” (v. 10).

Besides these verses in the Psalms, we need to read some verses from the Prophets. “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting on a high and lofty throne, and the train of His robe filled the temple” (Isa. 6:1).

“The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin” (Jer. 1:1).

“The word of Jehovah came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of Jehovah was upon him there” (Ezek. 1:3).

“By speaking to the priests who belong to the house of Jehovah of hosts and to the prophets, saying, Shall I weep in the fifth month and separate myself, as I have done these many years? Then the word of Jehovah of hosts came to me, saying, Speak to all the people of the land and to the priests, saying, When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months, even for these seventy years, was it at all for Me that you fasted?” (Zech. 7:3-5).

We must also read a verse from 2 Samuel: “David danced with all his might before Jehovah; and David was girded with a linen ephod” (6:14). All of us know that an ephod is a special robe for the priest. But here, David the king was girded with this priestly robe.

Now, let us look at the New Testament. “In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zachariah, of the course of Abijah; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth” (Luke 1:5).

“There was one Anna, a prophetess, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and she was a widow up to the age of eighty-four, who did not depart from the temple, serving God with fastings and petitions night and day” (2:36-37).

“Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers...As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:1-3).

“I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in spirit...” (Rev. 1:9-10).

GOD'S PURPOSE DEFINED

In the last chapter we saw that a priest is the type of person that God planned to have for the fulfillment of His purpose. He is not merely a person serving the Lord but one who is in reality mingled with the Lord to fulfill His purpose.

Not many Christians talk about the eternal purpose of the Lord, because very few are clear about God's ultimate intention. In order to know the real priesthood, we must first know the spiritual, eternal intention of God. The Bible shows us that God's intention is to work Himself into us that we and He may be fully one. This is the principle of incarnation. In other words, God comes into man to be fully one with man so that it is hard to discern which part is God and which part is man. While the Lord was on the earth, He did many things, the source of which people could not discern. They could not tell whether they were done by God or by man. It was because Jesus, that wonderful person, was the God-man. As the very God, He became incarnated as man to be the expression of God. This is the principle of incarnation, and this principle reveals the real meaning of the priesthood.

One stronghold in the human mind is the concept that man must work for God. Before we were Christians, we simply forgot about the Lord and never talked about God. But once we turned to the Lord, we began to exercise our mind to think what we must do for the Lord. These thoughts flood into our mentality all the time. This is not of the Lord but of the enemy.

Two sources exist in the whole universe—the divine source and the satanic source. The two trees in the garden reminded Adam of these two sources. The tree of knowledge reminded him that Satan is the source of death, and the tree of life, that God is the source of life. We may read the Bible many, many times yet never realize that knowledge, work, and even good things other than God do not belong to the divine source. They always belong to the source of Satan. To do something for the Lord may be good, but its source is the wrong tree. We must realize that to do something for the Lord is awful, even terrible! What brought death into humanity? It was the tree of knowledge, and any consideration of doing something for the Lord comes from the same source.

The Lord's only intention is for us to open ourselves to Him and let Him come into us to fill us and be one with us. Then *He* will do something through

us. Whatever He does through us will flow out of Himself. This is the real service which God is seeking today.

If we have the spiritual understanding of the Bible from beginning to end, we will realize that this book never commands us to do anything for God. God is continually presenting Himself to us as enjoyment. The Bible shows us that we must enjoy God; we must eat of Him and drink of Him. We must take Him as our life and as our life supply. This is why the tree of life is at the very beginning of the Bible. At the end of the Bible we find the tree of life again. From the beginning to the end of the Bible, the tree of life signifies that God is our life supply and our enjoyment in life. The more we enjoy Him, the more we will be filled with Him. The more we enjoy Him, the more we will be saturated with Him. The more we enjoy Him, the more we will be taken over by Him; and the more we enjoy Him, the more we will be one with Him.

The Lord said, “I am the bread of life...He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me” (John 6:48, 57), and to those who receive Him, He will become in them a fountain of water springing up (4:14). We must forget about working. God only intends for us to enjoy Him all the time. There are many, many ways to speak about this one thing: to breathe Him, to take Him, to drink Him, and even to absorb Him as the sunlight. Only then will we be fully occupied, filled, saturated, and permeated with Him. Only when we are one with Him in this way will He work something out through us.

The Bible gives many different illustrations to show us this one thing. Look at the branches of the vine. They do nothing. They simply abide in the vine and absorb, or enjoy, the riches of the vine. When these branches are filled with the riches and saturated with the life-juice of the vine, something will be worked out through the branches. This is the real meaning of John 15. This very simple matter has been totally missed or lost by most Christians.

God intends to work Himself into us in such a way, for only then will we be in the priesthood. A priest is a person who is filled, saturated, and permeated with God until he is one with Him. God will then express something of Himself through such a person.

THE PRIESTHOOD BRINGING IN THE KINGSHIP

In the last chapter we saw that Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all priests. If we read the whole Bible, we will see that these godly persons were priests who fulfilled the purpose of God.

We have mentioned that the leading ministry in God's economy is the priesthood and that the kingship was brought into function through the priesthood. David was anointed by Samuel. Samuel was more than a prophet; he was a priest. Samuel was brought up and even educated in the house of God as a priest. It was through him that the kingship was brought into function.

The first positive king in God's sight was David. One day when they brought back the Ark of God, David was so excited that he put on a priestly garment, the ephod. What did that signify? It simply meant that the king needed the priesthood. It was the priesthood that brought in the kingship.

Spiritually speaking, it is the life that is filled with God Himself that brings in the authority. The kingship coming out of the priesthood means that God's reigning power comes out of God's life. If we have this kind of life, we will then have the authority.

Christians are not only holy priests but also royal, or kingly, priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). In other words, we are the royal priesthood.

First, God created man in His own image and then committed His own authority to man (Gen. 1:27-28). The image is related to the priesthood, and the authority is related to the kingship. The authority of kingship comes out of the life of God's image. We must be so one with God that we become His very expression. Then out of the life of God's image we will have the authority. Thus, the authority of the kingship is brought in by the image of the priesthood.

THE PRIESTHOOD BRINGING IN THE PROPHETHOOD

Not only was the kingship brought in by the priesthood, but, by careful reading of the Bible, we will see that the prophethood was also brought in by the priesthood. Although Isaiah was a prophet, he was really a man in the presence of the Lord. Actually, he was not a priest, but spiritually, he was a priest. Also, Elijah and Elisha were not legally priests, but in reality both of

them were priests, because they spent their time and their life in the presence of the Lord.

Before we can be a prophet, we must be a priest. I have heard many people talk about 1 Corinthians, saying that we must desire the gift of prophecy. However, only the priesthood can actually bring in the real prophethood.

I am especially interested in those prophets who were in the recovery. Nearly all the main prophets in the recovery were priests. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah were priests. These three priests were the main prophets for the recovery. Also, if we read the book of Daniel, we will see that he was spiritually a priest, even though he was not one legally. He spent his time and his life in the presence of the Lord. Eventually, he was a person who was really one with the Lord. Many people pay attention to the prophecies of Daniel but neglect the priesthood of Daniel. Daniel was a priest because he was first mingled with the Lord.

We have seen that the kingly authority comes from the priesthood. Now we see that the real spirit of prophecy also comes from the priesthood. Look again at Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. Without exception, their prophethood came absolutely out of the priesthood. Whether you are a priest, a king, or a prophet, you must first have the priesthood. The priests need the priesthood, the kings need the priesthood, and the prophets also need the priesthood!

Look again into the Psalms. Although most of the psalmists were not priests, all of them were spiritually in the priesthood. For example, “One thing I have asked from Jehovah; / That do I seek: / To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the beauty of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple” (27:4). David wrote this psalm. If he were not a priest, how could he dwell in the house of Jehovah? To dwell in the house of Jehovah indicates the life of a priest!

One psalmist says that to dwell in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand days (84:10). This is the best way to redeem the time, because it can be redeemed one thousand times! We must not be satisfied to stay in the outer court. We must learn to stay in the very presence of the Lord; for there, an hour is better than one thousand hours! This is the priesthood which brings in the kingship and the prophethood.

THE WHOLE NEW TESTAMENT BEING A RECORD OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Have you ever noticed that the New Testament begins with the priesthood? The priesthood was expressed through Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist. We know that John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Lord, but who brought in John the Baptist? It was the priesthood through his father. The priesthood through Zachariah brought in the forerunner of Christ, who brought in Christ Himself. So it was through the priesthood that the New Testament was opened and brought into reality.

We know that Zachariah was a priest both legally and spiritually. This means that John the Baptist was also a priest because he was the son of a priest. Although he stayed in the wilderness, he was really in the Holy of Holies.

As we read the four Gospels, we realize that no one is as priestly as the Lord Jesus. He was the Priest among all priests. All the time He was one with God and constantly lived in the presence of God.

Even the book of Acts is a full record of the priesthood. In those first ten days, the upper room in Jerusalem was the real Holy of Holies. The disciples were simply in the presence of the Lord. Legally, they were not priests, but spiritually speaking, they were the real priests. They spent their time, their life, and their all in the presence of the Lord. Eventually, on the day of Pentecost, they became one with the Lord.

Today many people talk about Pentecost but forget that this was the priesthood. They think that Pentecost was a matter of gifts. No, Pentecost was a matter of the priesthood. A gifted person and a priestly person are two different persons. What the church needs today is not gifted persons but priests. Peter, John, and the others were priests, not merely gifted persons. They lived in the presence of the Lord and lived as one with the Lord.

Further on in Acts, it was while Peter was spending time in the presence of the Lord that the heavenly vision came. At that time, Peter was in the Holy of Holies.

Then, Acts 13 records the story of Antioch. Again, it is the story of the priesthood. Paul, with the others, ministered to the Lord in the spiritual Holy of Holies. They spent their time, their lives, and kept their person in the presence of the Lord. When they were one with the Lord, then the calling came. The calling was simply an expression of the Lord through those people who were filled and saturated with God Himself. This was nothing but the priesthood.

Finally, in the last book of the Bible, John the apostle is found in spirit. Today our regenerated spirit, indwelt by the Lord, is the very Holy of Holies. When John was in his spirit, he was in the Holy of Holies. It was there that he saw the Lord, the visions about the church, the New Jerusalem, and even the judgments that will be exercised on the earth. Remember, it was Peter and John who told us that we have been made priests, even the kingly priests, by the Lord's redemption.

THE LORD'S RECOVERY BEING REALIZED BY THE PRIESTHOOD

In the priesthood there has always been failure on the human side and continual recovery on the divine side. Following the restored creation, Adam was put into the real position of the priesthood. When Adam failed, God came in to recover the priesthood by His redemption. Abel was brought back by redemption into the priesthood. He became a redeemed priest to enjoy and contact God, to function with God and partake of God.

Eventually, even this priesthood under redemption was lost by man. Then God came in to select Abraham out of the fallen race and bring him into the priesthood. He became a priest interceding for others. Genesis 18 reveals that God came to the tent of Abraham. That tent was the Holy of Holies. Abraham was in the Holy of Holies being one with the Lord. Therefore, he received the vision about Sodom and the Lord's plan.

Gradually, Abraham's descendants, the children of Israel, fell into Egypt. Thus, they lost the priesthood again. But the Lord redeemed them through the passover and told them that He intended to make them a kingdom of priests, or a priestly kingdom (Exo. 19). There would not be just one priest but a kingdom of priests. However, it was not long until the whole nation of Israel fell by worshipping the golden calf. Then the priesthood was turned from the

whole nation to the one tribe of Levi. Later, during the time of Eli, the situation with the priests of the tribe of Levi was very poor. They were so fallen that they lost everything of the priesthood. But God raised up the kings and the prophets to restore the priesthood. All the kings and prophets who were with God were brought into the real priesthood.

Now we come to the New Testament. As we have seen, the Lord Jesus, who is the Priest of all priests, brought us into the priesthood through His redemption. The whole church must now be the priesthood. However, this priesthood has also been lost. Therefore, the recovery of the church life is the recovery of the real priesthood. It is not a matter of service, work, or activity. It is solely a matter of the priesthood. We must be recovered into this priesthood, which means that we must be brought back into the real fellowship with the Lord.

Clearly, it is not a matter of doing something for the Lord, nor is it a movement. The Lord's recovery is entirely a matter of the priesthood. We have to be brought into the presence of the Lord. We must learn how to be possessed and occupied by the Lord until we are filled, saturated, and permeated with the Lord. Let us forget about any kind of work. That is not our responsibility—it is *His*. Our responsibility is simply to take care of the priesthood.

The record in the Bible clearly shows that none of the work of God was initiated by man's thought or activity. All His work has been initiated through the priesthood. We must forget about the work, activities, movements, methods, forms, and even the teachings and gifts. Our one unique need is the real priesthood.

We need some time to be on the "housetop," on the "island of Patmos," on the "side of the river," and in the "wilderness." This simply means that we need some time to be separated and shut up unto the Lord so that we may spend not just our time but have our very life and person in His presence. Then He will occupy us, and our whole concept will be changed to the heavenly view of the priesthood.

I must say again that the recovery of the Lord is the recovery of the priesthood. The recovery of the church life is not a movement, work, or activity but only the recovery of the priesthood. What the Lord needs is a

group of people who are brought into His presence and even into the Lord Himself until they are one with Him. Then He will have the freedom to flow out and work out His will for the fulfillment of His purpose.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RELATIONSHIP

BETWEEN THE PRIESTHOOD, KINGSHIP,

AND PROPHETHOOD

“God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen. 1:26-28). These verses clearly present two main things related to man: the image of God and the authority over the earth.

“You are a chosen race, a royal [or kingly] priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

“And made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father” (Rev. 1:6).

“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years” (20:6).

First Corinthians 14:1 says, “Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” However, 1 Corinthians 13:8 says, “Love never falls away. But whether prophecies, they will be rendered useless; or tongues, they will cease; or knowledge, it will be rendered useless.” Prophecies will be rendered useless, tongues will cease, and knowledge will be rendered useless, but what about the priesthood and the kingship? From the verses we have read in Revelation, we see that both of them will remain forever.

Then we must read Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10. “Put on the new man, which was created according to God...And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.”

Finally, let us read 2 Corinthians 3:18: “We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.”

TWO BASIC MINISTRIES

In this chapter we must continue to see the three main ministries in God’s economy—the priesthood, the kingship, and the prophethood. The priesthood and the kingship are the basic ministries, while the prophethood is subsidiary. The prophethood helps the priesthood and the kingship, but it is never helped by the priesthood and the kingship. This is because the prophethood is for the priesthood and the kingship.

Man was created in God’s image and committed with God’s authority. God’s image and authority are the two main items in the creation of man. Which of the three main ministries is related to the image of God, and which is related to the divine authority? I believe we know that the priesthood is related to the image of God, and the kingship is clearly related to the authority of God.

Then what is the function of the prophethood? It functions only as a teacher or an instructor. If we do not know how to be a priest, we need a prophet to teach us. If we do not know how to be a proper king, we again need a prophet to instruct us. This is why David needed the help of Nathan.

We were born priests and kings because we have been born as sons of God. Have you ever realized that you are a priest and a king? We are priests and kings just by being born of God. But were we born prophets? Although we were born priests and kings, we were not born prophets. As children of God, our status by birth is that of priests and kings. But we must *desire* to be prophets (1 Cor. 14:1). By His redemption the Lord has made us both priests and kings. Therefore, all Christians are priests and kings, but not all are prophets.

The priesthood and the kingship are the two basic ministries, while the prophethood is only temporary. It is something in time and not in eternity. When we are in the New Jerusalem, the priesthood and the kingship will still be there, but the prophethood will end, for its purpose is only temporary.

THE PRIESTHOOD HAVING THE IMAGE OF GOD

The priesthood in reality needs God's image, which requires transformation. We are priests and kings in position, but we fall short of God's image in reality. We have not been transformed. Even in the Old Testament dispensation Moses was a priest, not only by birth but also in reality, because he was in the image of the Lord. Second Corinthians 3 also makes reference to Moses. He was open to the Lord and remained in His presence for forty days without a single veil or covering. He was so permeated and saturated with the Lord that the shekinah glory of the image of God was on his face. Only a priest could have such an image, because only a priest can enter into the Holy of Holies and stay in the shekinah glory of God. We must be transformed by being in God's presence until we have the glory of God as our image.

We need to read 2 Corinthians 3 again and again. We must take away all the coverings and hindrances in order to behold the Lord with an unveiled face. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, "Beholding and reflecting like a mirror..." We are a mirror to behold the Lord. When we behold Him again and again, His image will be impressed upon us. This means that we will be transformed into His image. So we must open ourselves to the Lord all the time.

The problem with today's Christians is that they have the knowledge of religion with its forms and teachings and spend much time in studying the Bible. However, not many will spend time to open themselves to the Lord and remain in the shekinah glory of God as a real priest. Therefore, there are different opinions, different concepts, and different teachings and ideas, all of which only create divisions. Our opinions create divisions, and divisions only create confusion. This is the real situation of Christianity today.

The recovery of the Lord is to deliver us out of opinions, concepts, methods, and words into the priestly experience of being transformed into the image of God. We do not need to emphasize the teachings or methods. We only need one thing—to be in the presence of the Lord until we are transformed into His image.

If we would focus upon this, we would be one in the priesthood. We are not one in the teachings, doctrines, or opinions. If we return to our opinions and concepts, we might be divided into many divisions. But once we enter into the priesthood and are brought into the shekinah glory of the Holy of Holies, all of our concepts will be swept away. Prophecies will be rendered useless, tongues will cease, knowledge will be rendered useless, but the priesthood will remain forever.

The most important matter is the priesthood. How much have you been saturated by the Lord? This is most important. Before we can be the real priests, the Lord must deliver us from the outward things and bring us into reality. There are too many opinions and too many concepts in today's Christianity, but praise the Lord that He has opened our eyes to see the basic, primary need of the priesthood.

We must be transformed into the image of God. This is why we must put on the new man, forgetting about ourselves, the old nature, and the old man. As long as we are living, walking, and serving according to the new man, we are in the image of God and in the reality of the priesthood.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE KINGSHIP COMING FROM THE PRIESTHOOD

The kingship follows the priesthood. When we have the priesthood with the divine image, we will also have the divine authority. Consider the apostles. On one hand, they were the real priests; on the other hand, they were kings. After the day of Pentecost, Peter and the others were in the presence of the Lord and were even filled with the shekinah glory of the Lord. They were really in the priesthood, and they also had the divine authority. The high officials of both the Jews and the Romans could not deal with them. These poor fishermen were kings over all. All of the apostles were in the priesthood; therefore, they were the kings.

Likewise, Moses, who was a priest, was committed with such authority. Because he was in the reality of the priesthood, he had the kingship.

Today in the church, the authority of the eldership must come out of the priesthood. Then the eldership is the kingship. To be an elder, one must be in the presence of the Lord as a priest and be saturated and permeated by the

Lord. Then the kingship will follow. Do not think that you must exercise your authority as an elder. This never works! The real eldership can only come from the priesthood. When we are really in the presence of the Lord, others will recognize the divine authority within. The authority in the church follows the image. When we have the image of the Lord in the priesthood, we will then have the authority of the kingship.

THE PROPHETHOOD RESTORING THE PRIESTHOOD AND KINGSHIP

A prophet is needed to correct and adjust when the priesthood is weak and when the kingship is wrong. Although Samuel was a priest, he became a prophet for the kingship. David the king also became a prophet to predict and prophesy. But among the Lord's children today, the basic ministry is not the prophethood but the priesthood and kingship. What we need primarily in the church is the priesthood and the kingship.

During the degradation of the people of Israel, there was no proper king or priest. Therefore, Elijah was called by God. When Elijah began to function as a prophet, all the priests had disappeared; even the doors of the temple were closed. The kings also were ruined and corrupted. It was at such a time that God brought in Elijah and Elisha. When the priests failed and the kings were ruined, then the prophets were raised up.

In Christianity today, we have many preachers but few priests and kings. When a preacher comes, people gather to listen to his preaching, but when the preacher is gone, the people are scattered. This degraded concept is within us all. We all expect to hear a big prophet. This is wrong. All the brothers must be helped to be the proper priests and kings. If we would all exercise for the priesthood and kingship, the church would be enriched.

Have you ever realized that 1 Corinthians is the book where the gift of prophecy is mentioned? We know that the situation in the church at Corinth was carnal, ruined, weak, and confused. There was no priesthood or kingship—only confusion. Therefore, they needed the prophet to teach, correct, and adjust them. When a church needs prophecy, it is no longer strong, but weak; it is no longer rich, but poor.

If we are real priests and real kings, the preachers will not be as necessary as they are today. Today's Christians are too poor and too weak, and the priesthood has nearly disappeared. Many times the brothers in different places have told me how much they need someone to minister to them. This simply means that the priesthood is neglected. We must learn the lesson of how to function as a priest.

Let us apply these things to our daily life. Suppose a brother has a real problem with his wife. Does he need a prophet or a priest to help him? If I function only as a prophet, I will say, "Brother, you must confess to your wife and learn the lesson of humility. You also must love your wife, etc." This is the ministry of the prophet. This dear brother may say inwardly to himself, "Brother, I know all these things quite well, but I cannot do them. I know that I must confess to my wife that I was wrong, but I cannot do it. I know that I must be humble, but I cannot be humble. I know that I must love my wife, but I cannot. What shall I do?" Then the prophet will say, "If you do not do this, your wife will divorce you!" This is a typical prophet.

But what is the ministry of the priest? If I am a priest, I will bear this brother upon my shoulders (all the tribal names of the people of Israel were upon the shoulders and on the breast of the high priest) and stay in the presence of the Lord, praying for him all the time. Then I will visit him—not to teach, instruct, condemn, or rebuke him but to impart the life of the priesthood into him. I may sit with him for half an hour without saying anything. Then eventually I may say, "Brother, will you pray-read with me?" The priestly ministry is to spread the bread of the Presence, light the lamp, and burn the incense within him. After such a time of prayer, something within will nourish and enlighten him. Something within will burn as a kind of incense. I did not even talk about the problem he has with his wife, but I did minister something of Christ into this brother. This is the ministry of the priesthood.

Eventually, the life ministered into him will energize and strengthen him. It will even subdue and convict him. After three days he will confess to his wife in tears. Not only will the problem be solved, but death will be swallowed up by life. This is what priestly ministry means and what prophetic ministry can never do. This is not the prophet teaching others but the priest ministering Christ into others. This is the priest setting forth the bread of the Presence, lighting the lamp, and burning the incense.

Doubtless, the church today needs the teachings and messages, but the most important thing the church needs is the living function of the priesthood. If the priesthood were exercised, we would not so much need a prophet or a teacher as today's Christianity does. All the brothers and sisters would simply minister life to others. It may be that they cannot preach, but they can minister life. Prophecy is a gift, but the priesthood and kingship are not; they are a development of life. When the inner life develops to a certain degree, there will be the priesthood. It is not a gift, but the result of the growth in life.

During the past century many teachings have been recovered in Christianity. Since the middle of the last century, the Pentecostal gifts have spread from England and through the U.S.A. and the Orient. But after more than one hundred years, the results have been only divisions and confusion. Divisions have come out of the teachings, and confusion has come out of the so-called manifestation of the gifts. Let us look at the facts of history. We must believe that the Lord's recovery is not in teachings or gifts. The Lord's way of recovery is in the inner life through the priesthood and the kingship rather than in so many teachings and so many gifts of the prophethood. The more teachings we have, the more divisions we will produce. The more gifts we have, the more confusion we will spread.

It is more important that we exercise the spirit to contact the Lord, spend time in the presence of the Lord to be saturated with Him, and learn the experiences and lessons of how to minister life to others. This is the priestly ministry. We need the life-imparting, life-supplying ministry of the priesthood and the kingship.

My heart is longing to see in every city a group of dear ones knowing how to exercise the priesthood and minister life to others, rather than paying their attention to teachings and gifts—all of them being priests and kings, rather than prophets. This is the real way for the Lord's recovery. Whenever we come together, we should not pay attention to teachings or anything else but simply exercise the priesthood. How wonderful this would be! I believe that this is what the Lord is seeking in these days. May His grace work it out.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRIESTHOOD AND KINGSHIP FOR GOD'S BUILDING

“Speak to him, saying, Thus speaks Jehovah of hosts, saying, Here is a man, whose name is the Shoot [Branch, KJV]; and he will shoot forth from his place and will build the temple of Jehovah. Indeed, it is he who will build the temple of Jehovah; and he will bear majesty and will sit and rule on his throne; and he will be a priest on his throne; and the counsel of peace will be between the two of them” (Zech. 6:12-13).

THE TWOFOLD MINISTRY OF THE BRANCH

The above two verses tell us that Christ is the Branch, and as both Priest and King, He will build the temple of Jehovah. According to Isaiah 4:2 and 11:1, Christ is both the Shoot of Jehovah and the Branch of Jesse. In His humanity He is the Branch of Jesse, and in His divinity He is the Shoot of Jehovah. By this we can see that the Branch refers to His incarnation, that is, His divinity mingled with humanity. This One who is called the Branch has both the divine and human natures in Him. He is the Shoot out of God and the Branch out of man.

It is as the Shoot that He will build the temple of Jehovah bearing two ministries. One is the priesthood, and the other is the kingship. “He...will sit and rule on his throne; and he will be a priest on his throne.” He is both Priest and King for the purpose of building the temple of Jehovah. In order to build up the temple of Jehovah properly, the Shoot needs to bear the priesthood and the kingship.

John 15 tells us that we are branches of the Shoot. The Shoot is the true vine, and we are the branches of this Shoot. We are branches of the incarnated One. This is very basic, for the building up of the church is a matter of incarnation. The church is not merely a group of human believers; it is a group of people who are peculiar, strange, and wonderful because they are mingled with God.

We are familiar with the word *hybrid*. There is a certain kind of fruit in China. It is rather hard to tell whether it is a peach or an apple. This is the result of the peach and the apple being mingled by grafting. This is a hybrid.

The word *hybrid* may not be the best word, yet it gives a picture of two lives mingled together. Therefore, a Christian is the highest hybrid. We are not only an apple or a peach, but we are a peach-apple! We are a peculiar people yet so marvelous and wonderful because we are a mingling of God with man. We are branches of the Shoot.

If we live simply as a man, we are not in reality a member of the church. We must be a hybrid. Others should find it rather hard to tell what we are. All the members of the Body of Christ are a peculiar people because they are a mingling of God with man. They are branches of the Shoot, and they must also bear the twofold ministry of the priesthood and the kingship.

We now need to read a few more verses from Zechariah. “Hear then, Joshua the high priest, you and your fellows who sit before you—for they are men of symbol—for I am about to bring forth My servant, the shoot. For here is the stone that I have set before Joshua—upon one stone are seven eyes. I will engrave its engraving, declares Jehovah of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day” (3:8-9).

Here we see that Joshua the high priest is related to the building of the temple with Christ as the Shoot and as the one stone that has seven eyes.

We also need to read Zechariah 4:7-9: “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain, and he will bring forth the topstone with shouts of Grace, grace to it. Moreover the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it; and you will know that Jehovah of hosts has sent Me to you.”

In chapter 3 Joshua the high priest is related to the building of the temple, and in chapter 4 Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, is also related to the building of the temple.

Now let us read Haggai 1:1-2. “In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of Jehovah came through

Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and unto Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, Thus says Jehovah of hosts, saying, This people says, The time has not come, the time for the house of Jehovah to be built.”

In these verses the governor and the high priest are mentioned together. The high priest represents the priesthood, and the governor represents the kingship. Again, the priesthood and the kingship are both directly related to the building of the temple of God.

THE PROPHETHOOD BUILDING INDIRECTLY

The prophethood is not as basic a ministry as the priesthood and kingship. The book of Hebrews tells us that Christ is a Priest, and the book of Matthew tells us that Christ is a King. But not one book tells us that Christ is a Prophet. Of course, in some verses He is called a prophet, but not one entire book emphasizes His prophethood. This is because the prophethood is not as basic for God’s purpose as are the priesthood and kingship.

This is true of the church today. Peter tells us that the spiritual house, which is the building of God, depends on the priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). This priesthood is not only the holy priesthood but also the kingly, or royal, priesthood.

In Zechariah and Haggai we see the three ministries of the priesthood, kingship, and prophethood. Zechariah was a priest, but he spoke as a prophet.

Haggai was a prophet, but he helped the priesthood and the kingship in the building of the house of God. The governor and the high priest were the ones to take care of the building of God’s temple, but they were a little weak and even discouraged. Therefore, the prophet was called to help.

But the prophet did not build the temple; the governor and the high priest did. God only sent the prophet to strengthen the priesthood and kingship that they might build up the house of Jehovah.

Can the church today be built up by the prophet? No, it can only be built up by the brothers and sisters who exercise the priesthood and kingship. The position of the prophet is to help but not to build. We think that we need a

preacher, a minister of the word, or a teacher. We pay too much attention to the prophethood and neglect the priesthood and the kingship.

However, the priesthood and the kingship are both our birthright. A prophet would be unnecessary if we would enjoy and exercise our birthright. The problem is that doctrinally we understand that we have been born priests and kings, but we simply do not know how to exercise this birthright. The only way to exercise the priesthood and kingship is to learn the lesson of the incarnation. We must be mingled with the Lord by opening ourselves again and again to Him. Then He will saturate us with Himself.

THE FELLOWSHIP AND THE AUTHORITY

The throne of God is the center of the New Jerusalem. This is the kingship, the authority, the headship, and the lordship. Then from the throne issues the flow of the river. This is the priesthood. The throne is the kingship with the authority; the flow is the priesthood with the fellowship. When we open ourselves to the Lord, He is able to flood us with Himself that He may flow out to others. Then we are in the fellowship of the priesthood, and the flow of this fellowship brings the authority of the throne with it. The whole New Jerusalem is under the throne and the flow of the living water. This indicates that the whole building of God is under the priesthood with the kingship.

Most Christians give their attention to ministers, preachers, and teachers. This means that they give their attention to the prophets. But not many prophets will take care of the building of God. Most of them simply give some messages about redemption and then establish standards of moral behavior. Therefore, it is impossible for the Lord to have His building. This is why the Lord is recovering the church life today. His recovery is nothing other than the recovery of His building.

We must learn that today our major need is not to have the prophets. What we need most is to assume our position as priests and kings. This is our birthright. We have been born in the house of God as priests and kings; now we must be bold enough by His grace to take up this position. However, merely to declare this does not work. We must also open ourselves to the Lord for Him to possess us and saturate us with Himself that He may flow out of us. Then we will have the flow of the priesthood, in which there is the authority of the kingship.

It is in this way that we come to the meetings. We simply behave as priests and kings. We do not come to teach others, but we open ourselves to the Lord that His flow might flow through us to others. We simply open our spirit to express something to the Lord by praying or praising. Once the Lord has a channel through us, the flow out of us into others will be so prevailing that the whole meeting will be a flow of living water. There will not be teaching with the exercise of the mind but only the flow through the exercise of the spirit.

In today's so-called church service, the minister speaks by exercising his mind, and the listeners exercise their minds to listen. Hardly anyone exercises his spirit; therefore, there is no flow. It becomes a teaching with a religion—not the flow with life. Consequently, there is no nourishment or building up. For this reason, you must not pay too much attention to the prophets. If you would take the position of the priesthood and kingship, even I would simply be a priest and king among you. It is only when the priesthood is so weak and the kingship has disappeared that the ministry of the prophet is necessary. This is abnormal. I long to see the time when there is not much teaching or instruction. Only the flow of life through every member will build up the church.

The building of the tabernacle was without any prophets but was very much with the priesthood and the authority. Moses represented the authority of kingship. At the same time, Aaron was the high priest. This was also true in the building of the temple, for there was the priest as well as King Solomon, and the one who prepared the way and the materials for the building of the temple was David, who was in both the kingship and the priesthood.

Also, in the recovery of the temple, there was the governor of Judah with the authority of kingship, and there was Joshua, the high priest. Not one prophet built the temple directly. The prophet only functioned indirectly, helping the priesthood and the kingship.

Likewise, in the two books of the recovery, Ezra and Nehemiah, Ezra was a priest, and Nehemiah was a governor with authority. One was in the priesthood, and the other was in the kingship. There is not one book for the prophethood as such, but there are many books for the prophets to help the kingship and the priesthood. Strictly speaking, the prophetic ministry is unnecessary for the building up of the church if the basic need of the priesthood and the kingship is fully taken care of.

We must open ourselves to the Lord and let Him flow in to transform us. Then we will have the authority and be in order. There will be the flow of life with the headship in the meetings.

In today's situation in Christianity there is no fellowship, but there is much confusion. This is not normal. The normal church life has the fellowship of the priesthood with the order of the kingship. Everyone is under the authority of the Head when they are in the flow of fellowship. For example, look at our physical body. The arm is under the shoulder, the hand is under the arm, and the fingers are under the hand. All the members must be under the head in order to be built up together. There is then no confusion, but everything is in order with the fellowship of the flow of life.

I long to see a group of believers who realize the real meaning of the priesthood and the kingship and do not look to a preacher or teacher. If the Lord sends someone to help them, they are grateful, but they are not dependent on him, for they all exercise and enjoy their position as priests and kings.

In both the Old and New Testaments, this twofold ministry is necessary in the building of God. First Peter 2:5 and 9 tell us that the building of the spiritual house is the priesthood and that this priesthood is holy and kingly. These priests are kings. They know the fellowship and the authority, meaning that they know the inner life and the Lord's headship. We must have life flowing within and be under the headship of the Lord.

The church is not a matter of democracy or autocracy; it is a matter of kingship. When I am going to speak to a brother, I must speak under the headship of the Lord. I do not have the freedom to say anything apart from the Lord. This is not the control of man but the control of the Head over the Body. If we are under this headship, we will also be in authority. It is needless for us to exercise authority over others; they will sense the authority in us by our being under the authority of the Head.

Suppose a brother is very careless about the headship. He says whatever he chooses to say and criticizes the brothers freely. Eventually, he will become lighter than air. He will have no weight. The more he criticizes, the less authority he has. On the contrary, if a brother is under the headship of the Lord, his mouth, his thinking, his mind, his heart, and his work are under the

control of the Head. The more he lives in this way, the more others will sense the weight and the authority. This is true kingship. The authority in the church is not by organization or by voting but is that which comes by being under the Lord's headship.

We, as the children of God, must realize that we are born priests and kings. Therefore, by His grace we must assume this position by exercising our spirit to take the priesthood in reality and to be under the headship. Then the fellowship in life with the headship of the Lord will build up the church.

TODAY'S NEED

The real need today is to have the practice of the priesthood with the kingship for the church life. This means that each brother and sister must be helped to know the inner life and exercise their spirit until they are strengthened within to have the adequate growth in life. As we have seen, life always brings authority.

We do not mean that the prophethood is unnecessary, but we must realize that the prophethood is not *for* the prophethood. Rather, it must be *for* the priesthood with the kingship. Today the tragedy in Christianity is that people consider the prophethood as everything and as the only need. Their concept is that the prophethood is to build up a kind of ministry. But the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, gives us a clear picture that the direct need for God's building is not the prophethood but the priesthood with the kingship. Of course, on some occasions when the priesthood and the kingship need to be strengthened, there is the need of the prophethood to charge and to encourage the saints.

The Lord has recovered the prophethood during the past five hundred years, but what is the Lord's purpose in recovering the prophethood? Now we see clearly that the prophethood must be *for* the building up of the Body. It is an indirect ministry for the building of the Body. Even the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 do not build up the Body directly. They are simply to perfect the saints who are the members of the Body. Then the saints themselves directly build up the Body, as seen in Ephesians 4:16.

Today the Lord is recovering the building of the Body. This recovery needs the recovery of the priesthood and the kingship. Of course, there still must be a certain amount of ministry from the prophethood, yet we need to realize that the prophethood must raise up the priesthood with the kingship. This means that the prophethood does not merely teach others and give a lot of knowledge to the saints. The true prophethood must minister life to the saints and help them grow. The building up of the Body through the practical experience of the church life comes mainly from the inner life—not from the teachings or gifts.

Therefore, what we need today is the real experience of the inner life so that the priesthood with the authority of the kingship can be realized for the building up of the Lord's churches on this earth.

Holy priests are living stones
For God's building work today;
If these stones would build be
All the priests must learn to pray.

To the holiest often come,
In the spirit touch the throne,
Let the Lord flow thru in prayer,
Thus the building work is done.

All the saints must serve as priests,
That the living stones they be;
Each must priestly work perform,
Then their functions we will see.

In the priests the substance is
Of the building work replete;
When the priests their work discharge,
Then God's house will be complete.

Building God and man in one
Is their work before the Lord;
In this fellowship divine
Saints are built in one accord.

When in prayer our spirits blend,
Then together built are we,
Then a priesthood we become,
Off'ring sacrifice to Thee.

Grant us grace, O Lord, that we
Treasure dear the priestly call;
In the spirit serve and pray,
That Thy church be built withal.

(Hymns, #849)

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TWO ORDERS OF THE PRIESTHOOD

“Every high priest, being taken from among men, is established on behalf of men in the things pertaining to God that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to exercise compassion toward the ignorant and erring since he also is encompassed with weakness; and because of it, he ought, even as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no one takes the honor upon himself, but only as he is called by God, just as Aaron also was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself in becoming a High Priest, but it was He who said to Him, ‘You are My Son; this day have I begotten You’; even as also in another place He says, ‘You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’...This Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all; first being interpreted king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace; being without father, without mother, without genealogy; having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but likened to the Son of God, abides a priest perpetually” (Heb. 5:1-6; 7:1-3).

AARON AND MELCHIZEDEK

These two parts of the Word reveal the two orders of the priesthood. The first order is according to Aaron, and the second is according to Melchizedek. The order of priests according to Aaron was something of man bringing the needs of man to God, because these priests were chosen from among men. But the order according to Melchizedek was one coming from God unto man, imparting something of God to man.

There are two directions, or a “two-way traffic,” in these two orders of the priesthood. In the first order the direction is from man to God, and in the second it is from God to man. Even Christ as our great High Priest has these two orders with these two directions. He is the High Priest according to the order of Aaron and also the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. According to the order of Aaron, He, as a man, was chosen from among men to go to God with all the needs of man. But according to the order of

Melchizedek, as the Son of God He came from God to impart God unto us and to bless us with something of God.

Now let us read Exodus 28:12 and 29. “You shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel. And Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah on his two shoulders for a memorial...So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart when he goes into the sanctuary, for a memorial before Jehovah continually.” Aaron, as the high priest, bore all the names of the people of God into God’s presence as a kind of memorial.

Genesis 14:18-20 says, “Melchizedek the king of Salem brought out bread and wine. Now he was priest of God the Most High. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of God the Most High, / Possessor of heaven and earth; / And blessed be God the Most High, / Who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And Abram gave him a tenth of all.” Melchizedek came from God with bread and wine to meet Abraham who had fought the battle for God. He blessed Abraham with the bread and wine. This is quite interesting. He blessed Abraham with only these two things, the very same things that we use for the Lord’s table.

In 1 Peter 2 we also find these two orders of the priesthood. In verse 5 we see the order of Aaron, and in verse 9, the order of Melchizedek. “You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (v. 5). This is the priesthood according to the Aaronic order, which brings something from man to God.

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (v. 9). The holy priesthood, in verse 5, brings something from man unto God, and the kingly priesthood, in verse 9, brings something from God to declare and tell out to man.

THE HUMAN NATURE MUST BE HOLY

The priesthood is of both the human and divine natures. It is basically something of incarnation, which is the divine nature mingled with the human nature. A priest must be a person fully mingled with God. This is the shoot,

which we have seen in the previous chapter. The human nature, to be mingled with the divine, must be holy. Originally, it was common and worldly, but since it must be mingled with the divine nature for the priesthood, it has to be holy. The word *holy* in Greek means to be separated (unto God). To be in the priesthood we must be separated from the world and from all common things. Otherwise, we can never be a priest.

A priest is one who serves the Lord. If we are not priests, we can never serve Him. We must never think that we are ready to serve the Lord after going to a seminary, Bible institute, or Bible college. That will only make us “professional” priests, not real ones. To be real priests we must be holy; that is, we must be separated from all the things of this world and from all things common.

First of all, our words must be separated. We should not talk as the people of the world do. Our conversation must be separated from all common things. Even our thoughts, concepts, and ideas must be separated. Our thinking must not be so common; it has to be separated. If we are not separated from everything common and worldly, we are bankrupt in the priesthood. Not only our way of talking, thinking, and doing but even our way of spending money must be holy. Many of the brothers and sisters say that they would like to be priests serving the Lord, but according to the way they spend their money, they are out of the priesthood. A priest must be separated in the way he spends his money.

Many times when I visited a brother’s or sister’s home, I was grieved because his home was so common, so worldly. It was not separated. In the last century there were two Gordons: A. J. Gordon and S. D. Gordon. I do not remember which Gordon it was, but one of them, as a young man serving the Lord, bought a new house. He moved in and completely furnished it with everything. Then he asked his father to come and look at his new home. After his father had seen the home, young Gordon asked him what he thought about it. The father said that everything was very nice, but he had one question: if a stranger came into this new home, would he be able to tell whether it was the home of a son of the devil or a son of God? Gordon’s father simply meant that this home was not separated. It was too common and worldly; it was just like so many homes of the people of the world. There was no separation and no holiness.

Sometimes the way different brothers and sisters dress simply causes others to question: “Are these Christians, or are they people of the world?” There must be a separation from the style of this age, or we will never have the priesthood. The priesthood must have the holy separation.

As men in the priesthood, we must go to the Lord continually with all our needs and the needs of others. According to Hebrews 5, even the high priest himself has needs, and because he is encompassed with the same weaknesses, he can sympathize with others. Since we are all human, we can sympathize with all the human needs and weaknesses. As those who are in the priesthood, we must go to the Lord continually with all these needs.

However, to contact the Lord in His presence requires our separation. Anything common will hinder our fellowship with the Lord. It will be like a veil covering us, separating us from the presence of the Lord. Before we can stay in the Lord’s presence with all man’s needs, we must be separated. If there is anything common covering us and separating us from the presence of the Lord, we are veiled. I like the hymn, “Nothing Between, Lord, Nothing Between.” If we are going to contact the Lord, there must be nothing between. Anything between us and the Lord is a veil that must be rent. We must be separated from that particular thing. We think that the Lord is so big, but sometimes He is very small. Sometimes the Lord will struggle with a person just about a pair of shoes. We may like them, but the Lord does not.

When I was young, I was dealt with by the Lord in so many small things. There were even times when I would buy a spiritual book and would have to return it. The Lord would tell me within that I should not buy this book because I needed the money for some other purpose, but I would go ahead and buy it. After coming home I could not eat or sleep well. I would say, “Lord, You are not so small; You are so big. Why do You care for such a small thing?” There was a real struggle. I could not even pray or minister. Eventually, I would be forced to return the book. I believe that many of us have had this kind of experience. To contact the Lord, we must be separated. We must ask the Lord to show us that from which we must be separated. We will know within. In fact, we already know.

Thus, the first aspect of the priesthood is to go to the Lord with all the needs of man. As the Aaronic priesthood, we must bear man and his needs upon our shoulders and breast. This means that we must bear them with

strength and love. Whenever the high priest went into the presence of the Lord, he was clothed with the priestly garment with the names of the twelve tribes inscribed in stones upon his two shoulders. Twelve precious stones bearing the names of the twelve tribes were set in the breastplate. This signified that the high priest bore the people of God into His presence. We must spend time to bring all our own needs, the needs of the brothers, and the needs of the whole church into the presence of the Lord and remain there for some time. This is the holy priesthood.

KINGLINESS COMING OUT OF HOLINESS

The human nature must be holy in order to be mingled with the divine nature, which is kingly. As long as we have the divine nature, we have the kingship, for anything divine is kingly. It is easy for us to be kingly if we are holy. If we are willing to be utterly separated unto God without any reservation, we will be kingly. The more we are separated unto God, the more we are holy and kingly.

After staying in the presence of the Lord for a certain time as holy, separated priests, we come out from the Lord's presence with something divine. We went to the Lord with something human, but we come out of the Lord's presence with something divine. We come out as the kingly priesthood. We must be holy in order to be kingly. When we come to others, after staying in the presence of the Lord, they sense something divine and kingly in us. This is the kingly priesthood. We now have something of Christ to impart to them. Christ is typified by the bread and wine, which show the One who died for us and gave His body and blood for our enjoyment. The bread and wine typify the redeeming Christ who gave Himself for us.

Before we reach the unbelievers, we must be holy priests in order to be kingly priests. We must first go into the presence of the Lord with all the names of our unbelieving friends and tell the Lord all about their needs. In doing this, we are ministering in the presence of the Lord as holy priests. But many times when we go to the Lord with such a need, the Lord will first point out something in us which has to be dealt with. If we are not willing to meet the Lord's requirements, we are finished and are discharged from the priesthood. But if we are willing to be dealt with, we will be able to stay in the presence of the Lord as holy priests for our unbelieving friends. After staying in the Lord's presence again and again for some time, the Lord will guide us

to go out of His presence to our friends. Then we will go with the divine nature and the divine kingship. We do not go simply as a human being but also as a divine being. We go to them as kingly priests, imparting something of God into them. That impartation into them will be the redeeming Christ. This means that we bring the bread and wine to our unbelieving friends. Whatever we minister to them will be something of the bread and wine. Then, eventually, some of our friends will be saved.

In the ten days before Pentecost, Peter with the hundred and twenty prayed and prayed in the upper room. At that time they were the holy priesthood. For ten days they were fully and absolutely separated unto the Lord. They brought all the needs of man into the Lord's presence. After ten days, on the day of Pentecost, they came out of the presence of the Lord declaring unto the people what the Lord Jesus had done. Then they were the kingly priesthood. Even the people looked upon them as kings, not as fishermen. As Peter stood there speaking, the people sensed something weighty, something divine, and something heavenly and kingly. He was a kingly priest, imparting Christ as bread and wine to those in need.

When Melchizedek came to meet Abraham, he came out of the presence of God and ministered something of God as the bread and wine to strengthen Abraham. Abraham had been fighting the battle for a long time and was very tired and needy. He needed the bread and wine to sustain him. Therefore, Melchizedek came from God and came with God to minister the bread and wine unto him. This is the kingly priesthood.

As priests, we must realize that whenever we go into the presence of the Lord with our needs and the needs of others, we are holy priests. This is why we must be separated from so many common things. When we get right with the Lord and are saturated with His glory, we will come out of His presence as royal, kingly priests unto the people. Then we will minister unto them Christ Himself as the redeeming One, typified by the bread and wine. We are separated from the world, and we are saturated with His presence. This is both the holy and royal priesthood.

ONLY THE HOLY AND ROYAL PRIESTHOOD CAN BUILD THE CHURCH

In the church life we must be holy priests in our private lives and kingly priests in the meetings. Day by day we must be in the presence of the Lord to bring our needs and all the brothers' and unbelievers' needs to Him. Every day we must spend time in the Lord's presence as holy priests. Then when we come to the meetings, we will impart something of Christ to the needy ones. In this way we will function in the church as the holy and royal priests.

The holy and royal priesthood is what the Lord needs today. But look at today's Christianity. Nearly all the believers would not be separated unto God as holy priests, and when they "go to church," they have nothing of Christ to impart as kingly priests. They just look to a prophet. Everyone sits quietly in the pew. They are not priests; they are laymen, sitting and waiting for a "good" message. This is the poor situation in today's Christianity.

There will never be a proper building up of the church until the priesthood is recovered. Every one of us must learn the lesson of being a holy priest in our private life. We must be wholly separated unto the Lord in everything in order to bring ourselves and others into the Lord's presence. Then when we come to the meetings, we will spontaneously be the kingly priests to bring forth something of Christ as the bread and the wine to many tired and needy ones. This will bring in the building of the church. Then the prophets will be "jobless"; they will have nothing to do. This is the only way for the church to be built up.

The Lord Jesus builds His church not as the Prophet but as the Priest and King. Zechariah 6 clearly tells us that Christ, the Shoot, will build the temple as the Priest and King, not as the Prophet. The tabernacle, Solomon's temple, and the recovered temple were built up by the priesthood and kingship.

The principle is the same today for the building up of the church. We may need a prophet to come and encourage us when we are disappointed, just as Haggai the prophet came to encourage Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor. But the direct building of the church does not depend upon prophets. Rather, it depends upon the priesthood and the kingship. We must learn to be priests and kings, that is, to be the holy priesthood and the kingly priesthood. We must be burdened to cry to the Lord until we see in every locality brothers and sisters functioning as holy priests in the presence of the Lord and as kingly priests unto the people.

The building of the church does not come by any kind of teaching. It comes by the two orders of the living priesthood. We must pray specifically unto the Lord that in our city, and in every place, a group of believers will be raised up to function as living priests according to the order of Aaron and according to the order of Melchizedek.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RECOVERY OF THE PRIESTHOOD

“Now Jericho was shut up so tight because of the children of Israel that no one went out and no one went in. And Jehovah said to Joshua, See, I have given Jericho and its king and the mighty men of valor into your hand. And you shall circle the city, all the men of valor, going around the city one time. Thus shall you do for six days. And seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the Ark. Then on the seventh day you shall circle the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. And when they give off the blast of the ram’s horn and you hear the trumpet sound, all the people shall shout with a great shout. And the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, each straight ahead.

“So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the Ark of Jehovah. And he said to the people, Pass on and circle the city, and let the armed men pass on before the Ark of Jehovah.

“Then when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams’ horns before Jehovah passed on and blew the trumpets; and the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah went after them. And the armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets; and the rearguard went after the Ark, the trumpets continually blowing. And Joshua commanded the people, saying, You shall not shout, nor let your voice be heard, nor let a word go forth from your mouth, until the day I say to you, Shout! Then you shall shout. So he had the Ark of Jehovah circle the city, going around it one time. And they came into the camp and lodged in the camp. And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the Ark of Jehovah. And the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams’ horns went before the Ark of Jehovah, continually blowing the trumpets; and the armed men went before them, and the rearguard went after the Ark of Jehovah, the trumpets continually blowing. And they circled the city on the second day one time and returned to the camp. This they did for six days” (Josh. 6:1-14).

Now let us read Romans 15:16. “That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.” This means that the apostle Paul preached the gospel as a priest.

“We will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). The apostles continued steadfastly in prayer first, then in the ministry of the word.

I believe we know that Ephesians 6 is a chapter dealing with spiritual warfare. After mentioning the armor of God in the previous verses, verse 18 says, “By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints.” There is no doubt that this is the priestly ministry.

ALL SERVICE MUST BE PRIESTLY

All service for the Lord must be priestly, regardless of what kind of service it is. Our service to the Lord must be a kind of priestly service. The priests in the Old Testament were not only priests but also the army, so the army was a priestly army. Priests not only stand before God, ministering unto Him, but they also fight the battle. The army of the Lord is a priestly army. This means that if we are not priests, we can never fight the battle for the Lord. We must be a priesthood in order to fight the battle for God.

After the children of Israel went over the Jordan and entered the land of Canaan, the first warfare was a battle fought by the priests. It was not fought by any secular weapons but by the Ark. The Ark was the prevailing weapon. In addition, the priests used rams’ horns. They were a peculiar army, and they fought the battle in a peculiar way with a peculiar weapon. Everything was peculiar. That is not the way we would fight a battle. Later on, however, we will see that we must learn to fight the battle in this way. Basically speaking, this army was the priesthood. I do not mean the office of the priests but an army of priests, a body of priests coordinated together under the leadership of the Ark.

As we come to the New Testament, we see that the apostles were priestly apostles. An apostle must be a priest. If we do not know how to be priests, we can never be apostles. The apostle Paul tells us that he served as a priest in

preaching the gospel. It was as a priest that he offered all the Gentile believers unto God as an offering. I believe that you have read Romans many times, but have you ever noticed that Romans 15:16 tells us that Paul preached the gospel as a priest? If we are evangelists, we must be such as priests. We must be priestly evangelists. If we are not priests, we can never preach the gospel in an adequate way. The gospel must be preached by priestly evangelists.

Then the apostle Peter tells us that he and others had to first continue steadfastly in prayer and then in the ministry of the word. This means that to minister the word, we must first be priests. As priests, we must give ourselves to prayer and spend time in the presence of the Lord. This is the priestly ministry.

Before all kinds of service, we must first serve as priests in the Lord's presence. If we are elders, we must be priestly elders. If we are deacons or deaconesses, we must first be priests. Without being priests, we can never be good brothers or good sisters in the church. But even this is not all. We must be priestly husbands, priestly wives, and priestly parents. We have to be priestly in all things.

The army must be priestly; the apostle must be priestly; the evangelist must be priestly; the minister of the word must be priestly; the elder and deacon must be priestly; the brothers and sisters must be priestly; and the husbands, wives, parents, and children must be priestly. This simply means that in the Lord's service we must first open ourselves to the Lord and spend time in His presence. This will enable Him to fill, saturate, and even swallow us up so that we may be one with Him. Then He will be our content, and we will be His expression. He will be able to say something through us and to express something from within us, whether we are fighting the battle, preaching the gospel, teaching the word, or serving as elders or deacons. Whatever we are will be a channel for the Lord to flow out. This must be our way of living, our way of work, and our way of service.

Thirty years ago, if a brother came to me asking how he should act as an elder, I would have outlined several points he needed to know. I would have said, "Brother, let us open the Word," and then I would have given him all the points. But today if anyone comes to me to ask how to be an elder, I will say, "Go to be a priest. Go to practice the priesthood. Then you will be a good elder." When I was young, the sisters also came to me and asked how to have

a proper family life. Again, I would give them the first point, the second point, the third, etc., until twelve points were given. But in these last years I simply tell the young sisters to go to the Lord, touch the Lord, and be touched by Him. When the Lord has saturated you, you will know how to be a good wife. It is not by the Ten Commandments or the twelve commandments. All the commandments do not work. Only one thing works, that is, to go to the Lord, open yourself to Him, and let Him fill and saturate you with Himself. Then the Lord will be your very content and reality, and you as a good wife, good husband, good elder, or deacon will be His outward manifestation.

Do not trust in your message, teaching, or ministry very much. There is only one thing in which we can trust: the priesthood. In 1934 a co-worker moved to one of the biggest cities in north China. It was a naval base with a population of nearly one million people. When he went there, he was very poor and did not know anyone in that city. The first few years he really had a hard time. He could not get one person to meet with him. Later, two or three moved there from my hometown, but it was a very difficult situation. Many of the brothers tried to encourage this brother to move to another city, but he would not move. Gradually, people began to be saved, and the number increased. In the spring of 1949, they baptized more than seven hundred people at one baptism. The point is this: this brother could not minister in a very eloquent way. He was awkward in speaking, and his utterance was always very slow. But he prayed very much. The work there in that city was carried on by the priestly ministry.

ONLY THE PRIESTLY MINISTRY CAN BUILD THE CHURCH

The church is built up basically by the priestly ministry, not by the teaching ministry. All the local churches must be local bodies of priests. We do not need much speaking, but we need the priestly ministry. A strong local church is one that is full of praying people. They may not be so strong in talking or in teaching, but they are very strong in praying. Their spirit is strong in prayer because they practice the priesthood in their daily walk. They have learned to open themselves to the Lord, to go to Him and spend time in His presence. They have learned to be filled and even swallowed up by the Lord. Therefore, their spirit is so living, so active, and so aggressive. When they come to the

meetings, nothing can quench them. There is something burning within their spirit.

Do not think that I am encouraging you to pray by asking the Lord to do something. This is not my point. Real prayer is not to ask the Lord to do something for you or for the church. Real prayer is to open yourself to the Lord. Do not ask Him to do anything, but simply open yourself to Him, and let Him fill and saturate you with Himself. Then He will burden you to pray, and He will give you guidance to pray. Your prayer will then be according to the inner feeling, not according to your mind.

Why do we need to pray? It is because we cannot do anything. We can never be elders, we can never be deacons, and we can never be evangelists. We just cannot do it. So we must pray, which means that we put our trust in the Lord. The second reason we need to pray is that we realize God must do something through us. Without us, even God cannot do anything. This is quite remarkable. Without us, the Lord cannot preach the gospel. Without us, He can never save sinners. Although we need Him, He needs us even more. So we have to pray because we cannot do anything and because without us God cannot do anything. The third reason we must pray is that God wants to mingle Himself with man. Therefore, we pray to open ourselves to Him that He may mingle Himself with us. When God and man are mingled together through priestly praying, God will flow out through man to do His work.

So we see that if we are going to build up the church, we must first realize that we cannot do anything. We cannot build up the church, yet we must. This burdens us to pray. Even the Lord cannot build up the church unless we pray. The building up of the church can only be accomplished by the mingling of God with man. There must be certain ones who offer themselves to the Lord so that the Lord may mingle Himself with them. Then it will be possible for the church to be built up. This building is not by the ministry of the word but by the ministry of the priesthood. We must simply learn to practice the priesthood; then we will see the result.

In reading the history of the church and the biographies of many spiritual persons, we found the same principle. It is not a matter of work or a matter of ministering. It is a matter of practicing the priesthood. We must have the priestly ministry. Of course, we do need people to work in the outer court, but we must know that all the activities in the outer court are under the direction

of those who are in the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies. Without the priests in the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies, there is no direction for the people to work in the outer court. All the outward activities must be under the direction of the inward priesthood. We need this priestly ministry today.

THE WAY OF THE PRIESTHOOD

BEING LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

I must repeat again that to fight the battle or be the army in Ephesians 6, we need the priesthood. We must offer ourselves to the Lord that He may take us over, saturate us, and make us one with Him. Then, in this mingling, the Lord will move deep within us to express something. This is the priesthood, and this is basic and necessary for any kind of ministry. Without this, whatever teachings, messages, ways, or gifts we have will not work. Past history has adequately proven this. All these things have been tried in the past centuries. Teachings, ways, messages, gifts, and so many different kinds of practices have been tried and found wanting.

If we are not in the life of the Spirit, regardless of what way we use, we are still in deadness. Once a brother told me that about sixteen or seventeen years ago, he learned from the Brethren the way to have a meeting, that is, to arrange the seats in a circle rather than in one direction. So they changed their arrangement of chairs and found that they had more deadness. After a period of time, they decided to return to the old way of arranging the chairs in one direction. If we are not in the life of the Spirit, the more directions we have, the more deadness we will have. If we arrange the seats in one direction, we will have one direction of death. If we arrange the chairs in four directions, we will have four directions of death. When you are a dead person, no matter what way people arrange you, you are still dead. When I am living, regardless of how I am seated, I am still living. It is not a way; it is life. It is not the message; it is the Spirit. It is not the gifts; it is the priesthood.

There are too many teachings in today's Christianity, and all the ways have been tried in the past. It is not the way but the life, the Spirit, the priesthood in the Holy of Holies. Forget about the way; get into His presence and let Him saturate you.

We must see today that it is not this or that, but it is a matter of life in the Spirit. When I was young, I would argue about a number of things, saying that

they were scriptural. But today I know it is foolish to argue in that way. It is neither this nor that, but the life in the Spirit. We have to be in the presence of the Lord. We have to open ourselves and be filled with Him.

In the priesthood the only way is the presence of the Lord. We must have the Lord's presence. This is why it is rather hard to find any kind of way in the New Testament. What is the best way to preach the gospel? No one can tell you. What is the best way to hold a meeting? Again, no one can tell you. If you were to ask me what the right way is, I would have to say that I do not know. I really do not know what the right way is. In the Bible you can never find a way to minister the word or to do the work of the Lord. This is because the New Testament is the dispensation of the Spirit. Whatever way you use, it must be in the spirit. Everything must be in the spirit. In these last years, wherever I have gone, I have never paid any attention to the way. Regardless of the way people meet or serve the Lord, it does not mean anything. The real problem is this: Is there the presence of the Lord? Is there the life in the spirit?

May the Lord have mercy upon us that we may be delivered from anything other than the priesthood. We must learn this one lesson of being in the presence of the Lord. Then we will come out of the Lord's presence with the bread and wine to minister to the people's needs. This is what we need. If we are an army, we must be a priestly army. If we are apostles, we must be priestly apostles. No matter what kind of persons we are or functions we have, we must be priests. Then there will be the free course for the Lord to go on and accomplish something through us to fulfill His purpose.

It would be foolish for us to repeat the tragedy of history. Since the recovery of the Lord started, five hundred years ago, the priesthood has not been recovered completely, even today. The Brethren have seen the so-called universal priesthood—that everyone should function. But that does not work. You cannot expect dead people to function. You cannot expect those who are empty to minister Christ to others. The priesthood is not just something universal; it is something of life, something living, something divine, and something in the presence of God. We believe that in these last years the Lord must recover this priesthood—not the universal priesthood but the holy and royal priesthood.

We must be brought into the reality of contacting the Lord and being filled with Him. Then we will be so living and so aggressive in the spirit to minister

something of the Lord to others. This is the priesthood, and this is what the Lord is going to recover in a corporate way. The priesthood is not something individualistic but something corporate. It is a body of priests working, coordinating, and functioning together in a body way. I have the assurance that the Lord is going to recover this priesthood in these last days.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE NAZARITE

“Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, When a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazarite, to separate himself to Jehovah, he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar of wine or vinegar of strong drink, nor shall he drink any juice of grapes, nor eat fresh or dried grapes. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grape vine, from the seeds even to the skin. All the days of his vow of separation no razor shall pass over his head. He shall be holy until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to Jehovah; he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long. All the days that he separates himself to Jehovah he shall not come near a dead person. He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is upon his head. All the days of his separation he is holy to Jehovah.

“And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him so that he defiles the head of his separation, then he shall shave his head on the day he becomes clean; on the seventh day shall he shave it. And on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and the priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, and make expiation for him because he sinned by reason of the dead person. And he shall sanctify his head that same day. And he shall separate to Jehovah the days of his separation and shall bring a male lamb a year old for a trespass offering, but the former days shall be void because his separation was defiled” (Num. 6:1-12).

“She [the mother of Samuel] made a vow and said, O Jehovah of hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your female servant and remember me and not forget Your female servant, but give to Your female servant a male child, then I will give him to Jehovah for all the days of his life, and no razor will come upon his head” (1 Sam. 1:11). This means that the male child will be a Nazarite. Let us also read verse 28. “Therefore I, for my part, have lent him to Jehovah; all the days that he lives, he is lent to Jehovah.”

“He will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall by no means drink wine and liquor. And he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15). According to this verse, John the Baptist was also a Nazarite.

GOD’S SUPPLEMENT FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

In the two books of Exodus and Leviticus the Lord ordained and appointed many kinds of persons. Then in the beginning of the book of Numbers, the Lord told Moses how to coordinate all these different persons into one army to fight the battle. In chapter 6, while He was telling Moses how to coordinate these persons, He gave him something as a kind of supplement. The Lord had appointed and ordained only the house of Aaron of the tribe of Levi as the priests. The rest of the Levites who served in the tabernacle were not the priests.

But suppose the house of Aaron would not be faithful to the Lord and would even forsake Him. What would the Lord do? This thought may be strange to us but not to the Bible. We know that Abraham was chosen of God when man failed God after creation. Out of Abraham came the people of Israel, with whom God intended to make a kingdom of priests. We must remember that a priest is one who opens himself to the Lord that the Lord may be mingled with him. The Lord is his content, and he is the Lord’s expression—this is a priest. God’s intention was to make the whole nation of Israel a kingdom of priests; however, through Israel’s failure the Lord chose the Levites as a tribe of priests to replace a nation of priests in Israel. But not all the tribe of Levi were chosen by the Lord. Only those of the house of Aaron were to be the priests.

Could you believe that the house of Aaron would never fall? The house of Aaron eventually came to the point of being fully and utterly fallen at the time of Eli’s sons.

However, the Lord foresaw the situation. Besides His ordination of the house of Aaron as priests, in the sixth chapter of Numbers, He made a supplement. This supplement means “in case of.” In case of failure on the part of the house of Aaron, the Lord opened a side door as an emergency provision. In case the front door is damaged, there is a side door. Therefore, we have the regulation of the Nazarite.

The regulation of the Nazarite is not limited to certain persons, for anyone can become a Nazarite. Regardless of whether you are a Levite, a member of the house of Aaron, a man or a woman, the side door is open. Even the sisters need not worry that the priests in the Old Testament were all men. The side door is open to both men and women. During normal times only the main entrance is needed, but when things are abnormal, the side door is necessary. The principle of the regulation for the Nazarite is that the door is wide open for everyone. No one is prohibited.

VOLUNTARY CONSECRATION

What then is the principle of the Nazarite? The principle is voluntary consecration. It is not by being appointed, ordained, or even chosen by the Lord, but by voluntarily consecrating yourself to Him. In the words of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, you simply “lend” yourself. For example, if I am rich, you do not need to lend me anything. Only when I am poor do I need to borrow something from you. As far as the priesthood was concerned at the time of Eli, the Lord was really poor. So Hannah lent Samuel to Him. She told the Lord that if He would give her a male child she would lend him to the Lord. When the priesthood is poor, causing the Lord to be poor with respect to His administration, there is the need for someone to voluntarily lend himself to the Lord.

To what tribe did Samuel belong? It seems that Samuel was of the tribe of Levi, but his father dwelt in Ephraim (1 Sam. 1:1-2). Samuel was not of the house of Aaron, but he became a priest by being consecrated, separated, and lent to the Lord. Samuel became a priest by coming through the side door, not through the main entrance. He became a priest according to the supplement of Numbers 6, not according to an appointment or ordination.

Samuel was not only a priest, but he was also a judge. He was first of all a person in the priesthood, and second, he was a person in the kingship. All the judges were in the line of authority. Besides all this, Samuel was also a prophet, for he was the one who turned the age into the age of the kingdom with the kingship. How much was related to this one person! There was the priesthood, the authority, the prophecy, and the turning of the age of degradation into the age of the kingdom. Was Samuel chosen by the Lord? No. Was he ordained or appointed by the Lord? No. Such a wonderful person came into God’s administration only by the principle of the Nazarite. When

things became abnormal, God provided the side door of voluntary consecration.

Although John the Baptist was the son of a priest and therefore a priest by ordination and appointment, he functioned as a strange kind of priest. He functioned not according to birth but according to the principle of the Nazarite. When things are degraded and abnormal, priests by birth, ordination, and appointment are not good enough. Therefore, the supplement needs to be applied.

Allow me to ask a question: are we living today in a normal situation of the priesthood? Without a doubt, we are in an abnormal state; consequently, we must realize that the priesthood by appointment or by birth is not enough. Since the main gate is not good enough, the side door is needed. Do not merely say that we are priests and kings by birth. Although this is true, the situation today is abnormal. Since the main entrance has been damaged, we need the principle of the Nazarite. So many Christians today are born priests and kings, but do they look like priests and kings? We must apply the principle of the Nazarite. Regardless of the fact that we have been born priests and kings, we must take the standing of Nazarites and consecrate and separate ourselves unto the Lord. Regardless of how much we realize that we are born priests and kings, if we are not willing to separate ourselves unto the Lord, we could never be in the genuine priesthood. The main gate, under today's abnormal situation, is not good enough. We must use the side door by applying the principle of the Nazarite to separate ourselves unto the Lord.

THE FOURFOLD CONSECRATION OF THE NAZARITE

In the consecration of the Nazarite, four things are mentioned very clearly. First of all, a Nazarite should not drink or eat anything of the grape, even its skin. In typology, wine or anything of the grape signifies earthly pleasure or worldly enjoyment. If we are going to realize the priesthood, we must be separated from all earthly pleasures. It is a very hard thing in this country to be separated from worldly enjoyment, because this is a nation of worldly enjoyment. It is very difficult for young people in this country to realize the genuine priesthood because of many temptations, earthly pleasures, and worldly amusements. As long as we drink anything of the grape, we are ruined for the priesthood. By regeneration all Christians have been reborn priests

and kings, but almost all of them have been spoiled by the wine of earthly enjoyment. This is not a small matter.

We must realize that today is a day of degradation. To take up the standing of the priesthood, we must voluntarily be completely separated from everything of the grape. The Lord's recovery can only be prevailing through a priesthood which is entirely separated from earthly pleasures and worldly enjoyment. Whenever we partake of something of this world, we are through. Others do not need to tell us; we already know it within. We may still be a child of the Lord, but we are no longer a priest in reality. Oh, how the earthly pleasures and worldly enjoyments have damaged the priesthood!

Some might ask, "What do you mean by earthly pleasures?" Do not ask me; simply ask yourself. If you ask me, I will return the question to you. You know! You can never say that you do not know. I know that you know. You know exactly which earthly pleasures and worldly enjoyments are keeping you from the priesthood. Under today's degradation the Lord needs those who will pioneer the way in absolute consecration—a consecration without any reservation.

The second item of the Nazarite's consecration is that his hair should not be cut. Those in the priesthood must be a peculiar people. We must be somewhat strange and uncommon. If I were to say that you are peculiar, you might not be so happy. But if you were to say that to me, I would be very happy.

What does it mean to forbid the Nazarite to cut his hair? First Corinthians 11:14 says that long hair is a dishonor to a man. It is not a glory, but a dishonor. It is a glory for a woman, but a dishonor for a man. A Nazarite is one who is willing to bear shame for the Lord. To have long hair means to be separated from self-glory. The self has been put to death; hence, there is no self-consciousness, self-righteousness, or self-glory. As long as we have something of self-glory, we can never be in the priesthood. We must bear shame for the Lord's testimony and for His purpose. Do not be a glory-seeker, but be a shame-bearer.

Many times some of the brothers have told me not to say or do certain things because they feared that I might get a bad name. But I desire to have a bad name! Some brothers even call me a troublemaker. I praise the Lord for such evil reports! We should not try to be so good or nice. When the Lord

Jesus was on the earth, He was not always so nice. If we are going to be priests, we must learn to bear the shame.

Hebrews 13:13 tells us to go outside the camp and bear His reproach. This means to bear His shame. Do not be afraid of bad names or evil reports. If we are not bold enough to bear the shame, we cannot be in the priesthood. A priest is a person with long hair; that is, he has no self-glory. To be a genuine priest will, more or less, cause others to look down on you. This is especially true in this country, which is a nation of amusements and glory-seeking. In this country you can speak to Christians about anything except separation from the world and the denial of self-glory. Whenever you speak about these things, they are offended. There is a real price to pay for the priesthood. We must bear the reproach, denying all self-glory for His sake.

The third item in the Nazarite's consecration is to not be defiled by anything dead, especially by the death of our nearest relatives. Our nearest relatives, representing our natural affections, can be a means to deaden us. We must be separated from our natural affection which so easily deadens. Our business with the Lord is our business with the Lord; it must not be involved with anything of our natural affection. If it is, then immediately we are deadened.

Why are so many Christians who have been born priests and kings out of function today? It is simply because of these three things: earthly pleasure or entertainment, self-glory, and natural affection. If we are going to realize the position of the genuine priesthood, we must voluntarily consecrate ourselves unto the Lord to be separated from all these things.

Moreover, the Word of the Lord is even clearer about the matter of spiritual deadness. Numbers 6:9 says that if *anyone* dies very suddenly beside you, you are defiled. Anyone can affect us. If we are deadened by them, all the days of our separation will be lost. We may have overcome our natural affections, but one day in the church, a brother standing beside us dies very suddenly. I do not mean that he dies physically, but spiritually. If this happens, we must be careful not to be affected by him. Do not let him pass his deadness on to you. Satan is the very source of death, and he always likes to spread death to others. Many brothers and sisters in the church life have been deadened by one or two dead members. Whenever we sense or smell the stench of spiritual death, we must run away. This is the fourth item in the Nazarite's consecration.

Do you like to look into a garbage can? No matter how fine anyone's home is, there is always a trash can. Even a king's palace has a trash can. There is also a trash can in the universe. Hell is the universal trash can to contain all the garbage in the universe. Do not say that such-and-such local church is so wonderful, for every local church has a trash can. If you come to my home, will you come to smell and enjoy the trash can? No. But sometimes when we go to a local church, we do not go to the "living room" but to the "trash can." We do not exercise ourselves to taste the good things but to enjoy the trash can—the gossip, the criticism, and the murmuring. Eventually, we are deadened. The more we contact these negative things, the more we cannot pray. We are simply deadened. We may have one hundred reasons for this or that, but we are deadened. If any man dies very suddenly near us, we must run away. Run away from the dead members, or your spirit will be deadened.

Earthly enjoyments, self-glory, natural affection, and sudden spiritual deadness in others must be overcome; otherwise, the priesthood will be ruined. We must realize that the situation today is not normal. If it were, it would be unnecessary to apply the principle of the Nazarite. We must volunteer to be a Nazarite, such as Samuel, who turned the age of degradation into the age of the kingdom. It was a Nazarite like John the Baptist who turned the Old Testament dispensation into the New and ushered in the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that in these last days there will also be those who turn this age into another age. Only the Nazarites can bring back the Lord Jesus. It cannot be done by today's Christianity, but only by those who voluntarily separate themselves from earthly enjoyments, self-glory, natural affection, and sudden spiritual deadness in others. Then they will be the Nazarites of today who will turn this age of degradation into the age of the kingdom, and they will bring back the Lord.

We must bring this principle of the Nazarite to the Lord and pray. Do not say that we have been born priests and kings. Under today's degradation this ordination by birth does not work. There is the need of the side door which is the regulation of the Nazarite. We all must lend ourselves to the Lord.

Due to a lack of spiritual personnel for His administration, the Lord is very poor today. We must offer ourselves unto Him so that He can borrow us for His purpose. Only the regulation of the Nazarite can meet today's emergency. The Lord is calling a people to separate themselves entirely from all earthly

enjoyments, self-glory, natural affection, and sudden spiritual deadness. Who will be the volunteers?

O how blessed is the priest's life,
Christ to him is all in all:
All his clothing, food, and dwelling,
And his portion therewithal.

O how blessed is the priest's life,
Christ to him is all in all:
All his clothing, food, and dwelling,
And his portion therewithal.

All the clothing of his service
Is the beauty of the Lord;
Glorious splendor do his garments,
Breast and shoulder-piece afford.

When in sacrifice he offers
Christ to God as God has willed,
Then as food he doth enjoy Him
And is with His riches filled.

Putting on the Lord as clothing,
Christ without he doth express;
Eating, drinking, with Him mingled,
Christ within doth him possess.

Holy, glorious is their dwelling,
'Tis the increase of the Lord;
Here the priests built up together
Unto God a house afford.

All his portion, all his living,
Everything the priests possess—
All is Christ and Christ forever,
In His all-inclusiveness.

(Hymns, #911)

PART TWO:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
CHRIST AND THE PRIESTHOOD

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE EXPERIENCES OF THE PRIESTS

What is the relationship between Christ and the priesthood? When we say “Christ,” we mean the all-inclusive Christ. He is the very embodiment of the Triune God, our Savior, and He is also our life. He is everything to us, for He is so all-inclusive. The priesthood has much to do with such a Christ.

According to the types revealed in the Old Testament, the relationship between the priesthood and Christ is clearly manifested. Briefly speaking, these types may be classified into several categories.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS THE OFFERINGS

The work, ministry, and commission of the priesthood are in Christ. Christ is the very ministry of the priesthood. Thus, the priesthood takes care of nothing but Christ. First of all, the priesthood takes care of all the offerings (Lev. 6:8—7:34). All the offerings typify the different aspects of what Christ is to us. From the standpoint of experience, the trespass offering is first, the sin offering second, the peace offering third, the meal or food offering fourth, and the burnt offering fifth. Some parts of these offerings are the wave offerings, and some parts are the heave offerings (7:29-34). The priesthood must take care of these offerings. Thus, to partake of the priesthood today means that we must experience Christ as all the offerings. Only when we have experienced Christ as these offerings can we minister them to others.

First, we must experience Christ as the trespass offering. We are sinful and have many transgressions before the Lord. How can God forgive all our sins? He can forgive us only by Christ’s death on the cross as our trespass offering. This is the story of our salvation: When we first trusted in Christ, we realized that we were sinful, with many trespasses. Then when we confessed to the Lord, we realized that Christ on the cross bore all our trespasses before God. He is our trespass offering.

After we were saved, we soon discovered that it is not simply a matter of the sinful things we do or have done, but the very nature of sin within us. Sin is within us. We not only have the sinful deeds without, but also the sinful

nature within. We knew that Christ died on the cross to deal with all the sinful deeds committed before God, but now we realize that the sinful nature is within. Romans 7 calls this nature “sin that dwells in me.” Then the Lord reveals to us that by dying on the cross He has not only dealt with our sins, but also our sinful nature. This means that He is not only our trespass offering but also our sin offering. Trespasses are something without, but sin is something within. Therefore, we must learn to experience Christ not only as our trespass offering but also as our sin offering.

After the experience of these two offerings, we enjoy Christ as the peace offering. Peace always depends upon dealing with all trespasses as well as dealing with our sinful nature. If we still have trespasses which are not yet forgiven and dealt with, we can never have peace within! Furthermore, if we have not dealt with the sin within us, we cannot enjoy peace within. After both our trespasses and our sinful nature have been dealt with by Christ, we can enjoy Him as our peace offering.

Following our experience of Christ as the peace offering, we find that He is also the meal or food offering. This means that Christ is our food and constant satisfaction.

The burnt offering follows the food offering. The burnt offering is the food for God! Christ is not only *our* satisfaction but also *God’s* satisfaction. He is not only our food, but He is also God’s food.

Much time is needed to realize and experience all these offerings, especially by young Christians. Many young Christians today do not know much about Christ. Have you experienced Christ as your trespass offering? No doubt you have, but what about the second offering? Have you ever experienced Christ as the sin offering? Not many Christians have had this experience. Some Christians may have experienced Christ as the peace offering, but what about the meal offering? So many Christians are simply short of these experiences! They are lacking in the experience of Christ as their daily food as seen in the meal offering. Christ is our food, and we must learn to enjoy Him as our satisfaction. Gradually, we will discover that Christ is not only our food but also God’s food and God’s satisfaction, for He is the burnt offering.

I believe that at the Lord’s table some of the brothers and sisters have had some apprehension and realization that their sins are forgiven, and they have

been very grateful to the Lord for His forgiveness. Others have apprehended something deeper than this. They have realized that their sinful nature has been dealt with by the crucifixion of the Lord on the cross. They have sensed that they are released and set free from sin. They are experiencing Romans 8—there is no condemnation because in Christ the law of the Spirit of life has set them free from the law of sin and of death. Christ has dealt with their sinful nature, so by His death they can be set free from sin which dwells in their body.

I also believe that at the Lord's table some of the brothers and sisters have had the sense of enjoying the Lord as their peace offering. What wonderful peace within! Others may have the feeling of satisfaction, for the Lord is their food, their meal offering. A few may realize that the Lord is the satisfaction not only to them but also to God. Christ is the meal offering to them and the burnt offering to God.

We must experience all these offerings in such a way; then we will be in the real priesthood. Christ is so much to us! He is the trespass offering, dealing with our sinful deeds; He is the sin offering, dealing with our sinful nature; then He becomes our peace and satisfaction as well as the satisfaction to God.

But this is not all. We must also learn to experience Christ as the wave and heave offerings. First, we must experience Him as the resurrected One—as the wave offering. He is waving; that is, He is so living! He has been resurrected; thus, we must know the power of His resurrection as the living One who is waving within us all the time. No Christian should be so quiet. We all must be very living. If we know Christ as the resurrected and living One, we cannot be still. We cannot be quiet. We will be waving and full of energy. We will not come to the meetings so quietly. If we do, it probably means that we are a little bit dead. However, the One within us can never be dead. He is the living One! When He came back to speak to the churches in the book of Revelation, He told them, “I am...the living One...and behold, I am living forever and ever” (1:17-18). His church should be neither dead nor deadened. His church must be living and waving all the time. We must learn to enjoy this waving Christ, for He is our wave offering.

Then Christ is our heave offering. He is not only the resurrected One but also the ascended and transcendent One. He has ascended to the heavens, and He is transcendent far above all. We must experience Christ as such a

One. Many times, different brothers and sisters have said to me, “O brother, I’m finished. I’m through!” They were very depressed. If this is true of us, we can never minister Christ to others as the heave offering. We need to experience Christ as the ascended One. He is so transcendent that nothing can oppress, depress, or suppress Him!

For us to be in the priesthood, we must experience these aspects of Christ and then help others to experience Christ in such a way. As the real priesthood, we must first take care of all the offerings before we can help others to realize that Christ is their trespass and sin offering. We must also help them to experience Christ as their peace and as their food and satisfaction. They must see that He is not only their satisfaction but God’s satisfaction as well. Also, they must be helped to realize the resurrected Christ as their wave offering and the ascended Christ as their heave offering.

When the apostle Paul was put into prison, he experienced both the wave and the heave offerings. Just because he was in prison did not mean that he was through. He was so energetic, so waving, because he had the living Christ within him as the wave offering. He even tried to sleep, but the waving One within him did not agree, so he sang hymns. He was not in prison; he was in heavenly places. He was not in jail; he was in the Holy of Holies. He was so transcendent, experiencing Christ as his heave offering.

Sometimes our home becomes a kind of jail. It is our “home sweet home,” yet it becomes a prison to us. If this is true, it proves that we do not know how to experience Christ as our heave offering.

Many times in my experience the surrounding circumstances have been just like a thick wall. There was no entrance and no window. But I could say, “Lord, all these surrounding circumstances are like many walls, but, Hallelujah! I have a window upwards. I am in the ark, and the window is open toward heaven” (referring to the window in Noah’s ark in Genesis 6:16).

We must learn to experience Christ as our heave offering. Only through the enjoyment of these offerings can we be in the real priesthood. But, as most of us know, the offerings are just in the outer court. We may say that they are quite good, deep, and spiritual, but they are still in the outer court. We are still at the bronze altar and not yet in the tabernacle. These offerings are the outward experiences, not the inward. They are still superficial and not so deep.

When we realize this, we see how poor many Christians are today. Most of them have not even experienced all the items of these offerings; even those who have are still in the outer court.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

“You shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. And you shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the table of pure gold before Jehovah. And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, so that it may be a memorial for the bread, an offering by fire to Jehovah. Every Sabbath day continually he shall set it in order before Jehovah; it is an everlasting covenant for the children of Israel” (Lev. 24:5-8). “You shall set the bread of the Presence upon the table before Me always” (Exo. 25:30).

After taking care of the offerings, the priests must proceed to spread the bread of the Presence in the Holy Place. Christ is not only our life within; He is also our life supply as the bread of life. Thus, we must experience Him as our life supply. This is to spread Christ as the bread of the Presence. When we experience Christ as our inner life supply, we will be able to spread Him before others and God. When we come to the meetings or contact those in other places, we can present Christ to them as the inner life. We must go deeper with the Lord and not be so superficial, emotional, and outward. Christ is within us, but we must experience Him as the indwelling One and the hidden One within who is our life supply. This life supply is to be presented not only as a satisfaction to others but also as a satisfaction to God.

Some may ask, “What is the real experience of the indwelling Christ?” Allow me to give an illustration which I believe will help. Suppose you are in trouble. If you pray, just asking the Lord to take care of your trouble, then you are an outward Christian, that is, a Christian in the outer court. The Lord is willing to hear this kind of prayer from those who are newly saved. Perhaps, after you pray in this way, the Lord will take away your trouble, and you will shout, “Hallelujah, praise the Lord!” But you are only in the outer court.

However, a time will come when you will be brought into a situation where the more you pray and ask the Lord to take away the trouble, the more trouble you will have. Then you may think that it is better not to pray. Regardless of

what you pray, the trouble increases. But this forces you into the Holy Place. It forces you to solve the problem inwardly, not outwardly. The trouble forces you to know the Lord, not only as the ascended Christ but also as the indwelling Christ.

Do you see why there is trouble after trouble, trial after trial? You may say, “Brother, this is not the gospel, the good news.” But this is really the good news! Trouble after trouble and trial after trial force us to be an inward Christian rather than an outward one. They force us to go deeper with the Lord, causing us to realize that He is not only the resurrected and ascended One but also the indwelling One. Then we will experience Him as the inner life and the life supply. We will learn that His grace is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9). The more trouble we have outwardly, the more experiences of Christ we will have inwardly. This will cause us to experience Christ as the inner life supply.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS THE LAMP

“Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel to bring to you pure oil of beaten olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually. Outside the veil of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting Aaron shall set it in order from evening to morning before Jehovah continually. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations. He shall keep the lamps in order on the pure lampstand before Jehovah continually” (Lev. 24:1-4).

With the spreading of the bread of the Presence in the Holy Place, the priests must light the lamp. The bread is the life, and the lamp is the light. When we have life, this life is the light. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). When we have the experience of Christ as our inner life, this life will be the inner light shining within us. We will not just read the Bible by exercising our mind to gain some knowledge, teaching, or doctrine, but something within will be enlightening. Something within will be shining as the very light of life. This is a deeper item of the priesthood. In the outer court, the priesthood takes care of the many offerings; in the Holy Place, the priesthood must take care of something deeper, something within, not simply something without. We must experience these items of Christ in the Holy Place: Christ as the inner life and Christ as the inner light.

When we read the Bible, we must not exercise our mentality too much to understand it. If we understand it too much, it will become the tree of knowledge to us. We must pray-read the Bible and not try to merely understand it mentally. Then, we will be in the priesthood. We must open ourselves to let the Lord fill us, possess us, and occupy us. Then the word of the Bible will be shining from within, not from the written Word but from the living Christ. The written Word will shine within through the living word. Then we will have the inner light, not simply the outward knowledge.

Why should a Christian not go to the movies? Is it because there is a rule demanding that Christians should not go to the movies? That is not the Christian life; that is a religion with rules and regulations. But when we experience Christ as the light of life, something within is enlightening and controlling us by the inner light. This is an inward control, enlightening, and shining, which is typified by the lamp in the Holy Place. The outer court has the outward light of the sunshine, but the Holy Place has the inward light of the lamp. This is the light of life.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS THE INCENSE

The priesthood must also burn the incense at the golden altar in the Holy Place. The lighting of the lamp and the burning of the incense are taken care of at the same time. These two things can never be separated. "You shall put it [the incense altar] before the veil that is over the Ark of the Testimony, before the expiation cover that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you. And Aaron shall burn on it fragrant incense; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it. And when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before Jehovah throughout your generations" (Exo. 30:6-8).

If we burn the incense, we must light the lamp, and if we light the lamp, we must burn the incense. This shows us that to receive the light from the Word, we must pray by burning the incense; and if we pray by burning the incense, we must light the lamp by reading the Word. Reading and praying must be mingled as one. While we pray, we must read, and while we read, we must pray. To read the Word is to light the lamp, and to pray is to burn the incense.

What is the incense? It is the sweetness of Christ. It is the sweet odor of Christ as our acceptance to God. When we experience Christ in such an inner

way, He becomes our inner life, our inner supply, and our inner light. At the same time we have a deep sense that the sweet odor of Christ is going up to God. The preciousness of Christ becomes our acceptance to God. It is not an outward improvement of our behavior; rather, it is an inward sweetness. When we experience Christ as the inner life and inner light, and enjoy Him as the inner life supply, there is a sweet and precious feeling that we are so acceptable and pleasing to God. This is to burn the incense on the golden altar. Christ as the sweet incense is ascending to God as our acceptance.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS THE ARK

“Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and cross over before the people. And they took up the Ark of the Covenant and went before the people. And Jehovah said to Joshua...You shall command the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant, saying, When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan...And when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the Ark of Jehovah, the Lord of all the earth, come to rest in the waters of the Jordan; the waters of the Jordan, the waters that flow down from upstream, will be cut off, and they will stand in a heap” (Josh. 3:6-8, 13).

The fifth item which the priesthood must take care of is the Ark. The Ark is the very testimony of God, which is Christ Himself. Not only should we experience Christ as the offerings, the inner life, the inner light, and the inner acceptance, but we must go on to experience Him as the very testimony of God. The priests must bear the Ark at all times. The third chapter of Joshua mentions clearly that the priests must bear the Ark. As the priesthood we must experience Christ as life, as light, and as our acceptance to God, and we must especially bear Christ as God’s full testimony. We must experience the riches of Christ and then bear the living, all-inclusive Christ as the very testimony of God. The experiences of the offerings, the bread of the Presence, the lamp, and the incense are the experiences of all the different aspects of the riches of Christ. But these experiences lead us to Christ as God’s testimony.

To have the experience of Christ only as our life and light is not enough. Even the experience of Christ as our acceptance to God is not enough. We should experience Christ as the full and complete testimony of God among us. He is the living testimony of God borne by the priesthood. The priesthood must take care of and bear the Ark. If we are really in the priesthood, we will

bear Christ as the living testimony of God. This testimony will not be simply in one aspect but will be complete in all aspects. We will bear Christ as the whole testimony of God.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AS THE TABERNACLE

We have seen five things which must be taken care of by the priesthood: the offerings, the bread of the Presence, the lamp, the incense, and the Ark. The sixth item which the priesthood must take care of is the tabernacle, which typifies the enlarged Christ as the dwelling place of God. After we, as the priesthood, richly experience Christ, we must take care of the whole church, the whole Body of Christ. The church is simply the enlargement of Christ. Christ enlarged is the church; Christ increased is the Body.

In chapter 4 of Numbers, the priests take care of the tabernacle—the boards, the coverings, and all the utensils within the tabernacle. The priests must take care of the tabernacle, whether it is set in a certain place or while it is traveling on a long journey. This shows us that the priesthood must take care of the church, that is, the Body of Christ. The experiences of Christ as the offerings, as the inner life, as the inner light, as the inner acceptance, and as the testimony of God are for the church. The more we experience Christ in all these items, the more we will be for the Body of Christ, the church. As the priesthood of God experiencing Christ as everything, we must take care of the church so that the Body of Christ may become God's dwelling place on the earth. All the experiences of Christ must eventually be for the church, the Body of Christ. The partaking of Christ as our life in so many aspects is for the church life. The church life comes out of our experience of Christ as the inner life. This is all that the priesthood must have and take care of. We must ask the Lord to bring us into all these experiences and make them real to us.

CHAPTER NINE

THE LIVING OF THE PRIESTS

We must continue to examine the relationship between Christ and the priesthood by seeing the living of the priests. As far as their living is concerned, the priests need to eat so that they might be strengthened, nourished, and filled within, and they need to be clothed so that they might be covered without. Food and clothing are the two main items of the living of the priests. Of course, besides food and clothing, there is the matter of their dwelling, which will be covered in the next chapter.

CHRIST AS THE FOOD OF THE PRIESTS

For forty years the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness. Day after day they ate manna as their food. For breakfast, lunch, and dinner, they had only one thing to eat—manna. But have you ever considered what the priests ate during all those years? Did they also eat manna day by day, or something else?

Let us first read Leviticus 2:3: “What is left of the meal offering shall be Aaron’s and his sons’; it is a thing most holy of Jehovah’s offerings by fire.” The priests were to eat a portion of the meal offering.

Then let us read Leviticus 7:14 and 31-34: “From it he shall present one out of each offering as a heave offering to Jehovah; it shall belong to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the peace offerings...And the priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be for Aaron and for his sons. And the right thigh you shall give to the priest for a heave offering out of the sacrifices of your peace offerings. The one among the sons of Aaron who presents the blood of the peace offerings and the fat shall have the right thigh as his portion. For the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering I have taken from the children of Israel out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons for a perpetual statute to be observed by the children of Israel.” Some parts of the peace offering were also a portion for the priests.

Furthermore, Leviticus 6:26 says, “The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the Tent of Meeting.” The sin offering was another portion for the priests.

Leviticus 7:6-7 says, “Every male among the priests may eat of it; it shall be eaten in a holy place; it is most holy. The trespass offering is like the sin offering; there is one law for them: The priest who makes expiation with it shall have it.” This is the trespass offering as a portion for the priests.

Leviticus 24:9 says, “It shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, for it is most holy to him of Jehovah’s offerings by fire, a perpetual statute.” The context of this passage shows that this is the bread of the Presence. The bread of the Presence was a portion for the priests.

These verses show us that nearly all the different kinds of offerings became the food for the priest to eat. In the last chapter we saw that the priests mainly take care of the things of Christ. They are not only the ones serving God or interceding for others, but they also take care of the different aspects of Christ, handle Christ, and minister Christ to others. Like the businessman who handles a certain kind of merchandise, so the priests handle Christ as their merchandise. They handle the all-inclusive Christ, the rich Christ, the infinite and unsearchable Christ! They are continually taking care of Christ and ministering Him to others.

Now we see that the living of the priests is also Christ. They not only handle Christ, but they also eat of Him. They must experience Him in a very inward and subjective way. They handle Christ not only as the merchandise for others but also as the food for themselves.

The different offerings typify the different aspects of Christ to us. The priests were destined to live by these offerings, for they ate what they offered, and they ate it properly in a regulated way. At certain times, they ate certain offerings at a certain place. If we had the time, we would see *where* we should enjoy the various riches of Christ. It is very interesting and even marvelous.

In all my travels to so many places, I have noticed that Christians eat in different ways. Yet, how many of them know how to eat Christ? Christians today are very careless about Christ, and many real Christians do not even relate the word *enjoyment* to Christ. They know how to believe in Christ,

follow Christ, know Christ, worship Christ, and preach Christ, but they have never heard about enjoying Christ by feeding upon Him.

In 1958 I ministered in a certain city that we should eat Christ. Following the message, a young man told me, “Brother, your message is good, but you use a wild word. How can you say that we should *eat* the Lord Jesus?” I replied, “If my word is wild, then the Lord’s word is also wild. He says in John 6:57, ‘He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.’ We must eat Him. He also said, ‘I am the bread of life’ (v. 35). Bread is to be eaten.”

The Bread of the Presence

Although we cannot cover all the offerings, let us illustrate what the bread of the Presence means to us. The bread of the Presence is one of the foods for the priests, and we have seen that it signifies Christ as our life and life supply. To handle Christ as the bread of the Presence and to minister Him to others, we must first enjoy and feed on Him as the bread of the Presence. This means that we must experience Christ as the inner life and the life supply by feeding on Him.

Not many Christians know how to feed on Christ. We must learn to feed on Him, to take Him in, and to enjoy Him as our spiritual food. When we minister Christ to others, we also feed ourselves with Him. While we are feeding others, we are fed. Every time I minister, the first one to be fed is myself. After the ministry I am satisfied. I am satisfied by my ministering of Christ to others.

The Trespass Offering

Another example is the trespass offering. The whole trespass offering was to be eaten by the priests. This means that when we minister Christ as the Savior to a lost person, not only will the person be saved, but we will also be fed with Christ while we are ministering Him in this way. By doing this we enjoy Christ within. While we are ministering Christ to others, regardless in what aspect, we are fed and we enjoy Him.

Some brothers have told me, “Brother Lee, we cannot stop preaching the gospel. If we do not minister Christ to the sinners, we are hungry.” Their

spiritual food was the very Christ whom they ministered to others as the trespass offering.

If we are lazy and do not go out to reach others, we are hungry within. But when we go out to minister Christ to others as the trespass offering, we are satisfied. After we return home, we have the sense that we are really full. This is the way to eat Christ. We handle Christ as the trespass offering for others. When Christ as the trespass offering becomes the Savior to others, He becomes the food to us.

What is our food? It must be Christ, not a Christ in doctrine or teaching, but Christ in our ministry. Christ ministered to others as the trespass offering will be *their* Savior and *our* food. This is also true with the sin offering, the peace offering, and the meal offering. I cannot elaborate on all the items, but the principle is clear. The more we handle Christ and minister Him to others, the more we feed upon Him. We cannot minister an objective Christ, but One who is so subjective to us. He as our merchandise is also our food, for we must eat what we sell.

The more I speak about Christ, the more I am satisfied. If this is not true, then I am a false minister. The more I talk with you about Christ and present Christ to you, the more I feed on Christ. While I am ministering Him, I am feeding on Him. He is so subjective to me. I am not selling Christ by my thinking mind but by my enjoying spirit. He is my food. Nothing is so subjective to us as food. The food we eat becomes our very being after a short period of time. We must experience Christ in such a subjective way.

CHRIST AS THE CLOTHING OF THE PRIESTS

“Bring near to yourself Aaron your brother and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may serve Me as a priest—Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons. And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. And you shall speak to all who are wise in heart, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron’s garments to sanctify him, that he may serve Me as a priest. And these are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a girding sash. So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and for his sons that he may serve Me as a priest.

“They therefore shall take the gold and the blue and the purple and the scarlet strands and the fine linen, and they shall make the ephod of gold thread, of blue and purple and scarlet strands, and fine twined linen, the work of a skillful workman. It shall have two shoulder pieces joined to its two edges, so that it may be joined together. And the skillfully woven band, which is on it for its fastening, shall be like it in workmanship, of one piece with it; of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet strands and fine twined linen. 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. With the work of an engraver in stone, 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...

“You shall make settings of gold, and two chains of pure gold; you shall make them twisted, a corded work, and you shall put the chains of cords on the settings. 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, of blue and purple and scarlet strands, and of fine twined linen you shall make it. It shall be square and doubled; a span its length and a span its width. And you shall enclose in it enclosures of stones, four rows of stones: the first row shall be a row of a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; and the second row, a carbuncle, a sapphire, and a diamond; and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row, a chrysolite, and an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be set in gold in their enclosures. And the stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel, twelve, according to their names; they shall be like the engravings of a signet, each according to its name, for the twelve tribes...

“You shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron’s heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually” (Exo. 28:1-11, 13-21, 30).

Christ as our food is the very content of our being. He is not only our satisfaction but also our content. Furthermore, Christ is also the garments of the priests. These are their manifestation or outward expression. We must experience Christ in an inner way and express Him in an outer way. We are not merely to eat of Christ but also to wear Christ, putting Him on as our

garment. We are not only to enjoy Christ but also to express and magnify Him. Christ must be manifested through us and magnified upon us! He is our inner satisfaction and our outer expression.

Four or five things are very important concerning the garments of the priests. First, they have a robe made of white linen to cover the whole body. Then they have the ephod, which is something like a vest upon the robe. Next, they have a turban, which is a head piece, something like a crown. Finally, upon their shoulders are two precious stones, and upon their breast is the breastplate, with twelve precious stones and the Urim and the Thummim.

The Robe

The robe is Christ Himself as our righteousness. We are under His covering. Most of us know this as a doctrine, but I am afraid that very few know it in an experiential way.

What I mean is this: Suppose we meet a brother in the church who is very meek, very humble, just, and good. But he was born as a meek, humble, just, and good person. Before he was saved, he was also meek, humble, and good. Now in the church some may say that he is such a good brother, but before he was saved, he was just as good as he is now. Does he have Christ as his robe? No. All he has is his own righteousness, his natural goodness. You cannot discern that Christ is expressed as his meekness, as his humility, or as his justice. The sweet savor of Christ cannot be sensed in his behavior. You may say that he is a good brother with a good character, but the flavor or sweet odor of Christ in his outward behavior is missing. In the meekness of some Christians there is a real sense of the sweetness of Christ. The flavor of Christ is definitely sensed in their meekness. Sometimes in a brother's humility you can only sense pride, not Christ. Do you see the difference?

Our robe must be Christ expressed as our righteousness. We must not express our meekness, our humility, our rightness, our goodness, but Christ as all these things. We must not know meekness, but Christ! We must not know humility, but only Christ! This is a profound lesson for us to learn. We must learn to reject our natural meekness, humility, and rightness; then Christ will have a free way to flow out of us to be expressed as our covering.

The Ephod and the Turban

The ephod is made of five main items: fine twined linen, gold, blue, purple, and scarlet. This is very interesting. Linen signifies the purity of Christ; gold, the divine nature of Christ; blue, the heavenly nature of Christ; scarlet, the redemption of Christ; and purple, the kingship and dignity of Christ. All these things must be Christ wrought into us and expressed through us. Others should see upon us the purity of Christ, the divine nature of Christ, the redemption of Christ, the heavenly nature of Christ, and the kingship, headship, dignity, and authority of Christ. They will see these things in us when these aspects of Christ have first been wrought into us. Then we will have a rich and beautiful expression of Christ.

The turban is Christ as our boast and glory. He is our turban, our crown, our head covering; He is our boast and glory. We have nothing to boast of except Christ. When Christ as all these things has been wrought into us, these things will emanate from us as the very expression of Christ.

The Shoulderplate and Breastplate

The garments of the priests also contain the aspect of building, signified by the precious stones built into the gold. The first stone mentioned is onyx, and the last one is jasper. This is very interesting, for in chapter 2 of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, the onyx stone is in the flow of the river in the garden of Eden. Then in Revelation, the last book, the main precious stone is jasper. Revelation 4 tells us that the One who sits on the throne looks like jasper. The manifest appearance of God is likened to jasper in the Bible. Jasper is the very expression of God. Jasper and onyx, as well as many other precious stones, are built up in that golden city, the New Jerusalem, which is the dwelling place of God. Thus, on the garments of the priests is the miniature of the New Jerusalem. In the settings of gold on the breastplate, the stones are built up together as a body. This simply means that when Christ is fully wrought into us, He will be expressed through us, and in this expression of Christ is the building of the church.

We must eat of Christ and enjoy Him again and again, taking Him as our food all the time. Then we will eventually be filled and saturated with Christ, and He will become our outward expression and manifestation. In this manifestation all the precious stones are set in enclosures of gold. These precious stones represent the transformed ones, who are set in the golden

nature of the divine life. This is the building. All are related to one another and built up together as a Body by experiencing Christ in different ways.

The Urim and Thummim

There are also the Urim and the Thummim upon the breastplate. *Urim* means “light,” and *Thummim* means “perfecters.” When the breastplate is built up with all the precious stones set into the golden enclosures and related as one, it then, with the Urim and Thummim, becomes the means of God’s revelation for His people. It is through this that God reveals to His people His mind concerning them.

First, we must take Christ in and digest Him as our very content. Second, we must express Him outwardly. Third, in this outward expression is the building up of the Body. Finally, in this building are the “Urim” and “Thummim” as the revelation of the Lord’s mind concerning His people. The Lord’s revelation to His people is through the building (the Body) and in the building (the church).

All these things should not be merely a kind of talking or teaching to us. They must be definitely experienced by us. We must feed on Christ, learning how to take Him in as food. Then we will be filled and saturated with Him. Spontaneously, we will have an outward expression and manifestation of Christ. Others will see all that Christ is among us and upon us. They will see the purity of Christ, the divine nature of Christ, the heavenly nature of Christ, the redemption of Christ, and the kingship of Christ. They will simply see Christ upon us in His real manifestation, and in this manifestation there is the building of the saints, for they will be transformed into the precious stones and built up together in the divine nature. Finally, the revelation will come from the Lord through His built-up Body, showing us His mind about His people.

Now we can realize how much is included in the priesthood; it is very comprehensive. We have only seen a very simple and brief sketch. May the Lord reveal all these things to us in a practical way that we as priests may experience Christ as our inner food and outer clothing.

CHAPTER TEN

THE DWELLING OF THE PRIESTS

“Now the tabernacle you shall make with ten curtains of fine twined linen and blue and purple and scarlet strands; you shall make them with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman...You shall make fifty loops on the one curtain, and you shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is in the second set; the loops shall be opposite one another. And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and join the curtains to one another with the clasps, so that the tabernacle may become one” (Exo. 26:1, 5-6).

Now let us read some verses from the New Testament. “We know that if our earthly tabernacle dwelling is taken down, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For also in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our dwelling place from heaven, if indeed, being clothed, we will not be found naked. For also, we who are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened, in that we do not desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:1-4). In these verses we see the concept that the clothing is the housing. They refer to being clothed with a home, not with a garment. So the housing is the clothing, and the clothing is the housing. Our garments, in a sense, are a house. When we are in the garment, we are in the house.

Now let us read Ephesians 4:22-24: “That you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.” *Put on* in this verse means to be clothed with the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of truth.

To find out what the new man is, we must turn back to Ephesians 2:15-16: “Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace, and might reconcile both in one Body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity by it.” Christ created one new man of both the Jews and the Gentiles.

This proves that the new man is not something individual but something corporate.

We must realize that in the new creation, every one of us is not a complete man. In the new creation each of us is a member, not a man. The whole universe has only one new man, created of the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers. All believers, whether Jewish or Gentile, are members of this one unique man. Thus, no one should consider himself a complete man, but only a member. If any of us is a complete man, he can be independent, but if he is a member, he cannot be independent. Look at our hands and our feet. These members can never be independent. They must be dependent upon the body.

The one new man in verse 15 is a corporate, universal man; it is the very Body of Christ that was reconciled in one Body to God in verse 16. We must be very clear about the definition of the new man. Sometimes we think that the new man is just the new creation. Some of the translations of Ephesians 4:24 even render “new man” as “new nature.” But according to the book of Ephesians itself, the definition of the new man is the very Body of Christ.

When we are clear that the new man is the Body of Christ, we can understand that to put on the new man simply means to put on the Body, and to put on the Body means to be clothed with the Body. The Body must be our clothing. In other words, we must “wear” the Body. The Body is our clothing and our covering. This is what it means to put on the new man.

EXPRESSION THROUGH ENJOYMENT

We have seen that the first item of the living of the priests is to feast on Christ. This means to take Christ in. Day by day we have at least three meals in which we do nothing but take in food. Whatever we take into us by our eating eventually becomes a part of us. In the past we have taken in much chicken, eggs, meat, potatoes, and many other things. Where are the chickens now? Where are the eggs? We are now both the chickens and the eggs. That is, our physical being has become a composite of all the things we have ever eaten. The living of the priesthood is primarily to take in Christ. If we are to realize the priesthood, we must know how to take Christ in day by day. Then whatever we eat of Him will become our very constituent.

Second, we have seen that the Christ whom we have taken in becomes our manifestation. This is our clothing. The food we take in is the inner supply, and the clothing we wear is the outer expression of what we have taken in. If we feed on Christ all day, eventually He will be expressed from within us. The more we eat of Him, the more He will be expressed, and this expression is the clothing. As we enjoy Christ daily, we will express Him. What we enjoy is Christ taken within, and what we express is Christ manifested without. This manifestation is the heavenly, spiritual clothing.

The clothing of the priest is mainly composed of five different elements: gold, fine linen, blue, purple, and scarlet. The expression of Christ through us is manifested in these five ways. First of all, Christ should be manifested through us as the gold, which represents the divine nature. We must give others the impression that we have in us something better than humanity. This is the gold, the divine life, the nature of God Himself expressed through us. The expression of Christ in our daily living must have these elements. Others will realize that we are not only human beings, but that we have something higher, something which no human words can express. This spiritual gold that is in us is not our natural behavior but something divine, something of the nature of God.

Next, our expression of Christ must also have the fine linen, which signifies the pure righteousness of Christ. We must be so pure, so righteous, and so just. If Christ is in us and we enjoy Him as our life, we will be so honest, so righteous, and so pure. All human beings, even the most moral ones, are not so pure or so just. But the priesthood is a real expression of honesty, justice, and righteousness.

The priesthood must also express the blue, which signifies heavenliness. We are living on the earth, but we are not earthly persons; we are heavenly persons. We are persons of the heavens and even persons in the heavens. Does our living have the expression of the heavenly blue?

There must also be the expression of the purple. In ancient history purple was the royal color. All those in a royal family, especially the king, wore purple clothing. Thus, purple signifies royalty and kingly dignity. In our expression of Christ, we must have this kingly dignity. We should not be so mean or common. Sometimes when we deal with others, we lose our dignity.

But if we live by Christ, we will have the spiritual, divine dignity expressed through us.

Then there is the scarlet. After I had been with Brother Watchman Nee for quite a long time, I noticed that whenever we prayed together, he would always utter some deep words about applying the blood of the Lord Jesus. Even at the meeting of the Lord's table, he uttered many deep words to apply the blood. I always had the sense of the scarlet when I was around him. Whenever he prayed, he always applied the blood of the Lord Jesus. Why? Because he knew redemption.

We can never come to the Lord without applying the blood. Not one of the priests could get into the Holy Place without the blood. Regardless of whether we sense that we are sinful or not, we are still sinful, for we are still in the old nature, and we are still walking on this dirty earth. In many ways, consciously and unconsciously, we have been defiled and therefore need to apply the blood. We must always be showing others that we cannot live without the scarlet color, meaning that we cannot live without the Lord's redeeming blood. In our expression of Christ we must give others the impression that we always have the realization that we are sinful, defiled, and dirty. We always need the cleansing of the blood and must give others the sense that we live by the blood. We can never enjoy Christ as our life without applying the blood to cleanse us and to cover us.

In the expression of Christ we must have the divine nature, the purity and righteousness, the heavenliness, the kingly dignity, and the redemption. These are the items in the expression of Christ. If we express Him, we will express Him as all these items.

If we are ones who are feasting on Christ and enjoying Him day by day, spontaneously we will give others the impression of the divine nature, the purity, the heavenliness, the kingship, and the redemption of Christ. When others contact us or pray with us, they will sense that we are full of the divine nature. They will sense in us the righteousness and the heavenliness. The more they talk with us, the more they will feel that they are in the heavens. Our presence will simply become the heavens to them. When we are filled with Christ, we will express the heavenliness of Christ. Finally, others will also sense in us His kingship and redemption. This garment of the priest is the glorious expression of Christ.

BUILDING THROUGH EXPRESSION

It is very interesting to notice that the garments of the priests are composed of the same materials as the tabernacle. Their garments were made of gold, fine linen, blue, purple, and scarlet; the tabernacle was also made with gold, fine linen, blue, purple, and scarlet. This simply means that what the priests wore was their abiding place. Their clothing was their housing.

The church is just the expression of Christ from within so many saints. Christ expressed from within us all is the church. If we do not have this expression of Christ, we do not have the church. In a sense we may rightly say that we are the church, but the real church life is the expression of Christ. So the clothing of the priests was their housing and their dwelling place. Their clothing was the same as the tabernacle, and the tabernacle was the place where they dwelt.

We must realize that the priests today are God's dwelling place, which was typified by the tabernacle. First Peter 2:5 says, "You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood." We have pointed out previously that the word *priesthood* here means a body of priests. It does not mean the office of the priests. *Priesthood* in Hebrews 7:11 means the office of the priests, but here in 1 Peter 2:5, it means the body of priests. The holy priesthood is a spiritual house, a corporate body of priests. When we are filled and saturated with Christ, expressing Him in an accurate and full way, we will become God's dwelling place. We will *become* the tabernacle according to type. The tabernacle could never be separated from the priests. Where there are the priests, there is always the tabernacle, and where there is the tabernacle, there are always the priests. The priests go with the tabernacle, and the tabernacle goes with the priests. The New Testament tells us clearly that the priests are the spiritual house—the tabernacle.

How do we consider ourselves? Do we consider ourselves to be a proper dwelling place of God—a spiritual house? As we have mentioned, the tabernacle is an expression of gold, fine linen, blue, purple, and scarlet. If we say that we are God's dwelling place, God's tabernacle, do we express the gold? Do we have the purity? Do we express the blue, the purple, and the scarlet? If not, then what do we express? Is it something natural? Is it something of the flesh? If we express something natural, something of the flesh, we are not a suitable tabernacle of God. We must only have the expression of gold, pure

linen, blue, purple, and scarlet. Then we are qualified to be God's spiritual house—the tabernacle. When we express Christ in such an adequate way, we have put on the new man. That is, we have put on the church; we are clothed with the Body of Christ.

Let us check ourselves: If we say that we are the Body of Christ, what do we express? Do we express the divine nature or something else? I am afraid that many times, in contrast to expressing the divine nature, we express the self and even the flesh, which is worse. Many times we express the self, the flesh, the soul, the old man, and the natural life, instead of the gold of the divine nature. When we express all these negative things, we are simply outside the church life.

If we say that we are the Body of Christ, we must check what we express. Do we express sin and wickedness or the purity and righteousness of Christ? Do we express worldliness rather than heavenliness? We say that we are the Body of Christ, but I fear that others can see only worldliness in our daily life. How then can we say that we are the Body of Christ? What we express is not the same as what the curtains of the tabernacle express. The curtains of the tabernacle express all the beauties of what Christ is.

Do we express the kingship as seen in the purple? Sometimes we just express that we are babies, so weak and low. Then what about the redemption? I fear that many dear brothers and sisters do not sense that they are dirty. I have been watching and listening to so many of the saints pray, and not many of them deeply sense that whenever they contact the Lord, they need the blood. Not many realize that they are defiled and filthy. We lack the consciousness of being sinful before the Lord. In a sense we are self-righteous. We do not sense that we are dirty, but we always feel that we are right. How we need to express the Lord's redemption.

We must express *all* that Christ is. Then we not only become a part of the tabernacle; we become the tabernacle. It is then that we are not homeless. Unless we come to this point, regardless of how many years we have been a Christian, we are always homeless. We do not have rest, because we do not have a proper and genuine church life. When we are filled with Christ and express Him in a proper way, we become part of the church, and the church is always with us. Then we have a place to rest, to dwell, and to abide.

This is not doctrinal. To argue doctrine means nothing and brings us nowhere. We must check the reality. Do we really sense that we have a spiritual home all the time? Do we always have this sense? Praise the Lord, I have a spiritual home, and that home is the genuine church life of which I am a part. The new man becomes my clothing, and this clothing is my housing. When I wear this new man, I am just at home. Here I have rest, here I can dwell, and here I can abide. My whole life is now at home. Where are you? Are you at home? Do you have a spiritual home? I can say that for so many years I have been enjoying the home life, and this home is the genuine church life. But whenever I express something of the self, something of the soul, or something of the flesh, immediately I am outside the church life. I just become homeless.

It is only when we are filled with Christ by enjoying Him that we express Him as these five aspects. In this way we have the clothing, and the clothing becomes our housing. We have the church life, we are a part of the church life, and we are at home. We can now rest and abide in this expression.

In the previous chapter we mentioned that upon the garment of the priest is the building. All the precious stones, representing the people of God, are set into the enclosures of gold. They are built up *with* the divine nature, and they are related to one another *in* the divine nature. Therefore, they are the Body, the church. It is at this time that we will serve in a corporate way. First Peter 2:5 tells us that when we as living stones are built up as a living, spiritual house, as a holy body of priests, as a priesthood, then we will offer up spiritual sacrifices unto God. Not until then will we be able to serve the Lord adequately in a corporate way. We say that we should not be independent in the service of the Lord, but regardless of how much we say it, people will still be independent because they were born independent. Teaching by itself can never help people to be dependent, because dependency comes through a transforming work. When we are transformed into the image of Christ and express Him fully, automatically our individualism will be gone. Only then will we be in the coordination and relatedness of the Body.

Regardless of how many messages I may give telling others to be dependent on, coordinated with, and related to others, nothing can be worked out. It is only when we feed on Christ and become filled and saturated with Him that we will be transformed into His image. Then we will express Him in the five ways we have mentioned. By this time, our individualism will be gone.

Spontaneously, we will be one with the saints in the genuine church life. This is the Body of Christ, and this is the building of the church.

The building of the stones set into the gold is upon the garment of the priests. This garment is the very expression of Christ from within the priests who enjoy Christ as their food. While we enjoy Christ as our nourishment and food and digest Him, He will be saturating and permeating us so that we may express Him. Then this expression becomes our garment, and upon this garment there is the building of the saints as the precious stones set into the gold. Thus, the building up of the church is in the expression of Christ, and this expression comes out of the enjoyment of Christ.

Therefore, the enjoyment of Christ is very basic. We all must learn how to enjoy Christ. This is why we have been stressing again and again that the church life does not merely come out of teachings or gifts. Regardless of how many teachings we learn or how many gifts we have, merely by these we cannot have a genuine church life. The real church life only comes out of the true enjoyment of Christ within. We must enjoy Him at all times in all things. We must not take this as a doctrine, but as a daily practice. All day we must feed on the Lord and take Him as our nourishment. Out of this enjoyment we will have the “garment” as the expression of Christ. It is in this expression that there is the building up of the saints who are set into the divine nature. This is the only way for the building of the church.

Our eyes must be opened to see these things thoroughly. History tells us clearly that there is no other way. For one and a half centuries many teachings have been taught in Christianity, but divisions have always been the result. Doctrines have brought divisions into Christianity. Within the past several decades, the Pentecostal gifts have mostly resulted in confusion. This is why we believe that in these last days the Lord is going to recover the priesthood of the inner life. It is not a recovery of teachings or gifts, although they do have a certain value, but it is the recovery of the church life through the priesthood. The church life through the priesthood does not come out of mere teachings or gifts, but out of the inner life.

Every moment we must be found enjoying Christ so that an expression of Him might emanate from within us. Then, in this expression, we will have the building up of the Body, and in this building of the church we will have the revelation of the Urim and the Thummim to tell us the right way to go on with

the Lord. This is the light and the perfection. The enlightenment and the completeness come out of this building up of the saints who are transformed into the Lord's image and set into the divine nature. May the Lord bring us into such a priesthood.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PRIESTS' RELATIONSHIP TO THE ARK

“You shall put into the Ark the Testimony [the law] which I shall give you. And you shall make an expiation cover of pure gold: two and a half cubits shall be its length, and one and a half cubits, its width. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of beaten work you shall make them, at the two ends of the expiation cover. And make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; of one piece with the expiation cover you shall make the cherubim on its two ends. And the cherubim shall spread out their wings above the cover, covering the expiation cover with their wings, with their faces toward one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the expiation cover. And you shall put the expiation cover on top of the Ark, and into the Ark you shall put the Testimony that I shall give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the expiation cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, of everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel” (Exo. 25:16-22).

Then let us read Hebrews 9:3-5: “After the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar and the Ark of the Covenant covered about everywhere with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna and Aaron’s rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant, and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the expiation cover, concerning which it is not now the time to speak in detail.” “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...Christ Jesus; whom God set forth as a propitiation place” (Rom. 3:23-25). Christ has been set forth as a propitiation place.

THE ARK AND THE TABERNACLE

We have seen that the priesthood is the tabernacle. The body of priests is the very dwelling place of God. First Peter 2 tells us clearly that the holy priesthood is the spiritual house. We as priests are the dwelling place of God, but we need to be built up and coordinated. We must be coordinated and built up before we can be a body. The Body is not a scattered number but coordinated members built up to be the dwelling place of God.

In this chapter we must see something about the Ark. The three main categories concerning the priesthood are the offerings, the tabernacle, and the Ark. We have seen that the offerings are the different aspects of Christ as our enjoyment. We have also seen that the tabernacle itself is the outward manifestation of this enjoyment. Now we need to see something about the Ark.

The Ark is the content of the tabernacle. Without the Ark, the tabernacle is empty. In the history of the Old Testament, there was a time when the Ark was absent from the tabernacle. Due to the degradation of God's people, the Ark was captured and taken away. Then when Solomon became king, he went to Gibeon and there received a dream from God in which he saw that an empty tabernacle without the Ark was not good enough (2 Chron. 1:3-13; 1 Kings 3:15). So he returned to Jerusalem and went to the place where the Ark was. At that time the Ark was separate from the tabernacle. This means that the tabernacle had lost its content, for the Ark was the content of the tabernacle.

Christ is the very content of the church life. If we only have the church life without Christ, our church life is empty. The church life is the expression of Christ, and Christ must be the content of the church life. The church life can only come into existence out of the enjoyment of Christ. First, the priests must enjoy all the offerings, all of which typify the different aspects of Christ. This means that the priests must enjoy Christ, take Christ in, feed on Christ, and be filled with Christ. Then they will be saturated with Christ and will be one with Him. From this saturation, something will be expressed. From the outworking of this indwelling Christ comes the expression of the church life.

The church life is not just a kind of religious organization or a social group of Christians. The real church life is the expression of Christ. It is the outward expression of the indwelling Christ. The church life is not a kind of human society or religious organization, but is Christ expressed through so many Christians. Thus, the church life comes out of the enjoyment and experience of Christ. The more we experience and enjoy Christ and are filled and saturated with Him, the more we will have the church life as the expression of Christ. Since the church life comes out of the reality of Christ Himself, the content of the church must be Christ.

We know that in the tabernacle, the Ark was in the Holy of Holies. This Ark was the content of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle was the very expression of this Ark. As we have seen, in the outer court we enjoy Christ at the altar as the trespass offering, the sin offering, the peace offering, the meal offering, the burnt offering, the heave offering, and the wave offering. But this is not all, for Christ is much more than this. In the Holy Place we enjoy Christ at the table of the bread of the Presence as life and the life supply; we enjoy Him at the lampstand as the light of life; then at the golden altar we enjoy Him as the sweet acceptance to God.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE LAW

But this is still not all. There is also the Ark in the Holy of Holies. The Ark originally contained only one thing: the law which was the testimony of God. Most Christians have a poor concept of the law. They consider the law as ten items we must obey or else we will be condemned. But this is wrong, for the law is the testimony of God. This means that the law is the very definition and explanation of God. The law gives us a picture of what God is. Without the law, no one can know what kind of God we have. It is by the law that we have a complete picture of God.

The law shows us that God is a God of holiness, a God of righteousness, a God of love, and a God of light. The Ten Commandments reveal to us that God is such a God. The law is the picture that portrays such a holy and righteous God of love and light. No one has ever seen God, but the law describes and defines Him. Therefore, the law is the testimony of God, and as the testimony and definition of God, it was put into the Ark. This means that all that God is was put in Christ.

Suppose I take a photograph of you. This is a kind of testimony. If someone asks me about your appearance, I will show them your picture. The picture is your testimony. We must realize that the law is God's testimony, which means that it is God's definition, God's explanation. So when the law is put into the Ark, it signifies that all that God is, is now in Christ.

The Ark typifies Christ because it was made of two things: *wood* overlaid with *gold*. Wood signifies the human nature of Christ, and gold signifies His divine nature. He is a man, and He is also the very God. He is the God-man as the Ark made of gold and wood. In this golden, living One there is the

testimony of God. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily (Col. 2:9). This is typified by the law as the testimony being placed into the Ark. Thus, in the Ark is the fullness of God, and in the tabernacle is the Ark. The Ark is the content of the tabernacle, and the fullness of God is the content of the Ark. This means that God is the content of Christ, and Christ is the content of the church life.

What is the content of the local church where you are? Is it Christ, or something else? This is the problem. The content of the church life must be Christ, not anything else, and the content of Christ is the fullness of God.

THE CHERUBIM OF GLORY

Within the Ark is the law which is the description of God, and upon the Ark are the two cherubim. These two cherubim are called the cherubim of glory. If we read the Bible carefully, we will see that glory is God expressed, God manifested. When God is manifested, it is glory. It is like the light of electricity that is expressed when it shines out. Without the shining, electricity is just electricity. But by shining, electricity becomes the light, and the light is the glory, that is, the expression and the manifestation of the electricity. Thus, glory is God manifested and God expressed. Within the Ark is all that God is, and upon the Ark God is expressed. Within, God is contained; without, God is expressed as the glory.

Have you ever looked at Jesus as He is portrayed in the four Gospels? He is the real Ark. Within Him is the content of God and all that God is, and upon Him God is expressed and manifested as the glory. Within Jesus is all that God is, and upon Jesus is the manifested God. Thus, within Him there is the law, and upon Him there are the two cherubim. This does not mean two kinds of glory, but a testimony of glory. Two is the number meaning testimony. The two cherubim testify to the expression of what God is.

Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We are sinful, so we are short of God's glory. The glory of God is so high. We may have some goodness, but compared with God's glory our goodness is short. There may be nothing sinful in our goodness, and we may feel that we are right. Even if this is true, we are still short of God's glory. We may say that we have never hated others, but we are short. We may say that we love others,

but we do not love others as much as God does. Our love is short of God's love.

In China there were many disciples of Confucius who claimed to be the best beings on earth. However, when some of them read the four Gospels, their eyes were opened to see who Jesus is. Then they prostrated themselves on the floor and confessed, "Lord, I am so short; I am good, but my goodness is so short of Yours."

The living of Jesus manifested God. The daily walk of Jesus was the very expression of God. This is the glory—God manifested and God expressed. All human beings are short of this glory. We are good, but can we compare with Jesus? We love others, but can we compare our love with that of Jesus? When we do, we see how short we are. This *shortage* is sin, because man was made in the image of God for the purpose of expressing God. Man was made for God's glory; that is, man was made to express God. To be short of God's glory and manifestation means that we are sinful.

I am afraid that, if before reading this chapter someone were to ask us if we were sinful, we would say that we are not so sinful. We are not hateful, and we are not wrong in so many things. But if we have light to see how short of God's glory we are, we will see how sinful we are. When we see the daily living of Jesus as recorded in the four Gospels, we see what glory is and how short of it we fall. Jesus is the Ark, and upon Him are the cherubim whose glory condemns us. This glory testifies of all that God is, but it condemns us. Even if we are good and loving, we are still condemned because our love is short of God's glory.

The glory must be expressed in the church all the time. The church must be God manifested and God expressed—this is the measurement. The standard of morality is not the measurement of the church life. The measurement of the church life is God manifested. Yes, we may love, but we love by ourselves, in ourselves, with ourselves, and for ourselves. Everything is for ourselves. This kind of love is short of God's glory. God can never be manifested in this kind of love. Maybe we are so humble, but we are humble by ourselves, in ourselves, and for ourselves. This kind of humility can never express God. The church life needs a divine love that expresses God, not a human love. It must be the kind of love that has God in it. The church must have the two cherubim

as the manifestation of God's glory, and this glory is continually watching and finding the shortages.

Most of us do not have much conviction that we are sinful. But suppose the Lord were to come to us and manifest His glory. All of us would fall to the floor and ask for something to cover us. We would have the sense that we are so short of His glory. Compared with others, we may be better. They are humble, but we are more humble. If they love, we can love more. But we cannot compare with God's glory. When God's glory is present, there is no comparison. Our shortage will come to the surface, and we will sense how sinful we are. We are sinful, not because we are evil or dirty, but because we are short of God's glory.

THE BLOOD ON THE EXPIATION COVER

The content of the church life is Christ, and this Christ is filled with all that God is. Upon Him there is the manifestation of God as the glory, continually testifying, watching, and finding our shortages according to the inner testimony. The two cherubim are upon the Ark watching according to the testimony (the law) within the Ark. When we come to contact the Lord, these two cherubim look at us and check us according to the Ten Commandments. Immediately, we are found short. We cannot stand before the Ten Commandments with the watching eyes of the two cherubim. But thank the Lord! Under the watching eyes of the cherubim, upon the expiation cover is the sprinkling of the blood. This sprinkled blood covers the Ten Commandments. When we plead the blood, it speaks for us.

We must realize that in the church life, man's morality is not the standard. Human goodness, human behavior, or human conduct can never be the standard—God's glory is the only standard. Regardless of how good we are, we can never compare our goodness with God's glory. This means that we must have an absolute renunciation of what we are. We can never boast about what we are. Even our love is short compared with God's glory. Our love must be forgiven. I believe we have asked the Lord to forgive us for our hatred, but have we ever asked the Lord to forgive us for our love? We must even ask the Lord to forgive us for our goodness.

The content of the church life is not according to the standard of human conduct; it is absolutely according to God's glory. This is Christ as the Ark. No

human being can stand at the expiation cover but by the blood. Over the blood there are the watching eyes of the cherubim, and under the blood there is the testimony (the law) of God. The only way we can stand before the testimony of God and the watching eyes of the cherubim of God's glory is by the precious blood.

THE HIDDEN MANNA AND THE BUDDING ROD

But this is something too negative; it is still not enough. According to the Old Testament, only the law is in the Ark, but in the New Testament book of Hebrews two more things are added: the hidden manna and the budding rod. One is the supply, and the other is the strength and power. The manna is the supply, and the budding rod is the resurrection power. Today in Christ, there is not only the testimony of God demanding and testifying, but there is also the supplying manna and the strengthening resurrection power.

When we, as members of the church, come to contact the Lord, immediately our consciences sense the watching eyes of the cherubim, checking according to God's glory and condemning us by the testimony (the law) of God. We thank the Lord for the blood that is sprinkled on the expiation cover. We must not only see this but also see that within the Ark are the hidden manna and the budding rod. There is the bountiful supply and the resurrection power. So we must say, "Hallelujah! As to my shortage I have the blood, but I also have the hidden manna nourishing, supplying, and imparting all of the riches of Christ into me, and I have the resurrection power within—budding, sprouting, and strengthening."

This is not something outward. It is many times hidden. The tabernacle is hidden in the outer court, the Holy of Holies is hidden behind the Holy Place, the Ark is hidden in the Holy of Holies, the golden pot is hidden in the Ark, and the manna is hidden in the pot. It is so hidden. This hiding place is now our human spirit, deep within us. Christ as our rich and bountiful supply is not the open manna, such as the manna in the wilderness. This hidden manna is not so open and public. It is deeply hidden in the golden pot. Since gold signifies the divine nature, the manna is something hidden in the nature of God. We must experience Christ to such an extent—so deeply in the spirit and in the divine nature of God, and when we enjoy this hidden manna, we will also partake of the budding rod as our resurrection power.

The content of the church life is Christ, but it is not a Christ so superficial or outward. It is a deep and inward Christ, a Christ full of all that God is, and a Christ who is the hidden supply and the resurrection power within us. Such a Christ is the very content of the church life. It is not simply Christ as the trespass offering, the sin offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, or the burnt offering. It is not even Christ as life and the life supply, the light of life, and the sweet incense to God. It is much more. It is a Christ who is the very embodiment of God Himself. In Him is all that God is. He is the embodiment of God, and He is the very content of the church life. He is the embodiment of God, and He is the deeper, inner, hidden enjoyment to us as well as the resurrection power. This is the content of the church life and the very testimony of God.

The church life which God is seeking today is something like the tabernacle that is the dwelling of the priesthood. It is not something outward but something deeply inward. If we would live in the deep part of our spirit, eventually we would have a kind of life that would correspond to God's glory. Then our walk would be the testimony of God. This is the church life the Lord is seeking today. He is not after a kind of organization, religious body, or human society. He is seeking a body of priests who are saturated and permeated with Him to become the testimony of God and the content of the church life.

The priest's position holy is;
He sacrifices e'er to God,
Beholds His beauty, incense burns
Of prayer before the Lord.

Let us the incense burn
Of prayer before the Lord;
The lamp we'd light, through day and night
Our praise to Him outpoured.

No natural light, but just the lamp
Within the holy place gives sight;
Whene'er the priest the incense burns,
The lamp he too must light.

The grace of God let us extol
And stir our heart sweet praise to sing;
For priests not only light the lamp,
But constant praises bring.

I'll offer prayers as incense burns,
Christ's resurrection bring therein,
God's wish thus meet, His heart give joy,
And I'll rejoice with Him.

I'll read His Word, His light receive,
E'en as the lamp before Him lit,
His holy light illum'ning me
To others I'll transmit.

Unto the Lord His praise I'll sing
As holy priests their songs did raise;
O may my heart be filled with Him
His love and grace to praise.

I'll offer Christ to God in prayer,
I'll read the Word, His light to know,
For all His grace I'll sing His praise,
The Spirit then may flow.

(Hymns, #791)

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE THREE CATEGORIES OF DEALINGS FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

“Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, You shall also make a laver of bronze, with 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. And Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet with water from it; 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, they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they may not die. And it shall be a perpetual statute to them, for him and for his seed throughout their generations” (Exo. 30:17-21).

“Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help” (Heb. 4:16).

“Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies in the blood of Jesus, which entrance He initiated for us as a new and living way through the veil, that is, His flesh” (10:19-20).

In the foregoing chapters we have seen that all the Lord’s work depends upon the priestly ministry. We must keep in mind that when we use the word *priesthood*, it not only means the office of the priests but also the body of priests. All the ministries throughout all generations depend on the priesthood. The army of God in the Old Testament was a priestly army, and even the apostle Paul preached the gospel as a priestly evangelist (Rom. 15:16). He served the Lord as a priest in the gospel of God. These cases show us that all the ministries and works of God depend upon the priesthood.

Now we must see the practical way to be a living priest. I believe that Hebrews 4:16 and 10:19-20 are very familiar to all Christians who read the Bible. We know that we must come to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to meet our timely need. We also know that we must have boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies to contact the Lord by the blood through a new and living way. We know these verses, but have we ever

considered that they describe a priest? According to the Old Testament, only the priests could enter the Holy of Holies and touch the throne of grace.

The throne of grace is the expiation cover, which is composed of three things: the testimony (the law), the two cherubim of glory, and the blood sprinkled on the cover of the Ark under the two watching cherubim. The composition of these three things is the expiation cover. Thus, the expiation cover is the law, the glory, and the blood. The law is the testimony and definition of God. The glory of God convicts us, but the blood of Jesus speaks for us. It is through the blood that the judgment seat of the Lord becomes the expiation cover, and this expiation cover is the very throne of grace.

Only the priests could enter the Holy of Holies and touch the throne of grace. If we are familiar with Hebrews 4:16 and 10:19, we realize that these two verses speak of the priests.

However, any priest who would enter the Holy of Holies must pass through many things. In the outer court there is first of all the altar. Then, between the tabernacle and the altar there is the laver. When a priest is going to enter into the Holy of Holies, he not only has to pass through the altar and the laver but also through the veil. He must pass through these three main things. Do we adequately realize what all these things mean to us?

THE ALTAR

At the altar, it is mainly sin and sins that are dealt with. Many kinds of offerings, such as the trespass offering and the sin offering, must be offered to the Lord there. These offerings are for the purpose of dealing with sin and sins.

Have you fully dealt with the matter of sin? Christians, more or less, are careless with the problem of sin. If the Lord Jesus were to stand before us, we would sense that we are sinful in many respects. In certain things we are wrong with others, and in other things we are wrong with the Lord. We are so careless about our sins. But when we go into the Holy of Holies as a priest, we cannot be careless about sin. Anything sinful must be dealt with at the altar. We must go to the Lord again and again to deal with this matter.

First John 1 tells us that when we stay in the fellowship, we are in the light. Then we see our sinfulness. Our shortcomings and weaknesses are exposed by the light, and we need the cleansing of the blood. We need the altar to deal with our sins.

Most Christians today do not have a deep and full sense of sin and sins. When they pray to the Lord, they do not have the conviction that they are so sinful. Therefore, they do not apply the blood. But one who is really with the Lord is so conscious of sin. He will stay at the altar to deal with his sins by applying the blood of the Lord.

THE LAVER

After the altar, there is the laver. What is dealt with at the laver? It is at the laver that the hands and the feet of the priests are washed. Our feet and hands are dirty from the earthly touch. This is worldliness. If we are going to be real priests and practice the priesthood, sin and sins must be dealt with, and all the worldliness from the earthly touch must be washed away. This washing is not by the blood but by the spiritual water which is the Holy Spirit. The working of the Holy Spirit is the water in the laver.

Today Christians are not only careless about sins, but they are also very careless about worldliness. They may not be so evil or bad, but they are quite worldly.

Do we come to the laver every day to be washed by the Holy Spirit from the earthly and worldly touch? How do you feel when you go to the department store? Do you feel so holy and heavenly after a certain period of shopping? The earthly touch dirties us, not by sinful things but by worldliness.

We must apply the blood to deal with our sin and sins, and we must apply the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit to get rid of all of the earthly touch so that we may be cleansed for the Lord's service.

THE VEIL

But this is not all. Eventually, we come to the veil, which is the flesh. To practice the priesthood, these three things must be dealt with: sin and sins, the world, and the self. It is not so easy to understand what the self is. Do not think that the self is so bad. Many times the self is really good. The flesh

mentioned in Hebrews 10:20 is the flesh of the Lord Jesus. There is nothing bad about Him, but even His flesh had to be rent and broken. Otherwise, His flesh would become a veil preventing anyone from getting into the Holy of Holies. We should not consider whether we are good or bad, right or wrong. Even if we are good and right, this good and right self must be broken.

Once a sister came and tried to persuade me that she was right and her husband was wrong. I would not say one word to confirm that she was right, nor would I say that her husband was wrong. She tried her best to persuade me that she was right. Finally, she challenged me: “Brother Lee, don’t you know what is right and what is wrong?” I said, “Sister, I do not like to talk with you about what is right and what is wrong. But I would ask one question, while you are arguing for yourself and trying your best to persuade me that you are right, do you have the sense that you are in the presence of the Lord? Do you sense that the Lord is standing with you and arguing for you? Tell me the truth. What is your relationship with the Lord while you are arguing in this way? Are you in light, or are you in darkness?”

She was honest and told me, “Brother Lee, I am in darkness. I am not in the light, neither am I in the presence of the Lord.” Then I said, “Sister, since you have told me that you are in darkness and not in the presence of the Lord, what use is it for you to argue?”

With Christians, it is not a matter of whether we are right or wrong. It is entirely a matter of whether we are in the presence of the Lord or not. It is a matter of whether we are in the Holy of Holies or outside it. The more we vindicate ourselves to prove that we are right, the more we are outside the Holy of Holies. Furthermore, we are even outside the outer court. We simply become someone in the street!

Our “right” self must be broken, for it is the veil that keeps us away from the presence of the Lord. To say this is quite easy, and this kind of teaching has been in the church for many years, but I am sorry to say that not many Christians practice it.

THE GENUINE CHURCH LIFE

In all these chapters we have seen that the church is not just a group of Christians meeting together. It is not simply a religious organization or a

social group. The genuine church life is the very expression of Christ from within so many Christians. This expression comes out of these dealings: the dealings with sin and sins, the dealings with the world, and the dealings with the flesh, the self. It is not just to deal with the evil, wrong, and bad things; even the right, humble, and good self has to be dealt with. We ourselves have to go. Without all these dealings it is impossible to have an expression of Christ and the church life.

The genuine church life comes out of the expression of Christ, and the expression of Christ comes out of these dealings. That is why we all must check ourselves. Unless we are willing to deal with all our sin and sins, our worldliness, and our fleshly self, we can never be in the Holy of Holies. Instead, we are outside the priesthood. We may be priests in name, but we are not priests in reality.

How do we know that we are in the priesthood? We know because we have the sense within that we are in the Holy of Holies. Deep within us there is the sense that we are at the expiation cover touching the throne of grace. Many times we are kept away from the throne of grace and the expiation cover simply because we are vindicating ourselves. When we are for ourselves, immediately we are away from the Holy of Holies. I believe that all of us have had this experience. Whenever we are for ourselves, we are outside the Holy of Holies.

On the contrary, the more we repudiate, renounce, and deny ourselves, the more we have the deep sense that we are touching the expiation cover. It is at this time that we receive mercy and find grace. Mercy and grace become like a flow of living water to us. We must not only condemn our bad self, but even more our good self. When we do this, we have the sense that we are in the Holy of Holies.

I have never seen believers who were in the Holy of Holies arguing, debating, and quarreling with one another. Never argue with your husband, your children, your parents, or the brothers and sisters in the church. The more you argue, the more you suffer. You may win the case, but I am sure that you will lose the expiation cover. For a Christian to lose the expiation cover is a real suffering. I am willing to lose all the cases, just as long as I can receive mercy and find grace to meet my timely need—Hallelujah, that is enough! Let others win the case, but give me the expiation cover.

Whenever there is an argument among us, the church life is gone. The church life is in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is like a dove. In the Bible, He is not likened to a tiger, but to a gentle dove. When we argue, quarrel, or fight with others, the dove is gone, the expiation cover is gone, and the presence of the Lord is gone. In the church life the self must be put aside.

Why do I speak so much about arguing? It is simply because arguing is the appetite of the self. Even little children who are only two years old want to argue. To prove how much a person is in the self, see how much he argues. Everyone likes to argue because they are so much in the self, and in arguing, some are very sharp.

Sometimes the brothers and sisters in the meetings even pray in a way to fight one another. As they pray you can sense that some take one side, and others take another side. When this is so, you can be sure that the church life is gone. They have no church life because there is too much self. The veil has never been broken.

THE PRIESTHOOD AND THE HOLY OF HOLIES

I am not talking about doctrine. By His mercy I am trying to impress you that all these dealings with sin, the world, and the self are vital to the church life. Whenever we are with the brothers, the self must be crossed out. The veil has to be torn down and broken. If it is not, there is no way for us to practice the priesthood. The priesthood, strictly speaking, is not in the outer court or the Holy Place but in the Holy of Holies. It is only in the Holy of Holies that the priests can be saturated with the shekinah glory of the Lord. In the outer court the priests are enlightened by the sunshine. In the Holy Place they have the light from the lampstand. But in the Holy of Holies, there is no sunshine and no lampstand. There is no natural light or humanly manufactured light. There is only the Lord Himself as the shekinah glory, shining and saturating them with Himself. When they become the real priests in the priesthood, they have the real expression of Christ.

This expression is not just some kind of good behavior or good conduct. It comes from dealing with sin, the world, and the self. Then we are with the Lord in the Holy of Holies, where nothing as a veil or covering can keep us from being thoroughly saturated with Him. It is not that we are adjusted, corrected, or balanced by Him. Instead, we are saturated with Him. We must

be so saturated with His shekinah glory that He will shine through us. Then His very expression will be upon us, and this expression of Christ is the genuine church life.

For more than twenty years I have been trying to find the best utterance to speak about the genuine church life. I believe that the best expression and definition of the church life is the priesthood. When the priests are full of Christ, then He becomes their garments, their outward expression, and on their garments are all the precious stones built up together as a body. The building up of the Body is in the expression of Christ, and the expression of Christ comes from the inner enjoyment of Christ.

When we have passed through all these dealings, we are spontaneously in the Holy of Holies, and we are at the expiation cover. We receive mercy and find grace. The mercy and grace are the hidden manna and the budding rod. The rich, hidden supply of the all-inclusive Christ and His resurrection power is the mercy and grace, and it is also the flow of the living water. In Hebrews the mercy and grace flow out of the throne of grace, and in Revelation the water of life flows out of the throne of the Lamb. The water of life in Revelation is the mercy and grace in Hebrews. These are the hidden manna and the budding rod, the unsearchable riches of Christ and His resurrection power.

Let us go back to the illustration of arguing. We have made it quite clear that the more we argue, the more we lose the expiation cover. That means that the flow within us is stopped, and we lose the mercy and the grace. In other words, we lose the bountiful, rich supply of Christ and His resurrection power. But suppose we learn the lesson of dealing with the self and crossing out the flesh. Outwardly, we may suffer by not arguing, but inwardly, we are in the Holy of Holies. We are at the expiation cover, and the rich supply of Christ becomes our portion, with the resurrection power strengthening, sustaining, and uplifting us within. We are enjoying the budding rod and the bountiful riches of Christ. He is so sweet, so rich, so strengthening, so satisfying, and so refreshing. This is the mercy and grace.

However, many times when we pray we do not have the sense that we have the inner flow. Instead, we sense that the flow within us is stopped. There is some blockage within, because we are hindered by sins, the world, or the self. We may have done nothing wrong or worldly, but each has his “self.” The self

is the problem. The self is the separating barrier. So we must learn the lesson of crossing out the self.

The first time I spent a few months with Brother Watchman Nee, he said to me concerning a certain matter, "In any case we must lose the case. We should not try to win the case, for if we do, the flow within will be stopped."

Are we going to win the case or keep the flow within? Do not try to win the case with your dear wife. Do not try to win the case with your husband. We may win the case, but we will lose the inner flow. To win the case means to treasure the self. The self has to be crossed out. Do not hate others, but hate the self. Do not hate your husband or wife, but hate your self. Do not hate your brothers or sisters, but hate your self. Do not condemn others, but condemn your self. To say or read this is easy, but when the case or cases really come, it is not so easy. Then we will be exposed. Many times we are simply in the self, not in the Holy of Holies.

I have the sense that if only this one message were engraved into us, all the problems in the church would be gone. When the self is gone, we are not in the wilderness but in the good land of Canaan. When the self is gone, we are in the heavenlies, and the real expression of Christ will be our genuine church life. The church is in the Holy of Holies under the expiation cover, enjoying the bountiful riches of Christ and His resurrection power. We must keep ourselves in the Holy of Holies at the expiation cover, enjoying the hidden manna and the budding rod all the time. Then we will be so rich and powerful in the spirit.

Therefore, to be practical priests is to experience these three categories of dealings. There is no other way. We must have our sins dealt with at the altar by the blood, and our worldliness dealt with by the working and washing power of the Holy Spirit. Then we must have our self dealt with by the cross. Spontaneously, we will be in the Holy of Holies at the expiation cover enjoying Christ as the hidden manna and resurrection power. Here we receive mercy and grace, which flow within us all the time as the water of life. Here we have the expression of Christ and the genuine church life. May the Lord be gracious to us that we may be willing to be such priests.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

HOW TO ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES

“There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God...Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience. 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 and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart...Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help” (Heb. 4:9, 11-12, 16).

“After the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar and the Ark of the Covenant covered about everywhere with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna and Aaron’s rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant” (9:3-4). These verses tell us that within the veil are the golden altar, which is the altar of incense, and the Ark.

Then let us read Hebrews 10:19-20: “Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies in the blood of Jesus, which entrance He initiated for us as a new and living way through the veil, that is, His flesh.”

Now we must read Revelation 5:8-10: “When He [Christ the Lamb] took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which bowls are the prayers of the saints. And they sing a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made them a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign on the earth.” In these verses we have the bowls, which are the prayers of the saints who are the priests.

Let us go on to read Revelation 8:3-5: “Another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with 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. And the Angel took the censer and

filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it to the earth; and there were thunders and voices and lightnings and an earthquake.” These verses tell us that the incense and the prayers of the saints are two different things.

Finally, let us read Ephesians 6:18: “By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit.”

THE HOLY OF HOLIES AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT

We have seen that the priests must pass through three kinds of dealings: the dealing with sins, the dealing with the world, and the dealing with the flesh, or self. After all these dealings, the priests are spontaneously in the Holy of Holies. In this chapter we must see clearly that today, practically speaking, the Holy of Holies is within us. Today the Holy of Holies is our human spirit. As we have pointed out several times, Hebrews 10:19 tells us that we must enter the Holy of Holies today. If the Holy of Holies mentioned in Hebrews 10 is in the heavens, how could we enter it today? Therefore, we must realize that the present Holy of Holies mentioned in this verse must be our spirit. This makes it easy for us to enter.

This is why, in the whole New Testament, there is one verse telling us that we must discern the spirit from the soul (4:12). If we read the context of this verse, we will realize that the spirit, divided from the soul, is the very Holy of Holies where God’s throne of grace is today. Our spirit, divided from our soul, is the place of rest, the land of Canaan. When we are in the soul, we are just like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. A Christian in the soul is a wandering person. There is no rest for him until he enters into the spirit. The rest is not in our soul but in our spirit, and Christ today as the life-giving Spirit is in our spirit. It is only in our spirit that we meet Christ and enjoy Him as the rich land of Canaan.

But we must see the way to enter the Holy of Holies. In other words, how can we enter into our spirit? We have talked much about this matter in the past, but I still doubt whether many brothers and sisters have been brought into the reality of entering into the spirit. Let me ask this question: how long have you been in your spirit today? One thing is definite—it is very easy for us to be outside our spirit. Sometimes we are in the flesh, but most of the time we are in the soul.

Perhaps you may ask what it means to be in the soul. We are in the soul when we are thinking, considering, excited, decisive, or indecisive. According to this measure we can see how long we have been in the spirit throughout the whole day. I am afraid most Christians spend the whole day exercising their mind to consider this thing or that. Sometimes their mind jumps over to one brother; the next hour it jumps over to another brother. All the time they exercise their mind to think and to consider. All day they are just in the mind, traveling, visiting, and even talking with people. Sometimes they are excited, sometimes sorrowful, and sometimes they are just wondering whether to do this or that.

After eight hours of sleep, we have sixteen hours in which we are awake. But in those sixteen hours, how long are we outside the soul? I fear that most Christians are not outside the soul for even five minutes. In other words, throughout the whole day they are only in the spirit about five minutes. Some of us are not in the spirit for even thirty seconds! It is so easy for us to be in the soul and so hard to be in the spirit. Just get involved in a little thinking, and we are outside the spirit. Just touch a little excitement, and we are outside the spirit. Just exchange a little bit of conversation, and we are in the soul.

Therefore, the book of Hebrews tells us that we must press on to enter the land of rest. Where is that rest? That rest is in the regenerated human spirit. All the spiritual blessings and all the riches of Christ are in the spirit. But it is so easy for us to be spontaneously outside the spirit and in the soul. This is why the Bible, especially in the New Testament Epistles, tells us that we must walk in spirit, live in spirit, and pray in spirit. Everything must be done in the spirit. We must learn to exercise ourselves to be in the spirit.

THE INCENSE ALTAR AND PRAYER

But by what way can we be in the spirit? The answer is in the ninth chapter of Hebrews. For years and years I had a problem with this chapter, and it was not only a problem for me but also for many Bible expositors. The problem is in Hebrews 9:3-4. According to the Old Testament, only one thing was in the Holy of Holies—the Ark. The Holy Place had three things: the table of the bread of the Presence, the lampstand, and the incense altar. This is clearly told in Exodus. But Hebrews 9 tells us that the incense altar was behind the second veil. All the Bible scholars cannot solve this problem. Some say that

there might be something wrong in the manuscript, and they insist that *altar* must be translated “censer.” They say that it is not the golden altar but the golden censer. However, all the Greek manuscripts have the word for *altar*. Some expositors say that the altar of the incense was brought inside the veil only on the day of atonement.

But after all these years of practical experience in the priesthood, I believe there is an explanation. That is, at the time of the New Testament, the altar of incense must be behind the veil, because to burn the incense is to pray. Prayer must be in the spirit—“praying at every time in spirit.” Even in the Old Testament, the altar of incense was not too far away from the Holy of Holies. It was very close to the veil. But according to the Greek manuscript of Hebrews 9, the altar of incense is now behind the veil in the Holy of Holies. This tells us that the prayers of the saints today must be in the spirit, not in the soul. They must be in the Holy of Holies, not in the Holy Place. We must believe in the authority of the Holy Spirit who composed the New Testament with the incense altar inside the veil.

The Old Testament had only the law within the Ark, but Hebrews 9 has the law plus the hidden manna and the budding rod within the Ark. It also tells us that the Ark, which typifies Christ, and the incense altar, which signifies our prayer, are both within the Holy of Holies. The only way to get into the Holy of Holies, therefore, is to pray. There is no other way to get into our spirit; we have to pray.

We have been talking about considering, thinking, being excited, and being decisive or indecisive as the real proofs that we are in the soul. If this is true, how can we get out of the soul and into the spirit? There is only one way, and that is by praying. We must forget about our thinking, our considering, our excitement, and our decisions. That is, we must forget about our mind, our emotion, and our will. This is just the soul. Instead, we must turn to the Lord and pray. We know that when we turn to the Lord in prayer, immediately we are in the spirit. The only way for us to get into the spirit is to pray, but not to pray according to our thinking, opinions, concepts, or understanding. We must pray according to what we sense deep within. Then we are in the spirit.

We must spend more time in prayer, because the more we pray, the more we are in the spirit. If we would pray two hours daily, we would be in the spirit for at least two hours. But because we are so used to thinking in our

mind, even while we are praying we leave the spirit and get into the mind again. Even while we are praying, we are exercising our mind!

The Lord's intention is that, after we are regenerated, we must be in the spirit and no longer in the soul. But on the contrary, after being regenerated we are still in the soul, exercising our mind, our wisdom, our knowledge, our understanding, etc. This is why we have so much trouble. The more clever we are, the more trouble we will have. I have noticed that those who are simple do not have as much trouble as the clever ones. The more capable, wise, and clever we are, the more difficult it is to be in the spirit.

In my whole Christian life, I cannot tell you how many clever sisters I have seen. When I was in the Far East, I came to the conclusion that every clever sister has a very hard-dealing husband. There is almost no exception. Every sister who is so clever, highly educated, and adequately cultured has a hard-dealing husband, plus some troublesome little children. So, I would advise the sisters to be simple and not so clever. Just be simple. If you would be simple, it would save you a lot of trouble. Why is this? When you are clever, you are too much in the mind; the Lord gives you a hard-dealing husband and two little ones to cross you and force you to pray. You are so clever and so much in the mind that no one can help you. Not even the Holy Spirit within can help you. You need a hard-dealing husband and two troublesome little ones. Then you will realize that your cleverness does not help. The situation will force you to pray. It will force you to forget about your clever mind and get into the spirit to contact the Lord.

In the Far East, I saw some simple sisters, and their husbands were so easy to deal with. We must believe in God's sovereign hand. If we are too clever and too much in the mind, the Lord's sovereign hand will prepare a proper husband or wife for us. The Lord will always cause us to be in a situation that will bring our cleverness to nought. It will force us not to exercise our mind anymore to meet the situation but to pray. We have been too much in the mind, so we need to be forced into the spirit.

THE PRIESTHOOD AND THE SPIRIT

It is only when we are in the spirit that we are in the priesthood. Only the ones who are in the Holy of Holies are the real priests. When we are outside the spirit, we are outside the priesthood.

Let us suppose that among us there is such a clever sister who loves the Lord, yet she is so capable and so much in her mind. Do you think she could be properly related and built up with others in the church life? Do you think that she could be coordinated with anyone? I am afraid that when she would get into the church life, she would say, “Oh, what poor elders and pitiful deacons!” She could never be built up with others. She would be good as a precious stone to put in the window of a jewelry store for display, but she could never be a precious stone set into the gold on the breastplate of the priest to be built up together with others.

In the church life we must be delivered from the soul, the natural man, and the natural cleverness. The church life requires brokenness. We all love the Lord, but how much have we been built up together? With some there may be a little building, but with many others there is not one bit of building.

Why is this? It is because we are too much in the soul. We are not at all in the spirit. When we pray, it is not to get into the spirit to contact the Lord but to ask the Lord to do something for us. That is all. That is our interpretation of prayer. But the Bible’s definition of prayer is to deny the soul and get into the spirit to contact the Lord. Whether the Lord will do something according to our prayer or not is quite secondary. The primary thing is to be out of the soul and in the spirit. Then we can be filled with the Lord. This is the true meaning of prayer.

To pray means to get into the spirit, and this is the only way to be in the priesthood. We are in the priesthood only when we are outside the soul and in the spirit contacting the Lord to be filled with Him. Only in this way can we be built up with others. The strong will must be broken, the clever mind must be crossed out, and the natural life must be dealt with. Then we will be ones who are seldom in the soul and much of the time in the spirit. Whenever things come to us, we will not simply exercise our mind to consider or think, but we will exercise our spirit to contact the Lord. This is to be delivered out of the soul, to be broken in the outward man, and to forsake and deny the natural life.

This is not just a kind of doctrine. If we do not exercise our spirit in this way, we can never be in the real priesthood, and we will be out of the church life. We may be a group of Christians meeting together, but we will always be

fighting with one another. There will be no building up, no unity, and no real oneness because we are not in the spirit but in the soul.

When we are in the soul, we have many reasons to prove that we are right. I do not believe that there have been many persons who feel that they are wrong in the soul. Most people feel that they are right all the time. If we are not in the spirit, it is rather hard for us to realize that we are wrong. When we are in the soul, even if we are wrong, we will still argue and reason with others that we are right. “Everyone is wrong but me”—this is the feeling of the natural man.

Look at the situation of Christianity today. Where is the real building, the real relatedness, the real coordination, the real unity, and the real oneness? In the Christian bookstores you can find many books written about the unity of the Body, etc. But where is the oneness? It must be in the spirit, not in theory. This is why Ephesians 4 says that we must keep the oneness of the Spirit. When we are outside the spirit, we are outside the oneness; consequently, there can be no realization of the priesthood.

Now we have seen what the priesthood is. The priesthood is a group of saints who are continually forgetting the soul, denying the self, forsaking the natural life, and getting into the spirit to allow the Lord to fill them, saturate them, and flow out of them. This is the priesthood. Only with such a group of priests can there possibly be the real church life, the real building, the real oneness, and the real unity.

The urgent need today is not to try to solve problems by talking, teaching, or certain kinds of understandings. We may make things clearly understood today, but tomorrow something else will be misunderstood. We will always have certain opinions and concepts. What we need is to get out of the soulish, natural man in order to get into the spirit. When we get into the spirit and open ourselves to the Lord, all the problems will be solved, all the arguments will be gone, and all the different opinions will vanish.

The more we are in the soul, the more we have something to say. The more we are in the mind, the more we have some reason to argue. But praise the Lord, the more we are in the spirit, the less we have to say. There is no problem when we get into the spirit. All the quarrels vanish, and we have the unity, the oneness, and the priesthood—the real church life.

By all these lessons we have learned one thing. Whenever the brothers raise some problems, it is better not to argue. Arguing can never bring us anywhere. Instead, we must go into the Holy of Holies and say, “Lord, I am coming to praise You instead of arguing.” When we are in the mind, we are outside the priesthood.

I must repeat again that the priesthood is a group of people living in the spirit and opening themselves to the Lord to be filled with Him. This is the priesthood which builds up the Body, as seen on the breastplate of the garment of the high priest. All the brothers and sisters need to have this experience.

THE INCENSE OF CHRIST AND THE PRAYERS OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Revelation 5:8 tells us that the prayers of the saints are the bowls which contain the incense of Christ. In our prayers, which are the bowls, are the various precious aspects of Christ, which are like the incense. The rich, sweet, precious aspects of Christ are just like the incense added to the prayers of the saints. Then the following verses say that all the saints are priests. To be priests we must offer prayers, and when we do, something of Christ will be added to our prayers. Revelation 8 also says that the rich sweetness and preciousness of Christ are ready to be added to the prayers of the saints.

If we would pray, we would partake of the preciousness and sweetness of Christ. When we pray in the spirit, the riches of Christ are added to our prayer. In Revelation the saints are praying as priests. While they are praying, the sweetness, the preciousness, and the riches of Christ are added to their prayer. This means that while we are praying in the spirit, we will realize the richness and sweetness of Christ. We will enjoy all the different aspects of Christ by praying.

It is here, praying in the spirit, that we will obtain mercy and find grace to meet our timely need. This is the flow from the throne of grace, but we only touch it by praying. We must come into the Holy of Holies and unto the throne of grace by exercising our spirit to pray. When we pray in this way, we realize the mercy and grace and the living water flowing from within. Then we are watered, nourished, and strengthened. We will sense in our spirit the

sweetness and richness of Christ added to our prayer. It is here, praying in the spirit, that we realize the priesthood and enjoy Christ.

Whenever we have a thought, immediately we must turn that thought into prayer in the spirit. Whenever we start to argue with others, we must immediately turn that argument into prayer. If we do, I can assure you that after a certain period of time we will realize that it is pointless to argue. Our concept will be changed. If we talk too much, we must learn to turn our talk into prayer. Even the reading of the Word must be turned into prayer. This is because in reading, we are in the mind; so we must pray-read to bring ourselves into the spirit.

Whenever we have some trouble with others, we must turn that trouble into prayer, because that trouble will keep us in the soul. The more we are in the soul, the more trouble we will have. As long as we are in the soul, our problem will never be solved. It is important to turn the problem into prayer. This means to turn ourselves from the soul to the spirit. It is not just a matter of solving our problems but of turning ourselves from the soul to the spirit.

As long as we are in the spirit, we are in the priesthood, and as long as we are in the priesthood, we have the enjoyment of Christ and are in the building up of the Body. Then we are in the church life. There is no other way. It is only in the priesthood that we enjoy Christ in order to have the proper and genuine church life. So we see that the building up of the church is dependent upon the priesthood.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE WHOLE VISION OF THE SCRIPTURES COVERED BY THE PRIESTHOOD

Genesis 1:26 says, “God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” There are two things related to the creation of man: *image* and *authority*. Man was created in the image of God and was committed with the divine authority of God.

Now let us read Genesis 2:9. As we read it, we must keep in mind these two words, *image* and *authority*. “Out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life.” Here, we have the word *life*. Image and authority are mentioned in chapter 1, and the matter of life is mentioned in chapter 2. Then Genesis 2:10 says, “A river went forth from Eden to water the garden.” In this verse we have the river or, in other words, the flow. The river which waters the garden is the *flow of life*. Then verses 11 and 12 say, “The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that goes around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium [pearl] and onyx stone are there.” In this verse we see the gold, pearl, and onyx, which represent *transformation*.

In these two chapters are the image of God with the divine authority, the life of God, the river as the flow of life, and the transformed materials of gold, pearl, and precious stones. If we put all these words together by the inspiration and anointing of the Spirit, we will see that though man was created in the image of God and committed with the divine authority, he still needs the life of God, and by the flow of this life he will be transformed into gold, pearl, and onyx stone. Later, we will see that all of this is for God's *building*.

God created man according to His image with the intention that man might be His very expression. As he expresses God, man will be in the divine authority. To fulfill this purpose man must have the divine life. Only God's life

can express God and bring man into the divine nature which is signified by the gold. Life always has a kind of nature. Then by the life with this nature man will be transformed into pearl and precious stones which are good for the building of God's house.

BUILDING IN THE DIVINE LIFE AND NATURE

Let us read Exodus 26:29: "You shall overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold as holders for the bars; and you shall overlay the bars with gold." In other words, all the wooden boards are united and put together as one with the gold and in the gold. If we read this chapter carefully, we will see that the forty-eight boards for the tabernacle are all one. They are not one in themselves, for in themselves they would fall apart, but they are one in the gold. All the boards are overlaid with gold, and on the overlaying gold are the golden rings. Within the golden rings are the golden bars which unite all the boards together as one. They are not one in the wooden nature, but in the golden nature. As we have seen, the wooden nature signifies the human nature, and the golden nature signifies the divine nature. We all are the boards. In our natural life, or human nature, we are just parts, but in the divine nature, the gold, we all are one. We are all one in life with the divine nature of God. Here we can see the building of God. All the pieces are united and fitly framed together as a building.

Exodus 28 gives us a clearer view of the building. This is the building upon the garments of the priests. "You shall take two onyx stones...you shall make them enclosed in settings of gold" (vv. 9, 11). These two onyx stones are set into the gold. We know that this means building. Even the onyx stones by themselves are separated, but after being set into the gold, they are built up together. Then verses 13 and 14 say, "You shall make settings of gold, and two chains of pure gold." The function of the chains is to bind the pieces together. This is the building united and built up together by the pure gold.

In Exodus 28:17-20 four rows of twelve precious stones are on the breastplate of the priests. All these stones are set in enclosings of gold. Gold is the setting which holds all the precious stones together. They are united together as one by being set into the gold.

"You shall make on the breastplate twisted chains, a corded work of pure gold" (v. 22). The chains are binding, and the settings are holding. It is by the

binding and holding of the gold that all the pieces are one. So I repeat that the building is on the garments of the priests. It is a building with the gold holding and combining all the precious stones together, and the precious stones come from the transforming work of the divine life. As seen in Exodus 26 and 28, the precious materials are built up together in the divine life and nature.

Now we must read 1 Corinthians 3:11-12: “Another foundation no one is able to lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones...” We must build on Christ with gold, silver, and precious stones.

“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” (12:13). In one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, and now we are drinking one Spirit. Within, the Spirit is the drinking water; without, the Spirit is the baptizing water. In other words, we are in the water to be filled with the water. All believers are in the Spirit to be filled with the Spirit. Outwardly, we are in the Spirit, and inwardly, we are filled with the Spirit. We are all in the Spirit and filled with the Spirit.

Now we must read Ephesians 2:22. “In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.” We are all being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit. We are being built up together in spirit.

Also, 1 Peter 2:5 says, “You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood.” It is not a wooden house or a physical house but a spiritual house, and this spiritual house is the holy priesthood. We are the living stones built up together as a spiritual house—a house in the spirit and filled with the Spirit, and this spiritual house is a holy body of priests separated unto God in the spirit.

Next, we must read Revelation 4:2-3. “Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting; and He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance.” The precious stone jasper signifies the image of God, because God looks like jasper and sardius stone. This verse must be read with Revelation 21:18: “The building work of its wall was jasper...” This means that the wall of the city is in the image of God. It gives the impression of the

appearance of God. When we look at the city, its appearance is just like that of God's image. God looks like jasper, and the wall of the city is built up with jasper, so the appearance of the city must be like the image of God.

“And the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone” (vv. 18-19). Then the twelve different kinds of precious stones are listed. “The twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass” (v. 21). The city is of gold with the precious stones set upon it and with the pearls as gates.

Finally, we must read Revelation 22:1-2: “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, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

I believe that we have gone through the whole Bible from the beginning to the end. The Bible opens with the image of God and with the divine authority. Then there is the tree of life and a flowing river producing precious materials. The flowing of the living water will first of all bring the divine life with the divine nature into us. This life is flowing within us all the time to transform us into gold, pearl, and onyx stone in order that we might be built up together as one in the divine nature. Then we become a spiritual house, a living body of priests to express the image of God under His divine authority. This is the priesthood. Therefore, we can see that the priesthood covers the whole vision of the Scriptures.

THE KEY TO THE VISION

The priesthood is a group of people who realize that God's intention is to mingle Himself with them, so they learn to open themselves to the Lord and to live in the spirit. The best way to learn this lesson is to learn how to pray. It is not to pray in a way of asking the Lord to do something for us but to pray to be filled with the Lord, to be opened to the Lord, and to let the Lord saturate us and fully possess us. Then we will be fully in the spirit.

When we are fully in the spirit, we will be one with all those who are also fully in the spirit. When we all get into the spirit, live in the spirit, move in the

spirit, and function with one another in the spirit, we will all be one. We will be the boards overlaid with the divine gold. We will be the precious stones set into the golden settings. We will be one in the gold.

The verses that we have read from the first book to the last book of the Bible show us the full vision of the Scriptures. This vision is that God must work Himself into us and that in His life we will be transformed into His image to exercise His authority. We will be absolutely mingled with Him as one and built up together in Him. This is the vision. In this oneness we will be under His authority to express His image.

How can we realize this vision in experience? The way is so simple. We do not need to learn so many teachings or doctrines. Whenever a person becomes a Christian, he always thinks that he must learn the teachings and doctrines. But there is no need for this. There is also no need for us to keep the forms and rituals or seek after many different kinds of gifts. There is only one thing that we must learn, that is, to realize that the Lord is the life-giving Spirit in our spirit. We must open ourselves to Him and let Him come into us in a deeper way, and we must learn not to live, walk, or move in the soul anymore. Instead, we must learn to always move, walk, and have our being in the spirit. When we are in the spirit, we will be thoroughly one with the Lord and one with all who live in the spirit.

This is really simple, but we are too complicated. For example, suppose two brothers realize that they are members of the Body and must be built up together in oneness. They come together to have the proper church life and to learn by His grace to love one another. But one day these two brothers have different opinions. One opinion is white, and the other opinion is black. One is at the north pole, and the other is at the south pole. What shall they do? They realize that they are brothers, that they must have the church life, and that they should try to love one another, but now they have a real problem. One says that a certain thing is white, but the other says that it is black. What shall they do?

It is easy for us to tell these brothers that they must pray, but sometimes the more they pray, the more dissenting they are. After the prayer, their different opinions become even stronger. Suppose we find ourselves in the situation of these two brothers; what would we do? Would we be willing to forget our mentality and our understanding and take care of the deepest part

of our being, the spirit? If we would do this, we would realize that it is neither white nor black; it is something else in the spirit. Then in the spirit we would be one.

When we are in the spirit, we are overlaid with gold. When we are in the spirit, we are set into the golden settings. We are bound and combined together by the uniting golden nature. It is so simple. It is not by discussion, conversation, or arguing. No, it is only by turning ourselves to the spirit. Then we all will be one. The holding and combining factor is the divine nature.

I do pray that this review of the vision of the Scriptures will make us very clear that the oneness, the unity, and the proper church life are simply in the spirit. The more doctrines we learn, the more divisions we will have. The more we debate and argue, the more we will be dissenting. The oneness is not in the mind, nor in the teachings or doctrines, nor in the forms or gifts. It is in the spirit. It is only in the spirit that we are all built up together as one.

The habitation of God is something in the spirit, so we must be filled with the Spirit, baptized in the Spirit, and drink of the Spirit. We must be thoroughly one with the Spirit. Then all the opinions and concepts will be flooded away by the flow of life. It is here that we will have the oneness, the building up, and the unity. It is here that we will all be under the authority of God. We will be under the throne of God and the Lamb. Everything will be in order, but not by our organizing hands. It will be by the flowing of life.

The flow of life will bring us under the divine authority, and eventually we will have the appearance of God. We will be just like the jasper when we are built up together as a wall. The wall of a city simply expresses what the city is. The appearance of the building up of the church is the expression of God in His image. This does not come by organization but by the uniting, transforming flow of life.

Eventually, the church will be the real picture of the New Jerusalem. In the center will be the authority of the throne of God, and from the throne will flow the river of life throughout the whole city to supply its needs with the tree of life. The authority of God with the flowing of the divine life is the church life and the priesthood.

The priesthood is a group of people mingled with God under His authority. Everything is in the divine order and built up in the appearance and image of God. God's throne is in the center, out from which flows the living water with the tree of life. Such a content with such an appearance is the priesthood. But the key to this is that we all must learn to turn ourselves to the spirit. Do not try to solve any problem or try to *do* anything. Whenever we have problems or are going to do something, we must turn back to the spirit. In the spirit all the problems will be solved. We will then be one in the divine nature.

We are complicated by different concepts, different teachings, and different voices. By the Lord's mercy, I have gone through all these things. When I was young, I always had a notebook beside me when I read the Bible. The more I read, the more questions I put down. I had questions, questions, and more questions. But praise the Lord, now I simply do not have any more questions. To me there is really no problem.

If we would forget about the different concepts, teachings, and backgrounds, we would just be in the heavens. It is so simple. The problem is that we are complicated by our thoughts, our concepts, our understandings, as well as by teachings and all different kinds of backgrounds. If we would just forget about all these things and turn to the spirit, immediately we would sense that everything is so simple. His yoke is really very easy, and His burden is really light.

THREE AREAS OF PRACTICE

I would suggest three things for us to do. First, in our private daily lives we must learn to turn ourselves to the Lord in prayer. Even when we do not have the time to pray, we still must exercise our spirit a little to contact the Lord. We must not exercise our mind so much but learn to turn ourselves to the spirit to contact the Lord. We must learn this in practice. There is no other way.

Then, if possible, come together with three or four brothers or sisters to pray. It must not be to talk or learn, but simply to pray. We must learn to open ourselves to the Lord and to one another by praying together in the spirit. Then we will be brought into the spirit, and we will be delivered out of the natural life, the soul, and the mind. We will be brought into the spirit and into the flow of life. This is what we need.

Third, if possible, come to all the regular meetings of the church, and when we come into the meetings, we must learn this one thing—to immediately open ourselves to the Lord and to one another by functioning in the meeting. This can be done by calling out a hymn, by praying, or by giving some testimony of how the Lord has dealt with us. Never try to express any kind of opinion, but always try to release the spirit.

If we all will practice these three things—individual prayer in our daily life, corporate prayer with a few others, and functioning in the church meetings by releasing our spirit to utter something to the Lord and to others—then we will all be so simple, yet so rich in life, strong in the spirit, aggressive in our function, and fruitful in our service. Spontaneously, we will not only be built up together but blended together under the authority of the divine order, expressing the image of God. This is the church life, this is the building up of the Body, and this is the priesthood. This is the very thing that the Lord is going to recover in these last days.

Will we promise the Lord to do two things? Negatively, we must forget about all the things of our background, and positively, we must constantly pay our attention to the spirit. Whatever problem we have, we must try to solve it by continually turning to the spirit. All the things that happen to us are simply to force us to forget about our ability, our energy, our wisdom, and our knowledge. All these things are to force us to turn ourselves to the spirit to pray that we might be filled with the Lord. We will then be fully, thoroughly, and wholly in the spirit. When we are in the spirit, spontaneously we will be one with others. I can assure you that once we practice this, our whole being will be transformed.

Since we have had a review of the whole vision of the Scriptures, it is unnecessary for us to try to remember all the points of the message. We must just keep in mind one thing: that is, today the Lord needs a group of people who are continually turning themselves to the spirit to be gained, possessed, and saturated by Him. It is unnecessary to endeavor to be related with others. When we are in the spirit, spontaneously the relatedness and oneness are there. Eventually, our whole being will be subdued by the spirit. Our concepts will be cast down, our decisions will be overthrown, and our whole being will be radically changed. Then we will all be one in the spirit to express Christ as the Head and God as our life. This is the priesthood, this is the church life, and this is the building.

Is this not simple? If we cannot say Amen, it proves that we are still very complicated. We must even forget all the inner impressions we have gotten about others. Even these impressions hinder. Sometimes when we consider Brother So-and-so, we say, "I know him." That means we have a certain impression. "Oh, that brother is hopeless; I know that he is hopeless." No, he is not hopeless. It is our concept that he is hopeless. With the Lord nothing is hopeless, but we have the "hopeless" concept. So we must forget about our concepts, as if we did not know this dear brother. Though we have known him for twenty years, we just do not know him. What I mean is that we must forget the impressions that we have gathered about others. We should never trust our own impressions.

When we hear others talking about how a brother or a sister gave them a poor impression, we must realize that a person talking in such a way is a carnal person, not a spiritual person. When a person is in the spirit, he never tries to collect impressions of others. He learns only to pay attention to the spirit. When we have collected certain impressions about others, we can never help them. Thus, we must give up all our impressions.

In the church life we must be so dull in hearing and seeing but so very keen in the spirit. The poor and pitiful situation today is that many dear ones in the church are dull in the spirit but keen in gossiping. They are so sharp in seeing the wrongs of others but so dull in the spirit. This kind of situation is not right, for it kills and deadens. This means that we are not in the spirit but in the flesh and soul. Opinions, criticisms, and divisions in the church life deaden, kill, and damage the building.

The way of deliverance is to be blind in the eyes, to be deaf in the ears, but to be keen in the spirit. We must remain in the spirit and never be tempted to come out of our spirit. When we are in the spirit, we are in the priesthood, and this priesthood is the church life. The building up of the Body, the spiritual house, is a holy priesthood, which is something wholly, thoroughly, and absolutely in the spirit. May the Lord have mercy upon us that we will all be brought into this realization. In the spirit we will be blended with one another to have the priesthood, the church life, and the building up of the Body.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE MAIN COMMISSION OF THE PRIESTHOOD

“You shall put it [the incense altar] before the veil that is over the Ark of the Testimony...where I will meet with you” (Exo. 30:6). The incense altar was put before the Ark. The cover upon the Ark was called the expiation cover, and upon the expiation cover the redeeming blood was sprinkled. It was here that the Lord met with His people.

“Aaron shall burn on it fragrant incense; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it. And when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before Jehovah throughout your generations” (vv. 7-8). The incense was called the perpetual incense because it was burnt on the incense altar all day, all year, and all the time from morning to evening.

Now we must read Leviticus 4:7: “The priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense before Jehovah, which is in the Tent of Meeting; and all the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.” After the blood was shed from the offering on the bronze altar in the outer court, it was brought into the Holy Place to be sprinkled on the four corners of the incense altar.

THE TWO ALTARS

From the above verse we see that there were two altars with the tabernacle. The tabernacle was composed of the Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, and the outer court, which was outside the tent itself. The *incense altar* was in the Holy Place before the Ark, but in the Old Testament, it was separated from the Ark by the veil. The first thing in the outer court was the *bronze altar*. This was the altar for the offerings. So we must keep in mind that the tabernacle had two altars: the bronze altar and the golden altar. The bronze altar was for the priests to offer all the sacrifices to God, and the blood of those offerings was shed upon this altar. This may be called the outer altar, for it was in the outer court. The golden altar was the altar within the

tabernacle, and it was for the burning of the incense. This altar may be called the inner altar.

The sin offering was slain upon the outer altar, and some of the blood was brought to the inner altar to be put on its four corners. Then the rest of the blood was poured out at the base of the outer altar.

“Then fire came forth from before Jehovah and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they gave a ringing shout and fell on their faces” (9:24). On the day of the inauguration of Aaron and the other priests, they offered many offerings. Then fire came forth from the presence of the Lord and fell upon all the offerings and consumed them. It was not earthly fire but heavenly fire. It was not fire made by human hands but fire sent by the divine hand. It was the heavenly, divine fire.

“Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in them and laid incense on it, and they presented strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from before Jehovah and consumed them, and they died before Jehovah” (10:1-2). It is quite serious and solemn to present strange fire before the Lord.

Then let us read Leviticus 16:12: “He shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before Jehovah, with his hands full of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil.” Here we see that the priest was to burn the incense with the fire from the offering altar. This means that he used the heavenly fire, not the strange fire.

Now we must read three verses from the New Testament. “While he [Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist] served as priest in the order of his course before God, according to the custom of the priestly service, the lot fell to him to enter into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And all the multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of the burning of incense” (Luke 1:8-10). We see here that the interpretation of burning the incense is to pray. While the priest was burning the incense, the multitude of the people were praying. Therefore, to burn the incense really means to pray.

THE THREE APPLICATIONS OF THE BLOOD

As we have seen, priests are those who open themselves to the Lord, who go into the presence of the Lord, and who contact Him and fellowship with Him until He fills and saturates them to make them one with Him. They always enjoy Christ as their food and as their nourishment. Eventually, He becomes their very content, their inner element. Then they express Christ. He is not only their inward nourishment but also their outward expression. Because He is their inward nourishment, spontaneously He becomes their outward expression, and in this outward expression of the priesthood there is the building up of the Body of Christ, which is the house of God, the dwelling place of God in spirit.

In this chapter we need to see that the main commission of the priesthood is to burn the incense before God. God is in the Holy of Holies. Upon the expiation cover, which is the covering of the Ark, God meets with man. How can man get into the Holy of Holies to meet God at the expiation cover? First, he must pass the outer, bronze altar, upon which the offerings are sacrificed. Why does man have to pass through this altar? It is because he is sinful and fallen. Sinful and fallen man can never enter the presence of God, for God is holy. The Ten Commandments within the Ark demand and require man to be this and to do that. But man has failed in all these things, so the Ten Commandments condemn man.

Upon the expiation cover there are also the two cherubim of God's glory. This means that not only the righteousness and holiness of God (shown through the Ten Commandments) demand and require something of man, but the glory of God does also. If a sinful person were to get into the Holy of Holies without the redeeming blood, immediately he would die before the righteousness, holiness, and glory of God. Therefore, if man is to enter the Holy of Holies to meet God at the expiation cover, he must first pass through the process of redemption. He must offer the sin offering at the altar so that he might be redeemed.

At the altar, sin is dealt with, and redemption is accomplished. Then the redeeming blood from the sin offering must be brought into the tabernacle to be sprinkled in two places. The first place for it to be sprinkled is the incense altar, because when we commune and fellowship with God, we must do so through the redeeming blood. This is why the redeeming blood must be applied to the four corners of the incense altar. Without the redeeming blood,

sinful man cannot converse with the holy God. Man needs the redeeming blood in order that his conduct may be acceptable to God.

The blood was also brought into the Holy of Holies to be sprinkled upon the expiation cover. It was first shed upon the offering altar, then it was brought into the tabernacle and put on the corners of the incense altar, and finally it was brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled upon the expiation cover. If we desire to contact God, we must do so through the redemption of Christ. Without the redeeming blood of Christ, we can never fellowship with God, and our prayers will never be acceptable to Him.

We can never go into the Holy of Holies to meet God at the expiation cover without the blood. Every time we meet God, we need the blood. By the redeeming blood the priests can go into the tabernacle; through the blood the priests can offer incense to God; and by this blood the priests can enter the Holy of Holies to contact God at the expiation cover.

The office of the priest is not primarily for offering the sacrifices. Of course, the priests do offer the offerings, but that is not their main function. The main commission of the priesthood is to burn the incense. All the offerings are for the purpose of burning the incense, which means to pray.

THE CHRIST OF THE TWO ALTARS

Praying is not so simple; it means very much. The incense offered at the golden altar is something coming forth and going back, and this something is Christ. The incense offered is Christ mingled with the priests; it is Christ going forth and coming back.

We know that Christ is the reality of all the offerings at the altar. He is the sin offering, the trespass offering, the peace offering, the meal offering, and the burnt offering. He is every kind of offering. Christ is the offerings, and the blood shed on the altar signifies the blood of Christ. We know that the priests not only offer the offerings on the altar, but they also partake of them. They take the offerings into themselves by eating them. After this, they bring the blood of the offerings into the tabernacle. When they bring the blood into the Holy Place, within them is the offering, and without is the blood of the offering. This means that Christ is within them, and His blood is

without. *Then* they offer the incense. What and who is the incense? Christ! It is all Christ.

But what is the difference between Christ at the offering altar and Christ at the incense altar? The answer is this: Christ on the offering altar is quite coarse, but Christ on the incense altar is very fine. Do we realize the difference between the offerings and the incense? The offerings are very coarse, including the shedding of blood, but the incense is very fine. It is a sweeter and finer way of expressing Christ.

Christ as the offerings satisfies all the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. He also satisfies the hunger of the priests. The offerings satisfy both God and the priests. Then the satisfied priests go into the tabernacle with the blood to offer the incense. The incense is also Christ, but in a finer form. This incense, spiritually speaking, is the prayer from within us as the very sweetness of Christ. Our prayer must be the expression of the sweetness of Christ. It must be Christ uttered and expressed in a finer and sweeter way.

THE FIRE OF THE TWO ALTARS

Furthermore, on the bronze altar the heavenly fire burned all the offerings. The fire came down from heaven, representing and signifying God Himself as the consuming fire. God is the holy fire that consumes all the offerings. It is this same fire which consumes the offerings on the bronze altar that must burn the incense on the incense altar. The fire is first on the outer altar; then second, it is used on the inner altar. This is the heavenly fire of redemption. Any other fire will be strange fire.

The offerings bring heaven down; that is, they join heaven to earth. The offerings are on the earth, but they bring the fire down from heaven. The fire, representing the God of heaven, becomes one with the offering. Eventually, a heap of coals is left burning on the altar. This is the joining of earth with heaven. This is the mingling of God with redeemed humanity.

The priests first enjoy this offering, and then they go into the tabernacle to offer the incense. This expresses something of Christ from within as incense to God. But even this incense must be burnt by the fire from the offering altar. The odor of the incense will then go up to God. It is in this sweet odor, this

sweet fragrance of the incense, that the priest can commune and fellowship with God.

THREE PRIESTLY STEPS OF PRAYER

Do we see that all these aspects are Christ Himself? Christ is coming down, and Christ is going up. This is why I say that Christ is going forth and coming back.

Today, if we are going to be the real priests, we must burn the incense. This means that we must pray. But to pray does not mean that we go to God and ask Him to do something for us. Prayer means so much more than this. It means, first of all, to apply Christ as our offerings. When we pray to God, we must apply Christ as our sin offering, as our trespass offering, and as so many other offerings. Then we must feed on Christ to enjoy Him and take Him in. It is by this Christ with His redeeming blood that we can go into the presence of God. Then we will utter something from within—not from our mind or mentality but something of Christ from deep within our spirit. This is prayer, and this is the way to pray.

To pray means to apply Christ as all the offerings, to enjoy Christ as nourishment, and then to utter something of Christ from deep within. This expression of Christ is the sweet incense ascending to God. It brings us into God and God into us. As a result, we will not only be mingled with Christ but also mingled with God.

All Christians know that they should pray. However, although they always say that they ought to pray, it is regrettable that very few Christians know the proper meaning of prayer. The proper way to pray is to apply Christ as all the offerings, to feed upon and take in Christ as our full nourishment, and then to utter something of Christ from deep within. These three items are the three stages of real prayer.

Suppose we rise in the morning to pray. First of all, we must apply Christ as all the offerings. When we begin to pray, we may have the deep conviction that we are sinful. Immediately, we must apply Christ as our trespass offering or as our sin offering. We must pray, “O Father, I am so sinful, but how I thank You that Christ today is my sin offering, and Christ this very moment is my trespass offering. I simply come to You with Christ as my sin offering and

trespass offering.” If we do not pray in this way, we can never get into the Holy of Holies. This is why so many Christians are praying outside the spirit. They can never get into the spirit, which is the Holy of Holies, because they do not apply Christ as all the different offerings.

In contacting God, we must learn to apply Christ as the various offerings. This includes our confessions to God. We must confess that we are short in this matter and that matter, wrong in this and that. We also need to confess all our weak points. It is when we confess all these things that we apply Christ as the sin offering and trespass offering, the peace offering, the meal offering, and the burnt offering.

Second, we need to enjoy Christ in the presence of God. Sometimes we may enjoy Christ by reading His Word. We take Christ in through the Word by prayer, through pray-reading the Word, and we enjoy Him before God.

Third, from within we utter and express something of Christ. When we pray in this way, it is not only we who are praying but Christ who is praying within us. We and Christ, Christ and we, become one by praying. Then our prayer to God is the sweet incense ascending to Him. The more we pray by offering the ascending incense in this way, the more the glory of God will come down. The incense goes forth, and the glory comes down. This is the real communication, the real communion, and the real fellowship. Prayer as the incense ascends to God, and the glory, the light of God, shines down into us. Eventually, we will be full of Christ and saturated with the shekinah glory of God.

To pray properly is not just to ask the Lord to do this or to do that for us. We have to go to the Lord, applying Christ as the different offerings, enjoying Christ as our full nourishment, and then uttering something of Christ from within as a sweet-smelling fragrance that ascends to God. Only this kind of prayer will bring the shekinah glory of God into us. Then we will enjoy Christ in the presence of God.

This kind of prayer needs time. We must spend time in the presence of the Lord to offer the offerings and to burn the incense. It really takes time to burn the incense, but my deep feeling is that Christians today do not need anything else. What we need is the priesthood with the priestly function, that is, to burn the incense through all the offerings. If all the brothers and sisters reading this chapter would practice this priestly office daily, the whole

situation of the church today would be changed. We must convert our times of discussion into the burning of the incense. Merely to say that we must pray is not good enough. It is not just to pray but to burn the incense. We must learn to apply Christ, to enjoy Christ, and to utter something of Christ. This is the proper prayer of the priesthood.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO ALTARS

There is a certain connection between the altar in the outer court and the altar in the tabernacle. The blood shed on the outer altar must be brought into the tabernacle to be put on the inner altar. The connection between these two altars is the redeeming blood. Also, the fire which comes down from heaven to burn the offerings on the altar in the outer court must be the fire that burns the incense on the altar in the tabernacle. Therefore, another connection between the two altars is the burning fire.

The connection between these two altars is the redeeming blood and the burning fire. What does this mean? It means, first of all, that before we spend time in the presence of God to burn the incense, we must always apply the blood. We can never do without the blood. Any time spent in the presence of God must be under the covering of the blood. We must always apply the blood in our fellowship with God.

Second, it means that we can never spend time in the presence of God with strange fire. Strange fire is our natural emotion, our natural enthusiasm, our natural energy, or our natural effort in prayer. Our natural emotion and strength have to be put aside. We must never be on fire with anything natural. Instead, we must be burned by the heavenly fire. It is true that we must be on fire and fervent in our spirit, but not by anything natural. Our natural effort and energy must be consumed by the heavenly fire. We must be in the spirit by the burning of the heavenly fire, not by our emotions or our enthusiasm. All that is natural must be burned away so that only the heavenly fire remains.

Sometimes we may sense that we are so much on fire for the Lord, but if we check ourselves, we see that we are not on “heavenly” fire, but on “strange” fire. We may have enthusiasm, but it is not heavenly; rather, it is natural. We are fervent within, but we are fervent naturally, not spiritually. We are fervent in an earthly way, not in a heavenly way.

This kind of fervency brings death. The more we are fervent naturally, the more we are dead in the spirit. Natural fervency brings in spiritual death. The more we try to touch the Lord with natural fervency, the more we are dead in the spirit. However, the more we are fervent with the heavenly fire, the more we are living in the spirit. When we are fervent with natural fire, strange fire, we have nothing but death. We cannot continue praying for a long time because we are dead in the spirit; we have used the strange fire.

Today the church's urgent need is for all believers to practice the priestly office of burning the incense in the presence of God. We must spend time in the presence of God to apply Christ in many ways and to enjoy Him in many ways. Then we will express something of Christ from within to God, which will bring us into the presence of God and bring back the glory of God. This is the real communion going forth and coming back. Something of Christ is ascending to God, and something of God is descending into us. By such spiritual fellowship we will become one with God and be fully saturated with Him to have the real expression of Christ. This requires much time spent practicing such spiritual fellowship.

If we love the Lord and mean business for His recovery in these last days, there is no other way. The only way to realize the Lord's recovery is to spend time—at least thirty minutes daily—to apply Christ, to enjoy Christ, and to express Christ. In this expression of Christ, we will commune and converse with God so as to bring us into God and God into us. Something very sweet ascending to God and something very glorious descending into us will saturate us and make us the real priesthood. Then among us there will be the proper expression of Christ, which is the church life. The recovery of the church life depends on this priestly office.

We should not only attend to this priestly office individually, but more often, corporately. If we would come together with some brothers or sisters every day for half an hour to an hour's time to apply Christ, enjoy Christ, and express Christ corporately in our prayer to God, it would help the building up of the church very much. There is no need to talk or discuss. We must forget about all the talking and discussion and simply spend time in the presence of God to burn the incense. If we would just attend to this kind of priestly office individually and corporately, there would be a great change in life and expression among us. May the Lord be merciful to us so that we may carry out this commission.

I come before Thy throne of grace
With hungry heart on Thee to feed,
Thy grace and mercy to receive
To help me in this hour of need.

'Tis here Thy light illuminates
My true condition unto me;
'Tis here Thy blood's effectiveness
To cleanse from sin I gladly see.

Thy Word I read before Thee here
E'en as the priests the lamp did light;
Thy Spirit is as oil to me
To light Thy Word and give me sight.

E'en as the priests the incense burned,
In prayer to Thee I persevere;
As incense Thou the Spirit art
Mixed with the prayer I offer here.

Thy Word is light, Thy Word is food;
Which doth enlighten and supply;
I long to read and feed much more,
For light and food to satisfy.

Thou art the incense unto God,
In Thee acceptance is complete;
I want to pray yet more and more,
To offer up this fragrance sweet.

I long to have such fellowship,
To read and pray and blend with Thee;
I long that Thou wouldst saturate
Till Thou may overflow from me.

(Hymns, #813)

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

LIGHTING THE LAMP

“You shall command the children of Israel to bring to you pure oil of beaten olives for the light, to make the lamps shine continually. In the Tent of Meeting, outside the veil which is before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall maintain it in order from evening to morning before Jehovah; it shall be a perpetual statute to be observed throughout their generations by the children of Israel” (Exo. 27:20-21). We are told here that the priests must do two things with the lamp. First, they must light the lamp with the pure olive oil. Second, they must order, or arrange, the lamp.

Then let us read Exodus 30:7-10: “Aaron shall burn on it fragrant incense; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it. And when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before Jehovah throughout your generations. You shall not offer any strange incense on it, or a burnt offering or a meal offering; and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. And Aaron shall make expiation on its horns once a year; with the blood of the sin offering of expiation once a year he shall make expiation for it throughout your generations. It is most holy to Jehovah.” In these verses to dress the lamps means the same as to maintain the order in chapter 27.

Now we must read Psalm 119:147-149: “I anticipated the dawn and cried out; / I hoped in Your words. / My eyes anticipated the night watches, / That I might muse upon Your word. / Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; / O Jehovah, according to Your ordinances enliven me.” Here David is praying and dealing with the word in the early morning. We see that his praying was mingled with the reading of the word.

Finally, we must read John 15:7: “If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.” From this verse we see that when we have the word abiding in us, we will get the answer to whatever we pray.

THE CENTRAL ITEM OF THE TABERNACLE

In the last chapter we saw that the main commission of the priesthood is to burn the incense. We need to be impressed that the burning of the incense is the central matter of everything in the tabernacle, God's dwelling place. We know that there is the outer court and then the tabernacle with the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies there is the Ark, which is a type of Christ, and it is on this Ark that God meets with His people. This is the place where man can meet God. Then there is the lampstand, the table of the bread of the Presence, and also the golden incense altar for the priests to burn the incense. These are the things within the tabernacle. There are two other things outside the tabernacle in the outer court—the laver for cleansing and the burnt-offering altar to offer the sacrifices.

If we look at a chart of the tabernacle showing all these things, we see that the incense altar is the very center of the whole tabernacle. It is the very center of God's building, God's habitation. The incense altar is for man to meet God at the Ark.

By this we may realize that all the things in the tabernacle are for the incense altar. The offering altar, the laver, the table of the bread of the Presence, and the lampstand are all for the incense altar, and the incense altar is for man to contact God at the Ark.

All this is a prefigure, a shadow, of the church. The tabernacle is a type of the church as God's habitation among man. Today the church is the real tabernacle for God. In the church there is the reality of Christ as the Ark in which, on which, and by which God can meet man and man can meet God. In the church man can meet God on Christ, in Christ, and with Christ. But how can this be done? This can be done only by having the altar for the offerings, the table of the bread of the Presence for the life supply, and the lampstand for the light. All these things are for the burning of the incense through which man can meet God in Christ.

THE BLOOD, THE FIRE, AND THE ENJOYMENT OF THE OFFERINGS

In the last chapter we saw that the offering altar has much to do with the incense altar. The altar outside the tabernacle is for the offerings, and the altar inside the tabernacle is for the incense. The blood of the offering altar has to be brought into the tabernacle and sprinkled upon the four corners of

the incense altar. This is to bring the effectiveness of Christ's redemption to the incense altar. If we are going to pray, we must pray upon the redemption of Christ. Without the effectiveness of the redemption of Christ through the power of the blood, our prayer will never be acceptable. Our prayer must be based upon the redeeming blood shed by Christ on the cross. The redemption of Christ has much to do with our prayers. Without the redeeming blood, none of our prayers will be accepted by God.

We have also seen that the incense must be burned with the fire that was taken from the offering altar. The fire used to burn the incense must be the fire that comes down from heaven to burn the offerings. Otherwise, we will burn the incense with strange fire. So again we can see that the offering altar has much to do with the incense altar.

The priests who went in to burn the incense were the ones who offered the sacrifices on the offering altar. By offering the sacrifices, they simply enjoyed all the offerings as their food. The offerings became their food. This typifies Christ as our food. We must feed on Him and learn to enjoy Him. Then, when we come into the tabernacle to burn the incense, the incense is also Christ. The offerings are Christ, and the incense is Christ. The offerings are for our food, and the incense is for God's enjoyment. This means that the offerings are for our enjoyment, and the incense is for God's enjoyment and satisfaction. When we are filled with Christ as our enjoyment, we offer the very Christ who is our satisfaction and enjoyment to God as His satisfaction and enjoyment. This is the incense. Christ at the offering altar is our offering, and the same Christ at the incense altar is God's incense.

If we are not satisfied and filled with Christ as our enjoyment, how can we offer Christ to God as His enjoyment? First of all, we must be filled with Christ. Then we will have something of Christ to bring to God in our prayer, that is, to express something of Christ from within to God as the ascending sweet savor for His enjoyment and satisfaction.

Therefore, to burn the incense we need the redeeming blood, the offering fire, and the enjoyment of the offering. We need the blood, the fire, and Christ as our enjoyment. Then we can burn the incense by praying through the blood, through the cross, and with Christ as our satisfaction. Out from Christ we will have something sweet and fragrant to offer to God as a sweet savor. This is the incense as our prayer to God. This prayer is pleasing and acceptable to God

because it is by the redeeming blood, the consuming cross, and the satisfying Christ.

LIGHTING THE LAMP AND BURNING THE INCENSE

Now we must see that the lampstand also has something to do with the burning of the incense. Not only the altar but also the lighting of the lamp is connected with burning the incense. We have seen in the above Scriptures that whenever the priests burned the incense, they lit the lamp, and whenever they lit the lamp, they burned the incense. This means that whenever we read the Word (light the lamp), we must pray (burn the incense). To burn the incense is to pray, and to light the lamp is to deal with the Word. God's Word is the light, so whenever we deal with this Word, we light the lamp. Reading and praying must be one thing. They must be mingled together as one. When the priests light the lamp, they must also burn the incense.

Without lighting the lamp, the priests will burn the incense in darkness. This means that without reading the Word, we pray in darkness, in a foolish way. Because we do not have the light, we are in darkness. Without the light of the lamp, there is no enlightenment. This shows us that whenever we are going to pray, we must first deal with the Word of God. When we read the Bible, we light the lamp and are in the light. Then we know how to pray. Otherwise, whatever we pray will be in darkness.

Many times we pray in a natural way according to our concept because we have not been enlightened by the Word. This kind of prayer will not be accepted as an offering to God. When we come to contact the Lord, we must be in fear and trembling. We know that our sins have been washed away, but if we do not first deal with the Word to receive the light, we may pray in a natural way according to our disposition. This kind of prayer is an offense to the Lord. It will not be a sweet savor to Him. So before we pray, we must read the Word to be enlightened. We must light the lamp.

SOME PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

If the sisters want to pray about their husbands, they must first read the Word. When they read the Word, they light the lamp, and they are enlightened. This enlightening changes their concept of prayer. Without reading the Word, they may pray in one way for their husbands. But after

reading the Word, they will pray in the proper way. The way is changed, but the subject remains the same.

Suppose a sister is going to pray for her husband. Before reading the Word, she intends to pray in this way: “Lord, You know my husband has a bad temper, and it is so easy for him to lose it. I just cannot do anything, Lord. You must deal with him.” Before reading the Word, this is the way she intends to pray. But, by reading the Word she realizes that it is not a matter of asking the Lord to deal with her husband, but that she herself needs to be dealt with. After reading the Word, her prayer is changed. She prays, “Lord, I do thank You for Your sovereignty in giving me such a good husband. I do need Your grace that I may learn the lesson to be dealt with.” These are two ways of praying, but which way is acceptable to the Lord? The first way is really not a prayer at all, but an accusation. A sister who prays in this way is not praying for her husband but is accusing him before the Lord. It is only when we are in the light by reading the Word that we will pray in the second way.

I am afraid that when some of the brothers pray for the elders, they pray in an accusing way: “Lord, You know the elders. I cannot help the situation. You must come in to vindicate.” Is this a real prayer or an accusation? One thing is sure: such a prayer by anyone is certain to be a prayer apart from dealing with the Word. This is burning the incense without lighting the lamp. It is burning the incense in darkness. However, if we will first light the lamp by dealing with the Word, our concept will be changed. We will pray, “Lord, have mercy upon me. It is not my brother that needs Your dealing, but I!”

How we need the lighting of the lamp before the burning of the incense. We must have the real dealing with the Word before we pray. The light from the Word will expose us, and this will enlighten us to have the right words to pray. So many intended prayers are simply canceled by reading the Word, and so many right prayers come out of the reading of the Word. The proper prayer, the right prayer, must be the prayer issuing out of the light from reading the Word.

THE PURE OIL OF BEATEN OLIVES

Now we must see another practical matter. In the Old Testament time, pure oil of beaten olives was used for the light of the lamp. We know that oil in typology signifies the Spirit. Just as the oil was needed to light the lamp, we

need the Spirit to enlighten the Word. Without the Holy Spirit the Word does not shine. Darby tells us that to light the lamp means to cause the lamp to rise up. This is quite interesting, for many times when we read the Word some of the words rise up and give light.

How does the Word give this kind of light? It is only by the Spirit, the oil, and the oil today is in our spirit. Whenever we come to read the Word, we must exercise our spirit. Then, in our spirit the pure olive oil will rise up to cause the Word to give us light. When we read the Word by exercising only our mentality and understanding, it does not give light. But if we exercise our spirit to contact the Word, immediately we sense something enlightening and rising up within our spirit. Then the Word becomes the living Word within us. It is through the indwelling Spirit as the pure oil that we have the light. The Word will be lightened and will give us light.

It is the pure oil of beaten olives that gives the light. Is not the Holy Spirit pure? Yes, the Holy Spirit is pure, but our spirit is not so pure. Our spirit has to be purified and beaten. This is the work of the cross. In typology, Christ is the olive. When He was beaten and pressed on the cross, the pure oil, that is, the Holy Spirit, came out of Him.

It is the same today. You and I need to be purified; we need to be beaten and pressed. Many times when we read a verse from the Word, there is simply no light. There is no light until one day we are under a certain kind of pressure. Under this pressure we come back to the same Word again, and then it gives the light.

We need to be purified, and we need to be pressed and beaten. We need a certain kind of pressure. Then the Spirit will come out, and the Word will be lightened; the lamp will be lit for us to be under its enlightening. This is the way we must pray and offer something to God. I must tell you again that whatever we utter to God as prayer in this way will be something purely of Christ. It will not be a natural prayer, but a real, sweet savor to God.

So we have seen clearly that if we are going to contact the Lord, we must know how to exercise our spirit, and we must know how to deal with the Word. Then we will know what to pray. Every morning and every evening we must exercise our spirit to deal with the Word to light the lamp. Then we will

be enlightened and know what to express to God. By this kind of prayer, whatever we utter will be something of Christ as the sweet incense unto God.

The psalmist says that he rose up early to pray, but he prayed by dealing with the Word. Without the Word, which is the light, he could not pray to burn the incense. The Lord Jesus said, “If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7). This means that we must be enlightened and dealt with by the Word in order to know what to pray.

We must put all these principles into practice every time we come to the Lord to contact Him. We must realize the blood, the consuming fire, and the satisfaction of Christ. Then we must learn how to exercise our spirit so that the Holy Spirit may have a free way to enlighten the Word of God that we may get the light. Under this enlightening, we will have the utterance to express something which issues out of Christ as the sweet incense to God. Then not only will we be satisfied, but God also will be satisfied. It will be a real satisfaction both to us and to God.

May the Lord be merciful to us in order that we may meet Him and fellowship with Him day by day, morning and evening, in this way.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

EATING THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

AND DRESSING AND ORDERING THE LAMP

“You shall make a table of acacia wood: two cubits shall be its length, and a cubit its width, and one and a half cubits its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold and make a rim of gold around it. And you shall make a frame of a handbreadth around it; and you shall make a rim of gold for its frame around it. And you shall make for it four rings of gold and put the rings on the four corners that are on its four feet...You shall make its plates and its cups and its pitchers and its bowls with which to pour out drink offerings; of pure gold you shall make them. And you shall set the bread of the Presence upon the table before Me always. And you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand with its base and its shaft shall be made of beaten work; its cups, its calyxes, and its blossom buds shall be of one piece with it. And there shall be six branches going out of its sides; three branches of the lampstand out of one of its sides, and three branches of the lampstand out of its other side...Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it; all of it one beaten work of pure gold. And you shall make its lamps, seven; and set up its lamps to give light to the area in front of it. And its tongs and its firepans shall be of pure gold. It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils” (Exo. 25:23-26, 29-32, 36-39).

Following these verses we must read from Exodus 37: “He made the table of acacia wood...And he made the lampstand of pure gold...And he made the altar of incense of acacia wood” (vv. 10, 17, 25).

Now let us read Leviticus 24:1-9: “Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel to bring to you pure oil of beaten olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually. Outside the veil of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting Aaron shall set it in order from evening to morning before Jehovah continually. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations. He shall keep the lamps in order on the pure lampstand before Jehovah continually. And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. And you shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the table of pure gold before

Jehovah. And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, so that it may be a memorial for the bread, an offering by fire to Jehovah. Every Sabbath day continually he shall set it in order before Jehovah; it is an everlasting covenant for the children of Israel. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, for it is most holy to him of Jehovah's offerings by fire, a perpetual statute."

THE BLOOD AND THE INCENSE

We must continue to see more about the priesthood. We know that the tabernacle consists of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Surrounding the outside of the tabernacle is the outer court. The Ark, which typifies Christ, is in the Holy of Holies. On the Ark there is the expiation cover sprinkled with the blood for atonement. It is here that God meets with man.

When man meets God at the expiation cover, he must take with him two things: the blood and the incense. Man must get the blood from the outer court and burn the incense within the Holy Place. By these two things, the blood and the incense, he is qualified and permitted to contact God. We know that the blood in typology signifies the blood of Jesus, through which we are redeemed, and the incense signifies the sweet fragrance of the resurrected Christ.

So the blood is for redemption, and the incense is for acceptance. It is by the blood that we are redeemed, and it is in this sweet incense of Christ that we are accepted. By these two things we can contact God in a bold way. We get the blood from the outer altar, and we burn the incense at the inner altar. It is by these, the blood and the incense, that we are accepted by God, and it is also by these that we contact, meet, and have fellowship with God. So, as we have seen, the incense altar is the center of the tabernacle.

THE TABLE OF THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE FOR THE LAMPSTAND

However, according to the record of the Old Testament, there are at least two other things in the Holy Place: the table of the bread of the Presence and the lampstand. What kind of relationship do these have with our contacting God? In the last chapter we saw clearly that if we burn the incense, we cannot burn it in darkness. In the outer court there is the sunshine in the daytime

and the moonlight at night. This is the natural light. But within the Holy Place there is no natural light. There is no window, or even a door—just a covered entrance. Therefore, the lampstand is needed.

The burning of the incense requires the lighting of the lamps to give the light. Then it is possible to burn the incense. The burning of the incense depends very much on the lampstand. We have seen this clearly in the previous chapter, and we have seen its spiritual significance. We must have the light from the Word, through the Spirit, that we might know how to pray. Otherwise, we will simply pray in darkness. Whatever we say without the light will be in darkness. It will be a kind of nonsense, a foolish talking to the Lord. We must pray in light and with light. Our prayer will then issue out of the light.

The light comes from the Word, through the Spirit. The Word and the Spirit are not two separate things but two sides of one thing. They are two aspects of one thing just as the children of Israel had the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. This was one pillar with two aspects. In the daytime it was the pillar of cloud, and in the nighttime it was the pillar of fire. The cloud is a type of the Holy Spirit, and the fire is a type of the Holy Bible. When our sky is clear, we have the Holy Spirit. But when our sky is cloudy, we need the Holy Bible to enlighten us and give us light.

So the Spirit and the Word are two aspects of one thing for our enlightenment. It is in this enlightenment that we know how to pray and how to utter something of Christ unto God as the sweet incense. This is the expression of something of Christ from within us in the light. Without the light, we would pray foolishly.

But what does the table of the bread of the Presence have to do with the lampstand and the incense altar? In Exodus 37 we can see an order, or sequence, in the making of the utensils. First of all, the children of Israel made the table of the bread of the Presence, then the lampstand, and then the incense altar. This shows us clearly that the table comes first, then the lampstand, followed by the incense altar. This means that the table of the bread of the Presence is for the lampstand, and the lampstand is for the incense altar.

LIGHT ISSUING OUT OF LIFE

The table of the bread of the Presence is for the lampstand because the table is for life and the lampstand is for light. John 1:4 says, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” The life is the light. At the table of the bread of the Presence there is the life supply, and from this life the light is produced. The light comes from life. The more life supply we enjoy, the more light we are in. Life produces light. If we do not partake of and enjoy Christ as our life supply, we will be in darkness. When we are filled with the life supply of Christ, we will have the light. The enjoyment of the life supply will give the light.

Some people receive light when they read the Bible, but this receiving of light depends to a certain extent on the enjoyment of life. The more life we have, the more light we will receive from the Bible. The more we grow and mature in life, the more light we will receive. Light depends on the growth of life. The more we enjoy Christ as our life supply, the more light we will have.

To burn the incense requires the light, and to have light requires the life supply. In order for us to burn the incense in a proper way, we need the light, but to get the light, we need the life. We must learn to feed on Christ as the bread of the Presence, the life supply. It is not simply to receive Him once for all; we must feed on Him continually, day by day. We can never graduate from feeding on Christ. We must eat continually to receive the life supply. The supply of life we receive will become the light. The life is the light, and this light is necessary in order to burn the incense unto God. The burning of incense depends on the light, and the light depends on the life supply.

THE ORIGIN OF THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

From where does the bread of the Presence come? We have seen that the altar has two things: the redeeming blood and the satisfying meat. After the blood was shed, the priests simply fed on the meat as their food. The bread of the Presence, in a spiritual sense, comes from the meat of the offering.

Some may ask how the meat could become the bread? In John 6 the Lord Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.” Then, in the same chapter He said that His blood is drinkable and His flesh is eatable. So in this one chapter there is the bread, and there is the meat. In a spiritual sense, the meat of the redeeming Lamb is our bread. This means that the redeeming One is not only for our redemption but also for our satisfaction and nourishment. On the one hand,

He redeems us, and on the other hand, He nourishes us. He is our nourishment, our food. He comes not only for redemption but also for life, that we may be nourished with Him.

We do not go directly from the offering altar to the incense altar; we make a curve. From the offering altar we must go to the table of the bread of the Presence, and from the table of the bread of the Presence, we make a curve to the lampstand. Then from the lampstand we go to the incense altar to get into the Holy of Holies and meet God at the expiation cover. It is a curved way, not a straight way.

To say that we can pray solely on the basis of being saved and sprinkled with the blood is not altogether true. It is possible for us to pray foolishly. To pray in a way that is acceptable to God, we must make some curves. After applying the blood, we must go to the table of the bread of the Presence and stay there for a while. This means that we must stay with Christ as our nourishment. We must feed on Christ day by day as the bread of the Presence to enjoy Him before God. Then we will receive the life supply which will bring us to the lampstand to produce the light. Then by, in, and with this light we will be able to offer the incense; that is, we will be able to pray with Christ as incense, in a proper way, in the light, and our prayer will be something issuing out of Christ—something so sweet—just as the sweet, fragrant incense to God.

THE ACCEPTABLE PRAYER

In the morning when we get up, the first thing we must do is pray. But if we are going to have the proper prayer that is acceptable to God, the sweet incense with something of Christ in it, we cannot begin to pray immediately. The way is not so straight. First of all, we must apply the blood. In other words, we must come to the offering altar to confess all our shortcomings, our sins, and our filthiness. After confessing all these things, we must apply the blood to be cleansed.

When we confess and apply the blood, we will enjoy Christ as our nourishment. The redeeming Christ will become the bread of the Presence to supply, to nourish, and to feed us. When we enjoy Christ in this way by feeding on Him, we are satisfied. Spontaneously, from this inner satisfaction there is something shining and enlightening. That is the lighting of the lamp. Then we know what to utter and express to God. In this way, whatever we say

to God is sweet incense. It will issue out of the Spirit with Christ as the sweet and fragrant element. Our prayer will be just like the incense to God.

I have no intention to give you teachings about typology. My burden is to show you the right way to contact God. This is not a kind of teaching but a certain kind of instruction to show you the proper way to contact God and to enjoy and experience all the riches of Christ in the presence of God.

Now we have seen the way. We must start from the offering altar by confessing. Every time a priest goes into the Holy Place, he cannot escape the offering altar. We cannot say that yesterday we passed it, so today we do not need it. No, yesterday we passed it, and today we still need it. Whenever we are going into the Holy Place, we need not only to touch the offering altar but also to stay there. We must stay there to apply the blood so that the redeeming One will become our enjoyment. If we would just confess all our sins, our failures, our mistakes, our wrong deeds, our shortcomings, and our weak points, and apply the redeeming blood of Christ to cleanse us, immediately we would have the sense within that this redeeming Christ has become our inner enjoyment and nourishment.

As we feed on Him in such a way, He becomes our bread of the Presence. Here is a table, and a table means a feast. We must stay here to enjoy Christ for a time. We must not begin to pray too quickly, but first we must feed on Christ. Then this nourishment, which is the Christ we have taken in, has to be assimilated by us. This takes a certain amount of time.

After enjoying the feast at the table, Christ as our nourishment brings us to the lampstand. The nourishment of Christ as life produces the light that we need. Something within enlightens us and brings us into the presence of God. Then, whatever we express is something of Christ. It is the fragrant odor of the different aspects of the sweet Christ. When we assimilate Christ into our being, we have something so sweet and precious of Christ to utter to God. Then our prayer is on the incense altar ascending to the heavenlies to be accepted by God. This is the acceptable prayer.

THE NEED FOR TIME TO PRACTICE

Do not take this as a teaching! We must put all these instructions into practice. When we get up early in the morning, we must stay at the offering

altar for some time, realizing that we are sinful. Do not think you are a saint. In a sense you are a saint, but in another sense you are so sinful. We all are sinful, and we will be until the day our bodies are transfigured. As long as we are still in this old nature, we are still sinful.

At the altar we confess so many items in which we are wrong: our attitudes, our motives, our intentions, our way of thinking, our way of making decisions, the way we love things, the way we hate things, etc. We are full of dirt, so we must confess to the Lord. But our confession must not be just in a general way. We must confess in a detailed way. Do not simply say, “Lord, You know that I am sinful.” No, we must sometimes itemize our sinfulness. Perhaps I am wrong with my wife in my attitude, in my words, and in my motive. We must confess all our shortcomings item by item, staying at the altar for some time. Then we apply the redeeming blood to cleanse us. If we will do this, we will have the deep inner sense that this redeeming Christ is our enjoyment. We will enjoy Him immediately after confessing and applying the blood.

From applying the blood, we turn to feeding on Christ at the table of the bread of the Presence. There we feed on Christ to enjoy Him and to taste Him. We do not simply eat Him—we assimilate Him. This also takes some time. Five or ten minutes for morning watch is not sufficient. According to our experience, we need at least thirty minutes, and it is better to take an hour, if possible. It is just like eating breakfast. We cannot eat an adequate breakfast in two or three minutes. Even if we eat a hot dog for lunch, we need more than five minutes. We cannot eat a good meal in such a short time. We need a longer time, and the longer the better. We must stay at the table of the bread of the Presence to be nourished and filled so that we might be full of the life supply.

Then we will have the light that issues out of the life supply. The things of God will be so transparent and crystal clear to us. Spontaneously, we will know what to say in prayer, and whatever we say will be something of Christ as the fragrant and sweet incense that is so acceptable to God. At this time, we will have a deeper sense, not only of satisfaction but also that we are accepted by God with the sweetness of the resurrected Christ.

In the ascending fragrance of this sweet incense, we will be one with God. I do not have the human words to tell you what kind of feeling this is, but when you experience it, you will sense how wonderful it is. You will have the sense

that you simply do not know where you are—you cannot say whether you are in the heavenlies or on the earth. No human words can explain what a wonderful enjoyment there is when we experience the sweet incense.

DRESSING THE LAMP

The lampstand gives us the light by burning the oil, but there is a real problem with the burning of the oil. The lampstand needs the wick in order to burn the oil for the light. I am afraid that some of the younger ones do not know what a wick is. A wick is a bundle of loosely twisted, soft spun cotton used to draw up the oil of the lamp or the melted wax of a candle to be burnt.

The lampstand is one piece of pure gold. The table of the bread of the Presence is made of gold and wood, as is the incense altar. Even the Ark is made of both gold and wood. In the past I thought the lampstand was only gold and nothing else. But recently the Lord showed me that even the lampstand is not gold alone. If it were only gold, it would not burn and give us the light. The lampstand must have something of the plant life, so soft, thin, and fine to be the wick. Without the wick, how could the golden lampstand give the light? The gold needs something of the plant life, the vegetable life, to give the light. The gold, the wick, plus the oil will give the light.

When I was young, we always used either oil lamps or candles. We always had a problem with the wick. When the wick is burned overmuch, it becomes charred. This charred, overburnt wick is called snuff. The snuff must be cut off from the remainder of the wick. Therefore, in Exodus 25 there are the firepans with the tongs. The priests pinch off the snuff with the tongs, and all the pinched snuff goes into the firepans.

Sometimes we have an enjoyment of Christ as our life supply, and this enjoyment really brings us to the light. But still, it does not give light. This is because the wick has been burned too much. It is overburnt, too old, and too charred. To dress the lamp means to snuff, or to pinch off, all the charred remains of the wick.

The lampstand is made entirely of gold. Gold signifies the divine nature, and the wick signifies the refined human nature. It is not only the human nature but the refined human nature. When the refined human nature cooperates with the divine nature and the oil, there is the light. But

sometimes the human nature becomes too old and overburnt. It does not work so well. It needs the snuffing, the cutting, and the pinching.

When we contact the Lord, to begin with we must stay at the offering altar to confess our failures and to apply the blood. This is good, for it will cause us to enjoy Christ and will bring us to the table to feed on Christ and receive nourishment. Then the life supply will bring us to the light. But many times when we are under the enlightening, we realize that something is too old. It does not need to be washed or cleansed but to be snuffed, pinched, and cut off. Yesterday it was a good wick, but this morning it has become overburnt.

Three years ago, certain brothers and sisters were fresh wicks. But today they have become charred, just like charcoal. Five weeks ago, some of the sisters were so fresh, just like fresh, new wicks, but today they are charred. Now they are not proper wicks. They need to be pinched and cut. They do not need the blood; they need to get rid of all the snuff. Then they will be the fresh wicks to give the fresh light. Perhaps even yesterday I was so fresh, as a proper wick, to burn the oil and to give the light, but this morning I am overburnt. I have become a charred wick, too old to give the right light.

ORDERING THE LAMP

To cut off the snuff means to *dress* the lamp, and to supply the lamp with oil means to *order* it. In the morning, after the lamp has been burning for the night, the priests have to dress it. This means that they must cut off all the snuff to get rid of the charred part of the wick. Then in the evening they have to order the lamp by filling it with enough oil. If it is short of oil, it will go out.

Sometimes the wick is fresh, but the oil is short. So we need not only the dressing but also the ordering of the lamp. We need not only the snuffing but also the supplying of oil. Since the oil signifies the Spirit, this means that we need more and more of the Spirit so that we might burn.

If we will bring all these things to the Lord, I believe that the instructing Spirit will show us all our problems. We cannot do a quick job; there is no shortcut. The Lord is available, no doubt, but we cannot be so fast. We must stay at the offering altar, and then make a curve to the table of the bread of the Presence to enjoy the Lord as our food for a while. Then we must make another curve to the lamp. Sometimes we have to dress the lamp in order to

get rid of all the charred part of the wick, and sometimes we must supply it with oil. Then it will give the proper, adequate light. It is then that we will know how to utter something to the Lord and be acceptable to God.

Our shortcomings, sins, and failures must be confessed, and the blood must be applied. The old, overburnt part of the wick must be pinched off. We must be a clean wick, and we must take care of the shortage of oil. Then we will have the lamp with the proper wick and adequate oil. This will give the light under which we will know how to pray. In this way we will get into the presence of God.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE CENTRAL AND ULTIMATE POINT OF THE PRIESTHOOD

“You shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. And you shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the table of pure gold before Jehovah” (Lev. 24:5-6). We know that this table is the table of the bread of the Presence. This part of the Word tells us that on the table there were twelve cakes in two rows and that every cake was of two-tenths of an ephah.

“You shall make its lamps, seven; and set up its lamps to give light to the area in front of it” (Exo. 25:37). On the table of the bread of the Presence there were twelve cakes, and on the lampstand there were seven lamps.

These two numbers, seven and twelve, are the main numbers in the book of Revelation. In that book there are the seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven bowls, etc. Eventually, there is the number twelve in the New Jerusalem: twelve gates, twelve layers of foundation, twelve names of the tribes of Israel on the twelve gates, and twelve names of the apostles on the twelve layers of foundation. The fruit of the tree of life is also twelve in number. In Revelation there is first the number seven and then the number twelve. Later on, we will see the meaning of these two numbers in God’s economy.

Now we must read Exodus 28:9-10: “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 two pieces of onyx stone were put on the two shoulder pieces of the ephod of the high priest.

“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, of blue and purple and scarlet strands, and of fine twined linen you shall make it...And you shall enclose in it enclosures of stones, four rows of stones” (vv. 15, 17). There are

two rows of the bread of the Presence, but here there are four rows of stones, each row with three precious stones.

“They shall be set in gold in their enclosures. And the stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel, twelve, according to their names; they shall be like the engravings of a signet, each according to its name, for the twelve tribes” (vv. 20-21).

“Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart when he goes into the sanctuary, for a memorial before Jehovah continually. And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron’s heart when he goes in before Jehovah, and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Jehovah continually” (vv. 29-30). In addition to the four rows of twelve pieces of precious stones, two other things are put on the breastplate: the Urim and the Thummim.

We must also turn to Numbers 27:21: “He [Joshua] shall stand before Eleazar the priest, and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah. At his word shall they go out and at his word they shall come in, both he [Joshua] and all the children of Israel with him, even the whole assembly.” Joshua and all the people had to go out and come in according to the judgment they received through the high priest with the Urim on the breastplate.

THE BREASTPLATE AS A TYPE OF THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH

In this last chapter we must come to the central and ultimate point of the priesthood, the breastplate. We have seen in past chapters that this breastplate is made of two kinds of materials: gold and twelve pieces of precious stones. Gold is the setting to hold the different pieces of precious stones, and the precious stones are used as the materials to build up the breastplate.

This is in figure and in principle very much like the building of the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is a city of gold. This is the setting. Then, upon the gold, many pieces of precious stones are built up to be the city. The twelve layers of the foundation are twelve pieces of precious stones, and upon

the foundation the wall is built with jasper. So the whole city is a building of precious stones set in the golden setting. In principle, the building of the New Jerusalem is exactly the same as that of the breastplate.

In previous chapters we have seen that the breastplate is a type of the proper building up of the church. This comes from the expression of Christ, which issues out of the enjoyment of Christ. As we have seen, the priests must experience all kinds of offerings as their food and enjoyment, and these offerings are all the different aspects of Christ's riches. So we must feed on the riches of Christ as our enjoyment, and issuing out of this, we will have the expression which is typified by the clothing of the priests. After the priests enjoy Christ within, they express Christ without. It is in this expression of Christ that there is such a building. Thus, the breastplate is the product of the enjoyment of Christ, resulting in the expression of Christ. This is the central and ultimate point of the priesthood.

THE REDEMPTION OF BLOOD

The priestly office is quite involved with the whole situation of the tabernacle. We have seen clearly that in the outer court there are the altar of the offerings and the laver. In the Holy Place there are the table of the bread of the Presence, the seven lamps on the one stand, and the incense altar. In the Holy of Holies there is the Ark. The priestly office is very much involved with the tabernacle. Because God is at the expiation cover, which is the cover of the Ark, and His shekinah glory is in the Holy of Holies, a priest must get to the expiation cover to contact God. But to get to the expiation cover, the priest must first come to the altar, where he gets the redeeming blood. This is the foundation. Without the redemption of blood there is no possibility for fallen man to contact God. So, at the altar there is mainly the blood.

With the blood, the priest gets into the tabernacle to contact God. He first has to pass the altar, and then, with the blood, he arrives at the table. From the table he turns to the lampstand, and from the lampstand he goes to the incense altar to burn the incense. The burning of the incense releases to God the sweet odor by which the priest is accepted. It is by the blood and through the incense that we are accepted into the presence of the holy God of glory.

The high priest enters into the Holy of Holies with a plate upon his breast, which is a building of gold and precious stones. There are the two shoulder

pieces and the breastplate. On the two shoulder pieces there are twelve names divided into two groups. One group of six names is on one side, and the other group of six names is on the other side. In this way, twelve names are divided into two groups of six. But on the breastplate there are four rows of precious stones, each row composed of three precious stones. All of this is upon the priest's robe. When the high priest passes all the places of the outer court and the Holy Place to get into the Holy of Holies to stand before the expiation cover, there is such a building upon him.

THE DISPENSATION OF LIFE

How many pieces of bread are on the table of the bread of the Presence? There are twelve in two rows of six each. This is quite interesting. The Hebrew word for *row* means an army in a kind of military array. So the twelve cakes are in a kind of array to display twelve pieces in two rows.

Then there are the seven lamps on the lampstand. In order to help us get into the full meaning of the breastplate, we must know why there are twelve cakes and seven lamps. If we read the whole Bible carefully to find out the proper meaning of the number twelve, we will see that it not only means eternal perfection but also dispensation, economy, or a kind of divine arrangement.

When we look at the table of the bread of the Presence, with twelve cakes arrayed in two rows, we are given the sense of a kind of dispensational arrangement. This is the dispensation in the divine life. *Dispensation* means God's economy, God's arrangement, God's dispensing in and with His life. Here at the table we can realize a kind of dispensation, a kind of arrangement in life and with life. God's economy is simply a kind of dispensation in His life and with His life. God dispenses Himself into us as life. The divine dispensation, the divine arrangement, is a kind of economy in the divine life. So at the table we have the economy of dispensation in life.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF LIGHT

After the life, there is the light. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). The life becomes the light. When we have the life, then we are in the light. When we get into the light, there is the number seven. Seven lamps are on the one stand.

In the Bible the number seven in a sense means perfection, but if we read the book of Revelation carefully, we will see that it is also the number of God's administration. There are seven churches for God's administration, seven seals for God's administration, seven trumpets for God's administration, and seven vials for God's administration. The whole book of Revelation is a book of God's administration in these four big sevens. Eventually, in the Bible seven means perfection in God's administration.

So at the lampstand there is the divine administration, and at the table of the bread of the Presence there is the divine dispensation with and in life. After the life, there is the divine administration, the divine operation. Life is for enjoyment, and light is for operation in the divine administration. This is quite meaningful. When we are in the enjoyment of Christ, we are in the dispensation of life, and the enjoyment in the divine dispensation of life will give us the light. When we get into the light, we are in God's administration, God's operation, God's move, and God's activity. Then in this light we burn the incense. In other words, this light brings us into the presence of God.

At the table of the bread of the Presence there is the dispensation, at the lampstand there is the administration, and at the altar there is redemption. First, there is redemption, and this redemption brings us into the enjoyment of the dispensation of life. Then the dispensation of life turns us to the divine administration in light.

Do not think that the word *dispensation* means "period" or "age." No, it means the dispensing of something. When we get into the enjoyment of Christ, we are in the divine dispensing of God Himself in Christ through the Spirit as life to us, and this life turns us to the light. When we are in the light, we are in God's movement, God's administration, and God's divine operation. This will bring us to the presence of God.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF BUILDING

In the presence of God, the priest wears the breastplate. There is something built up with gold and precious stones, the divine nature, and the transforming work. All the stones are something transformed. Therefore, to arrive at the transformation of building requires four main stops. The first stop is for redemption. The second is for the divine dispensation of life. The third is for the divine administration in light. Then eventually we come to the

last stop, which is the divine building, a building built up with the divine nature and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. There is redemption, dispensation, administration, and building. At the altar there is the blood, at the table of the bread of the Presence there is the life as the nourishment, at the lampstand there is the light, and eventually at the breastplate, there is the building by transformation. The process starts from the blood and passes through the nourishment of life and the enlightening of light to bring us into the transformation. Then our whole being is transformed into the pieces of precious stones. We are fully changed and transformed in nature. There is no clay, only precious stones. Then we are the proper material to be built up with others in the golden divine nature.

At the table there is the number twelve, and on the breastplate there is also the number twelve. But the same number is grouped in two different ways. At the table, twelve is composed of two by six. Two is the number of testimony, and six is the number of man, because man was made on the sixth day. Here in the dispensation of life there is the testimony of man.

On the breastplate twelve is composed of four times three. Four is the number of creation, and three is the number of the Triune God. In Revelation there are four living creatures before God. Four times three means that man is mingled with the Triune God. On the breastplate there is the multiplication which is the mingling of divinity with humanity. The divine nature is mingled with the human nature. This is the building. The building of God is nothing other than the mingling of God with man.

THE URIM AND THE THUMMIM

There are still another two things to be added to the breastplate, the Urim and Thummim. The Hebrew word *Urim* means “lights.” The word *Thummim* means “perfecters.” This is quite meaningful. Without these two things we do not have the light, and we do not have the perfection. We need that which is added by these two things.

The twelve pieces of stones with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel represent the transformation of the people of God. But with the people of God themselves, there is no light and perfection. Regardless of how spiritual we are, just by ourselves we are still in darkness. We do not have the light.

Regardless of how spiritual we are and how much we have been transformed, just by ourselves we do not have perfection.

Therefore, we can realize that both the light and the perfection are Christ Himself. The need of these two things to complete the breastplate means that Christ is needed. Regardless of how spiritual we are and how much we have been changed in nature, if we are just by ourselves, we are not the light, and we do not have the light. Neither is there any perfection. Only Christ Himself is the light, and only Christ Himself is perfection. We will never reach a place where we do not need Christ.

The material of the breastplate is not clay; it is transformed pieces of transparent, precious stones. They are even shining, but they are not the light. They need the light to be added; then they will shine. They themselves are not perfect. They do not have the perfection in themselves. Only Christ is perfection.

The Lord is so wise, for He has kept these two things a mystery. Christ is a real mystery. He is really mysterious. No one can fully define or describe what this means. Regardless of how completely we are redeemed, how richly we have been nourished with the life, how thoroughly we have been enlightened with the light, and how absolutely we are transformed into pieces of precious stones, without Christ added we are still in darkness, and we do not have the perfection. Even the most spiritual persons need Christ all the time.

The tabernacle is a type giving us all the aspects of Christ. Christ is the offering, Christ is the bread of life, Christ is the light, and Christ is the incense, and now even on the breastplate Christ is the hidden light and the mysterious perfection. No words can fully express how much Christ is to us. How we need Christ! Even if we have attained to the highest spirituality, we still need Christ to be added as light and perfection.

THE BREASTPLATE OF JUDGMENT

Several years ago I read an article concerning the Urim and Thummim written by an authority on Judaism. He said that the Thummim was a piece of stone containing four Hebrew letters. The Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two letters, but only eighteen of those letters are used in composing the names of the twelve tribes. Therefore, the breastplate was short of four letters to form

the Hebrew alphabet. So the four missing letters were engraved on this piece of stone and put into the breastplate to make the complete alphabet. This is why it means perfection. Without this piece of stone, the Hebrew alphabet was not complete.

This authority also said that the Urim was a body giving light. But it did not give light until the high priest presented the redeeming blood and, by means of the acceptable incense, went into the presence of God to ask Him something related to His people. Then the Urim began to shine, and it shined upon certain letters on the breastplate. As it shined, letter by letter, the high priest was able to spell out a word, then a sentence, and then a paragraph, until the full judgment of God was determined. This is also why it was necessary to have the complete alphabet of twenty-two letters on the breastplate, so that any word could be made.

I do not say that this definition of the Urim and Thummim is completely accurate, yet this article was written by an authority on Judaism. Whether it is reliable or not, the principle still exists. The principle is this: the breastplate is called the breastplate of judgment. This means that it is the place for the priest to seek the Lord's guidance for His people. Whenever there was a problem within the nation of Israel, they brought this problem to the Lord by means of the breastplate. It was by this breastplate that the Lord's mind was revealed.

This is very meaningful and very deep. The children of Israel had to move and take action, not by their own opinion or judgment but by the divine will and judgment. How could they know God's judgment? It was only by the breastplate that they could know the Lord's mind and will for their actions. Their action was according to the judgment they received through the breastplate. The priests received the judgment through reading all the letters in the presence of God.

THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The meaning of this to us is very deep and very hard to explain. The building of the breastplate is a picture of the building up of all the people of God, that is, the Body of Christ. If we are going to know God's judgment and God's will, first of all we need the building of God's people. If we do not have this building, we simply do not have the breastplate. Second, we need Christ

to be added as light and perfection, and third, we need to get into the presence of God. Fourth, after we are in God's presence, there must be the fresh light for us to read the letters to determine God's will. These four things are very basic.

There is the real need of the building of the saints together. Without this building, there is no breastplate. If we do not have the breastplate, we simply do not have the means to know God's will. Today people may say that they know the Lord's will. But I doubt if they really know it. We only know our own will. It is impossible for us to know the Lord's will without the Body. Romans 12 says that we should be transformed by the renewing of the mind; then we will prove the will of the Lord. According to Romans 12, to know the Lord's will is something in the Body. But if we do not have the Body, how can we know the will of God? If the priests do not have the breastplate, they do not have the means to know the Lord's judgment. In order to know the Lord's judgment, they must have the breastplate, which is the building up of the Lord's people.

Besides the building, Christ Himself as light and perfection must be added. We need Christ as light and perfection added to the church life, and we still need to get into the presence of God through the blood, the nourishment, the light, and the incense. Finally, we must have the fresh light to read the letters that we might know the mind of the Lord.

To know the Lord's mind, the Lord's judgment, about His people, is not simply to close oneself in a room and consider for some time and then come to a conclusion. No. We must have the church life, plus Christ as light and perfection, and we must stay in the presence of God to have the new light with which to read all the letters.

The spiritual significance is this: we must take the saints as the letters to compose the will of God. We must know how to read the church, the brothers and sisters, with Christ as the light and perfection in the presence of God. Sometimes each brother becomes a letter, then a phrase, then a sentence, and then a paragraph.

Suppose a brother is planning to do a work and wants to know where he has to go. Without the Body he can never know. When he experiences all the aspects of Christ in the tabernacle, then he is in the Lord's presence. He now

must read all the brothers and sisters in order to know to what place he should go.

When a brother seeks a job, if he seeks it by his own mind and desires, he can never be clear. But when he experiences the different aspects of Christ and is in the Lord's presence, then, in order to know the Lord's will, he can read all the brothers and sisters with whom he is built up.

It is vital for us to be built up with some brothers and sisters in the Body. It is also vital that we experience all the riches of Christ in the tabernacle. Then while we are in the Lord's presence, the light will shine on different saints, and they will simply be the letters to us composing the judgment of God. The more we read the saints, the more we are clear. We are clear that we must drop whatever does not correspond with the church life. Many times we do not need to fellowship with the saints to read them. While we are in the Lord's presence, the light begins to shine upon a certain brother with whom we are built. So we ask ourselves, "What would that brother think about this matter?" Then the light shines on another brother, and then a sister, and then another brother. The more we read the brothers and sisters, the more we are clear about the Lord's mind. Whenever the Body does not say Amen, we know that the matter we are considering is not of the Lord.

THE BREASTPLATE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES

All the Epistles written by the apostles were written in this way. For instance, the Epistles to the church in Corinth were written by the apostle Paul with all the believers composed together as a breastplate upon his heart. He was so much concerned for the Body of Christ that all the saints were composed upon his heart. He had Christ as his light and perfection, and he stayed in the presence of God to receive the fresh, new light. It was in this light that he considered all the saints in Corinth one by one. He read all the brothers and sisters as the letters. This is how he got the materials to write the two letters.

The apostle Paul did not study the Old Testament to get some wonderful concepts or thoughts and put them together to write to the church in Corinth. The apostles did not write the Epistles in this way. First of all, they were built up in the church life, and all the churches were composed as materials for that breastplate upon their heart. In their heart they were so much concerned

about all the churches of all the saints. They had the church life, and they had Christ as their light and perfection. In the presence of the Lord they received the fresh light to read the situation in all the churches. All the saints simply became the letters for them to compose the Epistles.

Today it is the same. If we are going to know the Lord's will and judgment about His people, we need the redemption, the nourishment, the enlightening, and the building up. Then among us and with us there will be the breastplate, which is the building up of the Body life and the means for us to know God's will concerning His people. Then we will receive the Lord's judgment of what we have to do or what we must not do. We will know the Lord's way. Then the whole church will go on according to the judgment given by the Lord.

THE WARFARE

Whenever the people of God take action in this way, they will get into the battle. Numbers 4:3 says, "From thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, all who enter into the service to perform the skilled work in the Tent of Meeting." The word *service* is the Hebrew word for "warfare" or "military service." The footnote in Darby's New Translation says the same thing. The priestly service is a military service. The same word is found in verses 30, 35, 39, and 43.

This tells us that the priestly service is a kind of warfare to fight the battle for the move of God. The gospel preaching is a kind of fighting, and even the teaching of the Word is a kind of fighting. Our Christian life is simply a life of fighting all the time. We are fighting against the world, the flesh, sins, Satan, darkness, and so many evil things. Our Christian life is a life of fighting, and our Christian work is a warfare. The priestly ministry is a matter of fighting.

Redemption, life, light, and building are all that we might enter into the presence of God with Christ as our light and perfection in order to know the judgment of God about His people. This will bring us into the battle. All the activities in this battle must be according to the judgment through the breastplate. So the breastplate is the very central and ultimate point of the priesthood.