
THE GREATEST PROPHECY in the Bible and Its Fulfillment

Witness Lee



LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

THE GREATEST PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE AND ITS FULFILLMENT

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PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee in Los Angeles, California, from December 22 through 25, 1972.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GREATEST PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:13-16; 5:26-27; Rev. 19:7-8

In this book we want to see when and how the great prophecy concerning the church will be fulfilled. Please take note of these words: *when* and *how*. We have to ask the Lord, our fellow Christians, and ourselves, “When and how?” In the Bible there are many prophecies, and many Bible teachers have pointed them out. In particular, G. H. Pember wrote a book on the great prophecies in the Bible. But strictly speaking, it is hard to find anyone who has pointed out that the building up of the church is a great prophecy.

“I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH”

In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, “I will build My church.” You may say that this is a promise, yet we still have to realize that this is a prophecy. Probably none of the disciples, including Peter, had ever realized that there was such a thing in the universe. Suddenly the Lord Jesus told Peter, “I will build My church.” At the time the Lord spoke this word, this was a great prophecy concerning the church, and it still is a great prophecy. This is because nearly twenty centuries have passed since the Lord spoke this word, yet we still cannot see that the church is fully built up. The fulfillment of this prophecy in Matthew 16:18 has not been fully realized, so even today this prophecy still remains unfulfilled.

“UNTIL WE ALL ARRIVE”

Some may say that in the book of Acts, the Lord Jesus fulfilled this prophecy by building up the church. Many Christians say that on the day of Pentecost, the Lord Jesus at least partly fulfilled His prophecy because He did build up something on that day. We need to go on, however, from the book of Acts to the Epistles to read what Paul says in Ephesians 4:13-16: “Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a

system of error, but holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ, out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.”

By reading these four verses, we can realize that there is a prophecy in them. Paul says, “Until we all arrive” at something. This means that at that time and even now, all the saints, including Paul, were going on and pressing on until they would all arrive. We have to consider whether or not any Christians have arrived at these three things: the oneness of the faith, a full-grown man, and the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Have we seen or can we see the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love? There are thousands of Christians, Christian groups, and so-called Christian churches, but can we see what is prophesied in Ephesians 4:13-16? We have to say no. This was not only a prophecy in the past but also a prophecy that remains unfulfilled today. Even among us, we cannot say that we have had such an arrival. What we can say is that we are pressing on. We are going on toward that goal at which we have not yet arrived. Have you ever realized that in Ephesians 4 there is a great prophecy? This prophecy is not concerning the ten horns, seven heads, seven seals, seven trumpets, or seven bowls, but just concerning one thing—the building up of the church.

Thank God that in these last days He has pointed this out to us. In the past a great number of Christian teachers have seen the prophecies concerning Israel, the prophecies concerning the nations, and the prophecies in a general way concerning the church, the coming millennial kingdom, and the eternal age of the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem. But in these days the Lord has pointed out to us one practical prophecy. This is not just a prophecy concerning the church in a general way but a prophecy concerning the building up of the church in a specific way. We need to emphasize *the building up*. We are talking about the building up of the church. The prophecy on the building up of the church started by the Lord in Matthew 16 is continued by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4.

CHRIST SANCTIFYING THE CHURCH

In the following chapter of Ephesians, chapter 5, there is also a kind of prophecy. Here it says that Christ will sanctify the church (v. 26). This

sanctification is not by the blood, because that has already happened (Heb. 13:12). The sanctifying of the church is by the washing of the water in the word, not the word of letters but the living word. In the living word, there is the living water that sanctifies and purifies the church. This living water washes away not only the dirt of the church but also the spots and wrinkles (Eph. 5:27). A person's face may be clean, but it can still have some spots and wrinkles. When you hurt your skin, this can leave a spot, and wrinkles come from oldness. How can the spots and the wrinkles be washed away? The precious blood of Jesus surely washes away our sins, but even this precious, prevailing, and powerful blood of Jesus Christ cannot wash away the spots and wrinkles. This is not the function of the blood. This is the function of the water of life. Only life can wash away the spots and the wrinkles. We have such a life within that can wash away these defects in a living way.

When we get the living word from the written Word, we experience the washing away of the spots, wrinkles, and such things so that Christ may present to Himself a glorious church, holy and without blemish. Is there such a thing today on this earth or in the heavens? There is not such a thing, but it is prophesied in Ephesians 5. Here is another prophecy about the perfecting of the church. There is a prophecy about the building up of the church in Matthew 16, and a continuation of this prophecy in Ephesians 4. In Ephesians 5 there is a prophecy of another aspect of the church, that is, of the perfecting of the church as the Body to make it holy, without blemish, and sanctified, without spot or wrinkle or any such things.

THE PREPARATION OF CHRIST'S BRIDE

Now we come to the last book of the Bible, Revelation. Verses 7 and 8 of chapter 19 say, "Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." These verses speak of the coming marriage of the Lamb, when His wife, the bride, has made herself ready. Strictly speaking, doctrinally speaking, that will be the fulfillment of prophecy, but this fulfillment is still not here. So these verses indicate that a prophecy is going to be fulfilled. This prophecy is that the bride of Christ will be made ready. We need to be impressed that there is a great prophecy in the Bible regarding the building up of the church and the preparation of Christ's bride.

Now we have to ask when this great prophecy concerning the church will be fulfilled. We may have been in the church life for many years and still not know when this prophecy will be fulfilled. We all have to declare, “Now! Now is the time!” Then we need to know how it will be fulfilled. It can be fulfilled by our eating Christ as our spiritual food (John 6:57). We all have to say, “Now is the time, and eating is the way.”

THE CONTENTS OF THIS GREAT PROPHECY

We need to see the contents of this great prophecy. Although the verses that we have pointed out may be familiar to us, we may overlook all the points covered in such a great prophecy. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord first said to Peter, “I also say to you...” He said this to Peter because Peter had already seen something. None of the other disciples had seen what he had seen. When Jesus asked them who men said that the Son of Man was, they answered by saying that some said He was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets (v. 14). But when the Lord asked them who they said that He was, only Peter responded. He declared that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (vv. 15-16). The Lord then told Peter, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in the heavens. And I also say to you...” (vv. 17-18a). Just to know Christ is insufficient and inadequate. The Lord was telling Peter that he needed to see something more.

The Lord said, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (v. 18). *Peter* means “a stone.” For the building up of the church, there is the need of living stones (1 Pet. 2:5). The first time Peter was brought to the Lord by his brother Andrew, the Lord Jesus immediately gave him a new name. He said, “You shall be called Cephas (which is interpreted, Peter)” (John 1:42). At one time we were pieces of clay. But Jesus told Peter, “You are a stone, and I am the rock. I am the foundation stone, and you are a piece of stone for the building up of the church. The gates of Hades shall not prevail against this church that I will build.”

We have to consider ourselves in the light of what the Lord said. We have to ask ourselves if we are stones. Actually, some of the young brothers are fifty percent stone and fifty percent clay. They become “muddy” easily. Regardless of how much water you pour on a piece of stone, it still remains solid. But if you pour water on a piece of clay, it becomes muddy. If we are stones, we have

to ask, “Where is the building up?” Piling many pieces of stone together does not make a building. Is there a real building among us? If you feel that there is some friction between you and some other saints in the church, that means you have not been built in. Once a piece of stone has been built in, there is no friction. To be built into the church, God’s building, is our destiny and even our destination for eternity.

The Lord said, “I will build.” But some Christian teachers like to evade such a word. They say that there is no possibility for us Christians to be built up today in this age. To them the Lord is not able in this age; He is able only in the coming age. To them the Lord is not able on this earth; He is able only when we get into heaven. They say that one day we will be built up but not today on this earth. But the Lord’s word in Matthew 16:18 is not a prophecy that will be fulfilled in the next age and in heaven. Now is the time for the church to be built. We are living stones, and the Lord wants to use us as the material for His building. But we have to ask, “Have we been built up with others?” In his first Epistle, Peter said, “You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house” (2:5). This is all that we need today.

The power of darkness cannot prevail against the built-up church. Look at today’s situation among all the Christians. It seems that nearly everywhere the enemy, the power of darkness, is prevailing. In every direction Christianity has been defeated. The gates of Hades have been and still are so prevailing against today’s Christianity because there is no building. It is only the built-up church, the church that has been built up by Christ, against which the gates of Hades cannot prevail. We cannot see such a thing today. We are still desiring to see the fulfillment of the Lord’s prophecy for a built-up church.

In Ephesians 4 Paul said, “Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith” (v. 13a). The oneness of the faith is not the oneness of doctrines. Only the Lord Jesus, His person, and His redemptive work are the constituents of our faith. If we have this, we are saved. If we do not have this, we are lost. But this is not the case with doctrines. Whether or not you have the doctrine of absolute grace, foot-washing, head covering, or baptism by immersion does not affect your salvation. The Quakers do not practice water baptism, but many of them are saved. However, they could never be saved without having the faith that Jesus is the divine person, the Son of God, incarnated to be a man, who was crucified on the cross for our sins and resurrected on the third day. He is the

Lord and our Redeemer, who has redeemed us by shedding His blood. Without believing into Christ as the divine and human person with His redeeming blood, we could never be saved. This is our faith. Regretfully, Christians today are divided not by their faith but by different doctrines.

Just with the matter of the rapture, there are many different doctrinal interpretations, such as pretribulation, posttribulation, midtribulation, and partial rapture. Regardless of what kind of rapture you believe in, as long as you have the faith in Christ, you are a saved one. Do we still hold on to some doctrine? Is pray-reading our doctrine? By the Lord's mercy, I do not hold on to any doctrine. We are not on the way of arriving at the oneness of doctrines but at the oneness of the faith, at a full-grown man, and at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we would be no longer children who are tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine. With us there should be no more carrying about. We should hold on only to the faith. Christians are divided because they are for different doctrines. They have been stopped by their doctrines, so they have to go on. They need to go on by leaving the doctrines until they arrive at the oneness of the faith.

Some who hold on to baptism by immersion have become the Southern Baptist Church. Another group of believers hold on to speaking in tongues, so they become a tongue-speaking church. Others who hold on to foot-washing become a foot-washing group. Still others hold on to the doctrine of the presbytery, so they are the Presbyterian Church. All these brothers are divided because of the different doctrines they hold on to. We need to drop all the doctrines and go on to arrive at the oneness of the faith. We do not care for any doctrine, although we have the proper doctrines. We have elders and practice baptism by immersion, but we do not hold on to these doctrines. The believers are scattered and divided by doctrines. They are being carried about by every wind of doctrine. We have left the position of division by doctrines to arrive at the oneness of the faith.

We also have to arrive at a full-grown man and at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Then we will be normal children. We will grow up into Christ, the Head, in all things. Then out of Him, the Head, all the Body causes the growth of the Body through every joint of the rich supply and through the effectual working of every part.

In Ephesians 5 there is the sanctifying and purifying with the living water in the word to wash away all the spots and wrinkles that the church might be glorious. Some day the church will be presented to Christ in such a glorious situation. At that time the church will be ready. This is a prophecy.

Of course, whatever the Lord has prophesied will surely be fulfilled. He can never be defeated. Since the Lord has prophesied that He will build His church, this prophecy will be fulfilled. Without the fulfillment of this prophecy, there is no way for the Lord to come back. If the church were not built, this would be a shame to Him. Satan would be able to say, "You have prophesied concerning the building up of the church, yet You have not been able to fulfill it." I have the full assurance, however, that the Lord is going to fulfill whatever He has prophesied so that He may come back. Before His coming back, He may boast to Satan by saying, "Satan, whatever I have prophesied, I have fulfilled, so I am coming!" The fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy concerning the building up of the church will bring Him back. Now is the time for the Lord to fulfill His prophecy.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH THROUGH THE LORD'S RECOVERY

Scripture Reading: Rev. 14:17-20; 16:12-16

We have seen that there is a great prophecy concerning the building up of the church that still remains not fully fulfilled. We believe that the Lord will surely fulfill it. We also believe that this fulfillment has to be before the Lord's coming back. In other words, the Lord's coming back depends upon this fulfillment in full. But when we observe the present situation of all the Christians, it is hard to see that there is the possibility that this prophecy can be fully fulfilled. This is why many Christian teachers in the past have been fully disappointed. They were disappointed to such an extent that they gave up any faith or hope that this great prophecy regarding the church could ever be fully fulfilled.

THE PRINCIPLE OF GOD'S RECOVERY WITH A SMALL NUMBER

In the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, there is a strong and solid principle that whenever the majority of the people of God fail to carry out God's purpose, God comes in to have a recovery. This principle is seen in the early history of the Israelites. Exodus tells us that the whole nation of Israel was chosen and established by God as a kingdom of priests to serve Him (19:6). But after a short while, the nation of Israel failed God at Mount Sinai (32:1-6), but God did not give them up. He came in to recover what was lost by selecting a small number of people. Out of that one nation, God selected from one tribe, the tribe of Levi. He did not even select the whole tribe to carry out the direct priesthood but just one family of that one tribe. That was the family of Aaron (Num. 3:3, 6, 9-10). God selected that family to replace the whole nation of Israel as His priesthood.

Afterward, there were other occasions in the Old Testament in which a majority of God's people experienced a failure in God's purpose. But God would never give up His purpose. He always came again and again to gain a

small number to recover the lost situation. Eventually, the temple was built, but later the nation of Israel was a failure to God. The temple was destroyed, and the people were carried away. God then came in to carry out His recovery work, but that recovery was not with the whole body of the people of God. Only a small number of the scattered people returned to rebuild the temple for God's recovery. This minority of God's people went back to cooperate with God for His recovery. It was through them that the nation, in a sense, was recovered. They rebuilt the destroyed temple and recovered the city. Again, the recovery was always in the principle of being carried out by a minority of the people gained by God.

When I was a young Christian, I read the prophecies about the re-formation of the nation of Israel (see Matt. 24:32 and footnotes). According to human common sense, no one could believe that there would be a re-formation of the nation of the scattered Jews. Not only were they scattered, but also their land had been lost for about twenty-five centuries. Most of their people had been naturalized to become citizens of different countries. But in 1948 the nation of Israel was re-formed. For this to happen it was unnecessary for all the Jews to go back. Just a minority of the Jews returned for this restoration so that they could be constituted into the nation of Israel. This is God's recovery, which is always under the principle of a small number cooperating with Him to fulfill His purpose.

Throughout the years many dear Christians would ask us, "Are the believers scattered in the denominations also a part of the church?" In response to this we may ask, "Are the Jewish people in the United States and other countries members of the nation of Israel?" We cannot deny that they are Hebrews, yet we cannot say that they are members of the nation of Israel, because they have refused to return to Israel. All the Jews should be members of the Jewish nation, but most of them did not go back. The Jews in New York could argue with those who went back by saying, "Why are only you the nation of Israel and not us?" Those in the nation of Israel would say, "Do not argue with us. Just come back. You are a Jew, so come back." Christians today would ask, "Are we not a part of the church?" We would respond, "Yes, but where are you?"

Look at today's situation. All of Christianity is scattered and divided; there is no building up. This can be compared to the situation of the Jews. Before 1948 there was no building up among them. There were many Jews and many

different groups of Jews, but none of them could be considered as the nation of Israel until 1948 when a small number of them went back. They paid the price to return even at the cost of their life. They stayed together and, in a sense, they were built together. Then the whole world recognized that they were the nation of Israel. The number of Jews who remained in other countries was much greater than the number of those who returned to become the nation of Israel, yet those other Jews were not the nation of Israel, because they became citizens of so many other nations. If they were to become a part of the nation of Israel, they had to go back, join the Jews who returned, and be built up with them.

We can be assured that the Lord will fulfill His prophecy about the building of the Body by the principle of His recovery. His recovery is always with the minority, not the majority. Surely today we can see the fulfillment of the prophecy that the Lord would re-form the nation of Israel, but this fulfillment is just with a minority of the Jews. Even so, such a minority is still recognized as the nation of Israel. There are many thousands of Christians in Los Angeles today, but they are all scattered in the denominations. How can the Lord build up His church in Los Angeles? It cannot be with all the Christians coming together to be built up, but by the recovery with a small number, a minority, coming together to stand on the proper ground of the church to be built up together as the church in the proper way. Today the Lord can boast to His enemy, Satan, by saying, "Look at the nation of Israel. It has been re-formed." In the same principle, today the Lord is going to build up His church in the way of recovery, not with all the Christians coming together but with just a small number.

We need to be carried away from our present position to look at today's Christianity. There are the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Protestant denominations, and many free groups. There are Christians in every place throughout the world, but is there any building up among them? This building up is the unique thing that the Lord is going to accomplish today. In this city and in that city, the Lord is going to gather together out of the denominations some of His lovers, His seekers, for the building up of His church.

The re-formation of the nation of Israel is a picture of the Lord's recovery for the building up of the church. This re-formation took place with a small number. In the same way, the Lord will build His church in His recovery with

a small number of Christians who are willing to take His way at any cost. All the Jews love the nation of Israel, yet many of them would not go back, because this involves a real cost. It requires them to pay the price by giving up many things. There are a number of saints who know that the Lord's recovery is the right way, but they realize that they need to pay the price to take this way. My burden is to tell you that the Lord is now doing His recovery work among the saints, not with a majority but with a minority. As long as there are some saints standing together and willing to be built up with one another on the unique ground of the church, this is a real boast to the Lord and a shame to Satan.

THE PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE WORLD SITUATION

Today is the time in which the Lord is building up His church in the way of recovery. In order to see the proper way for the Lord to work out His recovery, we need to see something related to the prophecies in the Bible. The prophecies concerning the world situation have been predicted in reference to three sections: the section of the European part; the section of the Mediterranean part, which is considered today as the Middle East; and the section of the Oriental part, which is referred to in the book of Revelation as the place of "the rising of the sun" (16:12). Today's world situation is progressing according to the prophecies in the Bible.

When I was younger, I spent much time to study the prophecies in the Bible. Also, when I was in school, my favorite subject was world history. I have been observing and studying the world situation for more than fifty years. In this entire century, there has never been a time like today that fits in with the situation predicted by the biblical prophecies. Today's world situation involves mainly America, Europe, and Asia. There are a number of prophecies in the Bible concerning Europe and Asia in their three sections: the European, Mediterranean, and Oriental sections. Today the problems in the world situation are not with America but with Europe and Asia. Actually, the problems in today's world situation are concentrated in the Middle East.

Eventually, the situation is being prepared for that day in which the nations will be gathered together for the last war among mankind before the millennium in a place called Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). Armageddon is less than two hundred miles away from Jerusalem. The book of Revelation tells us

that the armies from the Far East will be gathered there along with the kings of the whole inhabited earth (vv. 12, 14). No doubt, the powers of Europe and from the north will be gathered there. At that time, there will still be a warning to the believers who remain on this earth that the Lord is coming (v. 15). After a period of relative peace on this earth, there will be such a great war at the end of this age. Then the Lord will come back to destroy all the world powers and to set up His kingdom on earth (19:11-21; 11:15).

THE UNITED STATES BEING THE BASE FOR THE LORD'S RECOVERY

Before that time there will be a period of relative peace in which the Lord will carry out His recovery. The Lord has chosen the United States to be the base for the spreading of His recovery. Revelation 12 tells us that there is a wilderness into which the woman, signifying the remaining and living majority of the believers, can flee for refuge during the great tribulation (v. 6). Since the United States was founded, it has always been a place for oppressed people to take refuge. In a sense, although I am now a citizen, I am a refugee taking refuge in this free country. The United States is a wilderness where oppressed people can take refuge. There is such a big, wide, spacious wilderness where the Lord's people can cooperate with Him. The Lord is going to use the United States as a base.

The Lord will fulfill His prophecy to build up the church, and there is no possibility for Him to do this with all the Christians today. But there is the principle of recovery with a small number, and the Lord is going to accomplish this recovery. It is clear that the Lord has chosen the United States as the base for His recovery. From here He will spread His recovery to Europe, the Middle East, and other continents. This means that the recovery may eventually go back to the city of Jerusalem. The building up of the church started from Jerusalem, and it has been taking place throughout the world. Eventually, it may return to Jerusalem.

We look to the Lord that a number of saints can eventually migrate to Europe for the Lord's recovery. For this reason I would encourage a number of the young people who are going to college to major in English and also to pick up a European language, such as German, French, Italian, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, etc. Then they can go to Europe to teach English. Many people in Europe desire to be proficient in English. After this we hope that a

number of saints will migrate to the Middle East, including Israel, and then migrate to all the other continents. I hope that the Lord will work this out for the building of His church.

In the early part of the twentieth century, the Lord took China as virgin soil to sow the seed of His recovery. Some said that the practice of the local church would not work in the United States because it had been transplanted from China, but this is not true. The practice of the proper church life really works. The United States is the spacious wilderness where the Lord's people can cooperate with Him that He may have a base for His recovery. He will use the United States to take Europe, the Middle East, and the rest of the earth for His recovery.

If we are faithful to cooperate with the Lord, He will finish His recovery of the building up of the church to fulfill His prophecy. That will be the time for Him to come back. All that we are, all that we have, and all that we can do must be put on the altar of the Lord's recovery so that we can be built up together with others. Our cooperation with the Lord for His move is not in a loose or light way. It must be in the way of life. We will be built up, trained, and then sent. Then the whole earth will be taken for the Lord's purpose.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRIST AS THE LIFE AND PERSON OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:23; 2:15-16, 18, 21-22; 3:2, 8-11, 16-17a, 19b;
4:3-4a, 11-16, 23-24

Ephesians is a book that is familiar to many of us. In the past years I have given many messages on the verses listed in the Scripture Reading. We may wonder why we are coming back to these verses again. It is because these verses are the most profound words of God expressed in great terms. Can you explain the fullness of Christ, the fullness of God, the stewardship of the grace of God, the economy of the mystery, or what it means for Christ to make His home in our hearts? These are all great terms with a profound meaning. We have to spend more time on these verses in order to see how the Lord is going to fulfill His prophecy regarding the building up of the church.

THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE NEW MAN

In these verses we are first told that the church is the Body of Christ and the new man in God's new creation (1:22-23; 2:15). We all have to know these two big terms—*the Body of Christ* and *the new man*. Some would say that the Body of Christ is just an illustration or a symbol. But we need to see that Christ's Body is a reality. Christ needs a Body just as we do. Our body is not a symbol but a reality.

Christ is a great person. He fills all in all. It is hard to say what *all in all* means. I have been considering these three words for years. To say that Christ fills all in all shows how vast He is. He is so great and so vast that He fills the whole universe. According to our human consideration, the distance from the earth to the moon is great, but that distance is just a little part of the solar system. Millions of solar systems are needed to form a galaxy, and countless galaxies constitute the universe. As the One who fills all in all, Christ fills the entire universe. Christ fills not only our little heart. Thank Him

that He does fill our heart, but our heart is still so small. He fills all in all. *All* includes all the solar systems and all the galaxies.

This great, vast, and unlimited Christ, as such a person, needs a great Body to be His fullness for His complete expression. His small physical body was too limited. But after His resurrection and through His resurrection, He gained a mystical Body, and this mystical Body is universally vast. It is not a symbol; it is a Body! It is His Body, and this Body has many members. We are the members of this Body (Rom. 12:4-5). If the Body of Christ were just a symbol, then we would be the members of a symbol. That would mean nothing. The Body of Christ, however, is not a symbol. It is a living Body, and we are living members of this living Body.

The church is not only the Body of Christ but also a new person, the new man. As the Body, the church needs life. If there is no life in your body, it becomes a carcass, a corpse. The church as the Body is living because the church has life. As the new man the church needs not only the life but also a person. A man needs a person. The plants are living, but they need only life. They do not need a person, because they are not human beings. But the church is a great living being as the new man, so the church needs a person. The church as the Body of Christ has Christ as its life, and the church as the new man has Christ as its person. We all have to take Christ as our life and as our person. The church is not an organization but the living Body of Christ, having Christ as its life, and the new man, having Christ as its person.

A tree has life, but that life does not have any preferences, thoughts, and desires. The tree would never say, "Be merciful to me. Today's weather is too cold. I need more clothing." A real, living person, on the other hand, has a very sensitive personality. We have our preferences, thoughts, and desires. When someone is unhappy with us, we know it because we are living persons. The church as the new man has Christ as the most wonderful person.

HOW CHRIST CAN BECOME OUR LIFE AND OUR PERSON

Now we need to consider how Christ can become our life and our person. When I was young, I found out that Christ died on the cross for my sins. That was quite logical. He stood in my position and was put to death instead of me, so He died for me. Later, I came to know that Christ is my life. But I could

never figure out how Christ could be my life. First, I asked, “Where is Christ?” I said to myself, “How could the One in the third heavens, far away from me, be my life?”

Christ Making His Home in Our Hearts

Ephesians 3:17 says, “That Christ may make His home in your hearts.” *Your* here is plural in number. Christ makes His home in all our hearts. Surely this means that Christ is a person. If He were not a person, how could He make His home in your heart? If you put a desk into your apartment, you do not say that the desk makes its home in that apartment. But suppose I go to settle in your apartment. You would say, “Brother Lee is making his home in my apartment.” This is because I am a living person. Likewise, Christ is a living person, so He can make His home in our hearts.

In order to know how Christ can make His home in our hearts, we have to know some other big terms, such as *the stewardship of the grace of God*, *the economy of the mystery*, and *the eternal purpose of God*, which God purposed in eternity in Christ (vv. 2, 9, 11). Before the foundation of the world, before creation, God in eternity past made a purpose; that is, He made a plan, to dispense Himself into a group of human beings so that they might have Him living within them not only as their life but also as their person that they might be fully one with Him to be His Body, His expression. After God’s plan, He started to create. Then in time God came into His creation by the way of incarnation. He was incarnated into the human race, into a young virgin. He came into His creation to become the life and person of a man of Nazareth, Jesus. From that time, on this earth and in this universe, there was one man who was one with God, having God as His life and as His person. That man named Jesus was the expression of God, the vessel that contained God. Now God is going to produce more men like that man. The high level of the gospel is that God has planned to dispense Himself into you and me so that He may be one with us and so that we may be one with Him, so that He may be our life and our person and we may be His Body and His expression. God can make His home in us, and we can have an abode in God.

God is, no doubt, dwelling in the heavens, but He is not so satisfied with that dwelling place. If you migrate to a locality and stay in a motel, that is just a temporary dwelling for you. You are not satisfied with it and are looking to get a home. The third heaven today to God is just like that motel. Temporarily

He stays there, but He is expecting to get out of that and get into the New Jerusalem. Revelation 21 tells us that one day God will come down out of the heavens (v. 2). He will come out of that “motel.” There is a motel in the universe for God, but He would not dwell there for eternity. God desires to have a better dwelling place. The church is God’s better dwelling place. God desires to have an eternal habitation, the habitation of God in our spirit (Eph. 2:22). This is God’s plan.

Enjoying the Riches of Christ to Be Filled unto All the Fullness of God

Based upon this plan God has an economy. God’s economy is His household management, arrangement, administration, or service, to distribute, dispense, Himself into us. Through His divine dispensing of Himself into us, we are filled with the unsearchable riches of Christ in order that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God (3:8, 19). The fullness of God implies that the riches of all that God is have become His expression. When the riches of God are in God Himself, they are His riches. But when the riches of God are expressed, they become His fullness (John 1:16). The fullness of Christ (Eph. 1:23), the embodiment of God, is the very fullness of the Triune God. The riches of Christ are all that Christ is to us, such as light, life, power, wisdom, holiness, and righteousness, what He has for us, and what He accomplished, attained, and obtained for us. These riches of Christ are unsearchable. We cannot measure how wide, how long, how high, and how deep the riches of Christ are. The fullness of Christ issues from the enjoyment of the riches of Christ. Through the enjoyment of Christ’s riches, we become His fullness to express Him.

Today the Spirit is the practical realization of all the riches of Christ, and this Spirit has come into our spirit (Rom. 8:16). We may use electricity as an illustration of this. With electricity there are many “riches.” It generates power, light, heat, and the ability to communicate through devices such as the telephone and television. All these items are the riches of electricity. But the riches of electricity are practically in the current of electricity. The current of electricity has been installed in our buildings, and with the installation there is the switch. When we need to apply electricity for what we need, we can turn on the switch and get it. In the same way, the heavenly electricity in the

current of the Spirit has been installed in our spirit. When we exercise our spirit, we are turning on the switch to apply the heavenly electricity.

The riches of Christ today are realized in the Spirit, and the Spirit has been fully installed in our spirit. Whenever we say, “O Lord Jesus,” we turn on the switch to enjoy the riches of Christ (Rom. 10:12). When you shut your mouth and keep silent, the switch is off. To switch on is to open up your mouth and call on the name of the Lord. God has an economy to dispense Himself into us. The Spirit with all the riches of Christ has been installed in our spirit. The more we “switch on,” the better. To turn the switch on is to be strengthened into our inner man that Christ may make His home in our hearts (Eph. 3:16-17). It is by this switching on that Christ as the life-giving Spirit is being dispensed into us again and again, more and more. Day by day, even hour after hour, He is being dispensed into our being.

The Bible tells us that this divine dispensing is carried out by our eating of Christ as our spiritual food (John 6:57). Eating is to take something as nourishment into your being. Then you digest and assimilate it to make its very ingredients, constituents, and elements yours. When you eat chicken, your stomach digests it, and it is assimilated into your blood to become your element. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life...He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me” (vv. 35, 57). What is it to eat Christ? To eat Christ is to take Christ into you, digest Him, assimilate Him, and make His element your very element. Eventually, whatever you eat becomes you. Even dietitians say that you are what you eat. If you eat chicken, the chicken eventually becomes you. In like manner, if you eat Christ, you become Christ. To eat Christ is to take Christ into you so that Christ can become your constituent, your element, and your “organic tissues.” Then Christ becomes you, and you are one with Christ.

We can take Christ in by realizing that today He is the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). All the items of His riches are included in this all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, and He is in our spirit. When we switch on by touching our spirit, He will get into us and be assimilated by us to become us. This is to eat Jesus. By eating Jesus, all His riches become ours, and we are filled unto all the fullness of God.

Perfecting the Saints by Feeding Them for Their Growth and Function

Ephesians 4 tells us that the Lord as the Head of the Body gave many gifts, gifted persons, as the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers (v. 11). The thought in Christianity is that this verse refers to ministers, or preachers, to take care of the Christian work. But here the apostle Paul tells us that these gifted persons' duty and ministry are to perfect the saints (v. 12). What is it to perfect the saints? Many years ago I thought that to perfect the saints was just to teach them or to train them, but this is not right. Now I can say definitely that to perfect the saints is to feed them, to give them something to eat that they may be nourished, that they may grow.

Ephesians 4:12 speaks of the perfecting of the saints. Then verse 13 says, "Until we all arrive at...a full-grown man." A small boy becomes a full-grown man not by being taught and regulated but by eating nourishing food. The mother day by day prepares food to feed him until he becomes a full-grown man. Ephesians 4 does not say that we perfect the saints until they graduate from a seminary. It says that we perfect the saints until they all arrive at a full-grown man. Then the following verse, verse 14, says, "That we may be no longer little children..." How can you make a child grow? No doubt, you have to feed, to nourish, the child. Then verse 15 says, "Holding to truth...we may grow up into Him in all things." In these verses we need to take note of the phrases *full-grown man*, *no longer little children*, and *grow up into Him in all things*. This shows that to perfect the saints is to nourish them that they may grow.

The little babes have all the necessary organs. They have eyes, ears, a nose, feet, and arms, but they do not have the adequate function, because they are short of growth. To perfect the saints does not mean that the saints do not have "ears," so you come to make ears for them. In other words, to perfect the saints does not mean that you come to teach them. Instead, to perfect the saints is to feed them that they may grow. When little babes are fed, eventually they are able to function more and more in listening, speaking, and walking. They have all the organs, but they do not have the function, because they are short of growth. You cannot teach them to have the function. The only way for them to have the function is for them to grow up, so you need to feed them. This is not my concept. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul said that he fed the saints, and God caused the growth (vv. 2, 6). By the growth our functions will come out.

In Christianity the Christians are put into the pews just to sit there, making them jobless. But even if they were given some responsibility, it would be hard for them to function because of their lack of growth in life. Once when I was staying in Manila, a brother in the church was sick in the hospital. Some of our brothers went to visit him, and they had a long prayer time. This brother's relatives who were in Christianity were surprised. They said to each other, "Are all these people pastors and ministers? If not, how could they pray?" This shows that many in Christianity do not know how to pray. When people have legal problems, they go to a lawyer. If they are sick, they go to a doctor. If they have something to pray about, they go to a pastor. This is the real situation. This is because Christianity gives people only doctrinal teaching. Second Timothy 4:3 says, "The time will come when they will not tolerate the healthy teaching; but according to their own lusts they will heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears." These are ears that seek pleasant speaking for their own pleasure. Such speaking does not feed people. We need the healthy teaching and the speaking that feeds others so that they may grow in the divine life.

Today the Lord is going to recover the building up of His Body. In order to carry out this recovery, we have to reject all the dead teachings, regulations, and formalities. The Lord wants us to eat Him. By eating we will grow. We are an eating people. All the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers are feeders. They feed the saints to make them grow. By growth they will be perfected to function. This is why everyone is a functioning member in the church. Everyone can function because everyone eats. Now we know that by eating Jesus we grow, and by this growth we have the function and also grow up into Christ in everything.

Ephesians 4:16 goes on to say that when we grow up into Him, something comes out from Him. First, we grow into Him; then out of Him we all have something to share. Every joint has something to supply, and every part has something with which to operate. By all the parts and joints, the Body grows unto the building up of itself in love. This is the way the church is built up.

The Head, Christ, gives all the gifted persons, and the gifted persons do not do a common Christian work. They perfect the saints by feeding them. Then all the saints grow, and they will have the functions. When all these functions are put together, this is the building up of the Body. Today the Lord is going to recover this kind of building. If someone asks you who your pastor is, you

have to say that among us everyone is a pastor. This is because everyone functions.

Ephesians 4 shows that the Lord Jesus does not build the church directly by Himself. Neither do the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers build the church directly by themselves. It is the functioning members who build up the church directly. Christ gave the gifted persons, who do the perfecting work. Then the saints are perfected to grow and to gain the function. Then they use their function to build the church directly by themselves. This causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love. This is the Lord's recovery. We believe that today is the time for the Lord to fully fulfill His prophecy to recover you and me, every member, as a functioning one for the building up of His Body.

CHAPTER FOUR

KEEPING THE ONENESS OF THE SPIRIT AND ARRIVING AT THE ONENESS OF THE FAITH

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:23; 2:15-16, 18, 21-22; 3:2, 8-11, 16-17a, 19b;
4:3-4a, 11-16, 23-24

GOD'S ECONOMY

We have seen that the church is the Body of Christ and the new man, so the church needs the growth in life. This growth comes through the feeding, the nourishment, by the riches of Christ. The riches of Christ are the foodstuffs for our nourishment. The unsearchable riches of Christ in Ephesians 3:8 are for the church in verse 10. The church is the outcome of the enjoyment of the riches of Christ. This shows us that God's economy is to dispense all the riches of Christ into our being so that these riches may become our inward nourishment. This means that Christ will be wrought, will be dispensed, will occupy, and will settle Himself in every part of our being. This makes Christ one with us, and spontaneously we will corporately be the Body of Christ and the new man.

BEING DILIGENT TO KEEP THE ONENESS OF THE SPIRIT

Now we have to go on to see some further points regarding the building up of the Body. For the building up of the Body, there is the need of oneness. Ephesians speaks clearly and definitely about keeping the oneness: "Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" (4:3). This is because the Body of Christ is one and the new man is also one; that is, there is one Body and one new man. The riches of Christ, which produce the Body and the new man, are altogether realized in the Spirit. There is one Body and one Spirit (v. 4), so we have to keep the oneness. If the oneness is damaged, the building is gone. Even though we have the best enjoyment of the riches of Christ, if we lose the oneness, there is no possibility for the building up of the Body. This oneness is not the oneness of practices,

regulations, or forms but the oneness of the Spirit. The Spirit is one, and this Spirit who dwells in our spirit is the Triune God Himself.

Actually, the Spirit Himself is the oneness. It is similar to the electricity flowing within many lamps, making them all one in the shining. In themselves, the lamps are separate, but in the electricity they are one. The electricity within them is the oneness. Likewise, the Spirit within us is our oneness. The same one Spirit dwells in all of us, so He is our oneness. If we care for Him, we have the oneness. If we do not care for Him, the oneness among us is gone. If we go to something else, surely we will have different opinions and dissension. You will have your concepts, I will have my understanding, and another will have his idea. Then we will be divided. But if we give up all the other things and come back to the one indwelling Spirit, right away we have the oneness.

ARRIVING AT THE ONENESS OF THE FAITH

Ephesians 4 tells us that this oneness, on the one hand, is the oneness of the Spirit and, on the other hand, is the oneness of the faith (v. 13). The faith is composed of what Christ is, what Christ has done, and what Christ is still doing for us. The faith is what we believe in for our salvation. We all believe in Jesus as the Son of God becoming a man, who died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and was resurrected on the third day; today He is our Redeemer, our Savior, our Lord, and also the all-inclusive Spirit indwelling our spirit. If we believe in Him, our sins will be forgiven, His blood will be applied to us, and we will be redeemed, justified, saved, and regenerated to have Him within us as our life. This is our faith, which is common to all different kinds of Christians. Anyone who does not have such a faith is not a real Christian. He is not saved or regenerated. But as long as a person believes that Christ is the Son of God incarnated to be a man, crucified on the cross for our sins, and resurrected from the dead to be our life, he has the faith. Regardless of what kind of background he keeps or what kind of doctrine he holds on to, he is a brother, a saint.

In doctrines we may be different, but in the faith we are absolutely one. You should never consider any doctrine as your faith. Some may say, "My faith is in immersion by water," but immersion by water is not the faith. The doctrine of the presbytery is not the faith, nor is any other kind of doctrine. We do not need to keep anything else other than the oneness of the Spirit and of the faith.

When we come back to the Spirit, we are one. When we care only for the faith, we are one. Ephesians 4:13 speaks of the oneness of the faith, and then verse 14 speaks of the wind of teaching, the wind of doctrine. The faith produces oneness, but doctrine brings in the wind to blow us away, to carry us away. If we forget about the doctrine, care only for the faith, and turn to the Spirit, we are one.

THE NEED TO DROP ALL THE LEGAL DOCTRINES

Many Christians know that we should keep the oneness according to Ephesians 4:3, but they do not know how to keep the oneness. The following verses show us that to keep the oneness of the Spirit is to drop all the doctrines. The doctrines are just like toys to children. Children like toys, and the younger they are, the more toys they have. But the more they grow, the more toys they drop. If an older person is still playing with toys, this obviously indicates that he did not have the proper growth in life. All the different doctrines are toys. The more you grow, the more doctrines you will drop, because doctrines cause division. Instead, you will stick yourself to the faith. This is the way to keep the oneness.

If we mean business with the Lord's recovery today to afford Him an opportunity to recover the proper building, we have to drop the doctrines. By the Lord's mercy, I have dropped all the doctrines. As long as you still hold any kind of doctrine, you have to realize that, at least to some extent, you are divisive. Some kind of divisive spirit still remains in you. Let me say again that if we mean business with the Lord's recovery of His building of the church, there is the requirement for us to say, "We don't care for doctrines. We care only for the enjoyment of Christ." I am burdened that the real situation of the building up of the church be made clear to all of us.

When we say that we need to drop the doctrines, this does not mean that we do not keep the truths in the Lord's Word. Ephesians 5:22 says, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands," and verse 25 says, "Husbands, love your wives." To drop the doctrines does not mean that we do not have to keep words like these. The sisters have to submit themselves to their husbands, and the husbands among us have to love their wives. But we do not make these things doctrines that we insist on. For instance, a number of sisters among us practice putting a covering on their head when they pray, but we do not insist on this doctrine for receiving others. Today if anyone asked me to baptize him,

I would immerse him, but I do not insist that he be immersed for my fellowship with him. To drop the doctrines does not mean that we do not keep the Word. If you insist on a doctrine for receiving others, this doctrine becomes a dividing element. We have spoken the truth concerning pray-reading, head covering, the laying on of hands, baptism, and the Lord's table, but we have not insisted on any of these things as a doctrine for receiving the believers.

In 1 Corinthians 11 there are at least fifteen verses on the matter of head covering (vv. 2-16). Based upon this, whenever a sister prays or goes to contact the Lord, she would cover her head to keep the Word, but if she insists on this to make it a doctrine, this is wrong. We keep the Lord's word, but we do not make anything in the Word a legality, a kind of legal doctrine. I practice pray-reading very much, but if anyone among us would make pray-reading a legal doctrine, I would be the first one against it. I also call on the name of the Lord, but it is altogether wrong to make such a thing a legal doctrine. We have no doctrine of calling or of pray-reading. It is all right if some want to speak in tongues, but if they make tongue-speaking a doctrine, that is wrong.

I have to try my best to make the real situation clear to all of us. We have no doctrine. We have only the practice of keeping the Word according to our pure conscience. Our consciences do not function on the same level. Let me give you an illustration. In Romans and in 1 Corinthians, the same apostle taught us in different ways about the eating of sacrifices offered to the idols (Rom. 14:1-3, 20-23; 1 Cor. 8:4-13; 10:23-30). In some of the verses, Paul said that you should not eat the sacrifices offered to the idols. But in other verses Paul said that you may eat. Eventually, it all depends upon your conscience. If you have a proper conscience and feel that you are free to eat, then eat. If you have a kind of conscience that makes you feel that you should not eat, then do not eat. All these things are up to our pure conscience.

We need to allow one another to live before the Lord according to our conscience in doctrinal matters (Rom. 14:1-9). The Southern Baptists may say that we are neglecting the great commission of the Lord in Matthew 28:19, but the Quakers, Presbyterians, and Methodists do not consider this verse in this way. How Christians consider Matthew 28:19 depends upon their different kinds of realization. Those who do not feel that this verse is the great commission should not be considered heretics. A heretic is one who does not

believe that the Lord Jesus is God, the Son of God. These are the modernists, who also do not believe that Christ died on the cross for our sins or that He was resurrected. They are really heretics. But as long as someone has the proper faith in the Lord Jesus, he is not a heretic.

If your conscience tells you that you have to keep a certain verse of the Bible, you should do it. But never make that a kind of doctrine, saying, "In our church, all people have to do this. Otherwise, we don't receive them." Sisters, do you practice head covering? If you do, that is wonderful, but do not make your practice a legality for receiving others. If some want to practice sprinkling, we will not oppose them, but they should not make this a doctrine and spread this doctrine among the saints in the church. If they do, they will cause division. If you want to speak in tongues, that is okay. But if you insist that everyone speak in tongues, you will cause division. If you wash others' feet, that is fine, but do not say, "All the elders are not so faithful to the holy Word, because they do not practice foot-washing. Surely they are wrong, and this is not the proper church. The proper church must have foot-washing every time before the Lord's table." If you do this, you have made a legal doctrine that causes division. If you want to pray-read, this is wonderful, but do not make this a legal doctrine by forcing others to do the same thing and imposing it upon others. This is altogether wrong. I have to say this because the number of saints in the Lord's recovery will be increasing more and more in the coming years. Those of us who may be considered as the foundation of the Lord's recovery have to be clear.

I respect not only every verse but also every word of the Bible. But I have the full boldness to say that I do not make any verse a legal doctrine. We keep only the oneness of the Spirit and the oneness of the faith. We love the Lord's Word. We respect the Bible. As long as our conscience tells us that we have to keep a certain verse, we do it. But we never make that a doctrine. If we make any doctrine a legality, this will frustrate and hinder the fellowship among us. We keep the living Word, but we have no legal doctrines. We keep the Lord's Word not in a legal way but in a living way. We keep only the oneness of the Spirit and the oneness of the faith.

THE ABOLISHING OF THE ORDINANCES

Now we want to see that Christ has abolished all the ordinances so that He could put the different peoples into Himself to make a new man (Eph. 2:15).

For creating the new man, He needed to abolish all the ordinances. An ordinance is a way to worship God or a way of living. Any way for your living or for your worship is an ordinance. The Jews and the Arabs worship the same God, but they are enemies because the ways they worship God are different. The Jews have the Jewish way, and the Arabs have the Arabian way. These different ways create enmity. Even today there are a number of so-called Christian brothers who hate each other. Such religious prejudice is really awful, and it comes from different ways of worship.

In the church life, we do not have any ordinances. We do not have ordinances about how to arrange the chairs or about having quiet or loud meetings. We have no ordinances. Positively speaking, we need to endeavor to keep the oneness of the Spirit and to arrive at the oneness of the faith. Negatively speaking, we have to drop two things: doctrines and ordinances. Today the Lord is carrying out His recovery, and He is demanding that we drop all the doctrines and ordinances.

The Jewish ordinances were abolished on the cross, so the church had an opportunity to come into existence. But regrettably, after not too long a time the Christians created a lot of ordinances. Christians today are divided either by ordinances or by doctrines. There are so-called different churches because of the many doctrines and ordinances among the Christians. In order for the Lord to build up His church, we must keep the oneness and have no ordinances. This does not mean that we become a loose people. We are very proper, but we do not have any ordinances.

In the New Testament you cannot find a definite way for Christians to meet together. The only way you can find in the New Testament for us to worship God is to be in the spirit (John 4:24). There is no other way. People today like to quote 1 Corinthians for the way to meet, and in my early years I did the same. In this book, however, Paul says two things that are very difficult to reconcile. According to 11:5, women may pray and prophesy with their head covered, but in 14:34 Paul says that the women should be silent in the churches. Thus, chapter 11 permits women to speak, but chapter 14 forbids them. How can these passages be reconciled? According to the New Testament principle, for women not to be permitted to speak in the church meetings means that women are not permitted to teach with authority in relation to the defining of the truth (1 Tim. 2:12). In this sense, they should be silent in the church meetings. They may, however, pray and prophesy, that is,

Speak for the Lord and speak forth the Lord in the church meetings. But they must do this under the covering of the brothers.

When I came to Shanghai in 1933, that was the biggest city and the biggest local church among us in China. Brother Nee was very burdened to take care of the speaking in our meetings. The sisters in our meetings were not even allowed to pray at that time. They had to be silent. Brother Nee was bothered by this practice, and he had the burden to show the church that it is okay for the sisters to pray in the meetings. But some of the brothers would not agree with this. Eventually, the announcement was made that in our meetings it would be okay for the sisters to pray. But they were still not allowed to speak, including to testify. Then gradually the leading ones among us agreed that it would be altogether a loss if we did not allow the sisters to give testimonies. Later, we saw that in 1 Corinthians 14 to speak means to teach with authority, not to testify. Thus, we said that it was okay for the sisters to give testimonies.

I am sharing this to show that there is no definite way for us to worship God today, because today is the day of the Spirit. It is no longer the day of any ordinance. We do not have any ordinances. If we are clear about these things, there will be no division among us. We care only for the oneness of the Spirit, and we desire to arrive at the oneness of the faith.

Day by day, we all have to put off the old man and put on the new man by being fully and thoroughly renewed in the spirit of our mind (Eph. 4:22-24). To put on the new man is to put on the church life. By this way we will be one, we will grow, we will be transformed, and we will be built together. This is the real recovery of the Lord's building of the church. I look to Him that in these last days we would be so clear and we would sell ourselves to this recovery.

CHAPTER FIVE

HOW TO ENJOY CHRIST FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: John 1:14; 4:14, 24; 6:35, 57b, 63; 7:37-39; 10:9, 16; 15:5; 17:21, 23; 20:22; 21:15, 17

The book of Ephesians shows that God has a plan to dispense Himself as the riches of Christ into us for the producing of the church as the fullness of Christ and of God (3:8, 10; 1:22-23; 3:19). The way to take Jesus Christ into us is by eating (John 6:57). By eating Jesus as our spiritual food, we grow in His life. A baby boy has all the necessary organs, but he cannot function adequately because he lacks the growth in life. So you have to feed him in order that he may grow. This growth will bring him the proper functions in all his organs. Then this little boy will become a functioning one. We all are the members of Christ, and we are complete in our organs. But we may still be short of function because we do not have the adequate growth in life. So we all need to eat Jesus, to take Jesus into us as our nourishment, that we may grow. By this growth we will have the function, and by this function the Body is directly built up in love (Eph. 4:16). This is the Lord's building of His church.

THE WORD BECOMING FLESH, FULL OF GRACE AND REALITY

Now we come to the last of the four Gospels. John is the final word of all the Gospels. The final word is always the final decision. To know what is here in this Gospel is not so easy. John's long Gospel is of twenty-one chapters, and the many things contained in this book are profound.

John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." No one can understand or apprehend this verse in a full way. It is difficult to say what the beginning is and who the Word is. First, the Word was with God, so it seems that the Word and God are two, but eventually the Word is God. This means that the Word and God are one. It is really hard to say whether They are one or two. If you say one, I say two. If

you say two, I say one. This is so profound. We do not know so much, but we do have so much. When you are invited to a feast, you may have many courses about which you know very little. You may not know so much about them, but you have them. It is the same in the spiritual realm. We may not know what the beginning is, but we have the beginning. We do not fully know the Word, but we have the Word.

John 1:14 says that the Word, who was God, became flesh, and He was full of grace and reality. He was not full of doctrines and gifts, full of teachings and ordinances, full of forms and regulations, or full of miracles and signs. He was full of grace and reality. Grace is God enjoyed by us. Full of grace means full of enjoyment. Reality, or truth, is God realized by us.

Let me illustrate in the following way. In order to make bread, grains of wheat are ground into powder. Then the powder is blended and baked to become bread. So we could say, "In the beginning was the wheat, and the wheat was the fine flour, and the wheat became bread, full of enjoyment." Once, I was invited to take care of a conference in Copenhagen. Every morning the saints there served us different kinds of Danish bread for our enjoyment. If you enjoy the bread, you get the reality. The reality is the rich nourishment of all the ingredients of the wheat. This is an example of the Word becoming flesh, full of grace and reality for our enjoyment and realization.

In this light we can see how much Christianity has missed and how much it has frustrated us from the enjoyment of such a wonderful and unsearchable Christ. Christ is God Himself. There is no God without Christ. He is the rich embodiment of God for our enjoyment (Col. 2:9). But we have to realize that He is not the "raw" God but the processed God. He is the very God who has been "cooked," processed. Most of the foods we eat are processed, especially bread. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Christ today is not the uncooked dough but the bread. Bread is something made of wheat through a process. As long as the wheat remains raw, it can never be bread. If the wheat is going to be bread for your enjoyment, surely it has to be processed. It has to be cooked.

Christ is also the Lamb of God (1:29). The lamb of the passover was processed. It was slain, and the meat of the lamb was roasted with fire. Then the redeemed people struck the blood on their homes and ate the processed

meat, not the raw meat (Exo. 12:6-8). Christ was also processed as the real Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). He was slain, killed on the cross. He was processed by being “burned” on the cross. The holy fire of God fell upon Him and burned Him. He was really roasted. Christ was the roasted mutton.

When we enjoy Christ, we get the reality, which may be likened to the realization of all the ingredients of wheat. There are many ingredients in wheat, but without enjoying them, these ingredients are not yours; they are not real to you. But after you enjoy the bread, the ingredients of the wheat become real to you, and this is the reality. In the beginning was the Word, the Word was God, and the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of enjoyment and reality. In John 1 we are told that Christ was God Himself processed for our enjoyment. If we get this enjoyment, surely we get the reality, which is the nourishment of all that Christ is, the ingredients of the riches of Christ. If we enjoy Him, we get the reality.

HOW TO ENJOY CHRIST

Now we have to find out how to enjoy Christ. Verse 14 of chapter 4 tells us that He is drinkable. Are you thirsty? If you are, come to Jesus and drink of Him. You may ask, “How could Jesus be drinkable?” Verse 24 follows verse 14 to give the definite meaning of drinking Jesus. To drink Jesus is to exercise your spirit to contact God, the divine Spirit. God is Spirit. Whoever shall contact Him has to contact Him in his spirit. The living water in verse 14 is nothing less than the Spirit of God in verse 24, and the drinking in verse 14 is the worshipping in verse 24.

To worship God is not to prostrate yourself, to kneel down. That is the human, religious way. It is not the worship that God wants. God would say, “Come and drink Me. The more you drink Me, the more you take Me in, the more I get the worship.” In 1958 I visited Jerusalem. In that city there is a great mosque of the Moslems. I saw many Arabs there kneeling and prostrating themselves on the ground in their worship to God. But the more you worship in this way, the hungrier and thirstier you become. You get nothing to drink or to eat. God does not want us to have that kind of worship. That is absolutely the religious way, the worship invented by man. That is not the worship that God really wants. God’s way is that you enjoy Him. The more you enjoy Him, the more He gets the worship.

When I was young, I was taught that to remember the Lord at holy communion I had to be quiet and concentrate to recall all that Jesus is and all that Jesus had done for me. I thought that this was the way to remember the Lord and worship God. Eventually, I realized that the Lord Jesus said, "Take, eat; this is My body...This do unto the remembrance of Me" (Matt. 26:26; 1 Cor. 11:24). The more you eat Jesus, the more Jesus gets your remembrance. Then the Lord told us to drink the cup in remembrance of Him (v. 25). If you exercise your spirit to contact the Spirit of God, this is to take God in, to drink Him. To drink is to take some liquid outside of you into you. Now you have to take God into you, and God today is the Spirit. You have to exercise your spirit to take Him in.

In John 6 we see that the hungry people did not realize what they needed. They thought that Jesus might be a great prophet or a great king. By that time they were trying to force Jesus to be their king. But Jesus ran away from that (vv. 14-15). Later, Jesus came back in a secret way and said to them, "I am the bread of life. I came not to be the king. I came to be the bread to you. I don't want your exaltation. I don't want your worship in a religious sense. I want you to eat Me."

If you think that this is extreme, you are still under the influence of human culture and religion. This is not according to the traditional teaching of Christianity but according to the pure word of the Bible. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life...He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (vv. 35, 57). Jesus came to be the bread for us to eat. If we eat Him, that is the real worship to Him. He will not be satisfied until He gets into us. His intention is not to receive our outward, religious adoration but to get into us as the bread of life. When we eat Jesus and He gets into us, He is so happy. Galatians 1 says it pleases God, that is, it makes God so happy, to reveal His Son in us (vv. 15-16). Nothing makes God so happy as Jesus getting into us. We have to eat Him.

On Thanksgiving Day in the United States many mothers prepare a big turkey for the entire family to enjoy. What if the family sat down to eat, and one of the boys knelt down and said, "How I thank you, mother; how I appreciate you, mother!" The mother would think that something was wrong with her son if he did this. Instead, what would please her would be for him to thank her for the turkey and eat the turkey. The more he ate the turkey, the

happier she would be. We all have to take Jesus in this way. The more we take Him in by eating Him, the happier He is.

Let us consider the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. Actually, in this parable the main point is not the son's repentance and receiving forgiveness. The main point is eating. When the son was away from the father, he came into a situation in which he became so hungry. He had nothing to eat. Even he tried to eat the carob pods for the swine. Then he said, "How many of my father's hired servants abound in bread, but I am perishing here in famine! I will rise up and go to my father" (vv. 17-18a). The goal of his going back was to get food, to eat. He prepared something to say to his father, which was actually a religious speech. He said, "I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants" (vv. 18b-19). This shows that once a fallen sinner has repented, he always thinks of working for God or of serving God to obtain His favor, not knowing that this thought is against God's love and grace and is an insult to His heart and intent.

When the son came to his father, he began to say his prepared statement, but the father interrupted him and said to his slaves, "Bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet" (v. 22). The best robe enabled the prodigal son to meet his father's requirements, but the son was still hungry. He did not come back home for the robe but for something to eat. Right away, after telling his slaves to bring out the best robe, the father said, "Bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry" (v. 23). The father did not ask the son to worship him or to say any words of regret to him. The son came back for eating. It was the eating that made both the son and the father happy. In the Lord's recovery we should just care for eating.

Now the problem again is—how to eat? When the Lord told the disciples to eat Him, the Jews were offended. They wondered how Jesus could be eaten. Then the Lord Jesus told them, "It is the Spirit who gives life...the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). In other words, the Lord was saying, "You have to take Me by taking the word; then you eat Me. I am the Spirit and My words are spirit. If you take Me by taking My word as the Spirit, I will get into you to be your nourishment."

In John 7 the Lord said that whoever is thirsty should come to Him and drink of Him (vv. 37-39). Then in chapter 10 He said that He is the door (v. 7). Many Christians would say, "Jesus is the door for us to go to heaven." But if this were the door for you to go to heaven, it would be awful because it is also the door for you to go out (v. 9). That would mean that Jesus one day would bring you out of heaven. The door in John 10 is not the door of heaven; it is the door for you to get out of the fold (vv. 1-3). The fold signifies any religious organization, or religious society. Jesus is the door to the fold for you to get out of the fold and get into the pasture. The fold is the organization of any religion, and the pasture is outside of the fold. The pasture is Jesus! The pasture is the place where you can eat and rest. He is not only the door for you to get out of religion but also the pasture for you to feed on.

Many years ago I experienced Christ as my door. Through Him I came out of religion. Since that time He has been a green pasture to me. Day and night I feed on Him and rest in Him. He is my pasture. Here I have something to drink. Here I have something to eat, and all that I eat and drink is Jesus Himself. He is my drink and my food. He is my pasture for my enjoyment. The Word was made flesh, full of enjoyment and reality. He is the living water, the bread of life, and the green tender pasture, full of enjoyment and reality.

The enjoyment of Jesus makes us all one. In John 10 Jesus said, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd" (v. 16). The church is not a fold. The church is the flock. The fold is the place to hold the sheep, but the flock is the body of the sheep. We are the flock in the pasture, and we are not scattered. We are gathered. Some of us were gathered from the Southern Baptist fold, others were gathered, collected, from the Presbyterian fold, and still others were gathered from the Lutheran fold. We all were gathered from different folds, but today we are gathered to the one pasture. Now we are one flock. We are one by enjoying Jesus. The eating of Jesus brings us together.

With a flock feeding on the pasture, there is the enjoyment, without any manners. The sheep as a flock just feed on the pasture. They have no regulations, no forms, no good manners. But they are full of enjoyment and reality. What a failure and a fall we see in Christianity, where the people on Sunday morning come together to have a service full of manners, regulations, forms, and a good sermon. There is no eating. But in the Lord's recovery, He

has brought us back to eating. He has brought us out of all the folds with all the regulations and manners. In the fold there are many regulations. But when you get into the pasture, there is freedom.

John 15 tells us that He is the vine and we are the branches (v. 5). Could you teach the branches to bear the fruit? Would you teach a branch by saying to it, “You have to put out leaves. Then you have to blossom and bring forth fruit. The fruit you are going to bring forth shouldn’t be that big, like a grapefruit. You have to take the regulation to bring forth little grapes in clusters”? Do you believe these teachings work, and do you believe all the regulations and ordinances work? They absolutely do not work. What does work? If you water and fertilize the vine, the branches absorb and receive the nourishment. Then they grow and bring forth fruit. The life within the vine will spontaneously shape the fruit. It is not the regulation, but the inner shaping, the shaping of life. This illustration shows that we do not need outward, doctrinal teachings. We need to grow in life. We need the inner nourishment to have the inner life regulation. This inner life will take care of the shaping to conform us to the image of Christ.

I am saying this because in today’s Christianity there are mostly teachings and ordinances. They do not realize that the teachings and ordinances divide the Body. But today in the Lord’s recovery, the Lord is the door to His people so that many will come out of the fold. They will be liberated to eat, to drink, and to enjoy the riches of Christ. Then this eating will afford them the nourishment to grow and to bring forth fruit in clusters. All the clusters will belong to one tree. This is the one flock, the one Body, the one church.

We can never be one if we still care for doctrines and ordinances. If we drop all the doctrines and ordinances and only care for eating, we will be one. We have no interest in talking about doctrine. We are just happy to say, “O Lord Jesus! Let us eat the Lord.” In this way we have the real oneness, without any dissension or division. Eating affords us the real oneness. In John 17 the Lord prayed, “That they all may be one” (v. 21a). He did not pray that we would be one in doctrine but that we would be one in the Triune God. The Lord said, “Even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us” (v. 21b), that is, in the Triune God.

After the Lord’s resurrection, He came back to the disciples, but not to charge them with good teachings. In John 20 the Lord Jesus came back after

resurrection and breathed Himself into them (v. 22). He did not teach them. He did not say to Peter, John, James, and Andrew, “You have to remember what I spoke to you on the mount. You have to keep all those doctrines.” He came back to them not as a teacher but as a breather. His mouth was not teaching. His mouth was breathing. He did not tell them to receive the good teachings, good doctrines, good regulations, or good ordinances. Instead, He breathed into them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Breath” (v. 22, lit.). The Lord did not give them any teaching or ordinance. Instead, He breathed Himself into them.

Then in John 21 the Lord checked with Peter by asking him, “Do you love Me?” When Peter said that he did, the Lord did not say, “If you love Me, you have to remember My doctrines and all My good teachings. Then you have to teach all your younger brothers.” Instead, the Lord told Peter, “Feed My lambs” (v. 15). We feed the lambs with the very Jesus whom we enjoy and experience. This is like a mother feeding her little babe with her milk, that is, with something that she has enjoyed, digested, and assimilated. We have to feed others with the Christ whom we experience and enjoy.

Now we have seen something from the entire Gospel of John. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and this Word became flesh, full of enjoyment and reality. We enjoy Him by drinking Him, eating Him, and breathing Him. He is drinkable, eatable, and breathable to get into us. Today He is altogether the Spirit. He was God, and He became flesh and died on the cross as the Lamb of God for our redemption. After this death He was resurrected. In resurrection He was transformed into the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), so He came back as the breath, the Spirit. Now it is so easy for us to breathe Him in. When you breathe Him in, you drink of Him, and you eat Him. Then you can feed others with Him. This is the Gospel of John. This is how we can grow and function for the building up of the Body of Christ. This is the Lord’s recovery of the proper church building.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Scripture Reading: Exo. 12:4, 7-8; 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 3:2a, 6, 9, 12a; 5:7b-8a;
12:13, 3b; 15:45b

In this chapter we want to see the enjoyment of Christ in 1 Corinthians. This book has been used by many different Christian groups and even by many great Christian teachers. The Brethren used this book very much for their doctrine, and the Pentecostal brothers have used this book very much for their gifts. The Brethren put out at least a few expositions on this book. They pointed out that in this book there are more than ten problems solved by different doctrines, such as the doctrine of head covering, the doctrine of resurrection, and so forth. They also spoke concerning the doctrine of the way Christians should meet in chapter 14. The Pentecostal brothers used this book very much for their gifts. They mostly used chapters 12 and 14, quoting verses from these two chapters for their exercise of the gifts.

But 1 Corinthians 8:1 says that knowledge does not build up but puffs up. Knowledge damages the building. The Corinthians got the knowledge and they had the gifts, but they were still babes (3:1). The gifts did not help them to grow. Regardless of how many gifts they exercised, they were still babes. They were not merely childish but babyish. We are burdened today to show the Lord's children the real way for the recovery of the building up of the Lord's church. It is absolutely not with doctrines or with the gifts.

We need to read the pure Word and not care for the religious and cultural traditions we received from the past. We have been under the covering of human culture and religion. These two things are strong veils that prevent us from seeing. The Lord's Word is here to take away our veils. We need to see that 1 Corinthians belittles knowledge. Knowledge does not build up. It only helps you to be proud. Thus, we have to drop the doctrinal knowledge, which does not build up but puffs up. The Corinthians had many gifts, but they were still babyish and even carnal, fleshly. This shows that 1 Corinthians is surely not for doctrines or for gifts.

Now we need to consider what this book is for. All the verses referred to in the Scripture Reading of this chapter are marvelous. But nearly all these verses have been missed or neglected in Christianity. Many of us have read 1 Corinthians, but have we ever paid attention to verse 2 of chapter 1 as the opening word of this book? The Bible has sixty-six books, and each book opens with a special word. For instance, Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” John opens in this way: “In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God” (1:1). Matthew opens with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David and the son of Abraham (1:1). Paul wrote fourteen books, and each of his books also opens with a special word. That special word indicates the real content of the book.

ENJOYING CHRIST AS OUR PORTION BY CALLING ON HIS NAME

In the opening word of 1 Corinthians Paul says, “To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours” (1:2). Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and then to everyone in every place who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This Christ is both theirs and ours. Christ is ours. He is our enjoyment, our portion, so we have to call upon Him. To call upon Him is to eat Him.

In the previous chapter we saw how to enjoy the Lord from the Gospel of John. The Lord Jesus is nothing less than God Himself. But He is not the “raw” God, the unprocessed God. At one time God was far away from any creature. But one day God came into a virgin and was born out of her. By this He became a man. Is this not a process? The infinite God came into humanity. He picked up humanity and put on humanity. After His birth He was processed through human living for thirty-three and a half years. He passed through many trials, tests, temptations, sufferings, and much poverty. Surely this is a process. Then He was betrayed, judged, and crucified. He was buried and came out of death into resurrection. Surely this is also a process. According to Exodus 12, the lamb for the passover could not be eaten raw. It had to be roasted with fire (v. 8). That is a process. Christ was really put into a kind of oven. There He was burned; He was processed to be our food, our life supply.

Throughout the centuries the Lord has been recovering things, and He is still recovering something from His holy Word today. In these days the Lord has recovered from His Word the matter of eating, and He has richly recovered all the things concerning Him as our food. To be our food He needed to be processed, and He was. Jesus today is no longer the “raw” God. Today He is the processed God good for food. He has been processed to also be our spiritual drink and spiritual air. We have seen this clearly in the Gospel of John. The way to enjoy Christ is to drink Him, to eat Him, and to breathe Him.

The Bible is so meaningful. God did not give us one book of the Bible with the complete revelation. The truths are scattered throughout the Bible. The Bible is like a puzzle with many small pieces. We have to put these pieces together to see something. God put something in John, something in Matthew, something in 1 Corinthians, something in Romans, something in Ephesians, and something in Revelation. If you have the divine way to put the pieces of the puzzle together, piece by piece, from the different books of the Bible, you will see a wonderful picture.

John tells us that Christ is God Himself to be our enjoyment. For our enjoyment He was processed, and now He is ready for us to take. To take Him is to eat Him, to drink Him, and to breathe Him. But still John does not tell us adequately how to breathe. John would say, “I tell you only that Christ is the processed God for your enjoyment, and to enjoy Him is to drink Him, eat Him, and breathe Him. If you want to know how to breathe Him, you have to go to another brother. Brother Paul will tell you.” Now we come to Brother Paul. Brother Paul would say, “If you are going to eat, drink, and breathe, you have to call, ‘O Lord Jesus! O Lord Jesus!’” This is why Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to the calling people, to those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the whole Bible there is not another book that opens like 1 Corinthians. This book was written to all who, in every place, call upon Christ, who is both theirs and ours. Christ is our portion. He is yours and mine. We can enjoy Christ as our portion by calling on His name. To call on Him is the unique way to enjoy Him.

THE GROWTH IN LIFE AND THE TRANSFORMATION IN LIFE FOR GOD’S BUILDING

In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul says, “I have fed you...” (v. 2, KJV). The way to receive his feeding is to eat. Thus, calling is in chapter 1, but eating is in chapter 3. Then in chapter 3 we see that we have to grow. Paul says that he fed the saints. Then he says, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth” (v. 6). By feeding and by eating we have the growth, and the growth is for the building. Verse 9 says, “You are God’s cultivated land, God’s building.” The growth in life issues in the transformation in life into precious materials. First, you are plants, but eventually you become gold, silver, and precious stones (v. 12).

Petrified wood is a good illustration of a plant being transformed into stone. It was a plant first. But eventually it became a piece of stone, petrified, transformed. The precious stones are for the building (1 Pet. 2:5). This is the only way that the Lord can build the church. If we mean business with the Lord’s recovery for the building up of the church, we have to realize that we are the plants and we have to grow. We can grow by taking in and absorbing the nourishment. By this growth we will be transformed, and by being transformed, we become the materials for the building.

ENJOYING CHRIST AS OUR PASSOVER AND OUR FEAST

First Corinthians 5 tells us that Christ is our Passover (v. 7). He is the Passover lamb. When those in Christianity use the passover lamb for gospel preaching, they always stress the blood. We have a good hymn, the chorus of which says, “When I see the blood,...I will pass over you” (*Hymns*, #1005). But we need to see that with the passover lamb there is something in addition to the blood. That is the meat. The blood had to be shed, and the meat of the lamb had to be eaten. The striking of the blood was for the eating of the meat. They applied the blood to the house, and then in the house they ate. The striking of the blood was not the goal; the eating of the meat was. Christ is the real Passover lamb, and He has been sacrificed for us, not only to redeem us but also to satisfy us. His blood redeemed us, and His life satisfies us.

The Israelites were under the tyranny, the bondage, of the Egyptians. The blood that covered them only dealt with God’s judgment. God saw the blood and passed over them. But they needed the energy, the strength, to walk out of Egypt and cross the Red Sea. So under the covering of the blood, they ate the lamb. They ate in a way ready to walk out. They ate quickly with their loins girded, with shoes on their feet, and with a staff in their hand (Exo.

12:11). They were filled up with the lamb. Then after eating they said, "Rise up. Let us all go out!" They all walked out of Egypt and walked through the Red Sea. The blood covers and redeems us, but it does not strengthen us. We need Jesus to be our meat. We need to eat Jesus. We can receive Jesus into us as our meat by calling on Him. The calling is the eating.

First Corinthians 5:8 goes on to say, "Let us keep the feast." We are not keeping the good teachings of the passover. We are keeping the feast. A feast is full of the enjoyment of eating. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread as the continuation of the passover, the Israelites did nothing but eat. They cared only for eating for seven days. Today we are feasting on Jesus, and the way to feast on Him is to call, "O Lord Jesus. O Lord Jesus."

All the real Christians are, at least to some extent, callers on Jesus. Some may still oppose this calling, but sometimes they have called also. They will not call on the Lord Jesus in a regular way but in a special way. When they have a car accident or they are sick, they will call, "O Lord Jesus!" In the Far East a brother, who opposed calling very much, was riding a bicycle. At the corner a car hit his bicycle and knocked him into the air. When he was in the air, he called, "O Lord Jesus!" When he fell on the ground, he would not stop calling. When he was in the hospital lying in bed, he called, "O Lord Jesus, O Lord Jesus." He called on the Lord all day.

We should not call on the Lord, however, only in such special circumstances. We must call on Him all the time. Calling is the way to eat Jesus. Do not wait until you are sick and then start to eat. That is too late. You have to eat regularly. You may think that since you are a distinguished person, such as a professor or a father of a family, calling on the Lord is too childish for you. It is so good for your children to call, "O Lord Jesus," but you feel that you have to maintain your position. You may keep your position, but you will be hungry with nothing to eat. Instead, you have to take the lead in your family to call, "O Lord Jesus. O Lord Jesus." Calling on the Lord gives you the top enjoyment. Some dissenting ones have said that calling is altogether a matter of psychology. But if you call on the name of Confucius, Plato, George Washington, or Abraham Lincoln, nothing happens. However, we can testify that when we call on the dear name of Jesus, He is truly rich to all who call upon His name (Rom. 10:12). The more you call, the more you get.

DRINKING ONE SPIRIT

First Corinthians 12 speaks of drinking the Spirit (v. 13). This requires us to call on the Lord continually and draw water with joy from Him as the fountain of living water (Isa. 12:3-4; John 4:10, 14). I do not care for the gifts. I care for the drinking of Jesus as the Spirit. We all have been given to drink one Spirit. Many people pay attention to baptism, but we need to notice that in 1 Corinthians 12:13 both baptism and drinking are covered: “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.”

To be baptized is to be put into the water. To drink is to put the water into you. Do you have to be immersed in water all day? If I immersed you in water for the whole day, you would drown. But to drink is a continual matter. We drink many times throughout the day. We all have been baptized in the Spirit. That is one aspect. Another aspect is our being given to drink one Spirit. That means we are positioned to drink. Although we have been positioned, many of us would not drink. Instead, we are thinking, not drinking.

First Corinthians 12:3 says that no one can say, Jesus is Lord! except in the Holy Spirit. This means that whenever you say, “O Lord Jesus,” you are in the Holy Spirit, and you are drinking. The way to drink Jesus is to call on Him. First Corinthians 15:45b says, “The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.” You were given to drink one Spirit, and the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit. The life-giving Spirit in 15:45b is surely the one Spirit in 12:13. We were given to drink of Jesus as the life-giving Spirit. Thus, we all have to be Jesus callers, and His callers are His eaters, His drinkers, and His breathers.

We have to call on the Lord all day, every day, every moment, and on every occasion. When you are washing your face, you have to say, “O Lord Jesus.” When you are driving a car, you have to say, “O Lord Jesus.” All day you have to call on Him. By calling on Him, you breathe Him, drink Him, and eat Him. Then you get the enjoyment and the nourishment, which causes you to grow and be transformed. In this way you will grow as plants to be transformed into precious material to build up the church. This is the way to have the Lord’s recovery to build up the church. I hope this is not a mere teaching. We all have to see this. This concept is not only in the Gospels but also in the Epistles. We have such a wonderful way to enjoy Jesus for God’s building.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EXERCISING OUR SPIRIT TO ENJOY THE LORD FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 5:1a, 2a; 1:23; 2:2, 5a; Eph. 5:18b-22; 6:17-18; 2 Tim. 1:7; 2:1, 22; 3:16; 4:22; Gal. 6:18

We have seen the matter of eating from the Gospels and from the Epistles. What we have seen was written mostly either by John or by Paul. Now we want to see something written by Peter to show how consistent the New Testament is in the concept of eating the Lord.

FEEDING THE LAMBS

When Peter was young, he was charged by the Lord to feed the Lord's lambs and sheep (John 21:15, 17). When Peter became old, he did not forget this. Thus, in his first Epistle, he charged the elders to shepherd, or to feed, the flock of God (5:2). Peter, just as John and Paul, realized that for the building up of the church there is the need of the growth in life. For the growth in life, there is the need of feeding and eating.

BEING REGENERATED BY THE WORD AS A SEED

In 1 Peter 1, Peter says that we were born again by the word as the seed (v. 23). Many consider the word in the Bible as doctrines. But here Peter says that the living word of God should be considered as a seed. This seed does not convey knowledge but imparts life into you. The word of God is not mere doctrines. When the word of God, not the word in letters, the dead words, but the living word with the Spirit, gets into you, it imparts life into you, so you are born again.

DRINKING THE MILK OF THE WORD IN ORDER THAT BY IT WE MAY GROW TO BE LIVING STONES FOR GOD'S BUILDING

As one who is born again, you need to grow. For the growth you surely need to eat something. You need the nourishment. If there is no nutrition, there is no growth. Thus, Peter says in 1 Peter 2 that as newborn babes, we need to long for the milk of the word in order that we may grow (v. 2). From God's word there is the nourishment. As newborn babes you have to take in this nourishing milk in order that you may grow. Our growth is not to be big spiritual giants but to be living stones, and the living stones are for the building up of the spiritual house of God (v. 5).

I hope we all can see that there is such a consistent concept about God's building, and this concept is that for God's building we all need to eat. We need to receive the nourishment, not the knowledge. We all have to remember the words spoken by Paul. Knowledge does not build up (1 Cor. 8:1), but nourishment from eating builds up (3:2, 6, 9). Never forget this. There is a wrong concept among Christians today. They either consider teaching as the building element, or they pay much attention to the gifts. But if you have a clear vision of God's divine concept, you can see that the real building of God's house is not by teaching or by gifts but by nourishment. The only way to get the Lord as your spiritual nourishment is by eating and drinking the Lord, and by this nourishment you grow to be living stones.

Peter was a simple fisherman. His level of education, no doubt, was not high. But God frequently chooses simple persons. D. L. Moody was a shoe salesman when he was saved, yet he became a great evangelist. God uses such persons, who give you the important points without any kind of knowledge. Peter was so simple, telling us to be as newborn babes who long for the milk of the word, that by it we may grow to be the living stones for God's spiritual house.

Nothing is so simple as eating. The mothers know that there is nearly no need for them to teach their children to eat. Every little babe, after being delivered, starts to eat. Without any teaching, the little babe knows how to eat. The eating function is from birth. There is no need for you to grow up in order to have the function of eating. Other functions, such as seeing and hearing, require growth. Only the eating function does not need the growth. After you were born, you immediately started to eat. This is something of God.

OUR NEED TO BE RESCUED

FROM THE SYSTEM OF ERROR

For the Lord's recovery of the building up of the church, we have to be rescued from our old concept. Satan is subtle to such an extent that he uses the good things, even the best things, to systematize us. Ephesians 4:14 says, "That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error." Some errors, some mistakes, are systematized. This means that Satan uses the doctrines to form a system. Every good doctrine eventually becomes a part of Satan's system. Satan systematizes people. In other words, Satan puts them into a system.

This may be likened to a big university that has many schools. If your interest is in mathematics, the university puts you into the school of mathematics. If your interest is in psychology, the university puts you into the major of psychology. If your interest is in social things, the university puts you into the major of sociology. A university systematizes thousands of young people. This is a picture of the way Satan systematizes people. He surely systematizes people by worldly things. If you like movies, Satan puts you into the movie system. If you like dancing, Satan systematizes you with dancing. If you like gambling, surely Satan will send you to Las Vegas. He puts you into that part of his system.

The dividing teachings are also organized and systematized by Satan to cause serious error and thus damage the practical oneness of the Body life. The sleight is of men, but the system of error is of Satan and is related to the deceitful teachings that are designed by the evil one to distract the saints from Christ and the church life. Many fallen human beings are very religious. They like religion. Satan puts them into the system of religion. He uses religion to systematize people just like he uses dancing, movies, and gambling. In the big university of religion there are different departments. There are the department of foot-washing and the department of head covering. Even Bible study can be a part of the satanic system. Some Christians naturally prefer to go to the mission field, so Satan puts them into the system of the mission field.

Before his death Dr. A. W. Tozer pointed out how Christ's real authority is absent in Christendom. He said that there may be a conference of Christian workers talking about how to serve Christ or go to the mission field to work

for Christ, to preach the gospel for Christ. Then he said that if Christ came into their meeting, they would ask Him, “Who are You?” This shows that they are for their mission work; they are not for Christ.

We all have some fallen human desire. With some people their fallen desire is to dance. With others the fallen desire is to be quiet, doing nothing, giving up the world. Even to give up the world may be a desire of the fallen nature. Some unsaved people may give up the world to be in some pagan religion. They are put into that part of the satanic system.

Everything in today's Christianity has been utilized by Satan to systematize people. There are only three things that Satan would not utilize. (1) The Bible tells us that God is the unique God and the jealous God. We should not worship anything other than God. That means we should not have any kind of idol (Exo. 20:3-5; 1 John 5:21). Satan would never utilize this point. (2) The Bible also tells us that God created the human race for His purpose. God has to keep the human race in a healthy, sound, good, and pure situation for His use. So the Bible is strong against any kind of immorality, because this damages man's humanity (1 Thes. 4:3-4; 1 Cor. 6:18). Idols damage God's person. Immorality damages humanity. Satan would never utilize these two points. (3) The Bible tells us that the Lord is greatly concerned for His Body, that is, the church. So for the Body of Christ, for the church, there should be absolutely no division (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3). Idols are a damage as an insult to the person of God, immorality is a damage to humanity, and divisions are a damage to the Body of Christ. It is only these three things that Satan would never use. In other words, as long as you stay away from idols, immorality, and division, you stay away from Satan's system. Do not trust in any doctrines, not even the good ones. Satan can utilize even the best doctrine to systematize you. It is only the three things mentioned above that Satan can never utilize.

Even the scriptural teachings can be used by Satan to distract us from the Body of Christ. We have to be so clear. A doctrine may be good, scriptural, pure, and sound, yet utilized by the enemy to distract us from Christ and the church life. In the universal university of Satan, there are some bad departments and some good departments. Even there are the best schools of the best things. Satan will use whatever he can to distract us from the Body. This is why I say that we all need to be rescued, to be snatched out of the system of Satan.

For the long run for the Lord's recovery, I am burdened to uproot all our old concepts. This may be illustrated by uprooting the weeds from a field. It is not enough just to cut them. If you just cut them, the root is still there. After a while, they will grow up again. They must be uprooted. My burden is to uproot all the devilish factors that were sown deeply into our being in the past. Our religious concepts may be good, but they are used by Satan.

Paul desired that we might be no more children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching, or doctrine, not heresies. This is in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error. This word shows that all the doctrines are utilized by Satan to form his satanic system and to put you into a particular part of his system according to your fallen desire, according to your human tendency. The purpose of this is to keep you away from the building up of the Body. Even your zealousness for the gospel can be a system. Satan can systematize you according to your zealousness. A young man came to one of our meetings and told the brothers, "You shouldn't have this kind of meeting. You all have to go out to preach the gospel." No doubt, he was systematized in the satanic system, being distracted from the Body of Christ.

The best way to get out of the satanic system is to be altogether no more religious. We have to jump out of religion. Do not be afraid that we will be loose people. As long as we do not have idols, as long as we stay away from immorality, and as long as we stay away from any division, we can never be loose people. We have three safeguards: (1) no idols, (2) no immorality, and (3) no division. As long as we take care of these three things, we are fully safeguarded. We all were put into Satan's system, and we have been staying in the departments of the satanic system for a long time. Now the Lord is coming to snatch us out of religion. We all need to be snatched out. We need to hate religion, doctrines, forms, and regulations. We need to see the subtlety of the enemy.

COMING BACK TO GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

God's eternal purpose is to build up a Body for Christ today, not tomorrow. God's eternal purpose is to build up a spiritual house for Himself on this earth, not in the heavens. But millions of Christians today will not care for this. They care for thousands of other things. Some care only for Bible studies. They say that as long as we have people read and study the Bible, we will do a good

work. They do not care for the church, the Body, the building. Others care only for missionary work. Some care just for a good service. They spend millions of dollars to build up a physical sanctuary in a modern design. Satan uses many things, including the best knowledge, doctrine, forms, and regulations. He uses whatever he can to distract every Christian from God's eternal purpose. Now the Lord has enlightened our eyes, and He has burdened us to say that we have to come back to God's eternal purpose.

The best way for you to be snatched out of any part of this satanic system is to put everything you received from the past under your feet. We should care only for eating Jesus so that we may grow and be transformed for God's building. Many people read the Bible and do religious things, but they have never really eaten Jesus as their spiritual food. Instead, they just pick up the knowledge, the doctrine. Today our eyes have to be opened. The Christian life and the church life are altogether a matter of eating Jesus. When we call on the Lord—"O Lord Jesus"—we take the Lord Jesus in. To be religious and to take the mere knowledge of the Bible fit in with our fallen human, religious nature. We need a vision and a revelation of God's eternal purpose.

**BEING FILLED IN SPIRIT
TO HAVE RIVERS OF LIVING WATER
FLOWING OUT OF OUR INNERMOST BEING**

All the points we have covered in our fellowship are in the Bible, but many people do not see them, because they do not fit their natural, fallen concept. Christians easily pick up the verses in Ephesians 5 concerning wives submitting to their husbands and husbands loving their wives (vv. 22, 25), because these kinds of verses do not need any revelation. Anyone can understand them. But Paul also said in the same chapter that we are to be filled in spirit (v. 18b). In order to understand this verse, we need revelation. We need to be renewed and enlightened with the divine revelation from the holy Word.

Peter said that as newborn babes we should desire the pure milk of the word so that we can be the living stones for God's building. Who pays attention to this? Instead, many pay attention to the mere ethical teachings in the Bible. The Chinese already have the ethical teachings of Confucius. The Bible only teaches wives to submit to their husbands, but Confucius teaches a

threefold submission. He says an unmarried daughter has to submit herself to her father. When she gets married, she has to submit herself to her husband. If her husband dies, she has to submit herself to her son. This is a submission to three generations. Many Chinese who learned the Confucian teachings feel that they do not need the Bible since they already have high ethical teachings. When I was a young person in China, I was bothered by this. Even the Western missionaries said that the Bible teaches the same thing as Confucius. When we heard this, we wondered why they needed to come there, since we already had Confucius. But eventually I was saved, and my eyes were opened to see that there is no comparison between the Bible and the teachings of Confucius. People said that the Bible and Confucian teachings were the same because they did not see God's eternal purpose. They saw only the outward things in the Bible. Outwardly, a wax figure looks like a real person, but within it there is no life. Today many Christians take just the superficial things. They do not see the deep things.

Actually, the virtues of submission, love, obedience, care, and all the other virtues of a proper Christian life, church life, family life, and community life come out by our being filled inwardly in our spirit. When we are filled in spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, spontaneously something comes out of us to submit to one another (Eph. 5:18-21). When we are filled in spirit, we will spontaneously and even unconsciously be submissive.

The Christian life is not a matter of outward behavior, outward conduct. It is altogether a matter that flows out of the infilling of God Himself. I am filled in my spirit with my Lord, so there is the fruit. John 7 says that when we drink of the Lord, the rivers of living water will flow out of us (vv. 37-39). This is not one river but many rivers. A river of submission, a river of love, a river of power, a river of wisdom, a river of patience, and many other kinds of rivers are flowing out of us. But the source is the infilling of Christ. When we are filled in our spirit with Christ, we have the flowing of many rivers out of our innermost being.

**RECEIVING THE SUPPLY OF GRACE
BY EXERCISING OUR SPIRIT TO CALL ON THE NAME
OF THE LORD AND PRAY-READ HIS WORD**

How can we have this infilling? How can we get the pure milk of the word? In Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, he charged him to be empowered in the grace (2:1). Grace is the enjoyment of Christ, but how can we be in that enjoyment? In the same book Paul told Timothy to flee youthful lusts and to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (v. 22). The way to drink the pure milk is to call on the Lord. The way to take the Lord in, to get the infilling of the Lord, is to call on Him. The way to be strong in grace is to call on the Lord.

I can never forget a message I heard in 1935 telling us that the grace of Christ is sufficient. I was very much helped and motivated by that message. But eventually I wondered how I could enjoy the grace. How could I and the grace become one? Today I can tell you that the way for you to get into the grace is by calling, "O Lord Jesus, O Lord Jesus." Suppose a sister's husband is giving her a hard time. She may pray, "Lord, be merciful to me. Change the attitude of my husband." But the more she prays like this, the worse her husband may become. That is not the way. The way is seen with the apostle Paul. He had a thorn in his flesh, some kind of suffering, and he asked the Lord three times to remove this thorn (2 Cor. 12:7-8). But the Lord said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you" (v. 9). The Lord allowed the thorn to remain, and this created an opportunity for Paul to enjoy Christ as his all-sufficient grace. God would not remove the thorn, but He would supply the grace in Paul. We can get the grace by calling on the name of the Lord—"O Lord Jesus!" If a sister is having a difficult time with her husband, she needs to call, "O Lord Jesus, O Lord Jesus." Eventually, the more difficult her husband becomes, the more she will enjoy Christ as grace. We get into the enjoyment of Christ by calling on the Lord.

Second Timothy 1:7 says that God has given us a strong spirit. Verse 22 of chapter 4 tells us that the Lord is with our spirit. We have a strong spirit, and the Lord is with our spirit. Verse 22 of chapter 2 says that we have to pursue the Lord with the calling ones. This means that we have to exercise our spirit to call on the Lord. Then verse 1 of chapter 2 says that we should be empowered in the grace. This means that we enjoy the Lord Himself as our grace.

In 3:16 Paul says that every word of the Scriptures is breathed by God. This means that we can get into the enjoyment of the Lord not only by calling on the Lord but also by breathing the word of the Bible into us. We all have to

come back to these two things: calling on the Lord and pray-reading the Word. These are the ways, the means, for us to take the Lord into us.

WALKING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

The New Testament also tells us that we have to walk by and according to the spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:4). We have a strong spirit, and Christ as the life-giving Spirit is with our spirit. So we have to exercise our spirit to call on the Lord and to pray-read His Word. By this He will get into us more and more. Then our spirit will be more mingled with Him as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17).

We have to walk according to this spirit all the time; then Christ will have a free course within our being. This is like the food having a free course within our stomach so that we have a good digestion. Then the nourishment of the food we take into our stomach is assimilated into all the parts of our being. We have to give the Lord a free course from our spirit to get into every part of our being.

Do not ever say no to the Lord. Whenever you have an inner sensation that the Lord is moving in you toward a certain direction with certain things, you have to say, "Yes, Lord." Do not say no. Always say, "Yes, Amen." Then you give Him the free course to get Himself into your whole being to saturate and permeate every part of your being. This is the way for you to grow. It is by this that the functions will come out, the transformation will be afforded, and spontaneously there will be the building up.

Galatians 6:18 says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen." Not only is the Lord with your spirit, but also the grace of the Lord is with your spirit. The Lord is with your spirit, and the enjoyment of the Lord should also be with your spirit. This tells us that we have to enjoy the Lord in our spirit all the time. Ephesians 6 tells us that we have to take the word of God, which is the Spirit, by means of all prayer, and whenever we pray, we have to do it in our spirit (vv. 17-18).

By putting all these verses together, we can see that the Lord's building is through the exercise of our spirit to eat the Lord, to enjoy the Lord. This has been veiled, covered, and even buried in the Bible for centuries. Christians in the past centuries did not see this. This is something hidden, something

deeper, something invisible. This is like the inner life in my body being invisible. My body is visible, but my life is invisible. Yet the life is vital and real. In the Bible there is the vital part, which is hard for people to see. It is easy to see the superficial, shallow part. But we need the Lord's mercy to get into the deeper part, that is, to see something deeper, something invisible. This is Christ as the life-giving Spirit for our enjoyment. We eat Him, drink Him, and breathe Him so that we may have the growth for the building up of the church.

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE LORD'S RECOVERY
OF THE EATING OF JESUS
FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: Rev. 1:4; 2:7, 17; 3:20; 21:18-21; 22:1-2a, 14, 17;
2:14-15, 20, 24

In this chapter we have come to the last book of the Bible to see how the Bible ends. We want to see that the Bible consummates in the matter of eating and drinking. This shows the consistency of the whole Bible. The Bible shows us that at the beginning there were the tree of life for eating and the flowing river for watering (Gen. 2:9-10). At the end of the Bible there are also the tree of life and a river, the river of water of life (Rev. 22:1-2). The Bible ends in the same way it starts, and this shows us the consistency of God's eternal purpose.

In the book of Revelation, we can see the consummation of eating and drinking the Lord, and this consummation is a building, a city, the New Jerusalem (21:2). This building is the outcome of God's work through all the generations. The consummation of the sixty-six books of the Bible is a city built with gold, pearls, and precious stones (vv. 18-21), and this corresponds with the concept in the entire New Testament.

In Matthew 16:18 the Lord told Simon that he was a stone and that He, the Lord, would build His church upon Himself as the rock. Here we see the stone and the building. Then in the Gospel of John, again we see the stone (1:42), and the eating and the drinking of Jesus (6:57; 4:14; 7:37-39) that produces the building with the stone.

We have also seen this concept in the writings of Paul. In 1 Corinthians there are the feeding and the eating. From the eating is the growth, and from the growth is the transformation to produce the gold, silver, and precious stones for the building up of God's temple (3:2-16). In Ephesians there is the perfecting by feeding to cause the growth. Then by the growth there are the functions, and by all the functioning members the Body is built together

(4:11-16). Ephesians 2:21 and 22 speak of the universal building and the local building: “In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.” *You also* refers to the local saints’ being built together in their locality into the habitation of God in their spirit.

Peter also had this organic concept. As we have seen, he told us that we have to feed the younger ones (1 Pet. 5:2; John 21:15) and that we all have to drink the milk of the word in order that we may grow to be the living stones for the building up of God’s spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:2, 5). Now we can see that the Lord Jesus plus the three great writers of the New Testament—Paul, Peter, and John—all had the same concept.

The last book of the Bible, written by John, ends in such a marvelous way. But what the Lord in these last days has shown us from this book is nearly altogether different from what the great teachers saw from it in the past centuries. They saw the beast with ten horns and seven heads coming out of the Mediterranean Sea (Rev. 13:1). They saw the four horses (6:1-8), the seven seals (v. 1), the seven trumpets (8:6), and the seven bowls (16:1). No doubt, there are these things in the book of Revelation, but these are not the vital things in this book. We may use our physical body as an illustration. We have hair, nails, fingers, and toes, but we also have a heart and a liver. If one of your toes is cut off, you will still live, but if your heart or liver is taken away, you will die. This is because they are vital organs. We need to see the vital things in the book of Revelation.

In these last days what the Lord has shown us is not the ten toes in Daniel 2:41-43, which are the ten horns in Revelation. I was taught these things many years ago, but today is a different age. The Lord has opened up something more vital, more strategic, more central, and more hidden to us. These things are like the kernel of a piece of fruit. Within the fruit is the seed, and within the seed is the kernel. If you sow the seed with the kernel into the earth, it will grow. The life is in the kernel. The life in the book of Revelation is not in the seven heads or in the ten horns.

EATING THE LORD AS THE TREE OF LIFE, THE HIDDEN MANNA, AND THE FEAST

Revelation 1:4 says that this book was written from the seven Spirits to the seven churches. Then at the beginning of this book there are three particular promises. First, the Lord said, “To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life” (2:7). This is the first promise. Then in 2:17 there is the second promise: “To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives it.” This indicates that the eating of manna will transform you into a white stone, a stone justified and approved by the Lord. The stone is for the building.

The third promise is in Revelation 3:20, which says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.” Throughout the years there has been a big argument about what the door in Revelation 3:20 is. Many Christian preachers use this verse for gospel preaching. They say that the door is the door of the heart and that Jesus is standing and knocking at the door. But this door is not the door of the hearts of individuals but the door of the degraded church, the church in Laodicea. The church in Laodicea had put out Jesus. He was standing outside the degraded church, knocking at her door. Today the Lord Jesus is outside the door of the degraded church. Many Christians today are not with Jesus, because they are still in religion. Jesus is outside the door of religion.

The Lord promised to dine with the one who opens to Him. The door is the door of the church, but the door is opened by individual believers. The Lord is dealing with the whole church, but the acceptance of the Lord’s dealing must be a personal matter. When you open the door, Jesus will come to dine with you. To dine is to eat not merely one kind of food but the riches of a feast.

Thus, we can see that the three significant promises at the beginning of the book of Revelation are regarding the eating of the tree of life, the hidden manna, and the feast. These promises at the beginning of this book are related to eating.

In Revelation 2 and 3 there are seven epistles directly from the Lord Jesus to the churches. At the end of each epistle there is a promise. When we were young, we always considered that these promises were for the future. We thought that to eat the tree of life and of the hidden manna and to feast with the Lord Jesus were in the future. At that time we had been influenced by

Christianity not to see anything related to eating Jesus. One day the Lord showed me that these promises are not only for the future but also for today. It is ridiculous to think that we need to eat only in the future and not today. Surely we will eat the tree of life in the future, because Revelation 22 tells us so, but we can also enjoy the tree of life today. The Bible has a principle that whatever will be there as the full taste, we have today as the foretaste. We can eat of the tree of life, the hidden manna, and the feast today.

In the Old Testament with the people of God, there were three stages of eating. The first stage was to eat the tree of life. Of course, because of the fall, the tree of life in Genesis 2 eventually became the lamb in Exodus 12. The tree of life was good only for nourishment, not for redemption. In Genesis 2 there was no sin on the part of man, so there was no need of redemption. The tree for nourishing was sufficient. But then man became fallen. He became involved with sin. Thus, at the end of Genesis man was put into a coffin and left in Egypt (50:26). Man needs an exodus to get out of this. This is why we have a book called Exodus. We who became involved with sin and death, who were put in a coffin and left in Egypt, needed an exodus. When we were saved by the Lord, we experienced an exodus out of death, out of the coffin, and out of Egypt, out of the world. The way we experienced this exodus was by striking the blood and eating the Lamb.

The lamb in Exodus 12 was the tree of life in Genesis 2. Revelation 22 puts the tree of life and the Lamb together. The Lamb is sitting on the throne, out of the throne proceeds a flowing river, and in the flowing river grows the tree of life (vv. 1-2). Thus, to eat the Lamb equals to eat the tree of life. This is the first stage of eating.

After the exodus, the children of Israel entered into the wilderness, into the second stage of eating. In the second stage of eating, they ate manna for forty years (Exo. 16:35).

Then they entered into the third stage of eating. That was the stage of eating all the rich produce of the rich land of Canaan (Josh. 5:12). All the time they ate the produce of the land as a feast.

Thus, the three stages of eating were the eating of the tree of life, the eating of manna, and the eating of a feast. This matches the Lord's promises to the overcomers at the beginning of the book of Revelation. The Lord's promises to

the overcomers to eat of the tree of life, the hidden manna, and the feast correspond with the Old Testament type.

A PROMISE AND A CALL

At the end of Revelation, there are a promise and a call. The promise is verse 14 of chapter 22: “Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have right to the tree of life.” This is the last promise of the whole Bible. The last call in the Bible is verse 17 of the same chapter. In this verse the Spirit and the bride say, “Let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely.” Thus, the whole Bible ends with one promise and one call. The promise is to have the right to eat, and the call is to drink the water of life. These things are much better, much higher, and much more profound than the ten horns and seven heads in the book of Revelation. This is because we are speaking about the heart of the divine revelation.

A WARNING CONCERNING DOCTRINES

It is very meaningful to see that in Revelation 2 and 3, on the positive side, the Lord Jesus promised again and again about eating. But on the negative side, in these chapters, He warned us again and again about teaching, or doctrine. In 2:14 the Lord said, “I have a few things against you, that you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam.” Then in verse 15 He said, “In the same way you also have some who hold in like manner the teaching of the Nicolaitans.” In verses 20 and 24 the Lord Jesus warned about the teaching of Jezebel. To teach is not to feed but to just pass on knowledge or doctrine. It is so good not to have the doctrines, because the Lord Jesus appreciates this. On the positive side, there is the eating. On the negative side, there is the doctrine. This shows that the Lord Jesus is just for eating. He is not for doctrines.

Some would say that the Lord hates these doctrines because they are the wrong ones. But my argument is this: How do you know that your doctrine is the right one? If you know that the doctrine you hold is wrong, surely you will not hold it. Let us take money as an illustration. Only the experts are able to detect counterfeit money. The best thing is to possess gold. Otherwise, you can be cheated. Likewise, the best way for you not to be cheated is not to take any doctrine. You really may not know the difference between the genuine doctrine and the wrong doctrine. But as long as it is doctrine, you should not take it. Instead, you should want the gold. The gold is the reality. I do not care

for “currency.” I care for “gold.” I care only for Christ. I do not care for any doctrine.

In the last book of the Bible, the Lord Jesus would not care for any doctrine, any teaching. He cares only for eating, not the eating of doctrines but the eating of Himself as the tree of life, the hidden manna, and the feast. This is the last book, and the last book is the final word. The Bible is a long discourse from God that took over fifteen hundred years to complete. In any long talk, the final word is the most crucial. Revelation, as the final word of God’s long discourse, talks about the eating of Jesus, and it rejects and belittles all the doctrines. We need to forget about the doctrines and hold on to the eating of Jesus.

Do not forget that this word about eating was not spoken to any individuals. It was spoken to the churches. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). You need to be in the churches. Then you can hear what the Spirit says. Care only for the Spirit’s speaking. Do not care for doctrines. We need to eat the Lord today. We do not have the full taste yet, but the foretaste is here. Day by day we take the foretaste, and the foretaste is qualifying us for and will lead us to the full taste. In the full taste we again have the tree of life and the river of life. Again we have the eating and drinking of Jesus.

THE LORD’S RECOVERY

Out of the eating and drinking, you will become stones, and the stones are not scattered or piled up. All the stones are built up. The wall of the holy city is built with stones. These stones are produced from the eating and the drinking of Jesus.

Now you can see how consistent the entire Bible is with the matter of eating to produce the building. Even in Genesis 2 there is the revelation of eating the tree of life. There is also the flowing of the river, and the issue of the flow is the precious materials—gold, bdellium (pearl), and the onyx stone (vv. 9-12). That means that all the precious materials are produced out of the flow of the life river.

Now we all have to see that this is the Lord’s recovery. The Lord’s recovery is the recovery of the eating of Jesus for the building up of the church. This is

not only for this age but also for eternity. “O Lord Jesus! Open our eyes that we all may see Your purpose today, Your recovery today, and the goal of Your recovery today.” We need to eat Jesus to grow, to be transformed, and to be built together. Then we will have the building of the church.

By this way the Lord is going to fulfill His prophecy regarding the building up of the church. This prophecy is fulfilled by eating Jesus. Never forget that eating unites. Eating keeps the oneness. Eating builds up. If you are divisive, that means you are wrong in the matter of eating. If you are right in the matter of eating, surely you will be united and even uniting. You will be the ones who are built and who are building others. When will the Lord build His church? Now! How will the Lord build His church? By our eating Jesus!